

Resurrection Sunday

April 1, 2018

Reading: Matthew 26:26-32

Lord's Supper

You just heard Matthew's account of Jesus instituting the Lord's Supper. I am using this passage as the foundation for both our partaking of the Lord's Supper and my message this Resurrection Sunday.

Matthew's account implies that the Lord's Supper is celebrated as a remembrance of Christ's atoning sacrifice and it carries us back to the time just prior to the crucifixion. It is a remembrance to strengthen our relationship with our Redeemer, a relationship we must rely on to get us through life in this broken world. It reminds us that Jesus gave each believer the gift of the Holy Spirit to open our hearts to the truth of Jesus' sacrifice. But the Lord's Supper is also prophetic in its meaning because it gives the believer a foretaste and anticipation of the great Marriage Supper of the Lamb, which we studied last week. Jesus will marry his bride, his Church, at His second coming. We are to be a people who live daily in anticipation of his return. Do we not have this same sense of anticipation as we wait for our adult children to arrive "home for the holidays?" We long for their return and their arrival and make everything ready. So now imagine the heart of the King Jesus waiting for the ingathering of his entire family before participating again in the meal himself. Christians have been anticipating the King's return for nearly two thousand years now. Imagine how long it has been in the anticipation of the God the Father's heart! What a grand family meal it will be! I look forward to the Day of the Lord and sharing the full meaning of the Lord's Supper with my Lord and King in heaven!

Take a moment and prepare your heart to receive Jesus' symbols of his leaving and his coming return. Open your heart to God in prayer. **Brothers please pass out the elements.**

Now my beloved, we take these symbols of Jesus' body and blood that he sacrificed so that our sins would be forgiven and allowing us to be in relationship with the Living God by his atonement. My beloved, reading Matthew 26:26, "Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' " **EAT** acknowledging Christ's sacrifice. Jesus continued teaching by taking the, ²⁷ "cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to ~~them~~ His disciples, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." **DRINK** and remember. Then Jesus tells his disciples and he is telling us that he will not eat this meal again without his redeemed. Jesus says, ²⁹ "I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.' " Come Jesus come! Amen!

Matthew records that after they partook of the Lord's Supper they sung a hymn. Verse 30 reads, "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives." I believe now is the perfect time to follow Christ's and the disciples example. Please rise and sing **Jesus Messiah** from the heart for you are singing to the Lord!

Please be seated.

After I am raised up, I will go before you

I choose the title of the message this morning from verse 32, "But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." But before I focus on this statement I want to lay a foundation for why we celebrate Resurrection Sunday.

Christ Is Alive

Let me begin this morning with a question, "On what basis should we believe that Jesus was raised from the dead and is alive today and reigning as the Son of God?" I begin with this question to make sure we recognize it is foundational and to stress the fact that Christianity is based on historical events and facts, not just spiritual ideas and

experiences. What I mean by “spiritual ideas and experiences” are things like the idea that there is a god, in general, or that humans have souls or that faith in a higher power has a good psychological effect on people or the belief in a higher being can give a person the experience of peace in the midst danger or a spiritual forewarning that helps one avoid trouble or the assurance that people go to heaven or that they will be reincarnated. These are all spiritual ideas and experiences. True or false, spiritual ideas and experiences are not the foundation or the sum of Christianity. Christianity’s foundation is based on historical facts. If Jesus Christ was **not** a historical person who lived and died and rose from the dead in time and history, well then, Christianity is as fake and as false as all the other religions.

Christianity is built out of these truths; God created the universe and this world, called earth. God directs and maintains and nourishes this world. God the Father sent his divine Son, Jesus Christ, who entered the world and lived a perfect life as the only sinless being and Jesus died for our sins on a particular day about 2,000 years ago, in a particular place just outside Jerusalem and that God raised Jesus from the dead on the third day. Jesus is the God-man and as the one whom conquered death he sent his followers throughout the world to make disciples of every nation. Further, Jesus ascended to heaven where he reigns at God the Father’s right hand interceding for all who believe in him as their Savior. As believers in Christ we wait for him to come again to establish his eternal kingdom. We long to be with Christ and partake in the Supper of the Lamb. This morning we experienced the present and future promise of the Supper of the Lamb.

