

## THE CHALLENGE OF THE RESURRECTION

Lincoln Park Baptist Church, West Newton, Massachusetts

April 18, 1965

Easter Sunday

Scripture – 1 Corinthians 15:1-26

### Introduction:

We have gathered here this morning to proclaim in song and prayer what we believe. We have gathered to rejoice and give thanks because Christ our Lord has risen from the dead. It has become a custom with us to celebrate Easter. We celebrate it in our churches, in our homes, in the way we dress, in the way we feel.

At a time like this, it is appropriate to ask the question: What did the resurrection of Christ mean for the early Christians? What challenge did the life, death and resurrection of Jesus pose for them, so as to constrain them to go to the whole inhabited world to proclaim that God had done something unique in Christ?

We may also ask: What significance does the resurrection of Jesus have for us? And what challenge does this meaning involve?

- I. The resurrection and sin. The early Christians realized that all men, both Jew and Gentile, were under the power of sin.
  - A. All men are under sin, says Paul. *“I have charged,”* says he, *“that all men, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin, as it is written: None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands, no one seeks for God. All have turned aside, together they have gone wrong; no one does good, not even one.”*
  - B. The death of Jesus is attributed to sinful men. The resurrection is God’s mighty answer to murderous rebels. (Acts 2:23-24,36) *“You nailed Jesus on [the wood] and did away with him ... but God raised him up ... for it was impossible that he should be held captive by death ... God made him Lord and Christ, precisely this Jesus whom you have crucified.”*

*“The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate ... But you denied the Holy and Righteous one, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the author of life, whom God raised from the dead.”*
- II. The resurrection is stronger than human sin and perversion. The resurrection has devastating results for the enemies of God and of his servant, Jesus.

- A. But the death and resurrection of Jesus is not turned against the enemies of God. *“God... raised that Jesus whom you murdered by hanging him on the wood. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior in order to give Israel repentance and forgiveness.”*

*“Because of him forgiveness of sins is announced” ...through his name each one who believes in him will receive forgiveness of sins ... Each one who believes in him is justified, “declared righteous”.*

*“God commands now all people everywhere to repent ... giving assurance to all by raising Jesus from the dead”* Repentance and forgiveness are not only offered but given by the resurrection of Jesus. They were not asked to consider forgiveness but were granted forgiveness.

They were not shown the possibility of new life, but new life began on the spot. They were only asked to believe in Christ. Ex. of the perfect crime by Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb on May 21, 1924. Clarence Darrow, the lawyer.

- B. The resurrection gives us the possibility of newness of life. Baptism means newness of life. (Rom. 6:4) – *“We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. ... So you must also consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”*

*“Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. Do not yield your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but yield yourselves to God as men who have been brought to life, and your members to God as instruments of righteousness.”*

**An end to the reign of sin.**

### III. Christ’s resurrection and our resurrection. Death to death.

(1 Cor. 15:20 ff.) *“But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruit of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.”*

### Conclusion:

- A. The resurrection of Christ has no meaning apart from sin: Today in our nation and in the world there is need to proclaim the Gospel of the resurrection. There is guilt in our hearts. There is separation from God. But God by raising Jesus from the dead has declared us righteous, has forgiven us. The past does not hang on our necks like a millstone.

- B. Through the resurrection we are challenged to walk in newness of life. Through our baptism we proclaim that sin has no power over us. We have full access to God. We are free to love our neighbor. The present is an adventure with God.
- C. The resurrection is the end of death. This is still to come. The future is not a cloud of darkness but a sunshine of hope.

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