

As Trey said, my name is Aaron and I'm a pastor here and if I haven't had a chance to meet you I'd love to. It's my joy to share and teach the Bible this morning. This morning we're going to be in 1 Corinthians, chapter 15, beginning in verse 12. If you'd like a bible, we have ushers making there way down the aisles with free bibles in English and Spanish. Simply raise your hand and we'd love to give you a Bible to keep as our gift to you.

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? 13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. 14 And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. 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. 16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. 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, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. 24 Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 27 For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "all things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. 28 When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

Let's pray:

Father, we thank you for revealing to us who you are in the Bible. Open our eyes to your truth and teach us what we don't know. Empower us to be more conformed to Christ for your glory, amen.

One of my life's greatest heroes was a great uncle of mine. If you would've been fortunate enough to meet him before he passed, you would've found him to be a slender, friendly, Chicago cubs rooting man

in his 90s. He had a good sense of humor, but he took life seriously and he loved his family and was willing to help others. Now, many people who met my great uncle, likely thought that was an accurate description of who he was, and in part it was. But the person they thought they knew had so much more depth than they even dared to consider. You see, if you got to know my great uncle, you'd learn that he grew up Amish, and then when he was a senior in high school he was drafted into World War Two and became a medic on the European front. He fought in the battle of the bulge, survived world war two while four of his other brothers also fought and survived in that same war. He would later go on to be my father's college basketball coach. He and my father became very close, which is then how I ended up getting to know him so well. His basketball career led him to be an NBA assistant coach and then general manager of a team. He would win an NBA championship. He would then go back to Germany, because he spoke fluent German, and have a successful coaching career in the German national basketball league. I could go on and on but I think you get the point. Sometimes who or what we think we know, turns out to be so much more because there is a depth available that we never knew or noticed.

Sometimes when we come to topics or passages in the Bible a similar thing can occur. Over the next three weeks we're going to be studying the topic of the resurrection and how it transforms us in the present and the future. And many times when we come to a topic like the resurrection, it's easy to approach it with familiarity and think that we already know what the resurrection is and what it's for - it's what happened at Easter, when Jesus rose from the dead. But what if like my great uncle there turns out to be so much more to the resurrection than we ever thought, because there is a beautiful depth to the doctrine of the resurrection that we've never fully noticed before - that plumbing the depths of the resurrection opens up a world of new creation that God wants us to rejoice in.

As we thought about this series, here are three exciting ways 1 Corinthians 15 brings greater depth to the doctrine of the resurrection. We hope to see each of these ideas in various ways each week as we walk through this chapter. So here are three big "whys" behind the reason for doing a series on the resurrection and how it transforms us:

1 The resurrection matters because it is central to the gospel message.

2 The resurrection matters because it shapes how we think about the future.

3 The resurrection matters because it impacts how we live in the present.

And it just so happens that each of these ideas will also be our points as we study our passage this morning.

So our first point,

1. The resurrection matters because it is central to the gospel message (12-19).

In first Corinthian's 15, verses 3-4, the apostle Paul says,

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,

Paul is summarizing the gospel message and integral to his message is that Jesus was buried and he was raised on the third day, in accordance with the Scriptures. In other words, the full Gospel for Paul includes the proclamation not only of Jesus's death but necessarily of his resurrection. Why? Because his death and his resurrection are both in fulfillment of the Scriptures. They are both necessary and integral.

Paul makes this point again in Romans 1:1-4

1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, 2 which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, 3 concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh 4 and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,

Paul here again announces the gospel, which he says was promised before hand in the Scriptures. Jesus wasn't the only were descendent from David, James Jesus's brother was one. But Paul announces the gospel and says that the person Jesus, who is a human descended from David, is also the God's promised Messiah, the Son of God, because he has been raised from the dead. Without the resurrection, Jesus would have just been another human being that descended from David and remained dead from crucifixion. But because he was resurrected, his death was victorious over sin, death, and the forces of

evil. Furthermore, Paul's point is that in the resurrection, Jesus is declared to be God's prophesied Messiah, Son and Savior of the world. Therefore, for Paul, to only proclaim Jesus's death and leave out his resurrection is to preach a half Gospel. To think of the gospel only in terms of Jesus' death and to discount his resurrection has massive implications, Paul says. Paul says the full gospel has both his death and resurrection at the center, because without either one, there would be no good news. He is at pains in 1 Corinthians 15, verses 1 to 11 to show the Corinthian's that the resurrection of Jesus is central to the gospel and therefore what they believe in relation to the resurrection is a gospel issue.

