

YOU CAN'T KEEP A GOD-MAN DOWN!



PASTOR DAVID SAYLOR EASTER MORNING 2024

Well let me start off by saying I'm happy you've chosen to join us this morning. And I'll tell you why I'm so happy. I'm happy because this morning, I get to tell you about the greatest gift ever given to mankind. It was what John and Peter discovered and believed – Jesus Christ, God's Only Son rose from the dead! It's AWESOME!

READ John 20:1-9

Now I don't know how much you actually think about Jesus being raised from the dead. In fact, it seems like the only time some people hear about the resurrection is on Easter... or maybe at a funeral.

So I want to ask and hopefully answer this question **Why is the resurrection of Jesus Christ such a big deal?**

I mean, there's got to be an if/then relationship. *If Jesus rose from the dead ... then what?*

We deal with if/then statements every day.

For example,

- Christopher Columbus said, "*If the world is round, then I can get to the East by sailing west.*"
- Google/Alphabet said, "*If I copy the I-phone, then people would like Android.*" Microsoft said, "*If I copy the I-phone, then nobody will buy it!*"
- Nina Saylor said, "*If I can get David to pick up his underwear and socks, then ...well, nevermind!*"

So ... what's the big if/then statement for the resurrection? "*If you can't keep a God-man down; If Jesus rose from the dead ... then what?*" What are the implications?

- *If Jesus rose from the dead, then does it really affect anything important to me in my life or not?*
- *Does it affect my situation at home and at school or what's going to happen at work tomorrow?*

Does, or doesn't it? My guess is that some of you, you're not sure. And if you're here at church and you're not sure, then the people you know who don't go to church are even less sure of why Jesus rising from the dead would have any impact in their lives.

The Apostle Paul went out of his way to stress the

importance of the resurrection to his friends in the Church at Corinth:

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 (ESV)

³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,

1 Corinthians 15:17-20

¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead.

So, I've got 4 "if/then" statements for the resurrection. Some of you will not approve of some of them because they will seem like audacious claims – out of step with societies' norms. But I'm not going to candy-coat them for Easter. I'm just going to tell it like it is.

But I also want to say this. There is no better day than today to entrust your life to the living Savior. When you pray with me near the end of this message, God promises to forgive you and make you His forever!

Here's the first "if/then" statement: it has to do with the "nature of truth."

I. IF JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD, THEN THE "CHRISTIAN CLAIMS" ARE TRUE AND EVERY OTHER RELIGIOUS CLAIM IS FALSE.

I told you I wouldn't candy coat these. Now I'm not saying that everything done in the name of Christianity is true – it's not. I'm talking about *THIS* – the essence of Christianity.

Because, let's face it – if what we're celebrating today is true – a person.. more than a person, it says He came as the only Son of God to atone for the sins of the world by dying, and then resurrects, this makes perfect sense.

And of all the claims which Jesus made, rising from the dead was the most stunning! On several occasions, Jesus said he would die and then come back to life. Sometimes he said it subtly with metaphor:

John 2:19 ¶ Jesus answered them, "*Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.*"

And other times He said it very plainly:

(Matt. 17:22-23)

Matt. 20:18-19 *“We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified.*

“On the third day he will be raised to life!”

Where, how, when....

(Matt. 26:31-32)

It’s an amazing claim...but anybody can claim something.

I could claim to be the greatest basketball player in CT. But I think (after this weekend) no one here is going to buy it.

The same kind of thing is true in Jesus’ case. I mean, anybody can claim to be God; but how do you prove it? You prove it by rising from the dead!

And then do it, not secretly, but die and get buried publically, and then come alive publically, seen by hundreds of people over days and weeks!

And Jesus said, *“My dying and coming back to life will show you that all the things I’ve said and claimed are true... Yes, everything He said about himself -- that He is the Son of God; the Messiah; that when you’ve seen Him you have seen God; that He is the way, and the truth, and the life, and nobody comes to God except through him -- all of that is true. AND then anything that anybody else has ever said about who God is and what He’s like – if it contradicts what Jesus taught - it’s false.*

Let’s go back to the first century for a moment. Suppose you’re one of Jesus’ followers. His followers all knew what he said. Then He is killed, crucified like a common thief. You’re waiting. Friday, Saturday, and then Sunday -- and when Jesus gets up, comes out of the tomb, and appears to you and hundreds of others -- you are amazed, shocked, dumbfounded and incredulous because *you know* the implications.

