

Christ Reformation Church

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Hold Fast to Christ!

(Col 2:2b-3 ESV) to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

“We Have Been Raised With Christ”

**March 31, 2013
(Easter Sunday)**

Sermon Text: Colossians 3:1-4

Scripture Reading: Acts 17:16-34

Introduction-

Christ was crucified, but He IS risen!
We really do serve a living Savior.

The resurrection is the central hope of every Christian, apart from which, as the Apostle wrote, we are of all men the most to be pitied. It is my purpose this morning to put the resurrection of Christ and our own coming resurrection before you repeatedly, as does Scripture, to revitalize our faith and hope in a doctrine that lies at the very heart of Christianity -

(1Co 15:16-19 ESV) 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.

There are people who profess to be Christians, but who seemingly embrace a Christ who is only “in this life.” It is an earthly Christianity they follow. Old classic liberalism is of this nature. Denying the resurrection, yet claiming to follow “Christ” in this life.

Paul will have none of that. If Christ is not raised the our religion is worthless and we are all still dead in our sins.

But we can slip into a form of this error ourselves if we are not careful. If we focus on this life and set our minds on its trappings, forgetting that our real life is above and is yet to come, then in that sense we are denying the resurrection of Christ, and of ourselves. And thus we deny the New Creation, the New Heavens and the New Earth. We deny the gospel. Beware of hoping in Christ in this life only.

(2 Corinthians 5:1-10 ESV) ¶ For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ² For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, ³ if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. ⁴ For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened-- not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵ He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

⁶ ¶ So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, ⁷ for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸ Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹ So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

We have this great hope right here in Colossians – we need not leave this epistle for Easter! –

(Colossians 3:1-4 ESV) ¶ If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Do you grasp this, Christian? *Your life is hidden with Christ in God...you also will appear with Him in glory.* All of this is only possible because Jesus Christ arose from the grave.

Listen to Jesus promise it even before His crucifixion-

(John 14:1-3 ESV) ¶ "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.² In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

The Bible is filled with the resurrection! Not only our Lord's, but ours.

(Romans 8:18-25 ESV) ¶ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit,

groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

One of the traits of the Christian is this *groaning*. This eager awaiting of our glory and our new life being revealed when Christ returns. There is this sense in the Christian, produced by the Spirit, that this world is not our home. You have heard the common saying –

"He is too heavenly minded to be of any earthly good."

But I would suggest to you that our real problem most often is that we are not heavenly minded enough, and thus are not of as much earthly good as we might be. Paul instructs us to give our minds to the things above and to the things to come. We died with Jesus, and we have ascended with Him, and one day our bodies will be raised with Him as well.

(Ephesians 1:13-14 ESV) In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire

possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

Have you ever given much thought to this matter of our “inheritance”? The actual acquisition of it is yet to come, as Paul says here. The Holy Spirit in us is the seal of God’s promise of our inheritance. That inheritance is the New Creation in all of its fullness. It is the Promised Land of the New Covenant, the New Heavens and the New Earth, and our new resurrection, immortal bodies.

(Ephesians 1:11 ESV) In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,

Do you see? All of this is bound up in our coming resurrection. Here is some more –

(Ephesians 1:15-20 ESV) ¶ For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints,¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may

know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places..

That you might KNOW what is the hope to which He has called you -, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints.

Do you see the thing? If we could SEE by faith, what is to come. If we could SEE that life hidden with Christ – if we could just have an inkling of its glory, then all of our trials and troubles in this life would seem to diminish.

Listen to Paul as he puts our coming real, physical, actual and personal resurrection right in front of us --

(1 Corinthians 15:42-58 ESV) ¶ So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable.⁴³ It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.⁴⁴ It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.⁴⁵

Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.⁴⁶ But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual.⁴⁷ The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven.⁴⁸ As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven.

⁴⁹ Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.⁵⁰ I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

⁵¹ ¶ Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.⁵³ For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.⁵⁴ When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."⁵⁵ "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is

your sting?"⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.⁵⁸ ¶ 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.

The resurrection is also the Christian's great motivation to put to death sin, to not mourn over that which is past, but to look ahead and press on knowing Christ more and more. The New Testament certainly does not leave this doctrine to one Sunday of each year, but speaks of it over and over again -

(Philippians 3:7-11 ESV) But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith--¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,¹¹ that by any means

possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Resurrection as Foolishness

Now, this great and vital doctrine that we must hold to is assailed by the world and chalked up to myth and nonsense:

(Acts 17:29-34 ESV) ¶ Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man.³⁰ The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent,³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."³² ¶ Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this."³³ So Paul went out from their midst.³⁴ But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

And so it is. The natural man's reaction to the doctrine of the resurrection of Christ, and of our

resurrection to come, is to mock and disbelieve. Chalk it up to myth that only fools believe. And yet here we have the proof – Christ is risen. When Christ's sheep hear His voice in the preaching of this gospel however, they come to Him in faith – as did Dionysius, Damaris, and others that day in Athens.

