

Since He Always Lives

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[0 : 00] Good morning. It is good to worship together, isn't it? Especially on this day. Can we pray together? Father, we thank you for the truth of this day.

Father, we ask that your spirit would guide us into all truth today and always. Help us to understand your word, to embrace your word, and to plant it deep in our hearts so that we can bring you glory in this life and in the next.

It's in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen. Well, today is Resurrection Sunday. Amen? It is the most important celebration of the year for Christians around the world.

Today is when we sing the happiest music. It's when we wear the brightest colors. It's where we serve the best food. Our hope and our joy are so, so closely connected to the resurrection that not just today, but all through the year, we tend to sing the loudest and the most exuberantly when we're singing about the resurrection.

[1 : 33] We think about songs we've sung through the year when we sing, like, in Christ alone, and we get to the line, Then bursting forth in glorious day, up from the grave he rose again.

Getting goosebumps just recalling when we sing that line together. Or, Or, Or how about this one? Then on the third, at break of dawn, the Son of Heaven rose again. O trampled death, where is your sting? The angels roar for Christ the King.

It is a big day. But why? Why is the resurrection so important? Have you ever asked yourself that? Why is it actually important? I mean, for sure, Jesus rising from the dead is impressive. Impressive. But is it important? After all, it is possible for an event to be impressive without it actually having any lasting importance.

[2 : 45] Isn't that possible? In life? How many of you have heard of the Guinness Book of World Records? Okay, that book is filled with impressive, sometimes impressive, accomplishment.

Like, I'm sure all of you know about the record that was broken six years ago in Canada. You're probably already knowing what I'm getting at.

The man who wore more t-shirts at once than any other person. You know who it was. It was Ted Hastings, right? He wore 260 t-shirts at once.

That is impressive. I'm sure all of you know the name Donald Gorski as well, right? Ringing a bell? He, of course, has the current world record for the most Big Macs eaten over the course of a lifetime.

As of just last month, he surpassed 35,000 Big Macs.

[4 : 01] He started keeping track back in 1972 when he was eating nine Big Macs a day. And he kept track of every one of those little cardboard cartons.

He still has all of them, along with the receipts. And just last month, he passed 35,000. And he actually said in an interview, I hope nobody tries to break this record.

That is kind of impressive in its own way. But is it important? Does it have any lasting significance? Is that how we approach the resurrection?

Is it impressive without any lasting significance? Well, absolutely not. Absolutely not. Today on this blessed holiday, we're going to focus on three reasons why the resurrection is worth celebrating. It's worth getting goosebumps over. And it is important to your life right now. We're going to start with Luke's retelling of the resurrection.

[5 : 09] But we're going to begin on Friday evening. So if you have your Bibles, please turn to Luke 23. We're going to get to the end of the chapter here. We're going to start in verse 54 of Luke 23.

It was the day of preparation. And the Sabbath was beginning. The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments.

And on the Sabbath, they rested according to the commandment. But, chapter 24. On the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. But when they went in, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel.

And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, The best question ever. Why do you seek the living among the dead?

[6 : 21] He is not here. He has risen. Remember how he told you while he was still in Galilee that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.

And they remembered his words. And returning from the tomb, they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now, before his death, Jesus had spoken of his coming death and of his resurrection over and over and over again with his disciples.

But they couldn't get it. They couldn't grasp it. Which might seem odd to us. Why wouldn't they be able to grasp this? They had seen Jesus raise other people from the dead.

Like who? Like Lazarus, the most famous one. Yes, absolutely. He also raised the son of a widow back in Luke chapter 7.

And he raised this son from the dead at the funeral. Can you imagine that? And in the very next chapter of Luke, Jesus also raised Jairus' daughter.

[7 : 44] He was a synagogue ruler. And Jesus raised his daughter from the dead. And then, of course, Lazarus, which we all know. So they had seen this. But when Jesus died on the cross, all of their hope seemed lost.

Because Jesus was the one who had raised the others. So who was going to raise him? And we know that the women who visited Jesus that early Sunday morning were not expecting to see the risen Jesus.

