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What If?

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Series: 1 Corinthians

1 Corinthians 15:12-19

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Text

¹² Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. ¹⁵ We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

Introduction

What if? Have you ever asked that question? Sometimes it's a fun and lighthearted question – “What if Steve Bartman hadn't interfered with that foul ball in Game 6 of the NLCS in 2003 and Moises Alou had caught it?” But have you ever honestly asked it about larger, existential questions? Probably one of the most famous ‘what if’ scenarios depicted in film is found in the classic *It's a Wonderful Life*. There George Bailey gets to see what his town would have been like if he had never been born. What if he didn't exist? It was a depressing, alternate universe.

Have you ever wondered what if... God didn't exist? What if the Bible was just the human product of legends and disparate groups jockeying for power? What if Jesus was just a regular guy who was married to Mary Magdalene? What would that mean? Can you imagine it? I mean, really think out all the implications? Well, the Bible actually invites us to ask these kinds of questions, play it out in your mind. The Bible doesn't forbid us from asking questions and force us to just believe. No, it allows us to doubt, to try on the alternatives and see how they fit.

We've been going through the Apostle Paul's letter to the Corinthians as a church for about a year now. A couple weeks ago we came to ch. 15 and we're just going to be lingering in it through Easter. Easter is a traditional Christian celebration of the resurrection of Jesus. 1 Corinthians 15 is all about the resurrection. We've already looked at vv. 1-11 over the last couple weeks. There Paul asserted the fact of the resurrection of Jesus. And then he testified to the impact of that event on him personally. But today he asks us to conduct a thought experiment: what if... what if it didn't happen? What if Christ didn't literally come back to life and walk out of the grave, never to die again? What if? Let's honestly ask that question. Let's go there.

The Resurrection of Christ

But first, let's be crystal clear: the bodily resurrection of Jesus is the central claim of Christianity. This is what Paul has been unequivocally asserting in 1 Corinthians 15 up to this point. And he states it again at the beginning of v. 12 – “Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead...” And that is precisely what was being proclaimed – proclaimed by Peter, proclaimed by the other Apostles, proclaimed by a crowd of over 500 eye-witnesses, proclaimed by Jesus' skeptical half-brother James, proclaimed by Paul, and others. There were multiple people in the first half of the first century proclaiming that a crucified man was seen alive again on multiple occasions.

Now, in the Roman world 2,000 years ago it wasn't like this was something people thought was possible. It's not like – *Oh those ancients, they were so gullible.* “[E]verybody knew [back then that] dead people didn't and couldn't come back to bodily life,” just like we know today.¹ Nobody at Jesse Jackson's funeral this week was expecting him to sit up and climb out of his casket. And so, as N.T. Wright writes, “Christianity was born into a world where its central claim was known to be false. Many believed the dead were non-existent; outside Judaism, nobody believed in resurrection.”² The Greeks had a concept of the immortality of the soul, that there was an immaterial part of you that lived on after the body died, but they scoffed at the idea of resurrection (cf. Acts 17:32). Many of the Jews at that time had a notion of resurrection but they couldn't conceive of the idea of A.) a crucified Messiah and B.) a resurrection of just one person in the middle of history instead of all people at the end. And so the proclamation of Christ as raised from the dead was considered ridiculous by Jews and Greeks alike at that time. Yet nonetheless that is what Paul was insisting had happened. And now 2,000 years later Christianity is the largest religion in the world.

But what if, what if it's false? What if it isn't true? What if the resurrection of Jesus never happened? Where does that leave us? Let's honestly face that possibility this morning. What would that mean?

The Resurrection of the Dead

Let's keep going in v. 12. Evidently some people had found their way into the Christian community who were saying they didn't believe in the general resurrection – that the bodies of everyone who has died will be reconstituted at some future point in time. Paul continues, “Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead [and that was the message], [then] how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?” Who were these people who were holding to this position – that there is no resurrection of the dead? It's hard to say for sure.

As I already alluded to, there were Greek dualists who believed the physical body was a prison that the spirit needed to be liberated from. They didn't see any value in a future restoration of the body. Seeing as how Corinth was a Greek city, this is a strong candidate for these people who say there is no resurrection from the dead. They would hold that the goal of life was to escape this world and attain to some kind of disembodied, ethereal afterlife.

