

4/4/21 - Resurrection Sunday - "One Proposition; Two Roads" (Easter Sunday)

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[0 : 00] Mark chapter 16, verse 1 says, When the Sabbath was passed, Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Jesus in Siloam, bought spices so that they might go and anoint him.

And very early on the first day of the week when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb, and they were saying to one another, Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb? And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back. It was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed.

And he said to them, Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen. He is not here.

See the place where they laid him? But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you into Galilee.

[1 : 16] There you will see him, just as he told you. And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them.

And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. Now, if you could flip over to 1 Corinthians chapter 15. This is where we're going to spend a bulk of our time.

Starting in verse 12 of 1 Corinthians chapter 15. Now, if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, and your faith is in vain.

We are even found to be misrepresenting God because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise, if it is true that the dead are not raised.

[2 : 21] For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, and you are still in your sins.

Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

This is the word of the Lord. The passage that we just read in Paul's writing in 1 Corinthians, it contains a lot.

And we're going to unpack that a little bit today of what it contains. The passage contains several conditional clauses with various false premises, false conclusions for the sake of Paul demonstrating certain logical consequences.

So, for instance, if blank we so believe, then if we believe this, then that's going to affect this and this and this and this.

[3 : 36] Similar to that of a chain reaction. Any bowling people, you throw that ball down and you hit that first pin, and you know that after hitting that first pin, there's going to be multiple movements of pins that will fall.

We're entering in essentially to the middle of a conversation, and it needs a little bit of context in order to inform the section of passage that we're in today.

I don't know if it's just me, maybe, that you just interject in the middle of conversations. That happens a lot after the church service and I just pop in there and jump on in into a 10-minute conversation.

It leaves me out of the context of what's even being spoken about. And what we have here is context. We can't just jump in and act like we know what this means. So, we need to trace back because Paul's argument actually traces back and originates in verse 1 of chapter 15.

In summary, before Paul entered into this extended discussion of theology regarding the resurrection, he reminded the Corinthians the content of the gospel that he preaches. [4 : 46] And this involved that his preaching was not his own words. It was according to Scripture. It was according to the apostles. And it focused on the resurrection and the witnesses of the resurrection.

In this, Paul establishes a case in which continues to our passage today. And so, he begins to argue for that truth of the resurrection in two ways.

First, in verse 12 through 19 where we are today, sort of drawing upon the absurdity of the position held by those who deny the resurrection of Jesus Christ by denying the resurrection of the dead. People who believe in Jesus Christ not being resurrected with him. And then he flips the whole thing on its head in verse 20 through 28 following to affirm the veracity of the resurrection through that confirmation.

And then in Paul's wonderful writing style, he even returns back to problems of denying the resurrection in verse 29 through 28. That's the context.

[5 : 56] The resurrection, when we come together like this, this feels like almost like a Christian Super Bowl, doesn't it? We get together. We celebrate this climatic moment.

It's the climax of the gospel when Jesus resurrected. Good Friday affirmed the reality of the resurrection. And it gave meaning to the death of Christ.

If the resurrection wouldn't have happened, then Christ died in vain. And similarly, if Christ didn't die, there would be no resurrection. You need the two.

These are climatic gospel moments. These bring validity to our faith. The resurrection brings validity to our faith. It brings assurance in what lays waiting ahead for those who belong to Jesus Christ. It also brings confidence in the message that we can rest upon what this word says as being inerrant. Because without the resurrection, we know that all of this is completely a sham.

[7 : 06] Completely a sham. And we've all been duped. The road we choose has significant implications. Not only in this life, but also to come.

And so for the sermon title, I have proposed it being called and titled, One Proposition, Two Roads. We're going to lay this out according to Paul's argument here today.

And I believe that we will see his aim, that the consequences for disbelief in the resurrection far outweigh the consequences of belief.

So let's pray for a moment before we get into the text, and we will begin. Father, we ask for help at this time by the power of your Holy Spirit to make this word clear.

The very spirit that inspired this text. Lord, allow it to open our ears and to open our hearts. Whether we're in Christ or not in Christ.

[8 : 13] Father, let us all be attentive to what your word says today. And allow that to have supremacy over our time and govern every word I speak.

Holy Spirit, give me power to speak your word with truth, clarity, and confidence. And we praise in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. So the first proposition we have, just so you're tracking well, I'm just going to forecast how I'm going to do this.

