

Film: Life of Jesus and Death and Resurrection – This is my all-time favorite film clip of the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. In it we see so many elements of Him Whom we call Lord and Savior.

In one of the last frames, the camera looks from above, down onto the cross. A tear drop is falling from above. I believe this represents a tear being shed by the Father, as He weeps not only for His Son, but for all of humanity. This faith which we have in Jesus extends WAY BEYOND any philosophy of Jesus being merely a good man. If Jesus is only a “good man” then we certainly might admire Him. But if He is not God, then we must not and cannot worship Him as God. If the resurrection never happened, we are part of the largest hoax perpetrated on the world. CS Lewis tells us that we each must make a choice about Jesus. I quote,

“I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” – CS Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

I stand before you today and I declare my belief in Jesus as my Lord and my God. I also want to say that I believe He died for my sins and the sins of all. He was buried, and He rose again on the third day. Yes, I believe in a hill called Mount Calvary. I believe in the old rugged cross. And when time has surrendered and earth is no more; I’ll still cling to the old rugged cross. The Apostle Paul in his first letter to the Corinthian church tells us that without the resurrection, we are to be pitied in our faith. Open with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 15 which is our text for the day.

15 Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand.² By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance^[a]: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third

day according to the Scriptures,⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve.⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles,⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

⁹ For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.¹¹ Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

The Resurrection of the Dead

¹² But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?¹³ If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.¹⁵ More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised.¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either.¹⁷ **And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.**¹⁸ **Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.**¹⁹ **If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.** (1 Corinthians 15:1-18, NIV).

Verse 1 Paul reminds his audience of the gospel that he first presented to them and the gospel upon which they take their stand. What is the gospel? God came in the form of human flesh as Jesus Christ, and He allowed Himself to be despised and rejected by men. He was tortured and sentenced to death on a cross in a spiritual exchange that we cannot quite comprehend. And those of us who have believed take our stand on this. That is the gospel that Paul speaks of.

Verse 2 Paul then tells us that the word which he preached to them is something firm that they can hang onto, and if none of it is true, we have all believed it in vain. The gospel is something we can STILL hang on to today. Just this past week, I directed a young man to Jesus. This young man knows about Jesus. He admires things about Jesus, but he has never found himself insufficient, nor has he come to the end of himself. When I came to the end of myself, there was no other power that had the ability to deliver me but Jesus. In Bill Gaither's great song, *I Believe In a Hill Called Mt. Calvary*, the second verse proclaims a simple truth. "I believe that the Christ Who was slain on the cross Has the power to change lives today For He changed me completely A new life is mine. That is why by the cross I will stay." I assure you, when we put our faith in Him we have not placed our faith in vain.

Verses 3-4 Here Paul lays out what he calls that thing of “first importance.” What is a thing of “first importance?” It is that which trumps all else. Recently when I bought a new diesel generator, there were all sorts of tags about what needed to be done before anything else could be done. The crankcase needed oil. The radiator needed water. The Apostle Paul tells us what is at the top of the hierarchy in this thing called the Christian life. *“Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.”* (1 Corinthians 15:3b-4, NIV). That’s it. Without this, there is no Christianity. THIS IS THE ENTRY WAY INTO A RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS. He died for YOUR and MY sins JUST LIKE THE SCRIPTURES SAID. HE WAS BURIED and HE ROSE AGAIN ON THE THIRD DAY JUST LIKE THE SCRIPTURES SAID THAT HE WOULD.

Verses 5-8 These verses give proof of His resurrection. We’ve been over this many times during my years here at the Grove. As a lawyer, I’ve presented proof to you again and again that the accounts of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead are HIGHLY RELIABLE from a legal standpoint. They are so reliable in fact, that we’ve even studied the testimony of non-believing Jews who said there is no doubt that this rabbi, this Yeshua, died and was resurrected as a historical fact. These are not Jews who have accepted Jesus as the Messiah or as divine, but they have concluded that there is indisputable proof that Jesus rose from the dead. In 1978, Orthodox rabbi, Pinchas Lapide became the first Jewish scholar to publish a full-length book on Yeshua’s resurrection.¹ It is a fascinating read.

Paul gives us an order of appearance. He says that Jesus first appeared to Cephas (Peter), and then to the twelve. This is talking of course about the appearance He made to Peter after the Resurrection when the disciples were out in a boat. In John 20, John amusingly gives an account of Peter and John himself racing to the tomb. John casually mentions that he got there first. But in John 21 we read the account of Peter being the first to recognize Jesus on the shore (then the others saw Him as well).