There are many people today, even in churches, who hold some form of this belief. There are, for example, what's called full-preterists who think that the Second Coming, the resurrection of the dead, and the final judgment (all interpreted spiritually) have already happened, in A.D. 70, and there's nothing more to expect in the future. And

there are others who may not have elaborate theological systems like that but just simply believe that when you die you go to heaven and that's all they really understand or talk about. Paul clearly is countering all those who operate that way here. He's saying – *No, no, no. The main Christian hope is being raised from the dead physically to live in a renewed, physical world one day.*

But is the Greek dualist exclusively or even primarily who Paul has in mind in this section? I'm not so sure. Some Greeks at the time thought this life was all there was (e.g. Epicureans and other non-Platonists). And we know from the Gospels and Acts that even among the Jews there was a sect called the Sadducees “who deny that there is a resurrection” (Lk. 20:27), or angels or spirits (Acts 23:8). In other words, there were ancient Materialists or Naturalists – people who thought that this world is all there is. It seems to me that several of the statements that Paul makes here are aimed at people who were sympathetic to this view – that everything is material and there's no supernatural, that death is the end.

This is the official position of the modern, western establishment today. I say official because though many hold to it on paper, they're still open to all kinds of eclectic spiritualities and superstitions and when people die they speak sentimentally of them as looking down on us from heaven and stuff like that. It's hard to be fully consistent as a naturalist. But that is very much a prevalent worldview today. And there are even people in the church that don't really think deeply about the claims of resurrection and a new world to come. A lot of people are drawn to Christianity for its morality or as a political action group for making their version of a better world come to be – whether right-wing Christian Nationalists or left-wing Liberation Theologians. Many are just in it for some kind of sociological benefits and sense of belonging. Many are using Christianity to try to get their best life now. And there is a growing movement of ‘cultural Christians’ (even some atheists like Richard Dawkins are using that term now to describe themselves; they don't buy into the resurrection and life after life after death, but they think Christianity does some good for civilization, or at least is not as bad as other religions and philosophies).

I think what Paul is doing here is engaging with people attached to the Corinthian church who were kind of like Sadducees. They didn't really take the idea of the resurrection of the dead at the end of this age and a new world to come all that seriously. Maybe they were okay with some spiritual talk, but they didn't really believe it. Christianity got them something they perceived as beneficial for the present life. It's hard to say exactly what that was. For the Sadducees in Jerusalem it was power. In Corinth at the time I don't think Christianity gave people social status, but it may have provided some kind of feeling of excitement or subjective peace or momentary relief or something like that. But Paul wants them to take a long, hard look at the implications of their philosophy. It's a helpful exercise for us today, whether we're avowed atheists or cultural Christians of some stripe or even believers. What if? What if there really is no bodily resurrection of the dead at all? What would that mean? Paul offers us some help. He says it would mean vanity, lies, futility, finality, and pitifulness.

Vanity

Vanity. Paul makes clear in v. 13 the inseparable connection between the general resurrection of the dead and the resurrection of Christ. “[I]f there is no resurrection of the

dead, then not even Christ has been raised.” The resurrection of Jesus is the first installment of the resurrection of everyone. It’s cut from the same cloth. But if there is not cloth, if there is no such thing as resurrection, then it is of course impossible that Jesus resurrected.

Then in v. 14 Paul makes us think – “What if Jesus is not resurrected?” And he answers unabashedly, “And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.” As someone else has put it, “Christian preaching and Christian faith are only as valid and credible as the resurrection message on which they are founded.”³ Paul’s not hiding the fact that if there is no resurrection in general, then there is no resurrection of Christ. And if there is no resurrection of Christ, Christianity completely collapses. As B.B. Warfield acknowledged, the resurrection is “the cardinal doctrine of our system: on it *all other doctrines hang*.”⁴ Or as another person has put it bluntly, “If the resurrection is false, Christianity is worthless.”⁵ It’s not just a nice religion, that can give you some sense of meaning. It is meaningless, pointless, empty, vain.

