

## 1 Corinthians 15:1 – 6

April 1, 2018

*Easter Sunday*

We Americans are obsessed with winning. We live to win and win to live at whatever we do. We are adept at living our lives in a way to win.

Vince Lombardi said, “Winning isn’t everything; it is the only thing.”

What is winning?

- If you are cooking in the kitchen, winning is people heading for seconds and as they give you helpings of accolades for your soup.
- If you are toiling at school, winning is earning the grade and the respect of the class and teacher.
- If you are raising young children, winning is keeping your sanity and sneaking a nap in from time to time.
- If you are raising teenagers, winning is getting to them to talk to you and thinking you aren’t a total dunderheads.
- If you are working a job, winning is garnering admiration for hard work and netting that bonus or promotion.
- If you are playing a sport – winning is having a blast and scoring more than your opponent.

It may not be obvious, but Easter is a win. If you are thinking about Easter, winning is the dead guy walking out of the tomb alive.

I realize you might not really believe Jesus rose from the dead – thanks for coming – we are grateful you are here. We have a paper on the counter in the back that discusses the fact of the resurrection. You are welcome to grab a copy and read it and ask any questions of Christians that you know.

Easter is a win – but what did Jesus win? And did he win anything for you?

Maybe you are here and you are a follower of Jesus – Easter makes you excited – but you aren't totally sure what it means:

The resurrection of Jesus is not everything for the Christian, but it impacts everything for the Christian. Without the resurrection, Christians cannot win.

Jesus won by rising – but what did he win for you and me?

He lives.

Why does that matter? It matters greatly – greatly I tell you because every shred of hope we have to hang onto this morning echoes forth from that empty tomb.

- Never has something so empty filled so many with such hope.
- Never has something so silent filled so many with such joy.
- Never has something so vacant filled so many with such strength.
- Never has so empty filled so many with such purpose.
- Never has someone getting up and walking out meant so much to so many.

But what did Jesus win by rising from the dead.

We are going to find out – 4 things Jesus won for anyone who wants them when he rose from the dead.

May these strengthen your weary bones.

Let's start exploring the winning –

“Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, **2** and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you – unless you believed in vain.

**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, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.” 1 Corinthians 15:1 – 6

PRAY

4 things won by Jesus –

**1. Jesus is RISEN! – He won forgiveness**

By forgiveness, I mean forgiveness from your sin. That might seem to be an obvious need for you – maybe you don’t think sin is a real thing.

I could quote Bible verses today to try and show you otherwise – here is one –

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

But we all know this. Don’t we?

Sin is embedded in many of our sayings,

“I’m only human.”

“Everyone makes mistakes.”

“To err is human, to forgive is divine.”

We all recognize that we do wrong and make mistakes and sometimes our wrongs and mistakes really hurt others and ourselves.

We've all done wrong, toward ourselves, toward others, and because God created all things – even you and me – toward God.

You see, our failures, flaws and imperfections are all toward God. He created all things, and in any mistake or failure or flaw, he is always the most aggrieved party.

Sin is a problem.

How do you deal with it?

You could pretend that it didn't really happen. But that doesn't really work. Does it?

Last summer, my family and I were in beautiful Sedona and I was backing out and hit another car. Just as the owners were coming out of the restaurant.

In that moment, I couldn't say, "Hey, let's move on and put this behind us and pretend that this didn't happen. I made mistakes – you parked poorly – let's call it good."

I have to make it right.

The same is true with sin.

Mankind is guilty and we all know it we can't say to God, "Hey, let's move on and put this behind us and pretend that this didn't happen. I made mistakes – you parked poorly – let's call it good."

That answer is more ludicrous than if I would said that in the Wendy's parking lot.

Someone has to make things right.

That someone is Jesus.

In his life, Jesus was constantly talking about how he had the power and prerogative to forgive sins. He did not just say – come to me and I will smooth things over with God.

This is the matter of first importance we read about earlier--

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...

Did you see that? Christ died for our sins.

There is the answer.

Jesus died not for his own sins but the sins of others.  
The innocent killed; the guilty goes free.

The answer for the problem of sin is Jesus and death – but that is only part of the equation. Jesus died, yes for our sins but he is raised to life for our forgiveness.

If Jesus did not rise from the dead – there would be no such thing as divine forgiveness.

What do I mean?

Imagine you decide to buy a new car – you head to the dealership and spend your day haggling with a sales associate named Chester and finally after many hours, you have a deal.

But it is late in the day and Chester says – Let's finish this tomorrow.

And you come back and can't find the sales person anywhere. You find the manager and say – I had a deal with Chester to buy a car and I can't find him.

And the manager says, "I fired Chester last night. Your deal is off."