I'm going to raise the proposition that Paul lays out in 1 Corinthians chapter 15. And so when I lay that out, we're going to see the consequences. And then I'm going to flip it on its head as Paul does in the following passages.

And so we're going to look at a couple of propositions. So let's look at the proposition and consequences if Christ had not been raised, according to the apostle Paul.

Paul, it says in verse 12, now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

[9 : 29] But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. Now there's two ways of saying the same thing. Paul does it here.

He does it a lot, actually. But Paul faced quite a problem in this time. Some Christians in this Corinthian church just simply, they believed in the resurrection, but they were denying and doubting that what would follow would be in unison, all the dead would be raised in that resurrection because of that resurrection.

And Paul makes it clear through a logical argument that you cannot separate the two. Through a logical argument, he says in verse 13, if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ hasn't been raised.

It is literally close neighbors. You can't have one without the other. So to deny one is to deny the other. And notice the substance of the proclaimed message here.

I'm going to hit this in just a little bit, but the substance of the proclaimed message. Is Christ crucified, but also Christ risen in verse 12?

[10:43] Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead. Indeed, if preaching Christ crucified and Christ risen, believers benefit not only in this life, being forgiven for our sins here and now, but we are also given an inheritance, assurance of what lays waiting ahead.

If through Adam's sin, all sin entered into the world without the resurrection, we're still dead in Adam, our first representative with no hope.

The hope of the dead rests upon Christ being raised. If Christ had not been raised, he would be no different than the first Adam who fell and where sin entered the world.

And this proposition has significant consequences. And Paul lays them out for us. We do not need to travel too far from Scripture to see the consequences. And so we're going to lay out his proposition with the consequences now.

And he gives us a couple consequences. In verse 14, we see the first consequence. His preaching and the church's faith is in vain.

[12:00] He says, And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. If this were true, if Christ was not raised from the dead, not only would there be no hope for those who have died, as we saw in verse 12 and 13, but also the preaching would be in vain.

The consequence is wasted words. If the content of the message proclaimed is Christ crucified, Christ risen, and that's a complete sham, then what are we doing with our time?

Paul and his companions better not quit their day job before they go into full-time ministry there. Make a couple extra ten, because their time would be better spent there.

The consequence is wasted words, wasted energy, wasted time, wasted prayer, wasted toil and struggle, as he aims to present these churches as spiritually mature.

And the faith of the hearer is the central aim of preaching, isn't it? And we see that almost naturally from just one verse. If preaching is in vain, we can rightfully assume that any faith that's derived from that preaching is also in vain.

[13:26] If there's no point in what the message that's being proclaimed and testified to, then there's also no point in you coming to faith and believing any word that comes out of Paul's mouth or my mouth.

If there's no point in you coming to faith and believing any word that comes out of Paul's mouth, I've said before that you don't enter ministry for the health benefits, right? If there's any ministers or maybe elders of the past or present who have been in ministry, you don't enter into ministry for the health benefits.

And Forbes actually ranked pastor alongside of mayor, CEO, and congressman a couple years ago as the top five hardest job. And one pastor in the article put it like this, being a pastor is like death by a thousand paper cuts.

Let me repeat that for anybody who needs to wake up. Think about this. Being a pastor is like death by a thousand paper cuts. I didn't hear an amen, so that's a good start.

Another pastor says, you're always scrutinized. You're always criticized from the top to bottom, stem to stern.

[14:40] You work for an invisible, perfect boss. And you're supposed to leave, in his words, a ragtag gaggle of volunteers towards God's coming future.

And again, in his own words, it's like herding cats, but harder. Mind you, it's his words, not my words. What Paul's saying is that the reason a pastor, a shepherd, a herald of the gospel is able to persevere is because God saved him and called him.

It's not of his own doing. And for that, even I am grateful and humbled at the opportunity. And I labor through seasons serving him and in turn serving his people, each and every one of you.

And through serving him, it is worth it. The gospel is proclaimed, and his message is heralded forth from his word. But what is the gospel? The gospel events climax the long story of God and humanity, of a relationship broken by sin, of God's promises of salvation and forgiveness, God choosing the nation Israel to use and conquer the enemy regions, and the possibility even of salvation and reconciliation.

It's grace upon grace upon grace. And the backdrop of this good news of God's salvation is a story and a love saga of God's love for humanity that he gave his only son.

[16:22] And that not only did he die on the cross as atonement for our sin, he also verified that that satisfaction was actually satisfactory in God's sight.