I should get out of the business of preaching (I could make more money in another business). And you should get the heck out of here. Go jogging on the lakefront on a day like today. See a therapist for some life coaching (your insurance might even pay for it). If the resurrection of Christ didn’t happen, this whole thing is ultimately hollow. All the money you give to missions is a total waste. All the songs you sing about hope are silly mind tricks. All the prayer in Jesus’ name is just talking into the air. All the relationships are merely transactional and utilitarian. And what I do when I give these talks is uttering utter nonsense.

And if Christianity is utterly vain, you’ve got to figure out your other options. You’ve got to find another religion based on better facts and better promises. Have you done the comparisons? You should. See how they stack up. Or you could stay away from organized religion and put together your own religion. Or you could put your faith in ‘Science’, believe in Naturalism, that all this came from nothing with nothing else outside of it, guided by nothing but random chance and natural selection, and headed toward nothing.

But don’t just accept that flippantly. Stare deeply into the abyss of nihilism. The late Friedrich Nietzsche and the late Arthur Schopenhauer paint the bleak picture well. It is all vanity. When matter is all there is, then nothing really matters. The world is meaningless, absurd. Even your own thoughts have no inherent meaning in an evolutionary biological framework, they are not real but are merely chemical reactions that are part of the whole chain of random events in the cosmos conditioned by millions of years of selfish genes winning out. Not only is there no reason for reason, but there can be no such thing as morality. As C.S. Lewis put it, “[I]f Naturalism is true, ‘I ought’ is the same sort of statement as ‘I itch.’”⁶ Any moral judgments are really just “irrationally conditioned impulse[s] which cannot be true or false any more than a vomit or a yawn.”⁷ Or as Fyodor Dostoevsky put it, “Everything is permitted and that’s that.”⁸

People like the late Albert Camus let themselves seriously consider these things; they stood on the precipice and didn’t avert their eyes. Camus said, “There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy.”⁹ Camus didn’t kill himself; he died in a car crash when he was 46. Existentialists like the late

John Paul Sartre said that the only alternative to suicide was to just assert yourself, make your own meaning, which for him included endorsing Marxist political violence and having an open relationship with the late Simone de Beauvoir that involved sexually exploiting minors. Why not? The late Philosopher Emil Cioran saw life as so pointless that there wasn't even a point in committing suicide. He said, "It's not worth the bother of killing yourself, because you always kill yourself too late."¹⁰ Most people are unwilling to, but it seems responsible to take what these people said seriously. Here's a good summary quote from Bertrand Russell:

Man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving;... his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms;... no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave;... all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and... the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins.¹¹

The Apostle Paul said that if Christ didn't rise from the dead, Christianity is completely invalidated and really everything is vanity of vanities. Think about it: it means there is no resurrection power at work in this world to intervene and redeem things. It's just a cold, closed universe cooling off until the lights go completely out. You're just left to create your own meaning. And maybe that sounds somewhat daring and exciting and livable if you're young and privileged, you have health and money. Sucks to be handicapped or poor, but you know – survival of the fittest. But money can't stop aging. You know, I just read that "[a]ssisted suicide now accounts for 1 in 20 Canadian deaths."¹² What happens when the Viagra eventually quits working and the money can't buy you friends or cure your cancer? *Oh, then I'll believe in the immortality of the soul; my soul will live on forever somewhere.* But what is that based on? What reason do you have to believe there's some dimension called heaven? If Christ hasn't actually come back from the dead, it would be pure speculation. A hope against hope. A blind leap in the dark.

If I was convinced that it was the case that Christ didn't conquer death, I don't know what would keep me from doing what one of my best friends is doing right now – trying as many drugs as he can, traveling to as many places as he can, and having as much sex with as many different people as he can. He was the best man in my wedding; I was the best man in his. He gave up his faith. His marriage ended. He's basically retired now and living in his car in order to be 'free'. He's been all over the world; sends me pictures from exotic places. He admitted to me recently that drugs and traveling have pretty much lost their appeal at this point, but there's still a few more sexual experiences he'd like to have. And then what? What's the point? Paul wants us to really consider – what if... what if there is no resurrection? Vanity.