It only makes sense your deal is off because Chester is gone. The same is true for Jesus if he says, "I can and will forgive you."

But he is dead, the deal is off.

But he is not dead and the deal still stands. He lives by living he has won forgiveness for any who want it.

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Forgiveness is what you need most. More than education, more than meaning, more than purpose, more than money or understanding you need forgiveness.

But Christ is risen so that means two concrete and life-giving things today:



Christians – there is no more punishment for your sin. Do you still sin? Yes. Is the Lord storing up punishment to repay you?

No. Why?

Because Jesus rose from the dead assuring our forgiveness for every sin we have committed in the past, in the present and on into the future. Our forgiveness is not good only until the next time we sin – NO OUR FORGIVENESS IS GOOD AS LONG AS HE LIVES.

“All our transgressions are swept away at once, carried off as by a flood, and so completely removed from us that no guilty trace of them remains they are all gone! O ye believers, think of this, for the all is no little thing: sins against a holy God, sins against his loving Son, sins against gospel as well as against law, sins against man as well as against God, sins of the body as well as sins of the mind, sins as numerous as the sands on the sea shore, and as great as the sea itself: all, all are removed from us as far as the east is from the west. All this evil was rolled into one great mass, and laid upon Jesus, and having borne it all he has made an end of it forever. When the Lord forgave us he forgave us the whole debt. He did not take the bill and say, "I strike out this item and that," but the pen went through it all; – PAID. It was a receipt in full of all demands, Jesus took the handwriting, which

was against us and nailed it to his cross, to show before the entire universe that its power to condemn us had ceased forever. We have in him a full forgiveness.” Charles Spurgeon

God spent all his anger on Jesus so that all we experience is grace.

Are you not a Christian?

Take heart, you can be forgiven.

How do I know? The tomb is empty.

You realize that there are things about your life that you can't pretend aren't broken. You know that something needs to change with your life and you know that you cannot do it on your own.

No matter how you try and chase the bad feelings away with movies, alcohol, drugs, relationships, and porn – you are carrying a burden that Jesus can take.

The empty tomb can speak to you too. Trust in Jesus to carry away your sin and guilt and shame know the hope of forgiveness for the very first time.

Hope echoes from an empty tomb proclaiming forgiveness it also says:

## **2. Jesus is RISEN! – He Won Credibility**

He won credibility. He will do what he says.

Pretty basic – you know why? He did what he said he would. Because he said that he would rise from the dead after dying and he did. Jesus is not a slick huckster trying to sell you a bill of goods in some multi-level marketing scheme.

No, Mark and all the other gospel writers show that Jesus repeatedly talked about his resurrection:

“And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. **32** And he said this plainly.” Mark 8:31-32a

What does this mean?

It means that if Jesus did what he said he would about something as important as the resurrection we can trust him with the smaller details of life.

Next to defeating death for us – everything is a smaller detail of life. Right?

Let’s think about it –

How does the credibility of Jesus help us in our daily lives?

Are you afraid?

Are you afraid of something? Of course you are – we all are. But does that fear dominate the horizon of your life so that you don't see anything else?

We Christians have hope because we have a Jesus who casts out all fear. How does the open mouth of Jesus' empty grave speak hope to fearful souls?

But Jesus is not dead and he promises that he will not leave us but that he will protect his people – forever.

“Fear not, for I have redeemed you;  
I have called you by name, you are mine.  
2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.” Isaiah 43:1b-2

If he said that he would die and rise again and says that you don't have to be afraid – we don't have to be. Mind you, that doesn't mean that there aren't fearful things to face in our lives but it means Jesus the risen savior is stronger than our fears.

Are you burdened?

Are you tired? Worn out? You don't feel like you have the energy to keep going – and you are hanging on by a thread. You feel like everything is so out of control and any moment now – it is all going to fall apart.

And you just feel a weightiness all of the time...

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you.” John 14:27a

If he said that he would die and rise again and says that you don't need to be burdened (or worried)—we don't have to be. Mind you, that doesn't mean that there aren't real situations to worry about but it means that the Jesus the risen savior can carry our burdens with us.

Jesus has carried the burden of death and he rose again. You can take your burdens to him and know that he can give you peace.

The resurrection of Jesus proves his credibility. If he can rise from the dead – he can do anything. Anything.

No other problem rises to that level, right?

Money trouble.

Sickness.

Heartache.

Depression.

Falsely accused.

Misunderstood.

All serious issues, but not as serious as death. He has won credibility.

If Jesus defeated death he can help or defeat even things like

Money trouble.

Sickness.

Heartache.

Depression.

Falsely accused.

Misunderstood.