How do we know that? Well, because verse 1, On the first day of the week at early dawn, they went to the tomb taking the spices that they had prepared.

So why did they visit? Because they wanted to give him a proper burial. They wanted to put the spices and the ointments around Jesus' body.

So it wasn't because they were expecting to see the resurrected Jesus. And this makes sense because after witnessing his violent death, seeing him alive again was not on their minds.

[8 : 54] Jesus had been beaten brutally after his arrest. He had been whipped until he was bloody. The crown of thorns was pressed down on his forehead.

His hands and his feet were pierced with nails. And his side was stabbed with a spear. Jesus died by crucifixion, which was the most gruesome and the most efficient death in the world.

In fact, even today when we are describing the height of human suffering, we might describe it as excruciating. A word which literally means like something from the cross.

It was awful. And graphic. And not even the closest followers of Jesus confidently expected to see him alive again, even though he had told them that this would happen.

But now here we are three days later and the tomb is empty. And the angels are announcing that Jesus is risen. And this resurrection will prove to be really, really different from that of Lazarus and the others.

[10 : 10] So again, I'll ask, the resurrection was impressive, but how is it important? Well, first reason. The resurrection proves the success of the cross.

If Christ didn't rise, then his enemies were victorious. If he was not raised, then his death was the end of the story.

And our hope would have no foundation. If Jesus remained dead, his crucifixion would be just another death in history.

Now, Mike alluded to this earlier, but 1 Corinthians chapter 15 is the most comprehensive chapter on the resurrection in the New Testament.

And Paul puts the point like this. Verse 17 of 1 Corinthians 15. But thanks be to God.

[11 : 33] This is not the case. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. That is what we sang this morning. We can look at the resurrection and be assured that the price that Jesus paid for our sins has been accepted.

Christ died to save sinners like us. And his death is our death. And if we have died with Christ, we will also live with him.

Which leads to the second reason that the resurrection is important for us. Jesus is the first fruits of our own resurrection.

Let's keep reading in chapter 15. But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. The first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death.

For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

[12:35] What does it mean for Jesus to be the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep? Well, the resurrection of our Savior was the first of its kind.

When the first fruit of a tree is ripe, you can pluck it off the tree and take a taste. And the quality of that first fruit indicates what the full harvest is going to be like.

Jesus' resurrection tells us about our own future resurrection. Because we are united with him.

He is the first of the full harvest. Now before Jesus rose from the dead, those other resurrections that we talked about were different. They were not the first fruits.

When Jesus raised the widow's son or Jairus' daughter or Lazarus, they were raised still with their perishable bodies.

[13:44] They would eventually die another physical death. But when Jesus rose this glorious Sunday morning, his resurrection was different.

He had a physical but imperishable body. Meaning he is alive forever. His body will never see corruption or decay.

In fact, we were just reading earlier, just as a side note, we were reading when Mary Magdalene first saw Jesus, she didn't know that it was him. He didn't have all of the same bloody wounds and all of these things that would have made it very obvious.

Something was different about him. But he had a physical body. Now there are some groups that falsely teach that Jesus was only resurrected as a spirit body, but not a real physical, with no real physical body.

And that would give us a skewed picture of our own eternity in heaven. We won't be floating spirits with nothing to touch or feel. And Jesus' disciples even made this same mistake.

[15:04] When they first saw him alive again. And Jesus explains what's actually happening in Luke 24. And we talked about this a little bit earlier.

But we're going to start in verse 39. They thought that they had seen a spirit. But Jesus says this, See my hands and my feet? It is I, myself.

Touch me and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have. And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.

And while they still disbelieved for joy and they were marveling, he said to them, Have you anything here to eat? And they gave him a piece of broiled fish and he took it and ate before them.

I love that. They are bewildered. And Mike, what question does he ask? Got any food? So the risen Jesus has his physical body with flesh and bone and the ability to eat.

[16:15] He was whole again and then some. He is now glorified and imperishable just like we will be. Now at our resurrection, our physical bodies will be imperishable.