These are all objective and historical events and not just spiritual ideas or experiences. There were many witnesses to Jesus’ life and his walking the earth after he was crucified and rose from the dead. There were witnesses to his ascension to heaven. However, if all these many witnesses were liars and these events are false then

Christianity is false and no one should believe it. Believing in Jesus Christ as the Messiah, as the Son of the Living God and Creator of the universe is a step of faith, but certainly not a leap of faith as some would say. There is so much evidence; historical, archeological and scientific to show our faith is based on a solid foundation. But one must take that step of faith, for true faith comes from what one cannot see – God. As the Apostle Peter said, ⁸“Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹ obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.” (1 Peter 1:8-9) So, again, I pose this question, “On what basis should we believe that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead and is alive today reigning as the Son of God?” Before going to our text in Matthew, I want to share with you 5 proofs to answer this question. These 5 proofs are certainly not all the proofs found in the Bible or in history or in archeologically or in science.

Five Proofs That Christ Is Alive

1. **The testimony of the Apostle Paul.** We have 13 letters from Paul. He was a contemporary of Jesus. He claimed to have seen the risen Christ. He spoke of others that he knew and who saw Jesus alive after his crucifixion. Paul wrote, “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.” (1 Corinthians 15:3-6) What this proves is that Paul’s writings are founded in historically recorded events. Therefore, we can take what he writes seriously and as true. Further evidence is found in that no one at the time challenged Paul’s writings as not true. Where were

the scholars of Israel and Roman to write that Paul's writings and more than 500 witnesses were false?

2. **The empty tomb** in Jerusalem where Jesus had been buried is also proof. This is relevant because the claim that Jesus was raised from the dead spread in a city that was hostile to that claim and would have done anything it could to squelch the claim that Jesus was risen and alive if they could. Of course, the one thing the Jewish leaders could have done would have been to produce the dead body of Jesus, but they could not as recorded in Acts chapter 5 verses 30 to 33.

3. **The courage of the disciples** of Jesus and their willingness to lay down their lives to preach that Jesus was raised from the dead demonstrates truth. They began preaching "He is risen" just weeks after they had abandoned him out of fear and thought that they had been badly mistaken about his Messiahship as recorded in Luke chapter 24, verse 21. The question this raises is "What had changed them so radically from fearful men who abandoned and denied Jesus to men boldly preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ?" This raises a 2nd logical question, "Do men risk their lives for what they know to be a fraud?"

4. **The varied testimony** of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, James, and the writer to the Hebrews. You need to spend time getting to know these men, as witnesses of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and determine if they are credible. The fact that their testimonies vary in detail adds creditability to the writings. One needs to give them a thorough study and investigation to see if they do prove themselves as reliable and truthful witnesses that proves themselves to be more worthy of ones confidence than the skeptics of our day.

5. **The truth of the Bible.** Critically evaluate the biblical vision of the world, both at the time the Bible was written, which spanned thousands of years, and as the world is today. Does not this whole story of God and creation and sin and Christ and

salvation make more sense of this world and of mankind from beginning to end of history than any other vision of reality?

These are just 5 proofs of many, but I hope that you will pursue them for they will show you their truths and lead you to more truths concerning God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. The reason I ask, no implore you, to investigate these proofs is your eternal life hangs on what you conclude from your study and your decision concerning these truths.

Christ Is Sovereign and Merciful

The point of my message today is not merely the historical fact that Christ died or that he was raised from the dead. The point I want to make this morning is that because Jesus rose from the dead and is alive He is sovereign over the entire universe and us. Jesus is not a sovereign king who is harsh over his people but he is merciful to us because he died for our sins. As believers, we are sovereignly secured by Jesus' death-defeating resurrection and we are mercy secured by his wrath-removing death for our sins.

I am going to focus this morning on these 2 things; Christ is sovereign and merciful. In our world that seems to want to tear itself apart I believe these are 2 of the most needed truths.

We need mercy because every one of us is guilty of sinning against God. We know that we have failed to live up to our own standards, let alone God's. We are sinners and our own hearts condemn us. In our most honest times, we know that the law written on our hearts is an echo of God's law and therefore we are in more trouble with God than with ourselves. We desperately need God's mercy. If God is sovereign, but merciless, we are done for and we stand condemned. There is no hope and we may as well eat,

drink and be merry because we are all damned. We desperately need a merciful Savior. Our hearts tell us this and even more clearly the Bible tells us this.

