

Easter 2019, Resurrection Power, 4/21/19

That first Easter was the single most important historical event the world has ever witnessed and it has been transforming lives across every continent ever since. We join together with about 2 billion people this morning to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Let's praise the Lord together and pray that God will use this message to transform lives here today.

Prayer

Today I want to talk about how the **power of this historical event of the resurrection of Jesus impacts us today.** I emphasize historical event because a few years ago right around Easter I was in Starbucks working on a message and had my Bible out, and a gentleman start a conversation with me about faith and he said, "I love the Easter story, but of course, we shouldn't take it as a real event. It didn't literally happen. These stories were written to symbolize the empowerment of the human spirit. That as bad as things get, there is always a silver lining, We should put faith in the indomitable human spirit to overcome." Many would agree with him. They would reduce the resurrection story to a mere psychological empowerment tool to help people cope with the challenges of life. OK. So I asked him- "If Matthew, Mark, Luke and John wrote these stories as symbols of empowerment, to merely teach us lessons, how are we to interpret the proof passages?" He said, "The What?" Yeah, all the parts of the story after the resurrection?" Like in Luke 24 when the post-resurrection Jesus eats fish in front of the disciples? Why is that part in there? What does that symbolize and what are we supposed to learn about empowerment?" To Eat healthy sources of protein? It seems like Jesus is literally trying to prove he is real and alive to me. Why do the writers go out of their way to tell us about eyewitnesses to the resurrected Jesus? What does that symbolize? Why do they tell us they had a hard time believing he actually rose from the dead until they saw him in person, one of them had to put his hands in his side and fingers...Why is this written? Not to symbolize the power of the human spirit...the exact opposite. The writers are saying and more specifically Jesus is saying, "I'm not a symbol, I'm not a phantom, I am the real, bodily resurrected Jesus in the flesh." Let me give you one more...What about the disciples themselves? Did you know they all got fantastically rich off this resurrection thing? Not exactly. **Stephen** was martyred in Jerusalem (Acts 7)
Thomas was martyred in India
John Mark was martyred in Egypt
Philip was martyred in Turkey
Matthew was martyred in Ethiopia
The **Apostle Paul** was beheaded in Rome by Emperor Nero (A.D. 66).
Nero crucified **Peter** upside down the same year.

Would these men have given their lives for a symbol of human empowerment? I don't think so. The explanation? The resurrection of Jesus was a real historical event that they witnessed, it transformed them, they went through the literal fires not recanting but rejoicing. Why? Because they believed that the resurrection of Jesus happened and was worth dying for. And because the resurrection of Jesus is a historical event, it is far more than just mere

psychological empowerment to cope with today. Listen to what Scripture says, In **Ephesians 1:18-21**, Paul writes a prayer for these Christians.

¹⁸ I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

That power is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰ he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

Here in Ephesians, Paul wants these Christians to deeply know and experience a real power that they now possess, and that power is the same power that resurrected Jesus from the dead! That is an amazingly bold statement, isn't it? Resurrection Power lives in us if we trust Christ. Wow. Kids fantasize about having super powers. This of course is why Marvel will never run out of blockbuster hits. It is why I attempted to jump off my 2nd story porch with garbage can lids and a cape convinced I could fly like superman. Paul is obviously not talking about superpowers like x-ray vision, telepathy and Incredible hulk strength. But, make no mistake, this resurrection power we are given is far superior than the power of any superhero because Resurrection Power can crush two supervillains that often control our lives. The Supervillains of Shame and Fear

Resurrection Gives us Power. Power over Shame of Our Past and Fear of Our Future

1) Power over the Shame of our Past

Millions and millions of people walk around every day carrying with them shame. **Brene Brown**-shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging...The very things that are hearts long for most. Where does Shame come from? It can come from bad decisions, regrets, failures...maybe getting fired, or the breaking up of a relationship or family, or never saying what you wanted to say to someone who passed away. It can come from what you are told by others- you didn't live up to the expectations of a parent, or spouse. You were told you wouldn't amount to anything by a teacher. It can be cultural- You broke away from the norms and values of your culture, like marrying outside of your ethnicity or moving away. And shame can also come not because you didn't anything, but because you were a victim of things that happened to you.

Shame is a **supervillain**. Shame has the power to make us feel unworthy. It can causes us to feel like damaged goods, hopelessly beyond repair. And it paints on the canvas of our lives, like a kind of scarlet letter. Research shows that shame is highly, highly correlated with loneliness, addiction, depression, bullying, suicide, eating disorders and abuse. Why? Because we take guilt over bad decisions or things that we think we allowed to happen to us, and we allow that guilt to define who we are. Not, "I made a mistake", but "I am a mistake."

Shame also breeds isolation. Which is what we have done since the beginning. Adam and Eve were naked and unashamed, but as soon as they rebelled against God, they immediately hid themselves. And we've been doing it ever since. We hide, sometimes physically. But often we hide emotionally behind layers, through appearing tough or scary so no one will get in, through not getting vulnerable by ever admitting to failure, we run from relationship to relationship or town to town, church to church...hiding, and EVEN hiding behind accomplishments so that no one can know who we really are, what we have done or what has been done to us.