And he died the death we deserve, and he rose where we receive our justification. And this is all alluded to according to the scripture. This isn't just something they made up in the New Testament. Hey, let's try something new. God, okay, this sounds good. You send Jesus. Now, this was his plan all along according to the scriptures. You see, the resurrection was actually alluded to in Hosea 6.2, where it says, after two days he will revive us.

On the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him. And also Jonah 1.17. And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah.

And Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights. And that's not to include a big plethora. I mean, in Job, Psalms, Isaiah, Ezekiel, more Hosea, Daniel.

[17:25] This was God's plan all along, to forgive our sins and to send an atoning sacrifice for them. So, if Christ had not been raised, what Paul is saying is, your time might be better spent, not in church, might be better spent maybe down the road, maybe sleep in a little bit, maybe watch the news, maybe go out with a bunch of friends and just live it up, party like it's 1999, right?

Living for today because that's all that would matter. This is it. And the second consequence, he continues in verse 15.

We are even found to be misrepresenting God because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise, if it is true that the dead are not raised.

You see, the proclaimed word of God is the testimony of God. What God has spoken is what is written. It is God's word.

And if the message Paul testifies is not what God has spoken, no resurrection of Christ or the dead, then he is caught misrepresenting God. Paul is saying, I would be a false teacher before you.

[18:45] Paul would be a false witness. Looking over even the landscape of the past year or two, some of the most vile religious shams that exist in our day and age are many imposters who misrepresent God.

Their misrepresentation of God is fueled by a lack of gospel preaching. You don't hear Christ crucified. You don't hear Christ risen.

It's sort of like they've turned the Bible into a narrative about America or a presidential election or having health and wealth or maybe commanding and telling COVID-19 to be blown away magically and a plethora of other blind, contextualized gimmicks and tricks in our day.

not turning to God for clarity for his agenda and seeking out his message, which is the gospel. It's already established in the word of God.

And what Paul is reinforcing is that in honestly representing God, it will be united in the testified truth about Jesus who represents us.

[20:09] You get that? That if we're going to be honestly representing God, it will be united in the testified truth of the Christ who represents us.

There will be no distinction. We see another third consequence as verse 16 and 17 go. Paul reiterates again in this passage, For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And he continues with another consequence. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those who also have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. Without the resurrection of Christ, faith would be completely pointless. It would be vain. It would be empty. The Christian life would be nothing other than a little book of Ecclesiastes, a vanity of vanities.

We're wasting our time. Absolutely nothing. Do away with the fact of the resurrection. The gift of faith disappears. You cannot separate the two.

[21:19] And also, if then our faith is pointless, then sin is still our master. Because we know what Ephesians 2.8 says, For by grace you have been saved through faith.

It's faith that gives us forgiveness and mercy. And this is not of our own doing. It's a gift of God. And so if our faith is pointless, then our sin is still our master.

And we're still in bondage to the death and the sin of the first Adam. The implications reach farther than even our own hearts. But it reaches six feet underground for people who have gone away.

This isn't just hope for today. It's hope for yesterday. Grandma, grandpa, great-grandma, great-grandpa, mom, pop, who have died in the faith. This is good news for them. If there is no atonement for us, then it also means that the dead are also, in Christ, are also dead. That's it for them too. Six feet underground, that's it.

[22 : 23] If there was no resurrection. If Christ has not been raised, then all are represented by and united with Adam, and all die. Vanity.

So Paul draws upon a conclusion. It's believers who are to be the most pitied in verse 19. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most pitied.

That's strong, isn't it? In a powerful summary, if this logic were true, the only hope we have is here today.

So we have a pretty good reason to just go eat, drink, be merry, eat Taco Bell. These sinners. Be merry.

Live life now. This is all that we have. Forget the message. Forget faith. Forget sin. If this logic were true.

[23 : 36] But Paul, by way of implications and words, he's proving a point here by giving us these negative propositions. So we see another proposition that is naturally raised and answered in the following passage.

But we have for you a proposition and consequences if Christ has been raised. If Christ has been raised. And through the basis of Paul's logical argument, we are flipping the script into we know that he has been raised, right?

Christ crucified and Christ crucified and Christ risen is worth celebrating. It's worth proclaiming. It's worth rooting our faith in. It's worth our time.

It's worth persecution. It's worth being locked into a prison. It's worth it. We can rest assured in that. Right? Come what may.

