April 10, 2016

“All Things New”

1 Corinthians 15:12-28

**FCF**: Failure to really grasp the significance of the resurrection of Jesus

**PROPOSITION**: (anchor) Christ is risen. And He is making all things new.

(magnet) We need to lay hold of that reality and live from it.

**SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:**

A radical change took place in the lives of Jesus’ disciples, a shift for each of them all at once. They were now committed to loving God and one another, refusing to compromise on the claim that “Jesus is Lord” and were persecuted for it. Why? They knew not only that something had taken place but they knew what it meant as well. What was it? The resurrection of Jesus.

What about us? Studies show that most Americans acknowledge Easter to be a religious holiday, but far fewer identify the resurrection of Jesus as the underlying meaning. Well, what of us? We’re here two weeks post-Easter Sunday, settled on these things or at least searching for them. Is there “Easter evidence” in our lives – not only in what we believe but in how we live?

**SCRIPTURE READING**: 1 Corinthians 15:12-28

**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

**SERMON INTRODUCTION:**

Just after the climax of J. R. R. Tolkien’s The Return of the King, there is a golden moment where the brave hobbit Samwise Gamgee has awakened and just discovered that his friend, the beloved wizard Gandalf, is not dead after all but very much alive (READ quote):

*But Sam lay back, and started with open mouth, and for a moment, between bewilderment and great joy, he could not answer. At last he gasped: “Gandalf! I thought you were dead! But then I thought I was dead myself.* ***Is everything sad going to come untrue?*** *What’s happened to the world?”*

That’s a beautiful line full of Easter reality, resurrection day echoes from Middle Earth to here.

Jesus’ resurrection was the most vital event in history. Keep in mind that Christianity is an historical religion. Now some theologians will say we cannot take the reports of the disciples as literally true in our scientific age. It’s said to be mythical or symbolic. They tell us, “*The spirit of a man will live on – in other people – through his teaching*.” Not true. When we speak of the resurrection of Jesus we are saying that the dead corpse of Jesus came back to life again.

This all happened. Jesus really did, as we read in Revelation 21, come to make all things new. Listen to this summary statement from the *Heidelberg Catechism* (READ HC:45):

*45. Q. How does Christ's resurrection benefit us?*

*A. First, by His resurrection He has overcome death, so that He could make us share in the righteousness which He had obtained for us by His death. Second, by His power we too are raised up to a new life. Third, Christ's resurrection is to us a sure pledge of our glorious resurrection.*

Christ is risen! Everything sad is coming untrue. He is making all things new, giving us a new past, a new present, and a new future. And we need to lay hold of that and live from it.

1. **A NEW PAST**

He’s come to give us a new past. Back to the *Heidelberg Catechism* (READ HC:45):

*How does Christ’s resurrection benefit us? First, by His resurrection He has overcome death, so that He could make us share in the righteousness which He had obtained for us by His death.*

1. *Jesus’ Resurrection – His Saving Us*

(READ 1 Corinthians 15:17-20a) Christ’s resurrection is part of His saving work.

1. Where we would stand without it

The resurrection was necessary for there to be forgiveness of sins. Why? Without it, nothing was accomplished. Nothing would have been conquered – not sin, not Satan, not death.

1. Where we stand with it

But with the resurrection, divine justice is satisfied. The victory has been won. And the spoils are ours. Sin’s mastery is broken. Satan has been defeated. And death itself is now dead.

1. *Jesus’ Resurrection – His Proof to Us*

But how would we know? (READ 1 Corinthians 15:17) The resurrection gives us proof.

1. Of who He is

Proof of who He is as the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, fully man and fully God.

1. Of what He’s done

Proof of what He’s done. The work of expiation, removing our guilt and shame. Of redemption, ransoming us from the curse of the law and the power of sin. Of reconciliation, restoring our relationship with God. Of propitiation, appeasing the wrath of God. It’s the proof of it all.

*Illustration:*

It’s how we know He’s done what He’s done. Think of it this way. You may have heard that a fifth *Indiana Jones* movie is being made. Given the past films, imagine this hypothetical scene. Indy and a villain are at some ancient site, wrestling for control of a gun, and fall into a dark hole. We can’t see what’s going on but we can hear the struggle continue. Then a shot. And the sound of a body hitting the ground. Was it Indy? Did he survive? How will we know? What will relieve the tension? Only the sight of Indy coming out of the hole. In a way, that’s what we have with the resurrection. The sight of Jesus, raised from the dead, is how we know.

How does Christ’s resurrection benefit us? Christian, you have a new past.

*Application:*

It’s done. And we can know it’s done. Think on this. With the proof, we have nothing to prove. With what He’s done, there’s nothing now for us to do. It’s been said often and well that because of Jesus’ finished work, there’s nothing we can do to make God love us any more. And there’s nothing we can do to make Him love us any less. Our standing with God is secure.

Everything sad is going to come untrue. Jesus has given us a new past. Which should intensify our drive to serve Him. Not to get His love but because we’ve got His love already. And that is something we need to do more than think about but lay hold of and really live from.

1. **A NEW PRESENT**

But He has made our present new as well. The *Heidelberg Catechism* (READ HC:45):

*How does Christ’s resurrection benefit us?...Second, by His power we too are raised up to a new life.*

What does it mean to be raised up to a new life? At the very least, it means these three things.

1. *Jesus’ Resurrection – An Assurance*
2. Not just that there is a god

First, it assures us of what God is like. You see, it’s not just that there is a god. We can see that from the evidence of design all around us and also the testimony of our conscience within us.