And they will have no traces of pain or sickness or poorly working body parts or fatigue or any type of dysfunction.

There's a passage in the Old Testament that hints at this in Isaiah 40 when we read, Those who trust in the Lord will renew their strength. They will run and not grow weary.

They will walk and they will not faint. But you might be thinking, wait a minute. Wait a minute. Didn't Jesus still have the major marks of the crucifixion?

Didn't he have the scars in his hands and his feet and in his side? Yes, he did. And that is for two reasons.

[17:18] And both of those reasons are to the glory of God. First, those remaining scars made it clear to the disciples, this really is Jesus. He said, go ahead and this is how you know that this is me.

Go ahead and put your hands right here. So that gave them reassurance. This really is the Jesus that we know. And second, the reason that we see that Jesus keeps these scars is that forever when we are in heaven, worshiping the Lord who loves us, we can see the great price that he paid

for our salvation.

That's why I'm here. I'm here because of the price Christ paid for me. And since Jesus is called the first fruits of the general resurrection, then our resurrected bodies will be like his.

We will have physical bodies that can be seen and that can be touched. And yes, we can eat. Have you ever let yourself imagine who you will see in heaven?

Who you will meet, who you will walk with, who you will embrace, and who you will share meals with? What are some of the names that are at the top of your list?

[18 : 48] Parents. Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar. Nice. I'm just saying. Yeah. Yeah. Other names?

Paul. Naaman. Naaman. Noah. Noah. Absolutely. Yeah.

Moses. Esther. Daniel. I think of Jonah. Mary. Peter.

Lazarus. The list goes on. All of these, along with every faithful family member, friend, all the faithful who have gone before us. All of them claimed by the victorious Savior, who is our eternal high priest.

And that's the third reason that the resurrection is important for you, is because Jesus is our high priest. In fact, I want to spend the remainder of our time this morning understanding this final point.

[19 : 58] We've already covered that the resurrection is important because it proves the success of the cross, and Jesus is the first fruits of our own resurrection. And point number three, Jesus continues to be our high priest right now because of the resurrection.

Now, in order to understand this, you must understand the role of the high priest in the Old Testament. The high priest was sort of a mediator between God and his people.

The high priest were from the tribe of Levi, a Hebrew name that literally means connector, and that's exactly what they were. They were the connecting point between God and people.

They were the mediators. The priests offered sacrifices on behalf of the people to atone for their sins, to put their standing as good again with God.

The high priests were really important, but they had two notable flaws. Number one, they were sinful. So they had to atone for their own sins before they could atone for the sins of the people.

[21 : 13] Second flaw, they were mortal, which means after they had served their role, after they had served in that role, they passed away, and then they had to be replaced with a new high priest.

Now, Jesus is superior to the Old Testament high priest in both of these ways. He is sinless. So he didn't have to sacrifice for his own sins before he would sacrifice on behalf of the people.

He sacrificed himself once for all, not with repeated sacrifices like those of the Old Testament. And number two, he is alive.

The reason we're celebrating today, he is currently alive in the Father's presence as our high priest, never to die. So he is the one true and permanent mediator between God and his people.

This makes him a perfect and permanent high priest. Hebrews 7 puts it like this. Verse 23, The former priests were many in number because they were prevented by death from continuing in office.

[22 : 33] But he, Jesus, holds his priesthood permanently because he continues forever.

Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost, or completely, those who draw near to God through him since he always lives to make intercession for them.

We can't just gloss over this reminder. Jesus rising from the dead has supreme importance to your life right now. As the living high priest, never to be replaced, Jesus continues to intercede on your behalf.

And he is able to save completely those who come to God through Jesus, the one true mediator. It is worth mentioning that the verb for draw near to God is a present tense continuing verb.

Those who are drawing near and drawing near and drawing near to God through Jesus. And we do this over and over again because we know that Jesus is the only one who saves.

Salvation is found in no one else except for Jesus, our intercessor and our advocate. I want to give us a small moment of silence this morning to pause and ponder this point.

[24 : 04] At this very moment, Jesus is praying for you. Right now. He is praying for you. Think about that for just a second.

