

46-15-01.wpd—If Christ Was Not Raised
resurrection, Easter, doubts, hope
1Cor 15:12-19

Christ's resurrection is a case of “*all or nothing*” for all humanity.

INTRODUCTION: (Text as Scripture Reading)

—Our text makes it clear that, *if Christ was not raised*, Christianity is meaningless. But if Christ was raised, it's a whole different ball game.

—Everything depends on what happened on Easter morning almost 2000 years ago. **HOM.idea. *If Christ Was Not Raised...***

I. Gospel Preaching is a Waste of Time (v. 14, “*our preaching is useless*”)

A. [**Louis Cassels** (past religious editor of UPI): “If you are irrevocably committed to the proposition that it would have been impossible for Christ to triumph over death, you may as well quit fiddling around the fringes of Christianity, because, as Paul bluntly said, the whole thing stands or falls on the fact of the Resurrection. Either it happened, or it didn't, and if it didn't, Christianity is a gigantic fraud, and the sooner we are quit of it, the better.”] If that's is true of Christianity, then it's doubly true for Easter sermons about it!

B. **BUT if Christ is risen:**

1. Everyone should be flocking to churches to hear the message.
2. We should be sending missionaries on their way to preach hope to those without hope. (After a local teen suicide, two groups of young people among the rural poor of Nevada were asked, “*Do you want to die?*” Nearly half of the grade school-age kids answered “yes,” and over half the teenage group claimed they would like to. They saw no hope for their lives!)
3. We should try to get everyone we know under the preaching of the Gospel, especially our loved ones.

If Christ Was Not Raised...

II. The Christian Faith is a Delusion (v. 14 “*so is your faith*”)

- A. *Saving faith* in Christ is based on the reality of the resurrection—**Rom 10:9**, That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.
- B. **BUT if Christ is risen**, there's a more serious delusion: people hoping they won't have to give an account for how they lived. (**In the 1800s a young countess in Hanover** was a noted unbeliever. She opposed the doctrine of the resurrection, as if her opposition could somehow alter it. At about 30 years of age this lady died. But before dying, she ordered her grave to be lined with great blocks of stone and covered with a granite slab, with all

corners and the top slab fastened to each other by heavy iron clamps. On the covering this inscription was placed: “*This burial place, purchased to all eternity, must never be opened.*” But a little birch tree seed sprouted, and the root found its way between the side stone and the upper slab. As it grew there, slowly but steadily it forced its way until the iron clamps were torn asunder. Now that granite lid and its inscription rest upon the trunk of a large and flourishing birch tree.] Anyone who dies like this countess did is literally dead wrong!)

If Christ Was Not Raised...

III. The Apostles Were Liars (v. 15, “*found to be false witnesses*”)

- A. That means Christ's disciples weren't just liars, but also fools, because only fools would die for a message they knew to be false, when they could easily have saved their necks by admitting that the whole thing was a farce.
- B. But the apostles weren't fools! They were eyewitnesses of the risen Christ! They didn't steal Jesus' body as the guards were paid to report. [portions from **Edwin Markham's poem**, “*Guard at the Sepulcher*”

I was a Roman soldier in my prime;	And rolled the great stone from the
Now age is on me, and the yoke of time.	sepulcher,
I saw your Risen Christ, for I am he	Mixing the morning with a scent of myrrh.
Who reached the hyssop to Him on the tree,	And lo, the Dead had risen with the day:
And I am one of two who watched beside	The Man of Mystery had gone His way! //
The sepulcher of Him we crucified.... //	Years have I wandered, carrying my
Once in the pauses of our whispered talk	shame;
I heard a something on the garden walk.	Now let the tooth of time eat out my name.
Perhaps it was a crisp leaf lightly stirred—	For we, who all the wonder might have
Perhaps the dream-note of a waking bird.	told,
Then suddenly an angel, burning white,	Kept silence, for our mouths were stopt
Came down with earthquake in the	with gold.
breaking light,	

If Christ Was Not Raised...

IV. Sin Has Conquered (v. 17, “*you are still in your sins*”)

- A. No good asking God for forgiveness in Jesus' name, if Jesus never rose again, because His death would have failed to atone for sins.
- B. **BUT if Christ is risen**, John the Baptist's prophecy was fulfilled: “*Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*” (Jesus' resurrection is our guarantee that our sins are paid, that we can be *released* from them (which is what *forgiveness* means).

If Christ Was Not Raised...**V. Believers Already Departed Have Truly Perished (v. 18, “those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost”)**

- A. All that can remain is the false and fading immortality of fame....
[Edgar Allen Poe's monument in the Metropolitan Museum is inscribed with these words: “*He was great in genius; unhappy in life; wretched in death; but in fame he is immortal.*” What does it matter, if there’s no true immortality, especially for someone whose poetry revealed a tragic lack of hope for the afterlife? In his “Raven,” he writes, “*Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,/ It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore--/ Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore./ Quoth the Raven, 'Nevermore.'*”]
- B. **BUT** if Christ is risen, we have a solid resurrection hope of again seeing our departed loved ones whom *we shall clasp forevermore!*

If Christ Was Not Raised...**VI. Hope Still Lies Silent in the Grave (v.19, “If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.”)**

- A. Hope in a heavenly home is an empty dream, if Christ has not “gone to prepare a place for us,” as He promised He would do.)
- B. **BUT** if Christ is risen, we have a sure hope for our eternal future [We Have an Anchor [last verse & chorus] When our eyes behold thru the gath'ring night/ The city of gold, our harbor bright,/ We shall anchor fast by the heav'nly shore,/ With the storms all past forevermore.// We have an anchor that keeps the soul/ Steadfast and sure while the billows roll,/ Fastened to the Rock which cannot move,/ Grounded firm and deep in the Savior's love.] **We have that anchor**, a hope that stands in this life and reaches out with a firm grip on our eternal home, because Christ is risen!

CONCLUSION:

[A poem by Henry H. Barstow, “*If Easter Be Not True*”

If Easter be not true,	If Easter be not true. //
Then all the lilies low must lie;	If Easter be not true,
The Flanders poppies fade and die;	"Twere foolishness the cross to bear;
The spring must lose her fairest bloom,	He died in vain who suffered there;
For Christ were still within the tomb--	What matter though we laugh or cry,
If Easter be not true. //	Be good or evil, live or die,
If Easter be not true,	If Easter be not true? //
Then faith must mount on broken wing;	If Easter be not true--
Then hope no more immortal spring;	But it is true, and Christ is risen!
Then love must lose her mighty urge;	And mortal spirit from its prison
Life prove a phantom, death a dirge--	Of sin and death with Him may rise!

Worth-while the struggle, sure the prize, Since Easter, aye, is true!

–**Christ's resurrection is a case of “all or nothing” for all humanity.**
 If He did not rise, this sermon means nothing. If He is risen, then God calls all humanity to make Him their personal Savior and Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:13-21 (NIV)

13If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.

14And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.

15More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised.

16For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either.

17And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.

18Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.

19If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.