Lies

And lies. Lies. Lies. Lies. Verse 15. Paul admits as much: if Christ has not been raised, “[w]e are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised.” Paul, James, the Twelve, Peter, the women... there were multiple people who claimed to have seen and touched and heard Jesus alive again. They all have to be liars, telling us they saw something that they didn’t. Which means this whole book is a fraud. Throw it out the window. It’s made up. It’s an attempt to dupe people, manipulate them. You can’t trust any of this. You shouldn’t give it any reverence as a holy book. You shouldn’t pick and choose parts you like – turn the other cheek or love your enemy. It’s all based on a bold-faced lie and written by liars!

And who can you trust, really? If it’s not true that Christ was dead, buried, and resurrected in accordance with the Scriptures and this hugely formative text for Western Civilization is dishonest, deceitful, and deceptive, who *are* you going to trust? What is truth, really? Is anyone telling it? Or is everyone is just spinning things to suit themselves? It’s all perspectival. No one ever tells it like it is.

Futility

Paul repeats the premise he’s inviting us to contemplate in v. 16 – “For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised.” He’s acknowledged that that would mean vanity and lies. And now he adds futility. He says in v. 17 – “And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile.” It’s a similar word to vain, but with perhaps a slightly different connotation. Futile indicates not only an emptiness of meaning, but an inability to accomplish anything. It doesn’t do anything for you.

Specifically, Paul follows this up with – “...and you are still in your sins.” Christianity posits that our greatest problem is sin, our proclivity and practice of rejecting or ignoring God in the world he created, not being or doing what he requires in his law. And Christianity promises that through the death of Christ, for those who put their faith in him their sins are both taken seriously and taken away from them. There is atonement and forgiveness. But if Christ just died on the cross and then his body decomposed, then how would we know it worked? His death would have been futile. Our faith in him would be futile. We’d still have the weight of sin upon us.

And really futility would characterize life in this world for everyone. Apart from a risen Savior who’s coming back to set all things right it’s all futile. There is no assurance of pardon. But there is still a sense of guilt. As much as an atheistic worldview has no basis for morality, humans are still incurably moralistic. So to my earlier suggestion that if Christ has not been raised I should seriously consider raping as many people as I can get away with and then blowing my brains out, some would object and say – *Oh, but being good is its own reward; it feels good to be good; it’s the best way to live.* A lot of people want to live on certain aspects of borrowed morality from Christianity, but only the parts they like, which means their morality is still self-serving and situational and there’s not any defensible basis for telling someone from another culture that their practices are wrong.

But then you still have the problem that non-Christians and even non-religious people can be extremely passionate about certain causes and outraged about certain injustices, and yet none of them lives up perfectly to even their own professed standards. And so you have to live with a sense of not quite measuring up, even to your own

expectations. And what do you do with that? There's no atonement in Jesus, so you have to somehow atone for yourself. For many this takes the form of working harder to be better, but how do you know it's ever enough? This is the basis of every other religion in essence. Good works outweighing bad. But you're on a treadmill, trying and trying, but not really getting anywhere. And that's the definition of futility. No resurrection, no forgiveness of sins, just striving to do enough good, but how much is enough?

And the good you do doesn't seem to really do anything. Whose life work has really made the world a better place? Some advances in some areas here and there, but this world is like trying to plug a leak in a dam – fill this hole here and another springs up over there. We haven't really ended slavery. You see ads at airports about reporting suspicion of human-trafficking. It's good that someone made that ad, but do they think they really think they are going to fix it in their lifetime, or that it will be eradicated eventually? All the people who have won Nobel Peace prizes haven't left behind a world without wars. How many armed conflicts are happening right now? Wipe out one terrorist cell, another pops up. What is the point?

What the Bible calls sin is an easily observable phenomenon. People are often liars, twisting the truth to bend it to their own desires. People hurt each other. And there is real evil in the world – child abuse, genocide... And if Christ has not been raised from the dead, there is no defeat of sin. There is no forgiveness available for the remorseful. And there is no justice coming for the impenitent. Did you know that the majority of murders in the City of Chicago go unsolved?? There is often no justice in this world. If Christ has not been raised, there will be no justice at all. Just a world of sin (that's pretty much indisputable) and no way to deal with it – no final justice and no forgiveness, just futility.