No doubt there are some here today that are hiding from God because of shame. You think God couldn't possibly love or accept you because of the things you have done or have been done to you. Maybe everything was fine, and then your marriage failed, then you got pregnant, or started to struggle with porn and you felt shame and hid from God other people. And you stopped coming to church regularly. Maybe you are having doubts about your faith or something in the Bible, or something you are feeling that you think God wouldn't approve of and so you feel ashamed and leave the very place that ought to be able to help walk through it and support you and encourage you. Shame is indeed a supervillain. Here's the great news.

Jesus defeated the supervillain of shame on Easter!

Colossians 2:13-15

¹³ When you were dead in your sins and in the uncleanness of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Jesus Christ took everything in your past that causes shame, every scarlet letter, all your charges that you hold onto. All your guilt, all the regrets and mistakes and failures and all the dark and dysfunctional things that hide in the corners of our thoughts and hearts that separates us from a Holy God. And he says, forgiven! They are gone, slate wiped clean, charges dropped. Washed clean. He removes our shame permanently. How? When Jesus went to that cross on that Good Friday, he wasn't alone. He was carrying all our guilt that deserves punishment and the shame that accompanies it with him. He nailed it to the cross and killed it. He v.15 "disarmed the powers" of shame, the supervillain is destroyed. When we trust that Jesus has carried all our shame to the cross and killed it, God replaces our shame with righteousness. He sees us as pure and holy and worthy. And if it is good enough for God to see us that way, it ought to be good enough for us. **Brene Brown- shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging.**

Grace of the Gospel: We are most sinful and flawed in our ourselves then we ever dared admit and, at the same time, in Christ, we are more loved and accepted then we ever dared imagine. –Tim Keller Will you go to Jesus will your shame?

But there is another supervillain, Fear. Let's look at how the resurrection gives us **2) Power over Fear of our Future.**

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is a tangible demonstration that there is a real, personal and certain future that is unimaginably wonderful.

We have a Real Future- The Greek Philosopher, Epicurus- Once we die, that's it, no future. We just aren't there. Like clicking off a remote. And so his conclusion was, eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die. Nothing to worry about. Really? I just don't think he is being honest. Jack Kerouac, *"I am young now and can look upon my body and soul with pride. But it will be mangled soon, and later it will begin to disintegrate, and then I shall die, and die conclusively. How can we face such a fact, and not live in fear?"* He's absolutely right. And we all know it, which is why funerals can make us squirm and we distract ourselves from having to think about death by staying as busy and numbed as we can. Some people spend so much of their lives trying to avoid death's inevitability because they are gripped by the supervillain of fear. But Jesus not only killed the supervillain of past shame, **Jesus defeated the supervillain of Fear on Easter!**

1 Corinthians 15:19-22

¹⁹ If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

²⁰ But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ²² For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

Firstfruits is an interesting word. I doubt any of us in here are farmers, but this is an agricultural analogy that Paul uses. The firstfruits were the first crops to grow and produce. When the firstfruits came, it was the assurance that the rest of the crops would follow. Jesus Christ is the firstfruits. His resurrection came first and guarantees our resurrection as well. Those in Christ will be made alive Paul says and therefore concludes- **1 Corinthians 15:55 Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?**

Our future is not only real, but the resurrection guarantees that we will **have a personal future**. Many people believe when you die, you continue on, you live on in earth, all soul, reincarnation, Lion King- circle of life...soil, fertilize, plant, etc. There's nothing to be afraid of...really? Listen to what **Pastor Tim Keller** once said, *"You know what the deepest desire of your heart is? To love and be loved. That can only happen if you are a person! If there is no personal future, death has the ability to strip you of every person that you ever loved and strip you of the ability to love anyone ever again."* And we aren't supposed to be afraid of that? But Jesus was raised as a real person and so our future passed the grave will be personal, in an infinite love relationship with God and one another.

Resurrection guarantees a real future, a personal future, **finally a secured future**. Many religions that say, yes there is a real, personal future in heaven or paradise...but you have to be good enough, you have to live virtuous enough to get there...And so many religious people live in the tyranny of fear, hoping that they do enough good, with no guarantee. Especially if you are the kind of person that struggles to be consistent and disciplined. And here you are, back in the shame and fear cycle...How in the world am I going to be good enough if I can't even live up to

my own standards? But the resurrection secures our future because you know what Jesus' last words were? It is finished. You know what that phrase means? Paid in full. The bill is paid, there is nothing you can do to earn it or work for it. It is a free gift. **Salvation is Jesus + Nothing**, not good works, not enough rosary beads or confession visits...Jesus + Nothing. And this is why Paul can say such a bold statement like this:

Romans 8:35,38-39

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Recap:

The resurrection of Jesus Christ gives us a power over the shame of our past and a power over the fear of our future.

Maybe you are here and you are tired of living with shame and you have tried to hide it away, drink it away, eat it away, work it away... Jesus calls to you, come to me all you who are weary and I will give you rest. Maybe you are here today and you are grip with fear. And in the quiet moments of your soul, maybe late at night, or when you are alone you shutter to think of the end of your life and what will happen to you. Jesus calls to you, do not be afraid- I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the father but through me.

Pray.

Why Easter?

Christianity 101

Skeptical Series

"Why should I trust the Bible?"

"Haven't Christians been on the wrong side of history?"

"Why do bad things happen if God is good?"

"How can we believe in God if there isn't any proof?"

"Isn't it narrow-minded to believe Jesus is the only Way to God?"

"Why do Christians seem to be homophobic?"

"Isn't the Bible incompatible with science?"

"Doesn't the Bible condone genocide and atrocities?"