Paul adds that Jesus appeared to over 500 men and women. Some were still living when Paul wrote this letter and others had “fallen asleep” (meaning they had passed away). Paul then mentions that Jesus appeared to his earthly brother James and to the other “apostles.” The “other apostles” refers to those early church fathers who were sent out to minister and start the Church in various places. James, the earthly brother of Jesus, was the first pastor of the church in Jerusalem.

Lastly, Paul says, “and he appeared to me as to one abnormally born.” I think he’s just saying that Jesus appeared to him even though he was born in the wrong place at the wrong time.

¹ <https://www.kesherjournal.com/article/the-resurrection-of-jesus-another-jewish-perspective/>

Verses 9-11 If anyone understood grace, it was the Apostle Paul. We know that he was very intent and instrumental in persecuting the early church, and some have even surmised that he might have been at the trial of Jesus, leading the crowd in their call for Pilate to "crucify Him." Paul truly was the least of the least, the lowest of sinners. Paul's life and his redemption remind us that God takes the vilest heart and uses it mightily for His glory.

Verses 12-17 In these verses, Paul sets forth his argument that without a resurrection, we're all wasting our time. We are participating in an absurdity. Some obviously were denying that anyone could be resurrected. And if this were so, Jesus couldn't have risen either.

Paul puts it out there. If Christ has not been raised, Paul's preaching is useless. I might add that if Christ has not been raised, then my own preaching is likewise useless. If Christ is not raised, the Gospel message is nonsense. He then says something super interesting. Remember that Paul had always been a zealous follower of God. He had persecuted Christians because of his desire to do the right thing. Paul says that if Jesus didn't truly rise from the dead, then you and I are "false witnesses" participating in something that is a lie. Those are strong words, but it's true.

If Christ has not been raised, our faith is futile, and all of us have remained lost in our sins. Everyone that we know that has died is also lost, and our end is to become nothing more than worm dirt (Pastor Faber's term). If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, we might as well walk from this thing called the "Christian Faith," because it would all be just a big waste of time. If all we are doing is trusting in a man who never rose from the dead, we have no future assurance. We are the most pitiful of people.

In years past, I've given very articulate presentations of the proofs that exist to show the validity of our faith. I could give you a detailed list of all of the reasons that the resurrection is necessary. Instead, I want to speak to you personally. I want to say that I believe in a hill called Mount Calvary. Not only does the Bible tell me that it is true, but my spirit tells me that it is true. It resonates in me. It makes sense. As your pastor, I openly and unabashedly believe in the work that was done for me and for you on Calvary. I don't understand it all, but I believe it with all of my heart. I believe that when time has surrendered and the earth is no more, I will cling to the old rugged cross. That means when I pass from this life into the presence of God, the old rugged cross will be that to which I hold fast. That is where my confidence lies. It lies in nothing else.

I have come to believe that life is full of mysteries that I don't understand. I don't pretend to understand the Trinity. I don't fully understand why Jesus had to die on a cross for the sins of the world. I sort of understand it intellectually, but I don't understand it logically or emotionally. These are just mysteries. I know that my time here

on earth will come to an end. Death is there lurking around the corner, but I have faith that Jesus did indeed conquer darkness and death, and I believe that when I take my last breath on earth, I will transition and will be looking into the most peaceful loving eyes that I have ever seen. I will be looking into the eyes of my dearest and best friend. Oh how I long to look into His eyes and to feel the warmth of His love for me.

I also believe in the resurrection of Jesus because I have seen with my own eyes that Jesus the Messiah Who was slain on the cross STILL HAS THE POWER TO CHANGE LIVES TODAY. I could go around this room and name person after person who has experienced the power of God in their lives. Why do I believe that there is power in the cross? I have seen him change so many people's lives. I've seen Him take a good friend out of crystal meth addiction. I've seen Him free others of the addictions of alcohol, pornography, and crack cocaine. That is big! That is miraculous. But most importantly, and personally to me, is that I have seen Him change me COMPLETELY. He moved me from being a guy only in love with myself and my interests, to seeing situations and others with the heart and eyes of Jesus.

So, I speak to you today from personal experience. I speak to you today from personal study and revelation. IF CHRIST IS NOT RISEN FROM THE DEAD THAN WE ARE TO BE PITIED. So let me proclaim the good news once more. HE IS RISEN. HE IS RISEN IN DEED. HALLELUJAH.

I believe in a hill called Mount Calvary
I believe whatever the cost
And when time has surrendered
And earth is no more
I'll still cling to the old rugged cross

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4NSdy2N7mHA>

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.