Finality

How are you enjoying this fun little thought experiment, tour of Pottersville? Kind of depressing, isn't it? *I thought I come to church to get encouragement.* Yes, ordinarily, but I'm not interested in giving out flimsy, baseless, wishful thinking, positivity that's afraid to ask the hard questions. And Paul's not done yet. Look at v. 18. If Christ is not raised from the dead, then not only does this life really suck, but “those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.” Vanity, lies, futility, and finality. That phrase ‘fallen asleep’ “had been used as a polite euphemism among Greeks for centuries, but had come to serve as an allusion to the hope of the resurrection among [the early] Christians.”¹³ Christians found it an apt metaphor for those who died in faith. It was like they were just falling asleep, but they would wake back up.

But if Christ didn't get up, then all your loved ones who lived and died in faith are just gone. You will never see them again. My grandpa died over 10 years ago. My memories of him are already starting to fade. But I do remember visiting him at his nursing home. He was in a wheelchair and I was telling him about a sermon I was going to be preaching (or had preached) about hope. And he was stiff from the Parkinsons, but he tried to turn his head up to me and he said, “I have hope.” He's rotting in a cemetery in Fairmount, IN, next to James Dean and I'll never see him again. Last night my dad went into the ER because he was dizzy and couldn't breathe. We thought he might be having a heart attack. I texted him goodbye, just in case. And if Christ has not been raised and he died last night, that would have been goodbye.

If there is no resurrection, then there is a finality to death. That's it. There's nothing more. When you die, you're done. I have another atheist friend who's about 15 years older than me and he admits that that's terrifying. This is such a short life, even if you live to be 100. It comes and goes. And there are beauties and joys that leave us wanting more. And so much heartache. And if it's all a brief uphill period full of anticipation, followed by down-hill, picking up speed, falling apart, crashing into oblivion... what a tragedy. How sad. Or worse yet, if there is some kind of immortality of the soul and there is a just God, but there is no Savior who takes away our sins, then there is the finality of eternal punishment for sins. Maybe that's what Paul's getting at here. But either way at the end of the day, to borrow from one person I read, "Resurrection means [the possibility of an] endless hope, but no resurrection means [a] hopeless end."¹⁴

Pitifulness

What if... what if there is no resurrection of the dead, Jesus is dead and all is vain, everything you've ever heard in Christianity is based on a lie (not a well-meaning mistake, but an intentional lie), and it's all futile, and final (there is no future hope), then what a pitiful, pitiful situation we're in. Do you see what Paul says to the Corinthian Christians in v. 19? "If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied."

This is one of the ways in which Pascal's wager doesn't really work. Pascal's wager says, "Live as if God exists and if it turns out he doesn't, you haven't lost anything. But if you live as if he doesn't exist and it turns out he does, you've lost everything." There are some elements of wisdom here. But we have to be honest: there are many sacrifices you make in this life as a Christian. And if it turns out that there is nothing to it, then you really did get the short end of the stick.

Leon Morris explains – "While Paul never minimizes the compensations the Christian has in this life in the way of peace within and the like, yet it is only common sense to see that, if this world is all there is, anybody is better off than the Christian."¹⁵ Paul was beaten, stoned, whipped, jailed, ridiculed, and suffered greatly for his insistence that he saw the resurrected Jesus. Subsequent Christians were treated like the scum of the earth, persecuted, fed to the lions in the Coliseum for their faith. If it turns out that Christ was a quack, and his followers pulled off the biggest hoax the world has ever seen, then you should feel very sorry for poor, ordinary Christians. It's so pathetic. You should try to get them to stop believe in this delusion. Save their tithe money and buy a boat to get some more pleasure out of these few fleeting days of existence. Polycarp, Cyprian, Jan Hus, Hugh Latimer, Nate Saint, Jim Elliot... idiots, fools, pitiful morons.

If Jesus never rose from the dead, then there is nothing respectable in Christianity. There is nothing salvageable. You can't revise it into some Liberal form that is just about being nice. And you can't look at those poor people who genuinely believe this stuff and admire them for their faith or sacrifice or kindness. You should shake your head at them and feel sorry for them.