The Resurrection is Integral to the Gospel

You cannot have the gospel if the resurrection is denied. We have seen this already in 1 Cor 15. So we should not be surprised that the New Testament preaching of Christ includes the resurrection-

(1 Corinthians 15:1-5 ESV) ¶ 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.

And again in the preaching recorded in Acts-

(Acts 2:22-36 ESV) ¶ "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know--²³ this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.²⁴ God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.²⁵ For David says concerning him, "'I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;²⁶ therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope.²⁷ For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption.²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.'²⁹ ¶ "Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.³⁰ Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne,³¹ he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.³² This

Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.³³ Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.³⁴ For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, "'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand,³⁵ until I make your enemies your footstool."³⁶ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

A Risen Christ is Necessary to the Gospel

As we read the preaching of the Apostles and their writings in the New Testament Epistles, we must surely see that the gospel they preached *necessitated* the resurrection of Christ. A dead Christ cannot save NOW. A dead Christ has no power. Here is an example:

(Acts 3:17-26 ESV) ¶ "And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers.¹⁸ But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled.¹⁹ Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be

blotted out, ²⁰ that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, ²¹ whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. ²² Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. ²³ And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.' ²⁴ And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. ²⁵ You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' ²⁶ God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness."

And then you have the same thing in the miracles effected by the Apostles –

(Acts 3:1-16 ESV) ¶ Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. ² And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that

is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple. ³ Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. ⁴ And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." ⁵ And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. ⁶ But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" ⁷ And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. ⁸ And leaping up he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. ⁹ And all the people saw him walking and praising God, ¹⁰ and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

¹¹ ¶ While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's. ¹² And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk? ¹³ The

God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. ¹⁴ But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, ¹⁵ and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. ¹⁶ And his name-- by faith in his name-- has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

It is evident, isn't it? These things require a living Christ effecting these miracles by His power.

The Resurrection Christ Sends His Spirit

You might recall from our study of the Gospel of John that particularly in chapters 14-16 the Lord Jesus, before His crucifixion, spoke in some detail about "the Comforter." By this He meant the Holy Spirit, and His promises necessitate that He would be resurrected:

(John 14:15-18 ESV) ¶ "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask

the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ ¶ "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

So that when the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), it was JESUS coming to His people, just as he promised here. A dead Christ could not effect such a thing.

Of course we could go on and on with examples from the New Testament that require a living Jesus! In John 15 Christ instructs us to abide in Him. He is the Vine, He said, and we are the branches. The vine gives life to the branches so that they bear fruit. The Vine is alive!

(John 16:12-15 ESV) ¶ "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine;

therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

See it once more? Jesus is alive. He gives His truth to the Spirit, who then communicates Christ's truth to His people. The Spirit *hears* Christ.

Back to Our Resurrection Then

Just as the Lord Jesus commanded Lazarus to “come forth,” from the tomb, so He will one day come and shout out our name. Here it is in about as plain of terms as the Lord could put it for us –

(1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 ESV) ¶ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁵ For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be

caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Remembering all of these things, believing these promises, is what Paul meant when he told us to set our minds on the things above where our life is hidden with Christ.

The Other Resurrection

We must not neglect to sound the alarm this morning to anyone who is not in Christ and whose life is merely, well, of this earth's dust. Here is something that every human being must understand – *ALL people will be raised from the dead by Christ.* Here it is –

(Revelation 20:11-15 ESV) ¶ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were

in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done.¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

This same truth and warning is given elsewhere in similarly sobering terms:

(2 Thessalonians 1:4-10 ESV)
Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring.⁵ ¶ This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering--⁶ since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you,⁷ and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels⁸ in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.⁹ They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might,¹⁰ when he

comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

The resurrection of Jesus guarantees all of this. The resurrection of the righteous to eternal glory in the New Creation, and the resurrection of the wicked to eternal punishment in hell.

Christ is Risen. There is no need for any of you to perish. His invitation still goes out to all-

(Isaiah 1:18-20 ESV) "Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.¹⁹ If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land;²⁰ but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be eaten by the sword; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."