In fact, he continues this line of reasoning in versus 12 to 19. Verse 12 says, "Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?"

The whole reason Paul is having to address the Corinthians, is likely because they denied the future bodily resurrection. They had become convinced by non-Christians that dead people can't and don't rise again. Now, they were not denying Jesus's resurrection. But they were denying that humans in general could be brought back from the dead. If that sounds inconsistent, will see that Paul thought the same thing. There may have also been a hint that they thought the resurrection was purely spiritual, and that they were already living the resurrection life 100% because they had been spiritually raised with Christ. So on those grounds they would have also denied a future bodily resurrection. And Paul realizes he needs to correct their misunderstanding about the resurrection because the resurrection is central to the gospel.

And so he says in verse 13, "if there is no resurrection of the dead then not even Christ, who I just proved to you has been raised from the dead, has in fact been raised." In other words, as one commentator has said, "if no one can rise from the dead, that must mean that not even Christ has been raised," and if Christ has not been raised there are massive problems because the gospel crumbles.

Look at verse 14, Paul says, "if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in the vain and your faith is in vain." Paul is saying that the very content of the gospel that he has been preaching to the Corinthian's is meaningless without Jesus's resurrection. It's like trying to play basketball without a ball or a hoop. When something so central is missing, it'll never work. You can try as hard as you want but you can't call it basketball. Without the resurrection it is not the gospel; it's the story about a man who is still dead. Paul and the apostles are charlatans and full of meaningless nonsense if Jesus has not been

raised.

Paul even takes this further in verse 17 and says if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. In this phrase “you are still in your sins,” Paul is drawing together the how both the death and resurrection of Jesus are integral to God forgiveness and dealing with our evil and sin. He is trying to remind the Corinthians that at the cross God dealt with evil and sin in Jesus. But, if Jesus remains dead, then the cross was a defeat on good Friday, not a victory, because evil and sin were never really dealt with. But if Jesus did rise from the dead, the cross did not defeat him, but it was his victory over death, evil and sin because those could not hold the risen Jesus down. This is beautiful news for those of us who are in Christ. Because of the resurrection we are not in our sins, rejection and evil. Do you want to know why the resurrection matters so much? It is because the resurrection reaches back and gives glorious significance and meaning to the cross and death of Jesus.

Here is how one author explained the importance of the resurrection:

“We have found that the resurrection of Christ is *the* pivotal factor in the whole of the apostle’s [salvation] teaching. Not only is the resurrection the climax of the redemptive history of Christ...it and no other event inaugurates the new creation.” – Richard B. Gaffin, Jr.

So when we are given opportunities to share the gospel story with others, Paul encourages us to make the resurrection a central part of the narrative. If we fail to do so, Paul says we miss out on the depth of the fullness of the Gospel. When we talk about the gospel with other Christians, let's encourage one another with the depth of the resurrection. For Paul Jesus’ resurrection is a necessity if we are to have authentic gospel-hope in the resurrection of all Christians. As we’re seeing, the resurrection is not something that we just patch onto the Gospel story. Rather it is central to the gospel and it gives greater understanding and significance to his loving death, and causes us to cry out in humble praise to God.

After addressing why Jesus' resurrection is central to the gospel, Paul wants to explain what believers can look forward to because of Jesus's resurrection. What is their future hope and how does it impact them in the present?

2. The resurrection matters because it shapes how we think about the future and impacts how we live in

the present (20-28).

Paul says in verse 20, "Christ has been a raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." Now we want to explore what Paul means by Christ being the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. Fallen asleep was a common phrase back then to refer to death, similar to how we might say someone has passed away. First fruits was the concept in the old testament when the first harvest of a crop was given to the Lord as an offering. You would give the first harvest of your crop to the Lord as a pledge that when the full harvest came, you would also give him a portion of the full harvest as an offering of thanks. The first fruits were a down payment or guarantee of the harvest that was to come. Craig Blomberg says it this way,

Christ's bodily resurrection guarantees the future bodily resurrection of all believers, just as the "firstfruits" of a harvest heralded a much larger crop to follow. - Craig L. Blomberg

We said earlier that Jesus's resurrection confirms his special status as God's Messiah and son. But the resurrection is not only that - it continues to take us deeper and shows us that Jesus' resurrection is the guarantee and beginning of a much greater harvest of the general resurrection of all Christians. The Corinthian's had failed to see there was a direct connection between Christ's resurrection and their own future resurrection. This is why the resurrection matters and shapes how we think about the future. Jesus's resurrection is like a trailer to a movie. It's a preview of what is to come when the grand movie is showcased on the last day, and we all receive our resurrection bodies.

