



The Festival of the Resurrection of Our Lord Easter Sunday

April 1, 2018 – 9:00 a.m.

Rev. Todd Goldschmidt, Pastor

Theme: The Day Everything Changed!

Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

15 Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. ² By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance^[a]: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas,^[b] and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

⁹ For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. ¹¹ Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

The date was June 16, 1984—a date that probably doesn't mean much to any of you. I guess I should modify that: it's a date that I *hope* means quite a bit to at least one of you. On June 16, 1984, a wonderful woman became my wife. From that day forward, everything changed: I now have a friend with whom I share life's joys and heartaches; a sister in Christ

who encourages me in my faith when I'm down and points me back towards what's most important; a mother who loves our sons in some pretty amazing ways. I get to share my life with a partner who no doubt wishes I would've shared this sermon introduction with her ahead of time!

Your wedding day ought to be one of the most important days of your life. It's the day everything changes, the day you start to build a new life that you've always dreamed of. Who'd ever forget a day like that or ever need help remembering it? But that doesn't mean that spouses don't need help once in a while remembering *why* they married each other in the first place. In fact, sometimes they need a *lot* of help! When spouses get wrapped up in the busyness of paying bills, chasing kids, working long hours or taking care of a home, they need a reminder that they don't just live for themselves anymore, or have to face things alone; that everything changed when they **"became one flesh"** (Gen. 2:24) no matter how long it's been since they exchanged their vows before God and their wedding guests.

By the old Hebrew calendar, the date was the 16th day of the month of Nisan. It was a Sunday—the day everything changed. Two days prior, an itinerant rabbi named Jesus died. He'd said a lot of marvelous things that people wanted to believe. He talked about God's love, preached forgiveness and even claimed to be the Son of God who'd give eternal life to those who trusted in Him. And for a while, it seemed that it might actually be true: stories circulated of the amazing things He'd done—even raising the dead to life! Then they killed Him; nailed Him to a cross; pierced His side with a spear to make sure He was dead; laid His body in a tomb, sealed it with a huge stone, posted a guard and called it good. Finito!

It's just that... well... He didn't stay there. On that Easter Sunday, when the angels told the women, **"He is not here; he has risen!"** (Mark 16:6), it meant everything had changed. If Jesus really did rise from the dead, then it's all true. Your sins really are forgiven and your sentence of eternal condemnation in hell has been stricken from the books. You really aren't alone in this life, and when this life ends, you really will go to heaven and live forever. So doesn't that make Paul's words seem a little odd? **"Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand."** **"Remind"**? The Gospel is that good news that Paul sums up so briefly: Jesus died for our sins. He was buried. He rose from the dead, just as the Scriptures predicted. The most notable news in the history of the world. Who could ever need help remembering that?

We could—just like the Corinthians could in Paul's day. And so the Holy Spirit inspired God's Apostle to pen, **"Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain."**

It wasn't that the people who first heard these words had forgotten that Jesus rose from the dead. But they began to act like it. Read through 1 Corinthians, and you get the picture of a gifted congregation... that was falling apart. They had beautiful worship, but they just turned it into a chance to show off their skills. They had amazing talents, and they fought about whose were most important. They knew exactly what Jesus had done, but they actually started to believe and teach that life after death was a fairy tale. They could tell you all about the *facts* of the **"Never Get Enough of the Gospel"** faith, but they forgot what it really *meant*. They thought that this life is all there is. **"By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain."**

So how's your grip on the gospel? Could your faith ever be in vain? Could mine? Here's another way to ask that question: **"What are you looking for in life?"** Some people want far too little out of Jesus. Ask them what they're looking for, and they'll talk of finding their life's purpose. They'll talk about a Jesus who helps them comprehend love. Those are good things—gifts from God, even—but here's what Paul wrote: **"what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."** It's not that we forget what Jesus did. But sometimes, we act like it. Martin Luther shared a story from his own life. None of his efforts were panning out the way he hoped. He felt like a total failure, and began to grow bitter. One day, his wife Katie entered his study wearing a black dress and black veil, as if going to a funeral. When Luther asked who died, she replied, **"The way you're acting, I'm assuming Jesus must be dead."** Wise woman! It seems like all Lutheran pastors "marry up"!

Do you see the point? Since Jesus lives, *everything's* changed! So don't let *anything* become more important than holding on to that Gospel. We always want to know what love is, and have the strength to show it. But we need more than that. We want forgiveness for the times we've failed. We want to be inspired and know our purpose in life. But if that's all we're looking for, we're not holding firmly to what Jesus gives us. Paul wrote of Him: **"He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."** And Jesus solemnly vowed: **"I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me will live, even though they die; and those who live and believe in me will never die"** (John 11:25 – GNT). What a promise!

The first year I was a pastor in Nebraska, a retired farmer in our church was dying of cancer. His name was Bruno Zuerlein. He was a lifelong Christian. He'd been in love with God's Word for the almost-90 years of his life. When I sat down in the hospital with him on what would be the last day of his life, he hadn't spoken an intelligible word for two days. I had no idea what I could give to him or tell him that he didn't already know. So I just told him about Jesus. I reminded him that Jesus died to forgive his sins. I told him Jesus rose for him, and said he'd be able to see that with his own eyes when he went home to heaven. And as I shared this good news, everything changed for Bruno: His pulse and breath rate slowed, he looked into my eyes, smiled broadly and whispered, **"Wonderful. That's wonderful."** Within hours, Bruno's soul was at his Savior's side in heaven!

Never get too much of the Gospel. That good news changes everything! Paul spills a lot of ink making sure we know how absolutely true the Gospel is. Did you notice? Two times he points out that **"the Scriptures"** predicted that all this was going to happen. He lists five different sets of people who were eyewitnesses to Jesus' rising from the dead—well over 500 people who'd seen Him post-Easter. But his point wasn't just that this was true. **"Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved."** It's not just true. It's the *saving truth* that God gives to you and me. That Gospel becomes the wedding ring that God puts on our finger as He vows to love us forever—and that changes everything!

Paul knew that. **"For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect."** I know there are things about your life—things about you—that you'd like to change. The impatience that you can't shake. The bitterness or anger that you keep holding on to. The way it's so hard to share your faith as beautifully and often as you want to. And it's so frustrating that no matter how much you tell yourself to change those things, you just can't. If you want to serve and love

like Jesus, then don't focus on your service and love. Focus on His. Never get enough of the Gospel, and God's **"grace"** to you won't be **"without effect."** It never is.

Return to the cross. As you see God's Son die for your sins, He'll take your guilt away. Go with your fears to the tomb, and see that you do have a Lord who reigns over everything—even death—a living Friend who'll help you face life's ups and downs; a Brother who cares about your loved ones as much as you do; and above all, you have a Savior who fills you with His love and pardons you when you sin. All of that became yours not because God told you to be loving or commanded you to serve Him, or because you decided to be a better and stronger Christian. Their yours because **"Jesus died for (y)our sins ... was buried [and] was raised on the third day."** I know you know that. Some of you have known it far longer than I have. But what can I say? **"Brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved."** Christ is risen, He's risen indeed! Amen.