Jesus is praying for you.

And let me reassure you, when Jesus prays for you, the Father listens. And every prayer from Jesus, our high priest, to the Father with whom he is united, receives a yes and amen.

And this point was described beautifully by a, not a well-known, but a little-known 19th century Scottish preacher by the name of Robert Murray McShane.

A preacher whose grasp on the Christian life has been really, really humbling to read. He passed away in 1843 at the tender age of 29, but his wisdom was far beyond his years.

[25 : 18] I look forward to meeting him face to face one day. As Robert Murray McShane was reflecting on Jesus being his intercessor, this is what he said.

If I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room, I would not fear a million enemies. Yet distance makes no difference. He is praying for me.

I want to read that one more time. If I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room, I would not fear a million enemies. Yet distance makes no difference. He is praying for me.

You see, Satan can bring all of the accusations and charges against you that he wants, but it's useless. When Jesus himself is your intercessor and your advocate.

You don't have to fear the enemy and his accusations because Jesus himself advocates for you.

Now what exactly does that actually mean? Like John says it in his first letter in chapter two, he says, my little children, I'm writing these things to you so that you may not sin.

[26 : 24] But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous. Jesus' role as intercessor and advocate are both significant.

This term advocate hints at a curious theme we see throughout the New Testament where our salvation is described using courtroom language. Courtroom language.

Let's think about this. Who are the key players in court? Well, we have the prosecutor. That's the one who brings the charges against the defendant. And in biblical times, the prosecutor was called the accuser.

There was also the defendant, the one who was standing accused of wrongdoing. And there was the defendant's lawyer, the one who pleaded the case for the defendant.

And that person in biblical times was called the advocate. And then there was, of course, the judge. So scripturally speaking, you and I are defendants.

[27 : 35] We are the ones accused, and rightly so, of wrongdoing, sinning in thought, word, and deed against God who is the judge.

And Satan is called our accuser, pointing his finger at us, and rightly so, for our crimes. But, Jesus is our advocate.

He is our defense lawyer. Which means that every time Satan accuses us, our condemnation is shot down. It is overruled by Jesus' finished work, through which he is saying, my beloved is forever declared innocent.

There's nothing left for which my beloved can be condemned. That is the role of our risen savior, our intercessor, and our advocate who rules and reigns.

put it another way. Every objection to our salvation has been overruled by him who rules over all.

[28 : 53] So, all who are in Christ are declared righteous. Not just not guilty, but declared righteous. The resurrection is the event that secures our justified state before God.

And we're going to close with these words from Paul in Romans 8, verse 33 and 34.

Listen to all of the courtroom language here. Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn?

Christ Jesus is the one who died more than that who was raised who was at the right hand of God who indeed is interceding for us.

The resurrection of Jesus matters. It mattered to his first disciples because when he rose they were filled again with hope and their redemption was accomplished.

[29 : 59] Beloved of God, when you are in Christ, you have died with him and his resurrection is the promise of your resurrection. As you celebrate today, find joy and find peace knowing that since he always lives, Jesus is interceding for you and advocating for you.

all through this year, even during your darkest days, keep returning to this truth. Your standing before God is secure and Jesus is alive and he's praying for you right now.

He is already victorious but he is still active. Just because his work is accomplished doesn't mean that he is inactive. Jesus is still active.

he continues to intercede and to advocate and remember, he who began this good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus.

Amen? Let's pray. Father, we are humbled and we are in awe when we look at the death, burial, and resurrection of our Savior, Jesus.

[31 : 21] we are in awe that your perfect plan of salvation and forgiveness included a terrible and tragic death that ended in a glorious victory.

And we thank you that we, though we are unworthy, we get to share in the resurrection of our Savior, Jesus. we thank you that because of that glorious event, Jesus is praying for us, interceding for us, and showing the accomplished work in your presence.

We thank you that we have a promise that we get to be with you forever and to join with all of the voices for all the past and the present and the future people who have been redeemed by Christ.

We get to join our voices together and sing praises to you and to the Lamb. It's in Christ's name that we pray. Amen.