And Paul explains in versus 21 and 22 why the resurrection of our bodies is necessary. It says, "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." Through one man, Adam, back in the garden of Eden, death, evil and sin entered this world. Because Adam rejected his call and rebelled against God to be the image bearer God created him to be, because Adam refused to give God 100% allegiance in every area of his life and worship God, death, evil and sin entered into this world and infected humans and all of creation. Every human being, without exception, is born infected with evil and sin and yet we all also choose to rebel and reject God in our daily actions. And the ultimate result of this is death itself, physical and spiritual death. But Paul provides amazingly good news that Jesus has blazed a trail before us, and just as through one man came death, evil and sin, through the one man, Jesus, comes resurrection life. And this

resurrection life is not only spiritual life. Absolutely and thankfully it includes Jesus raising us from spiritual deadness to spiritual life. But Paul's main point here is that just as Adam brought physical death into the world, another man, Jesus Christ has made the unthinkable possible by providing the hope of resurrection of the dead. Paul is clueing in the Corinthian's that God will redeem our physical bodies so that the death that came through Adam does not have the final say in this creation. God is interested in a holistic salvation so that both the spiritual and physical in us is ultimately made perfect through Christ's death and resurrection. God did not create this earth just to have death and evil and sin break in and ruin it. Just as an entire soccer team shares in the goal that one teammate scores, we will get to share in the benefits of Jesus' resurrection. And one of those benefits we share in is that one day our bodies will be resurrected and transformed like his was, death will not have the final say. This is why the resurrection matters and shapes how we think about the future.

In fact, Paul lays out for us a general blueprint of God's plan of new creation in verses 23-28.

One of my favorite preachers, Dick Lucas, says:

These verses are "not primarily a message for the individual Christian that they will survive death. No, it is much bigger than that. The best way to understand the vastness of these verses is that they are a new Genesis. The story of creation, a new creation. On that Resurrection day he is setting out his plan for the universe and we have the chart and blueprint for the future of humankind and creation."

So what is the vastness of God's blueprint for redemption? Well, in verse 23 Paul lays out a general sequence of how things will happen. First is Christ's resurrection, the first fruits or guarantee. Then when Christ comes back to earth those who belong to Christ will be resurrected and receive their perfected bodies.

Now as we've said, Paul wants to shape our thinking about the future. So, the first step is Christ's resurrection. The second sequence is Christ coming back to earth - that hasn't happened yet - and at that point Christians will be resurrected and given their perfected bodies.

Now I've been asked a good question before and it goes like this: I thought God's people were already in heaven with him and so why do we need to be resurrected, what is going on here? What is Paul talking about if dead believers are already present with God in Heaven? Why is there a need for them to be

resurrected? Those are good questions.

When a Christian dies, the bible tells us that their lifeless body remains here on earth, but their soul or immaterial spiritual being goes instantaneously to be in God's presence in heaven. So, all the souls of God's people for all history who have died are presently with God in heaven. However, those Christians that die on earth do not have their physical bodies with them in heaven. Their lifeless bodies are still on earth. Only their immaterial soul is what resides in heaven. They have yet to have their soul be reunited with their physical body like it was on earth. Those of us alive right now are both soul and physical body. And what Paul is teaching in first Corinthian's 15, is the exciting truth that at the future resurrection of believers, God will resurrect the physical bodies of all dead Christians, transform the body into an incorruptible body, and reunites their souls that is currently in heaven with the new body. That incorruptible body will then live on this earth that will also be renewed perfectly by Jesus.

So, what we see here and will see in the rest of First Corinthian's, as well as the rest of the New Testament - particularly Revelation 21 and 22, is that heaven is not our final destination for all eternity. Rather heaven is actually an intermediate state. Or we could think of it as a holding tank or a temporary stage of wonderful bliss on the way to the eventual resurrection of the body when we come back down to the renewed earth. So, resurrection is really about life after heaven. Paul will make it clear in this chapter that our final destination will be on this renewed earth, not in heaven as we currently think of it. This is why the resurrection matters and how it shapes our thinking about the future. We have an exciting and glorious future in store for us and Paul continues to explain it in verse 24.

