

Does Easter really mean anything?

"If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile;

you are still in your sins."

1 Corinthians 15:17 (NIV)

When it comes down to it, the Christian Church celebrates Easter every week of the year. "How so?", you say. Well it only takes a moment to think of which day of the week Christians gather to worship. The day of the week churches open their doors to worshippers is the day of the week Jesus rose from the dead. The Christian community has done this to make the day of Jesus' resurrection a day of celebration and happiness. I know that many Christians do not consciously think of Jesus' resurrection every Sunday en route to church, but that is their fault not that of their church.

It seems clear that within the time of the apostles, the newly formed Christian congregations marked off Sunday as the day to take up offerings and break bread together in a habitual manner. Through the centuries it has remained the same. So our celebrating Easter is meaningful because it is the time of year that Jesus indeed died and rose again, but we have Easter all year long because we worship on Sunday.

What is the importance of Easter according to the Bible? It is important on several fronts. In our passage Paul tells us several reasons for the central position of this biblical truth. First he says that preaching Jesus is useless and faith in Christ is worthless if He is not risen. Moreover the apostles are liars, and everyone is still in their sins. Now that is a lot to lose if the truth of the resurrection of Jesus is false.

How could such an effective and ethical teacher as Jesus end up with such liars who would play such a hoax on the world? If Jesus taught His followers to speak the truth no matter what it cost them, how could they pull off such a deception as to say that their leader had bodily risen when he did not? Countless thousands of them died as martyrs for this truth. Could so many people be persuaded to die for a lie? I hardly think so!

Jesus was indeed the consummate teacher and His disciples were taught the highest morals by Him. Therefore it is silly to suggest they fabricated the resurrection story. They tell us that after the cross they were a fearful group hiding from the authorities until the Resurrected One appeared to them several times under various circumstances. Then they became bold unto death for this truth.

In the context of our verse today, Paul goes on to assert strongly that Jesus is indeed risen and our faith is vital and worthwhile.

Imagine what power it took to raise someone from the dead. We know nothing of such a power in our day. The medical community will never put funeral homes out of business. With all our scientific sophistication we have the nagging realization that we can not beat death on our own. If this enemy is to be conquered it must be by One vastly more powerful than we are or can ever hope to be.

In Ephesians 1:18-20 Paul writes that the very same power it took

to raise Jesus from the dead is the power that works in the lives of Christians. So whatever the issue a believer in Jesus faces they know they can conquer because they are strengthened with this power beyond anything created by humankind.

Have you considered this as you struggle with the issues that face you? If you are a follower of Jesus you have access to amazing energy to face and conquer anything that life can confront you with today. This is why it is so important to read our Bibles and see how God's people lived above the sorrows and tragedies of life. Also we need to read Christian biographies to see how God's people through the ages have been made super-conquerors through Christ our Lord.

If your life is getting too much to endure, go back to Scripture and reread the portions that tell us that if we are Jesus people we are adequate to anything life can offer.

The great question for all of us to consider is, "Are you a disciple of Jesus?" Such a remarkable promise of victory is only for those who have given themselves to Jesus to be His sheep and to have Him as their Good Shepherd.

The invitation is for all to come and submit to Jesus and ask Him to give us peace with God. Have you come? What does Easter mean to you?

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