However, just as much as we need a merciful Savior, we need a sovereign Lord. If Christ is merciful to us but does not have the sovereignty to rule the forces in the universe that threaten us, well then, what good will his mercy be? Our lives are fragile and vulnerable in hundreds of ways. What will happen in the nations who desire to rule the world: Iraq, North Korea, Russia, China and on and on? The world is always in conflict because of the fallen sin nature of mankind. What will happen between Israel and the Palestinians and the global tension that this situation creates? When will the next “9-11” tragedy come to American soil? What will happen to my health or the health of my children or my spouse? What difficulties will you who are my beloved church face? What natural disasters will befall this world, our country, our state, our community or our families? We are fragile and vulnerable—all of us.

If you are honest, you know that you cannot protect yourself from the world; it is bigger than you and me. Those who try, the isolationists and survivalists end up barricaded and lonely behind the illusion of self-made security. Peace is found in trusting in the mercy and sovereignty of Jesus.

In other words, we need a sovereign Lord over the world. We need one who rules over Iraq and Israel and Korea and terrorists and disease and disaster and accidents — right down to the very details of our lives. Not that, the Lord would always spare us calamity, the Bible does not teach that he will. But the Bible does teach that God is merciful and he will not let any calamity happen to us that is not for our ultimate good.

My point this morning is that Jesus Christ is both *merciful* and *sovereign*. Because he both died for our sins, which means he is merciful, and because he rose from the

dead he is sovereign. Let us now look at our text in the Bible to see Jesus' sovereignty and mercifulness in the words and actions of Jesus.

Christ Is Sovereign

In Matthew 26:26 it is Thursday night before the Friday when Jesus was crucified. It is Jesus and his disciples last supper. First, I want to look at the evidence for Christ's sovereignty and then secondly the evidence for his mercy.

The evidence for Christ's sovereignty is seen in his predicting the behavior of all his disciples and in his predicting his own resurrection. Notice verse 31, "Then Jesus said to them, 'You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered." ' " So, he authoritatively predicts what every one of them will do. Then notice what Jesus says in verse 32, "But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." He predicts with authority his own resurrection from the dead.

I think all of you should be asking, "Pastor why do you think that prediction implies Jesus' sovereignty?" Maybe you are thinking Jesus simply has penetrating insight into how these disciples, whom he has known for 3 years and how they will respond and act. Jesus knows their character and by this, he knows they will crumble under the pressure of the night. So, just because Jesus is insightful does not prove his sovereignty. Could it be possible that Jesus' confidence is based on the sovereignty of God in heaven and not his own? If so, that would show God's sovereignty and Jesus is just a prophet, as some claim.

However, there is more here than that. Notice the last part of verse 31 where Jesus says to his disciples, "You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' " Jesus'

prediction is not owing to his penetrating knowledge of human character. What Jesus says is owing to God's written plan, God's plan from before creation for this very night.

When Jesus says, "For it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'" This is what the prophet Zechariah wrote in chapter 13, verse 7 and is its fulfillment. That is the ultimate reason why the disciples fall away. There is the invisible hand of God the Father at work in these hours, this Thursday night. Everything is going according to the plan of the Father. This is the sovereignty of God, accomplishing our salvation through the orchestrated death of his Son.

You might still be thinking, yes, there is sovereignty there but is it Jesus' sovereignty? Does his foreknowledge of what others will do this night point to his sovereignty? I believe it does. We see this most clearly in what Jesus says, recorded by John, "I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he." (John 13:19) Jesus not only predicts the behavior of all his disciples before it happens, he knows perfectly the specific behavior of Judas before it happens. Judas' betrayal is recorded in Matthew 26:25. Further Jesus knows perfectly the specific behavior of Peter's three-fold denial before it happens as seen in Matthew 26:34. Jesus' words penetrate Peter's heart when after his 3rd denial the rooster crows.

What we observe is that Jesus interprets this amazing foreknowledge with these words in John 13:19, "I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he." His foreknowledge supports his deity. In addition notice he ends with "I am he" which is the Old Testament name for God found in Exodus, "God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.'" (Exodus 3:14) Jesus is "I AM!"

Therefore, the significance of these detailed predictions which are not just general statements about nations or peoples or times, but specific behavior of specific people

down to the details of specific times, such as “before the cock crows” are Jesus’ way of saying, “I AM” not a mere man, but he is saying, “I AM WHO I AM,” – I AM God-incarnate and therefore I AM sovereign.”