Even more than that – Jesus has won credibility and he says that he will always love us and he has put our sins away – far away. He always speaks love over his people because their justification before God has been purchased through the cross and resurrection.

You can stake your life on the CREDIBILITY of CHRIST. If you don't trust in the promise of Jesus you are trusting in the circumstances of life or the flightiness of your feelings.

You can trust everything else he says.

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The empty tomb that echoes forth the winning aroma of forgiveness and the credibility of Jesus. There is more.

### **3. Jesus is RISEN! He Won the Right to Help You –**

He knows exactly what it is like to be faced with trouble – but because he has risen from the dead he is helping you even now.

He understands where and how you need help. Why? He has been in your shoes.

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us then with confidence draw near to the

throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Hebrews 4:15-16

He understands.

He lived like us. And he has risen from the dead and is exalted but he knows what it means to be weak. He has not forgotten.

He understands why we are weak and where we are weak – he was a real man on earth. He is both God and man, but as man he understands why we are weak.

We can come to him knowing that he understands and will always extend sympathy.

But not just sympathy. He has won the right to help us.

He is helping you right now.

He is helping – because of his resurrection – in a far more concrete way, he prays for you.

Romans 8 says it this way –

“Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.”  
Romans 8:34



Have you ever said to someone – I'll be praying for you in a conversation and walked away and promptly forgot to pray for them at all? Anyone? Show of hands?

Wicked sinners.

Just kidding, all of us have. But Jesus hasn't. Jesus and his heart is so intertwined with his people that his business is praying for us even now. Think about it this way – though no one might know your pain and your toil – Jesus does and he is doing something about it. He is praying.

A dead Jesus can't do that.

He has won the right to help us.

The empty tomb issues forth this great hope that the Living Jesus is praying for me now.

Robert Murray McCheyne 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.”

What do we have left to fear? The resurrection gives sturdy and abiding hope that Jesus is in fact praying for us right now.

A dead Jesus is of no help at all. We can have no relationship with him. We are not able to take some of his teaching and leave the man off to the side.

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Easter is a win. Jesus has won forgiveness, credibility and the right to help.

#### **4. He is RISEN – He Won a Future**

Death is not the end. Maybe most significantly – when we die we will live forever with him in glory. Jesus and rose again opening the door for our future resurrection with him –

“For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, **10** who died

for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him.” 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10

Do you know what he means by asleep here? Dead. Death has been so thorough defeated that for the believer he or she is merely sleeping. Ready to be awakened at the last trumpet – to be called to join him with new bodies forever.

In Thoughts to make your heart sing by Sally Lloyd-Jones one of the poems is entitled,

Dying, Waking

God meant us to live forever. But sin has broken everything and now we – all of us – die.

Jesus came to destroy death. He died on the cross and was buried – but death couldn't keep him dead. On the third day he burst out of the tomb!

And now death can't keep us dead either.

The preacher Charles Spurgeon said that Jesus has turned the tomb into a bed – and dying into just waking up.

We will still die. But after we die, we will wake – as if from a refreshing night's

sleep – and Jesus will lead us by the hand into Life that won't ever end.

Because he lives – we live. Both now and forevermore.

Jesus passed through the doorway we will pass through too. We live in the Shadowlands but dawn is coming. Prior to Jesus there was no evidence that there was life after death. Today we know that because he is alive we will one day have a body like his – and better than that be with him forever.

He is alive, working even now. He promised that he would go to prepare a place for us, that is what he is doing now.

Christian, we can still feel the cold chill of death in every trial. Death's cold dark shadow is in every bit of suffering we endure here. But there is a power stronger than death.

- Financial crisis brings the shadow of death's icy gloom – but the riches we already have in Christ warm our hearts to eternal realities.
- Wayward children carry death's dark hope eclipsing pain – A near Savior speaks and says that nothing is impossible for me. I can call them back.
- Physical maladies seem to lug death's threatening whispers – but a RISEN Jesus shouts

over death and says though you die, you live forever.

- Death deals in the darkness of purposeless depression hopeless discouragement – and the Risen Jesus deals in the abiding hope of the empty tomb.
- Children die, Top doctors fail, Nations war with each other, Epidemics sweep the globe, famines erupt and ravage – Yet Jesus lives.

He is the one who promises that if we trust in him – the risen savior – he has won a future for us where the icy touch of the death will be forever gone.

If you are not a believer – this can make all the difference for you. Put real simply, you should believe the guy who walked out of the tomb. I don't know very much but I think you should listen to anyone who can do that.

He has won and it only makes sense to be on the winning side. You are welcome to take all the benefits Jesus won and make them your own.

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Jesus won by rising from the dead – if you are on his side celebrate! If you aren't, you are welcome.