After Christ returns to earth and Christians are resurrected, verse 24 says, "Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet."

Jesus will destroy all evil at the end of history. We could also translate it as, Jesus will annihilate all the powers that are hostile to God's purposes. These rulers, authorities and powers no doubt include demonic and supernatural forces. Most also believe they include human forms of structural evil, like evil government regimes, global forces, and also individuals hostile to God's purposes. God will not let any enemies stand in the way of his glorious plan of redemption for humans and creation. Jesus must reign victoriously as the resurrected Messiah, Lord and King of the universe. And the last enemy, it says in

verse 26, that Jesus will destroy is death itself. Physical death for humans will be forever annihilated. But the problem of death is not individualized to humans, it is all over creation - animals, plants, etc. The decay due to death that came from Adam's evil and sin is rampant throughout all creation. God must combat it not only in humans but in the all of creation. Like we said earlier, this is a new Genesis, new creation. Jesus will eradicate death forever for his redeemed people, but when he destroys death he will also do so in all of creation.

God's plan is to restore creation back to its original purpose that he intended from the beginning. How do we know this? We get a clue in verse 27 when it says, "For God has put all things in subjection under his feet."

Paul is quoting Psalm 8, where the Psalmist describes how humans were to be God's wise image bearers and representatives, lovingly ruling over the earth as God's stewards to reflect his glory.

6 You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under his feet,
7 all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
8 the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

God's purpose from the beginning of creation was that humans would be his wise image bearing stewards over creation. That we would fulfill our vocation as Gods representatives to lovingly rule over and care for his world. But due to our rejection and rebellion of God, we failed at this task and decided to run our own lives.

Anthony Thiselton says this:

Humankind failed in fulfilling this [image-bearing] role, and only in Christ do we see "true humanness" as the one who rules and restores creation...Christ bears the true image of God, "humanity" as God willed it to be. - Anthony Thiselton

Paul says that Jesus came as the true perfect human being, the true perfect image bearer of God. God did not scrap his creation or the image bearing role he called us to. Rather, he came down himself as Jesus Christ, the true image bearer, the true human, to renew for humankind what we nor creation could do for ourselves. This is why the resurrection matters and how it impacts how we live in the present. Jesus's resurrection does not just look forward to the future of new creation, but it brings that new creation back into the present for us to experience today. Because of Jesus's resurrection, the new creational power of the Holy Spirit resides in every Christian. The Holy Spirit has made us new creations in Christ and we can experience true humanity in the present that we did not experience prior to knowing Jesus. The Holy Spirit enables us to fulfill our task as God's image bearers at work, in our neighborhoods, at school, in our church and wherever else God may have us. The resurrection impacts how we live in the present.

At the present time Christ has not destroyed all of his enemies and we still experience evil, sin and death. But as we've seen there will be a day when that is not the case. On that day, it says in verse 28, all things will be under the rightful rule of Jesus. We will have our perfect resurrected bodies, living on this perfect renewed earth, being able to perfectly fulfill our role as true humans and image bearers, enjoying God's creation without any death, evil and sin. We can praise God that Jesus the creator God will be installed as the rightful ruler of all things. Jesus will forever, throughout all eternity, get the glory he deserves and we get to be included in worshipping of him.

And the end goal Paul says at the end of verse 28, is that God may be all in all. Now this does not mean that in the end it will be a form of pantheism, or that creation itself is part of God.

To paraphrase one commentator, The world that God made is separate from himself, yet those in the renewed earth will be able to receive God's love and be in a world of his presence like never before. Earth will be fully transformed by the infinite presence and rule of God. God will flood the perfect universe with his love and glory and in that sense he will be all in all.

The resurrection matters and shapes how we think about the future. We can look forward to our resurrection and the new creation, because Christ's resurrection was the first fruits.

The resurrection matters and impacts how we live in the present. Because of Jesus's resurrection, we

can live as new creations now empowered by the Holy Spirit. If God's renewed earth will be a place of perfect justice, love, peace, unity, and grace - then he is calling us to live by the power of his Spirit and be new creation people here and now that are conformed to Christ and display signs of God's kingdom that will one day come on earth as it is in heaven. The church, God's community, can fulfill the call of God because he gives us grace by his Spirit.

We have so much for which we can praise our Triune God when it comes to the doctrine of the resurrection. The gospel, a future hope, a present power.

Let's pray.

Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.