

GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

70 – The Resurrection

Announcements:

5/28 @After Service -

GRADUATION

POTLUCK!

5/31 @7:00 -

Prayer

6/1 @6:30 -

Grace Group

6/4 @8:30 -

Sunday School

ICE BREAKER: Finish this sentence: Believing in Jesus gives me _____

READ: Matthew 22:23-33

As we noted on Sunday, in this test that Jesus is given the subject matter moves from this life (and how we live on this earth) to the next life, and more particularly the resurrection. As we noted last week in the GracePoint, how Jesus answers these questions is not always the best place to gather our full theology of what the resurrection will be like or what it is all about. This week, therefore, we will be looking at a passage from Paul where he does dive in deep on the resurrection, its meaning, its importance, and why it was so important to him and to his preaching. The hope is that we find the same passion and excitement as we contemplate the resurrection!

READ: 1 Corinthians 15:12–23

In Corinth there were factions that were preaching the message of the Sadducees, namely that there was no resurrection from the dead, for anyone. This is a big problem for Paul for a whole host of reasons. But the first one he looks to is this: If no one is raised from the dead then not even Jesus is raised from the dead (13). There are then two consequences. The first is that Paul and everyone else who *says* Christ has raised is a liar. We find the “nicer” way to say that in verse 15, that they have been “misrepresenting God”. But the rub of it all is this: if Paul would lie about this, why would we trust anything he says? That’s bad, but the other consequence is much worse, “your faith is in vain”. Verse 14 is basically saying: If Christ did not rise from the dead then our preaching is in vain, but wait, it is worse, your whole faith is impotent and powerless. It cannot save, it cannot give hope, it does nothing. In other words, the resurrection is important!

DISCUSS: Why does a lack of the resurrection make all of Paul's preaching and our faith “in vain” and worthless? (hint: look to verse 17!)

In the mid 1600's there lived a mathematician and philosopher named Blaise Pascal. He is most famous in the math world for a thing called the “Pascal Triangle” (I can't really tell you much about this one, sorry!). In Philosophy his greatest contribution is probably what is known as “Pascal's Wager” (this one, however, is right in my wheelhouse!). It goes a little something like this: In regards to believing in God's existence I have two options: I believe he does or I believe he does not. In both of these I am either right or wrong. If I believe in God and I am right then I get eternal happiness, If I believe in God and am wrong, then I have wasted nothing, and probably lived a better life. If I do not believe in God and I am right then I have at best 70 years of hedonistic happiness, but If I don't believe in God and I am wrong, then I face an eternity of punishment. The thought is that any gambler would realize that betting on the existence of God is nothing but upside. While kinda interesting, philosophically it has a few problems, but more importantly biblically it has a few problems. “If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we of all people are most to be pitied” (19). In other words, the resurrection is so important, and most importantly the hope that the resurrection gives us for the future is so important, that it makes all the balancing of Pascal's wager wrong. It is the sole source of our hope, it is critical, and if it is wrong then we have wasted our whole lives and are worthy of pity!

DISCUSS: Why is hope for the life to come so important? One way to think about this would be like this: How does hope for life to come flavor the hope in this life?

The final thought comes from verse 22. Paul here calls Christ the “firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” By calling Christ the firstfruits two things can speak to our hearts. The first is to note that firstfruits were important and valuable. This was a position of honor, and also a testimony to the preferred nature of these things (which is why a perfect holy God demanded an offering of firstfruits). So first and foremost, it speaks of the beauty and value of our savior, but secondly, (and more to the point for our discussion today) it implies “secondfruits”. Paul's point in looking to the resurrection of Christ is not *just* that one event some 2000 years ago, but to confirm in our hearts and give us assurance of our own resurrection. Not just ours really, but all who have believed in the name of Jesus. So it is hope for us, for those we know and love, our departed brothers and sisters in Christ. Simply put, for Paul it *is* our hope!

DISCUSS: What thoughts fill your heart as you ponder the resurrection? What *particular* hope does it give you?