

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Martin Eden

Epiphany 6
Saturday, February 15, 2025, at 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, February 16, 2025, at 9:00 a.m.

“Christ is Risen!! He is Risen Indeed!!”

I Corinthians 15:1-20

Looking back through my notes, text notes, and such, I couldn't find any on our Epistle reading from Paul's letter to the Corinthians regarding chapter 15. It is such an important chapter as it speaks so well and so much about the resurrection. So, I did a search for my sermons on 1 Cor. 15. Nothing. This is the first time I have ever preached on this text. How can that be?

So, I looked through the readings for the three-year lectionary. The only other time this reading is appointed is for Easter morning in Series A and B. But on Easter, I always talk about Jesus at the tomb. I am sure that I have made references to Paul's words, but I never have focused on that as a sermon text on Easter.

Then I questioned why I never preached on it during Epiphany in Series C. Because, in the 5 cycles of Series C in my 15 years here as a pastor, I could only find two other times we had a 6th Sunday in Epiphany during Series C – and both times I preached on the Gospel. It is fun to do new things. It has been quite a while since I have preached on a fresh text.

And what a text this is. The heart of Gospel, the focus of the preaching and teaching of the apostles in the Early Church is the resurrection of the dead – the

resurrection of Christ in particular, because, as Paul says, “if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.”

The forgiveness of sins comes through the resurrection. The argument is that if Christ lied about His resurrection, or if His disciples lied about His resurrection, then the claim that He can forgive sins is a lie also. As Paul says, “if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.”

The good news is that we have every reason to have confidence in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And not just because of the overwhelming evidence from ancient writers – both Christian and non-Christian. When you examine the New Testament within the field of study known as Historical Criticism, there is no ancient book or document that is more firmly rooted as having been written in the time-period it was written, by the people who have claimed to have written it than the New Testament. And these writers make some very bold claims.

Couple with that the fact that it is impossible to explain the Jewish and Roman historical record of the First Century unless there is an empty tomb in Jerusalem. The body of evidence supporting the fact that there was an empty tomb in Jerusalem where a fellow named Jesus of Nazareth was placed after being crucified by Pontius Pilate – that body of evidence has more empirical support than the body of evidence that Julius Caesar was the first Emperor of Rome. I’m not exaggerating. Most of what you think you know about Julius Caesar comes from William Shakespeare.

But our faith is not based on archaeological data. Our faith is founded on the Word of God. Faith comes through the Word of God. Paul says, “Faith comes

by hearing.” Hearing the Word of God. Faith comes by the Word of God being applied in the waters of Baptism. Peter says, “Baptism now saves you.”

Our faith is in vain if Christ has not been raised from the dead. Without Christ rising from the dead, there is no forgiveness of sin. If there is no forgiveness of sin, the bread and wine of the Sacrament offers us nothing other than a light snack.

The Word made flesh who dwelt among us offered His body and blood as the final sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins. His resurrection opened the door for our resurrection. That is what Paul is preaching. That is heart of the Gospel. Paul begins this first letter to the Corinthians announcing that “we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and folly to Gentiles” [1 Cor. 1:23], because “the word of the cross is folly (foolishness) to those who are perishing [1:18] “but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” [1:24].

Christ (is) the power of God. Christ (is) the wisdom of God. In the original Greek, there is no verb. It is implied, which is a common thing in the language. Jesus of Nazareth hanging on a cross, dying the death of a criminal has the appearance of weakness. Yet, above Him is the proclamation “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.” But He is not only King of the Jews. In His suffering and death, He has become the Savior of the world.

He is that final Lamb of sacrifice. He is the One, the only One, who could make full and satisfactory payment for the sin of Adam and all of Adam’s children.

And just as His suffering and death appear to the ignorant as weakness, His resurrection, His rising from the dead seems like foolishness to the Gentiles, to the Greeks, to the ignorant that think of themselves as being so filled with wisdom.

Jesus rose from the dead on the third day as the Scriptures have told you. Believe the Word of God. As the letter to the Hebrews says, “In many and various ways God spoke to the people of old through the prophets, but now, in these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son.”

Jesus then appeared to Peter and the other disciples. Believe their testimony. John was the only one of them that didn’t suffer torture and death for preaching that Jesus rose from the dead, and he was exiled to the island of Patmos as a prisoner. None of them changed their story to saved their lives.

The good news is, as we read these words Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, is that we have every reason to have confidence in the resurrection of Jesus. Therefore, we have more good news. Because Christ has been raised, you are no longer still in your sins. Our faith in and confidence in the resurrection of Jesus means we have every reason to have confidence in the forgiveness of sins.

And because, as Paul says, Christ is the “firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” we who will one day die in Christ and our spirits will join the company of heaven gathered with the angels and arch-angels – and just as death could not hold Christ in the grave, on the Last Day, my body and your body will be raised and joined with our spirits.

The dead will be raised perfect, holy, righteous and blessed to stand before the Lord. I am so looking forward to proclaiming throughout the Easter season, “Christ is risen!! He is risen indeed!! Alleluia!! Amen.