It's worth it. Paul answers this question that since Christ has been raised in verse 20. Look with me. He says, But in fact, Christ has raised from the dead the firstfruits, meaning the new Adam, the new representative, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

[24 : 52] For as by one man came death in Adam, but a man has come also, has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

In the resurrection, we have great hope that death has been defeated. Death has been defeated. And the call of Christ is that when he calls, all will be raised.

Grandma and grandpa from, you know, back years ago, yep, their bodies will be raised. It'll be quite a sight. Yes, it will be quite a sight and no one will be missing out of that. As we saw in 1 Thessalonians in our last section of passage there.

All will be raised from the dead and brought in unity with Jesus Christ. How about that as a countercultural message from what is flashing up on the news headlines today?

Since he has risen, church, for those who believe, there are no consequences. There's only benefits. We are beneficiaries in forgiveness of sin.

[26 : 09] We don't live, we don't live today receiving consequence of unbelief. But the belief, the benefit of our belief, that our message is effective in rooting us in faith in the dead, the buried, the raised Christ.

And this message certainly bears true witness. We're not falsely representing God in bearing witness to this. It is the only means of receiving forgiveness.

And it's not only hope for today, it's hope for tomorrow. Because where he has gone there, his people will also be with him. The two resurrections of Christ and the church either stand or fall together.

There's no way of separating the two. If you don't believe that Christ is raised and that the dead will be raised with him, you might as well just say that you don't believe Christ has been raised because you don't believe the dead will be raised.

This is essential doctrine. And this is the gospel. This is the truth that we live and die upon. And so it is true.

[27 : 15] The consequences, as Paul lays out, for disbelief in the resurrection far outweigh the consequences for belief. Have you ever thought that it would be much worthy of our time to just waste our life having faith?

You know, looking kind of pessimistically from a world's perspective, that we would rather waste our whole life having faith in a life-surrendering, grace-receiving sham than living in rebellion against what is true.

Because if what the Bible says is true and we don't want to adhere our lives to it, we don't want to believe it, for whatever reason, I'd rather waste my life not resisting that truth, but saying, I'm going to take that for what it's worth.

It's according to the scriptures of the long saga of God's love story to us. It's according to the apostles, the prophets, the cornerstone being Jesus Christ.

This is where I can hang my hat, right? To put it simple as possible, in reality, there are only two roads to travel, belief or unbelief.

[28 : 26] There's only two. While there are a heavy set of secondary consequences, as we saw today, the one and only consequence of which deserves all of our attention stems from God's righteous wrath.

And that is something that should startle you if you are apart from Jesus Christ. There's only one road that this is a problem, though, and that is of unbelief.

The consequence of faith in Christ is judgment from the world scoffing, where the world can scoff at you and say, oh, look at that Christian and go into church again. What a waste of time, all that church stuff.

A little breakfast down in the lower level. I can get breakfast at Taco Bell. What did Taco Bell do to me?

You haven't seen the sermon series. I see you haven't been at church. The only consequence, church, of following Jesus Christ is judgment from the world.

[29 : 44] Better to be judged by the world than judged by God, where his wrath will be kindled against you if you are not found in Jesus Christ by faith. Because the consequence of unbelief results in judgment of God.

It's eternity in hell. And yeah, YouTube can take this message down for hate speech. I don't care. It's true, and you need to know it, and you need to preach that. So you have to choose this day who you shall serve.

As Youngstown Metro Church, we are an assembly of believers united in faith in Christ on this gospel truth of the crucified Savior, of the risen Savior.

That is what molds us and holds us together. And the world can weigh their opinions upon the matter, but at the end of the day, we rest in a hope secured. It's a hope that exceeds any hope that maybe Fox News can give you or CNN, whichever mix you like to watch.

Are you willing to live your life if you're not in Christ this morning, whether on the live stream or in here today? Are you willing to live your life on the premise of your own ideals or turn to God who has revealed himself through his holy scriptures to call upon you today to faith in him?

[31 : 08] May you come at this time, place your faith in Jesus Christ if that is you today, and join the Super Bowl of why we celebrate and what the world may scoff at.

Our hope is found only in Christ crucified and Christ risen. And we have been crucified with Christ. It's no longer us who live, but Christ who lives in us.

And since that is true, we know that our assurance is found only in the risen Christ as we too will be risen with him. So let's pray.