

This Changes Everything

Scripture: John 20: 1 – 18

Easter Sunday 2023

A longtime Oxford professor who was considered one of the preeminent authorities on Christian history wrote more than 30 books on the subject. He won the esteemed Kluge Prize as a lifetime award for his many writings. One of his students, however, recounted what he considered his teacher's most important words and he shared them with the teacher at his deathbed. He said to his teacher – 'If Christ is risen, nothing else matters. And if Christ is not – nothing else matters!'

The Apostle Paul has the same conviction. Paul said if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is our faith. Paul made such a bold statement because he knew that the resurrection was not merely a one-off miracle, but rather it was the pinnacle of God's redeeming work in human history. The promise of resurrection was not only his assurance that Jesus would rise from the dead but his bold affirmation that other dead and ruined things would also one day be brought back to life through Christ.

Our broken lives will be brought back through Christ's resurrection. Our broken neighborhoods will be brought back through Christ's resurrection. Our broken relationships will be brought back through Christ's resurrection.

If there was no resurrection, Paul knew that we would be in deep trouble. If there was no resurrection, then death and destruction would win!

But, of course, Christ has indeed been raised from the dead. Destroyed by the Victor, death loses. And Jesus is the first fruit of all the life that will follow. Jesus conquered evil and death so that we could live bold and free.

This changes everything!

A story: In High School, a boy wanted to run on the track team. At try outs, after running with all his might, he approached the coach completely out of breath. He was exhausted to the point of trembling. He thought to himself 'I did my best'. He asked the coach if he had made the team and the coach said 'No! Try again next year.'

Next year he tried out again after running all year and he made the team.

I suspect that Peter had the some thoughts. In our scripture reading from John's Gospel, Peter ran with all his might, only to have John pass by him. Peter arrived at the tomb after John, however, John did not have the courage to go inside of the tomb. He was afraid.

Do you often get there first but lack the courage to go in? Can you out run others but when you get there, fear stops you from serving Christ?

If you are a good runner, our church needs you. We need your energy, your spirit, and your faith to run with Christ and serve others.

It was Peter who entered the tomb first. It was Peter who overcame his fear and entered the tomb first to find it empty.

Most of the time, it is the one who is willing to finish the course that enters first. Are you will to enter the tomb first? Are you willing to finish the course and serve Jesus more?

If you are the one who gets there second, our church needs you. We need your lack of fear, we need your spirit, and we need your faith to run with Christ and serve others.

So, we need each and every one of you in this Chapel and those watching on YouTube. We need each of you to run and tell everyone you meet that Christ has risen!

Let us shout – ‘Alleluia, Alleluia, Christ has risen today!’

Let us pray:

O God, allow us to see how Jesus’ resurrection changes everything about our lives now and forever.

O Empowering God, help us to be brave. Help us to have the courage to follow you with all our hearts.

We pray this in Jesus’ name. AMEN.