

2006 Resurrection Sunday

Three Benefits of Jesus' Resurrection

Matthew 28:1-10

Rev. Freddy Fritz

April 16, 2006

Three Benefits of Jesus' Resurrection

Scripture

Today is Easter Sunday. It is the Sunday that the Christian Church has set aside to commemorate and celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. There is a very real sense in which we do that each Sunday of the year. And yet, there is one day each year on which we particularly remember the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In past years I have taken the opportunity to set before you the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. I am not going to do that today. I am going to assume the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The reason I do so is because the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is in fact one of the most historically verifiable facts in all of history, and my purpose today is different.

Today I would like to set before you three benefits of Jesus' resurrection. I intend to draw my material from all of Scripture but, before I do so, let me read Matthew's account of the resurrection of Jesus. Please listen as I read Matthew 28:1-10:

¹ After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

² There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. ⁴ The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

⁵ The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

⁸ So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his

feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, **“Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”** (Matthew 28:1-10)

Introduction

Last week one of our New Tampa Christian Academy pre-school teachers came to me and said, “Pastor Freddy, I need to tell you what one of my four-year-old girls said in class.”

“Go ahead!” I said.

She told me that she was teaching the class about the resurrection of Jesus. She asked if anyone knew what the angel said to the women when they came to the tomb looking for Jesus. One of the girls excitedly raised her hand and said, “I know! I know!”

“What did the angel say to the women when they wanted to know where Jesus was?” asked the teacher.

The little girl responded proudly, “He is not here; he is in prison!”

Lesson

The fact is that Jesus is not in prison; he is risen!

But what does that mean for us? Today, I want to look at three benefits of Jesus' resurrection.

I. Forgiveness for Past Sins

The first benefit of Jesus' resurrection is forgiveness for past sins.

As we think about the resurrection in relation to our sins, we must recognize that only because of the resurrection of Jesus can we have forgiveness for our past sins.

The Bible says that “because of our sins Jesus was handed over to die, and he was raised to life in order to put us right with God” (Romans 4:25, *Good News Translation*).

If we see Jesus as merely dying on the cross and being buried in the tomb, there is no hope and no forgiveness for us. It is his resurrection that gives us the assurance that Jesus has overcome death and won a great victory for his people. It is the resurrection that makes all the difference and puts us right with God.

This truth can be illustrated by an incident which I understand is well-known in England. After the Battle of Waterloo in June 1815 all England was waiting for news about the outcome of the campaign. The Duke of Wellington had opposed Napoleon Bonaparte in this battle. Of course, this was long before the telegraph, telephone, or television, and watchers were stationed along the coast to read the semaphore (i.e., flag) signals from the first returning sailing vessels.

It was a cloudy, foggy day but, finally, one watcher spied a sailing vessel beginning to signal a message. The message read: “Wellington defeated,” and then the fog closed in again.

This message was relayed all across England and the nation was gripped by discouragement and defeat.

Hours later, however, the fog lifted, and the entire message came through: “Wellington defeated the enemy!”

Discouragement was banished and the nation rejoiced in the good news.

This story perfectly illustrates the state of mind of the disciples when Jesus died. Jesus had made the claim that he was God.

He said that he had come to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10), and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).

He said that he had come so that his people might have life, and have it to the full (John 10:10).

He said that whoever was thirsty—spiritually thirsty—could come to him and be refreshed (John 4:13-14; 6:35; 7:37).

He said that whoever would follow him would never walk in darkness, but would have the light of life (John 8:12).

He said that he had come to give eternal life to his people (John 10:28).

But then he was crucified.

It was a terrible day. At noon the sun suddenly disappeared and everything became frighteningly dark. There was an earthquake. Events took place that caused even the Roman centurion to exclaim, "Surely he was the Son of God!" (Matthew 27:54).

Then Jesus died and his body was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea (Matthew 27:57-60). The message that rang out to all the world was: "Jesus defeated! Jesus defeated!" And all the disciples were gripped by discouragement and defeat.

But then, three days later on Easter Sunday morning, came the resurrection! Three days after Jesus was buried, he rose physically and bodily from the grave. Then the entire message came through: "Jesus defeated the enemy!" The discouragement of the disciples was banished and they rejoiced at the good news.

Jesus had conquered death and hell. Jesus had conquered Satan and sin. And so we sing:

Rise, O Church, and lift your voices,
Christ has conquered death and hell.
Sing as all the earth rejoices;
Resurrection anthems swell.
Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, the risen King!

When Jesus died on the cross of Calvary, he paid the penalty for sin. When he died, he defeated Satan. On the cross he conquered our enemy.

The resurrection was God's stamp of approval. The resurrection was God saying, "Jesus, I accept your death as a substitute for guilty sinners."

The resurrection was God's vindication of Jesus' work.

And because of the resurrection of Jesus, we can be confident that Jesus paid the penalty for all the sin of his people. If there was one single sin not covered by the death of Jesus, if there was one single sin for which he did not die, then he would have never been raised from the dead; he would still be in tomb.

But his resurrection proves that his death covers every single sin.

And because of Jesus' resurrection, we can be confident that God forgives us all our sin.