Jesus is no longer just a man. Instantly, he shows them that every other religion or belief system – even though well-meaning, were actually the speculations of mere mortals who stepped onto the stage of history for a season. They said a few good things perhaps, and then later died, leaving their philosophies behind.

- All that stuff that Buddha said about the great nothingness -- it’s *nothing*, because Buddha is still dead and Jesus is alive.
- In the same way **Jesus is alive, but Mohammed is**

still dead. You do the math. You want to build your life on the words of a dead man, or upon one who came back to life?

- German philosopher Frederick Nietzsche said that *God is dead*. Well, if the resurrection is true, then it’s Nietzsche who’s dead!
- And on and on we could go.

You see, if Jesus really rose from the dead, (and the historical evidence that he did is really overwhelming) then Christianity stands apart from every other religion.

Now I’m not trying to be mean or narrow-minded, it just makes common sense – if Jesus rose, it changes everything. Christianity is not just a social construct - a way a culture formed a belief in the Almighty. It’s reality-based. There’s a real God and a real Savior to decide on. (I told you I wasn’t going to sugar-coat it.)

You don’t have to believe me; you know we’re all going to die. And five seconds after we die, we’re going to find out what’s right.

So, this first if/then statement has to do with the nature of truth. The second if/then statement has to do with the nature of life.

II. IF JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD, THEN LIFE DOES NOT END AT THE GRAVE.

20 But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

1 Corinthians 15:12 *But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?*

Jesus’ resurrection begins to answer some of the big questions of life. Where did we come from? Where are we going? Does life have meaning?

I don’t know how many of you have had someone close to you die. I have several times. The first person close to me to die was my mother. And what I remember most as stood next to her body is that I knew that she was not there. That *all I was looking at was a shell*. The essence of who she was, she was not there.

And I also knew that it seemed wrong. Her death seemed wrong. Something inside of me was telling me that life was not meant to be this way.

I have been a Christian for a long time now, and what I knew instinctively at my mother’s death I tell you now from the Bible - that God never meant it to be that way either. He created immortal beings to live forever and to enjoy Him forever.

You see, *if Jesus really rose from the dead, then life does not end at the grave.*

John 14:19 (NIV)¹⁹ ... *Because I live, you also will live.*

John 11:25 *“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies;*

When we die, life goes on, but with an immortal body. The Bible says (Heb. 9:27) that *it is appointed once for a person to die, and then comes the judgment.* When Jesus burst forth from the tomb on Easter morning, his resurrection was the unmistakable demonstration of what *the nature of life* is all about. It's not incarnation. You don't get a bunch of chances to get it right. You get one chance, and then you face eternity.

What that does is to give this life Incredible Value and Importance. Why do you think that historically it has been Christians who start schools, build hospitals, establish orphanages, feed the poor, house the homeless. It was Christians who founded modern science, seeing science as a lens to see the handiwork of God.

And Christians often go to dangerous places share the love of God through Jesus Christ. WHY? It's because of the resurrection! They know that because Jesus rose from the dead, then life does not end at the grave -- so they are working to help people not just for now, but for eternity!

The **third “if/then” statement**, you may also find offensive. It goes like this:

III. IF JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD, THEN WE HUMANS MUST BE IN VERY BAD SHAPE.

*3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died **for our sins** according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,*

In other words, **if** God had to send his only begotten Son to die for our sins, **then** our situation must be extremely perilous.

When a criminal is condemned to die, either by lethal injection or the electric chair, we assume that what he/she did must have been really bad!

In this case, it's *our sins* which are so heinous that they could only be atoned for by the one true God himself coming to earth and suffering the penalty of divine justice.

Look, we just need to read the newspaper or watch the evening news and we see the problem. We'll read

about people manufacturing crystal meth or crack cocaine in hotel rooms so that they can get rich by addicting their friends to the stuff. We will read about businessmen lying to their stockholders or ripping off people out of their retirements.