1. But what He is like

But with the resurrection, we see that there is a god and what He is like (READ 1 Corinthians 15:15). The resurrection represents God. It shows us He is powerful, faithful, and merciful.

1. *Jesus’ Resurrection – Life’s Meaning*
2. No longer without purpose

So the resurrection gives us an assurance. And meaning. Without the resurrection, we have no way of knowing if life has any purpose at all. Or, if it does, what it is. We’re left to guess.

1. But with certainty and meaning

But with the resurrection, we see there is certainty and meaning. There are things worth living, dying, and fighting for (READ 1 Corinthians 15:32, 58). Along these lines, C. T. Studd said (READ quote), “*Only one life, ‘twill soon be past. Only what’s done for Christ will last*.”

1. *Jesus’ Resurrection – New Life*
2. No longer united to Adam

So we have an assurance and purpose. And then new life itself (READ 1 Corinthians 15:21-22). We were once united to Adam in the Fall, one with him in his sin and rebellion – all of us bound together in his guilt, our hearts also bent away from God, rebelling and guilty in our own sin.

1. But now united to Christ

But now we are united to Christ, one with Him in His death and resurrection. We died and rose with Him. We’ve been made new. Change is possible. Think of the author – Saul the Pharisee now Paul the apostle. Or the audience – these crass Corinthian pagans now made saints.

How does the resurrection of Christ benefit us? Christian, you have a new present.

*Illustration:*

There are a lot of seemingly immovable things in our lives. I think of the companies that specialize in moving structures you would never think could be moved. Think of the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse on the Outer Banks of NC. Just a few years ago, after decades of erosion, it was in danger of falling into the surf. But engineers came up with a way to secure it, jack it up, and move it 1000 yards inland. An astonishing feat. That ought to be a reminder to us.

*Application:*

There are a lot of seemingly immovable things in our lives, things that turn out to be moveable. What are they for you? That seething anger. That crippling insecurity. That hellish self-centeredness. The addiction you’ve settled into excusing. The relationship that looks dead.

There are a lot of seemingly immovable things. But Jesus can move anything. The resurrection is real. Everything sad is coming untrue. He has come to give us a new present. And that is something we need to do more than think about but lay hold of and really live from.

1. **A NEW FUTURE**

Our past, our present, and our future. Again, the *Heidelberg Catechism* (READ HC:45):

*How does Christ’s resurrection benefit us?...Third, Christ's resurrection is to us a sure pledge of our glorious resurrection.*

Paul speaks to this in several ways in 1 Corinthians 15 (READ 1 Corinthians 15:20-23). Jesus’ resurrection is the firstfruits of our own. That is an agricultural image. What does it mean?

1. *Jesus’ Resurrection – An Indication*
2. Image of firstfruits

Partly, the firstfruits are an indication of what’s coming with the rest of the harvest.

1. Image applied

So, as we look at Jesus and His resurrection body, we have an idea of what our own will be like. I think it’s why we read of such physicality in the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ resurrection body. He tells the disciples, “Touch me!” He asks for food to eat. Why? To show us that what is coming is not an ethereal Neverland. It will be our real renewed selves on a real renewed earth.

1. *Jesus’ Resurrection – A Guarantee*
2. Image of firstfruits

But the firstfruits are also a guarantee of what’s coming, a sure preview of a harvest that awaits.

1. Image applied

So, as we see that empty tomb on that first Easter morning, we have then the confirmation that we have new bodies coming. Now, no one knows exactly how God will gather all our molecules together. But we do know that He can and will put us back together again. It will be in some ways just like we are. And in other ways it will be new and better. Better days are coming.

How does the resurrection of Christ benefit us? Christian, you have a new future.

*Application:*

Things are not as they should be. But things will not forever be this way. We have a hope that is real and can be held. And this hope is not an empty wish or a projection of our desires. It is a knowledge of what is to come, a promise that holds up and carries us through.

One day there will be no more tsunamis or disease, no more weeds of any kind. Our relationships will be whole with no secrets or shame, no rifts or divorce. Our bodies whole, our spirits whole. Made like Jesus, seeing Him face to face. Everything sad is going to come untrue.

*Illustration:*

Now we can grasp something of that. When we know what’s coming, it helps us hang on. Perhaps it’s the end of an exhausting school year, or a tiring work shift, or a wrenching deployment. When you know what’s coming, it helps you hang on. All the more so when you know who’s coming and a sweet reunion or rescue that awaits. That’s what we have here.

**CONCLUSION:**

The Civil War effectively came to an end 151 years ago this weekend. I say “effectively” because it didn’t actually end at Appomattox. What General Lee surrendered was but the Army of Northern Virginia. It was months before all the Confederate forces surrendered and the war was truly over. Armies were spread all over the South. Then there was Stand Watie, a Cherokee in command out west of the 1st Indian Brigade. It was two months before he surrendered. And it was four months after that that the *CSS Shenandoah* sailed into Liverpool and surrendered.

Friends, we have great news. And it changes everything. Not “*Lee surrendered*” but “*Christ is risen!*” This is not news of a defeat but of a victory. And we should be living out of that. Everything changes with “*Christ is risen!*” Yes, that is something that ought to convict us. But it should also compel us. Why? This is the news we’ve been waiting for, the message that more than any other is “good news.” If there was ever an historical event which we should agree took place and then live from, it’s the resurrection of Jesus. Everything sad really is coming untrue. He’s given us a new past, a new present, and a new future. He’s making all things new.

**PROPOSITION**: (anchor) Christ is risen. And He is making all things new.

(magnet) We need to lay hold of that reality and live from it.