Speaking of Jesus, the Bible says, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

You know, there is no other way to heaven except through the risen Lord Jesus Christ. His death paid the penalty for sin. His resurrection proved that God accepted his death as a sufficient payment for sin. His resurrection guarantees that God will forgive us our sin when we sincerely and wholeheartedly cry out to him for forgiveness.

So, the first benefit of Jesus' resurrection is forgiveness for past sins.

II. Power for Present Living

The second benefit of Jesus' resurrection is power for present living.

The resurrection of Jesus not only guarantees forgiveness for past sins, it also guarantees power for present daily living. Because Jesus is a living Savior, he is a Savior who is able to empower us to live each day for him.

The apostle Paul said to the Philippians, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (4:13). Because of Jesus' resurrection the apostle Paul affirmed that he had power for daily living.

Years ago there was a missionary in the country of Turkey who was having great difficulty getting Muslims to understand why they should believe in Jesus Christ. One day he was traveling with some Muslims along a road that had no road signs. Eventually, they came to a fork in the road. Not having a map with them, they did not know which road to take to get to their destination. Right beside the road was a tomb of a Muslim "holy man."

While they were trying to decide which road to take, the missionary said, "Let's go over to the tomb and ask the 'holy man.'"

"But the man is dead!" his Muslim companions protested. "He cannot give us any information! See that house over there? Let's go there and ask someone who is alive!"

"You are quite right," said the missionary. "Never forget that Mohammed is dead. He can give you no help or information. In him there is no life. But Jesus Christ is alive, and he will not only give you eternal life if you will trust him as your Lord and Savior, but he will also empower you for daily living!"

I have never been to Medina, but if I was to go to Medina, I would find a grave in which Mohammed is buried. I have, however, been to Israel. I have seen the graves of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. All their bodies are in those graves. I have been to the grave of King David. His body is still in that grave. I have also been to the grave of Jesus Christ. And it is empty, I tell you!

And because the tomb is empty, we can not only have forgiveness of sins, but also power to help us in our daily lives. Listen to how the author of the letter to the Hebrews put it:

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:14-16)

Jesus is alive, and so he is able to help us in our time of need.

Pastor David Coffin tells of a Good Friday when his house looked more like a set for *Rescue 911* than a place of solemn preparation for the pinnacle of the church year—Easter Sunday.

Barbara, his wife of 15 years, had just arrived home at 3 a.m. after a long shift as a hospital nurse. Her heart started to beat more than a hundred beats a minute. Her pulse soon raced so fast that

they couldn't measure it. They tried massage and relaxation exercises, but nothing helped. Finally, in desperation they called 911.

In the darkness, the Emergency Medical Services unit arrived and rushed his normally healthy, 43-year-old wife to the hospital.

In the early morning hours, when many churches would sing "Go to Dark Gethsemane" and reflect on Christ's agony on the cross, Pastor Coffin was deep in his own darkness. He wept as he thought of the unthinkable.

Doctors finally controlled her atrial fibrillation, and Barbara was admitted to the intensive care cardiac unit. She had another episode on Saturday, which the doctor again brought under control.

Pastor Coffin returned to their empty parsonage, facing an Easter he couldn't cancel and didn't have much heart for. He prayed, wept, and pleaded for Jesus to give him the strength to be both a good husband and a good pastor.

He said the question he wrestled with was, "How can I celebrate Easter when I'm living Good Friday?"

He prayed some more, cried some more, and paced the room. Finally a seminary classmate called him from out of state at 11:30 p.m. that night. He asked Pastor Coffin what he planned to preach on Easter Sunday. He responded by pouring out his heart to his friend. His friend gave him a couple of thoughts to hang on to.

"First, Christ is Savior and rose from the grave," he said. "Dave, you are not Christ. Jesus will give the power to lead your congregation in a celebration of Easter. Second, Barb knows you love her. She wants you to be the best pastor you can be tomorrow on Easter morning."

Though Pastor Coffin barely got three hours of sleep that night, he discovered that Jesus did indeed strengthen him the next day. He was able to proclaim the Easter message "He is risen!" with clarity and power and joy.

It turned out that Barbara soon recovered too. Together, Pastor Coffin and Barbara discovered the power that Jesus gives for daily living. After the initial shock they realized that Jesus was true to his word as they trusted in him and his resurrection.

Jesus' resurrection guarantees power for daily living. No matter what difficulty, no matter what trial, no matter what the hardship, Jesus empowers his people for daily living so that they can say with the apostle Paul, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13).

III. Hope for Future Destiny

Finally, the third benefit of Jesus' resurrection is hope for future destiny.

The resurrection guarantees forgiveness for past sins. It guarantees power for present living. And it also guarantees hope for our future destiny.

If Jesus was not raised from the dead, we would have no hope for the future. But because he is alive, we do have hope. We know that all that he said is true.

The apostle Paul said to the Corinthians, "By his power God raised Jesus from the dead, and he will raise us also" (1 Corinthians 6:14). What a magnificent promise that is! The same power that raised Jesus from the dead will one day raise believers back to life as well!