That reality is “up close and personal too.” If we were to take a poll of the people in this room, my guess is that we would find some of you who had suffered terrible abuse as children. Some of you have been robbed. Some of you have been mistreated by teachers, by employers. Some of you have been cheated by others.

But we must also turn the table on ourselves— we are not just the victims; we must admit that we are propagators too! None of us are exempt from hurting others. We have all lied and sinned ourselves. Some of you have mistreated schoolmates and co-workers mercilessly because they looked different, or they spoke differently than you and your small group of friends. Some parents have been abusive to their children or have falsely accused a friend. Some have deeply wounded their spouse or child. In fact, *You are really bad people!!*

The resurrection of Jesus Christ serves notice that our sin is so dreadful, and that you and I are so deeply flawed, even if you are none of those things I spoke of just now, that nothing short of the death of God's only Son could pay for and break the power of sin in our lives and the lives of those we love.

Nothing. No matter how hard we try to be better people, no matter how shiny we polish the exterior of our lives, it will never be enough. We are stuck with our sinfulness.

We were in such bad shape that God had to *send his only begotten son, so that whoever believes in Him would not perish but have everlasting life.*

Without that, “*perishing*” is the only possibility, but God loves us and he sent His only begotten Son.

So, let's review. *If Jesus rose from the dead ...*

- **then** the Christian Claims are true and every other religious claim is false,
- **then** life doesn't end at the grave, and
- **then** we as a human race must be in very bad shape.

My fourth “if/then” statement is this, and I already said it:

IV. IF JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD, THEN GOD LOVES YOU WHETHER YOU KNOW IT OR NOT.

Look, everybody is looking for love. People are

pinning for it. They're *whining* for it -- just listen to the radio. Every other song is a love song -- wanting to be loved, about losing love, or not being loved, needing love. It's was like that when I was a teen and it is today.

We want someone who will love us *just the way we are*. And that never really happens, even when things go really well.

Why? Because it's an unreal expectation, because that person is also *looking for someone who will love them just the way they are as well*. Next thing you know, you're breaking up and *all you wanted was to be loved!*

The mistake is looking for perfect love from an imperfect person.

A love like that can only come from one place – GOD. **Jesus Christ** loves you with a perfect love you can't get anywhere else.

Jesus Christ sacrificed everything because He loves you.

1 John 4:9 *This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.*

John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life..”*

Easter is a celebration of the fact that God loves us in spite of us – just the way we are!

Because Jesus rose from the dead, we know that God loves us even after our sins killed His Son. Jesus died for our sins out of love.

Whether you like it or not, whether you ever cared for Him up to this day, or not - GOD LOVES YOU; He died to cover your sin, He came to prepare us for eternity and give us his help now...

And the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the proof.

CONCLUSION

If Jesus Rose from the dead, *then* “what should I do about it?”

- **1) Well, “I could pretend it never happened.”** I could say “it doesn't matter who/what I believe or don't believe in”.
- I could disregard that life is eternal or that sin is deadly and that Jesus is the only antidote.
- I could ignore His AMAZING LOVE in doing all this. MANY DO. No one's stopping you.

But if you do, there are consequences. Many. You are in effect rejecting God's act of love.

John 3:36 *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.”.*

2) What you *SHOULD* do is TURN to Christ and TRUST Him and He will do for you what only HE can do!

And, if you used to be on the right path spiritually, but you wound up in a ditch somewhere, wondering how long the road back to Christ is - all you have to do is **turn around** - Jesus is right there and He is saying, "Welcome back!" He will help you get your life on track. But you have to turn around.

What a great day to do that! – commemorating the day in history when God declared His decisive victory over sin and death.

How? **You become a follower of Jesus Christ by believing in His amazing act of love that paid for your sin. You do that by turning from your sin and anything else, and asking Him to forgive you.** It's not just head knowledge of Jesus – you may have had that already - but it's asking the living Jesus to be part of your life as your Savior and your Lord – the one you will seek to learn and follow.

Let me lead us in a prayer. Bow your heads please.

Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for coming to earth, dying for my sin and rising victorious over sin and death.

Lord Jesus, today I ask you to forgive me and make me Yours. I believe you are alive so please teach me to love you more. Help me to grow and be a fruitful follower. Amen.