When we examine Jesus’ prediction of his own resurrection in verse 32 where he says, “But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee,” this is not a mere conviction about what God might do for and through an innocent prophet. Listen to Jesus’ explanation, ¹⁷ “For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.” (John 10:17-18) When Jesus predicted his own resurrection, he was not saying what God would do for a sinless prophet, but he was saying what he would do with his own divine sovereignty.

Therefore, I conclude that Jesus Christ, God incarnate, the God-Man, the great and only I AM is indeed the sovereign God. He is what we need in a world like ours. Jesus the Christ said, after his resurrection and just before he returned to heaven, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” (Matthew 28:19) This is why we celebrate Easter or Resurrection Sunday.

Easter is from the Old English language and it means “east” and became the name for English Christians used for Christ’s Resurrection Sunday in the late 1400 to early 1500s. Just as the Sun rises in the east as the dawn of the new day, we celebrate the risen Christ at Easter. Therefore, Easter means that Jesus is risen, just as the sun rises to dawn the new day Jesus bring the new covenant and we celebrate today as Resurrection Sunday. The resurrection of Jesus also means that Jesus is the sovereign God and our Lord. He has all authority over Iraq and Israel and North Korea and terrorists and natural disasters and disease and accidents. He is also Lord over the miracles and

mercies and grace of this world seen primarily in his people. He is exactly what we need; he is the sovereign Lord, he is the “I AM.”

Christ Is Mercy

Jesus is also merciful! Otherwise maybe he would use his sovereignty *not for* us but *against* us. So we turn finally to the mercy of Christ. Where is this seen in our text? It is seen in a very pointed and precious way by comparing the first part of verse 31 and the last part of verse 32. Jesus says in verse 31, “You will all fall away because of me this night.” and in the last part of verse 32 Jesus says, “I will go before you to Galilee.”

Let me ask, “Have you ever let someone down?” The answer is, of course, we all have. Again I ask, “Have you ever treated someone worse than they deserved and later felt horrible about what you’ve done?” Again the answer is yes, we all have. What is amazing, with some of those you hurt, is you find that they have not spoken to anyone about it. They haven’t bad-mouthed you to others or plotted any revenge and some have even gone out of their way to be kind to you and help you and treat you as though you had never done anything wrong. What do you call this? You call it mercy. Unmerited mercy is one of the sweetest things a person can experience in the world. I have received unmerited mercy from Joyce many times.

This is what Jesus has done; he gives unmerited mercy. The disciples all deserted him in his greatest hour of need and even though they would desert him, he told them, “You will all fall away because of me this night. ... the sheep of the flock will be scattered. But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.” Jesus was saying, I will be your friend and your leader and your God even after you have deserted me.

It is as though you and a friend were walking down a road together speaking of your friendship and two thugs attack you and grab your friend. You respond by running away to save your own skin. Then the next day you see your friend coming toward you

on the road with stitches and bruises on his face and before you can say anything, he hugs you and says, “Oh, it is so good to see you, my friend, I am so glad you were able to get away and you are alright.” Would this not break your heart? You were unfaithful and your friend loves you anyway. This is mercy and mercy breaks ones heart.

Well, my beloved, this is what Jesus did for the disciples and what he has done for us and what he does for everyone who comes to him for forgiveness. You may have spent a lifetime deserting him or betraying him or denying him, but if you will come to Jesus with the broken heart that recognizes his mercy, he says to you this morning, “I will be your sovereign and merciful Savior and your Lord. I will be everything you need.”

Jesus is sovereign and merciful. Jesus is the risen Christ. Trust Jesus today, for it is by his mercy that he will forgive your sins forever. Trust Christ today for by his sovereignty he will guide you and protect you so that nothing befalls you but what is ultimately good for you.

As a minister of Jesus Christ, as his under-shepherd and pastor of his church, I say with a glad and thankful heart, “Know Jesus this day, Easter Sunday, this Sunday that we celebrate his resurrection and look to his coming again and know Jesus Christ is a great Savior and a great Sovereign who is full of mercy and love for those who are his. Give your life and soul to Christ, trust in Jesus and he will never leave you! May Jesus live in you and you live through Him!” Amen!