Jesus said to his disciples (in John 14:1-2) just before he was crucified, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you."

Right now Jesus is preparing a place in heaven for every single Christian. He is not preparing a place for Muslims or Buddhists or Hindus or Animists or Atheists or Unbelievers. He is preparing a place only for those who trust in him with a real, live, vital faith. And one day those of us who wholeheartedly believe in Jesus will die and go to him and live with him in heaven for all eternity.

Eric Barker was a missionary who spent many years in Portugal preaching the good news of the gospel, often under adverse conditions. During World War II, the situation became so critical

that he was advised to send his wife and eight children back to England for their safety. His sister and her three children were also evacuated on the same ship. Although his family was forced to leave, he stayed behind to finish the work before going to join them in England.

On the Lord's Day after their departure, the Rev. Barker stood before his congregation and said, "I have just received word that all my family arrived home safely!" Then, he proceeded with the worship service as usual.

It was not until after worship service was over that the full meaning of the Rev. Barker's words became clear. You see, just before the worship service started he had received a telegram informing him that a submarine had torpedoed the ship on which his family was sailing, and everyone on board drowned.

Eric Barker knew that because everyone in his family had trusted in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, they had in fact arrived safely home—their *heavenly* home. And although he was overcome by grief, he knew that by God's grace he had a sure hope of one day being reunited with his family.

This is the hope that the resurrection gives to those of us who know Jesus Christ personally as Lord and Savior. We will be raised back to life and we will find ourselves at home with Jesus in heaven for all eternity.

Conclusion

There may be someone here today who does not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. You know that your sins are not forgiven. Or you are not sure that they are forgiven. You know that Jesus is not real to you in your daily life. And you know that if you were to die today, you have no sure hope of going to heaven.

I say to you today that because of the resurrection of Jesus you can have your sins forgiven. You can know the power of Jesus in your daily life. And you can have a hope for your eternal destiny.

Three Benefits of Jesus' Resurrection

Today is my spiritual birthday. Thirty years ago, on Easter Sunday—resurrection Sunday—I received forgiveness for my sin, power to live each day for Jesus, and a sure and certain hope that I will spend all eternity in heaven with him.

Let me share with you how you too can have what I and many others in this room have today. It is very simple.

First, you must acknowledge that you are a sinner. You must recognize that your sin has offended Almighty God. You must believe that it was your sin that sent Jesus Christ to die on the cross.

Second, you must believe that Jesus died to pay for your sin. You must believe that he paid the full penalty for all your sin. You must put your trust in Jesus alone for the gift of eternal life.

And third, you must confess your sin. You do this by asking God to forgive you of your sin. And you do it by repenting of your sin. Repenting means that you forsake all your sin, everything that offends Almighty God.

You ask, “How will I know that God has forgiven my sin?” The Bible says that God will give you an assurance that he has forgiven you. I urge you to plead with God for his forgiveness until you know for sure that you have it.

Then, you too will be able to sing:

God sent His son, they called Him Jesus
He came to love, heal, and forgive.
He lived and died to buy my pardon,
An empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives.

Because He lives, I can face tomorrow.
Because He lives, All fear is gone.
Because I know He holds the future,
And life is worth the living just because He lives.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and **membership** in his church family,
develop them to Christlike **maturity**,
equip them for their **ministry** in the church
and life **mission** in the world,
in order to **magnify** God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

This sermon, and other sermons, by the Rev. Freddy Fritz can be found at:

1. www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/Sermons
2. www.sermoncentral.com/contributor_profile.asp?ContributorID=11181
3. www.sermonaudio.com/search.asp?SpeakerOnly=true&currSection=sermonsspeaker&keyword=Freddy%5EFritz

Please give your input and leave your feedback at websites 2 and 3 when requested to do so. This helps with evaluation and planning of sermons.

Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church (PCA)

Answers for Life!

Address: 19911 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., Tampa, FL 33647

Telephone: (813) 973-2484

Fax: (813) 973-4673

Email: Office@TampaBayPresbyterian.org

Web site: www.TampaBayPresbyterian.org

PRAAYER:

Our Father in heaven, I thank you for raising Jesus from the dead. Today we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, and we are reminded of three benefits of Jesus' resurrection.

We give you thanks for the forgiveness of past sins, the power for present daily living, and the hope of our future destiny.

Lord, there is someone here today who is not a Christian. Will you please grant that person faith and repentance?

If you are here today, and you know that you are not yet a Christian, I invite you to acknowledge that you are a sinner. Tell God that you have broken his law and that you have offended his justice. Don't try to hide it because he sees everything anyway.

Believe that Jesus died to pay the penalty for all of your sin. Thank God for sending Jesus and paying the penalty for your sin.

And finally, repent of your sin. Determine in your heart that you will turn from your sin today.

Father, will you answer every single prayer prayed to you today? Thank you again for the resurrection of Jesus. And all of this we pray in his name. Amen.

CHARGE:

If you would like to talk about what it means to be a Christian today, please speak to me following the service. I have a little booklet that I would love to give you. It is called *Which Way to God?* And it describes how you can come be sure that you are a Christian. And now, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.