Christians of all people are most to be pitied. But we're all in a pretty pitiable state. We should feel sorry for the human race. One of my daughters looked at our dog recently and said, "I feel sorry for him. He gets all excited every morning to get a treat, but then he just lays around all day with nothing to do and sleeps for most of it until he

gets another treat the next morning.” She didn’t say this, but he’s 13 and he’ll die soon and that’s it. And if there is no resurrection that’s our sad existence too. We’re just like the animals. Born, reproduce if we get lucky, and die. Except we seem to be more conscious than most species of the existential angst and suffering inherent in this world. It’s pitiful.

Conclusion

Ooof. So we’ve been looking at 1 Corinthians 15:12-19, which asks us to imagine, “imagine there’s no heaven... no hell below us. Above us only sky. [Just] livin’ for today.” Can you picture it? What do you think of it? We’ve entered into a Twilight Zone where Jesus has not been raised from the dead. How does it feel? What if? What if it’s reality? There’s no meaning, just vanity. There’s no one to trust, only lies. There’s no purpose, but rather futility. There’s no future, simply finality. Nothing to admire, merely pitifulness. In short, what we’ve seen today from this text is just this: **if Christ didn’t rise from the dead there is no point in living.** We’re all “having no hope and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12). It’s just a sad, senseless world and tortured life filled with longings that never quite get fulfilled. And if you think I’m being too pessimistic, just wait. Live a little longer and be brutally honest, don’t just numb yourself with distraction. **If Christ didn’t rise from the dead there is no point in living.**

Sit in that for a bit...

Blaise Pascal had another approach to apologetics. He said that Christians should make non-Christians wish it were true, and then show them that it is.¹⁶ I think a form of this can take helping people wish that naturalism were *not* true, and then showing them that Christianity is. I do not want to live in a world where there is only vanity, lies, futility, finality, and pitifulness if I don’t have to. It’s awful. It sure would be nice if there was an all-wise, all-powerful infinite God orchestrating a master plan that involved interjecting himself into a fallen world to bring redemption. Guess what? There is! And it’s not just wishful thinking.

J. Gresham Machen said, “If any one thing must be clear... it is that Christianity at the beginning was founded squarely upon an account of things that had happened, upon a piece of news, or in other words, upon a ‘gospel.’”¹⁷ We’ve been showing the last two weeks and we will continue to do so as we go through 1 Corinthians 15, but there are true and rational reasons for accepting this. To dip just a little bit into next week’s text – “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead.”

That’s the reason why Christian preaching and faith has not been in vain. It has changed so many people. There is truth that can be found and trusted, not everything is a lie. And it means that not everything is futile. Your sins can be forgiven. And death is not final, there is a secured future where all our longings will be fulfilled and all our losses will be remedied. And Christians are not to be pitied but envied for their hope, both for this life and the life to come.

And it’s a hope that can be yours too. If you shudder at the world without God and turn to him and apologize for trying to live as if he doesn’t exist and trust that Jesus died on the Cross for your sins, and rose again for your justification, and will come again to make your lowly body like his resurrected one to dwell forever with him, then you will be saved...

The Lord's Table

This sermon was addressed originally to the people at Immanuel Baptist Church, Chicago, Illinois, by Pastor Nathan Carter on Sunday morning, March 8, 2026. It is not meant to be a polished essay, but was written to be delivered orally. The mission of Immanuel is to be a multiplying community that enjoys and proclaims the Good News of Christ in the great city of Chicago.

End Notes:

¹ N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 316.

² *Ibid.*, 35.

³ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 755.

⁴ B.B. Warfield, "The Resurrection of Christ a Historical Fact," in *Selected Shorter Writings*, Vol. 1, ed., John E. Meeter (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1970), 178.

⁵ Craig Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 303.

⁶ C.S. Lewis, *Miracles* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996 [1947]), 56.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁸ Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage Classics, 1991), 649.

⁹ Albert Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus" (1942).

¹⁰ www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/68189.Emil_M_Cioran

¹¹ Bertrand Russell, *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell, 1903-1959*, qtd. in David F. Wells, *Above All Earthly Powers: Christ in a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 180.

¹² Kristy Etheridge, "Death Is Not a Right" in *Christianity Today* (March/April 2026), 86.

¹³ Ciampa and Rosner, 758.

¹⁴ David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 721.

¹⁵ Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975 [1958]), 212.

¹⁶ See Blaise Pascal, *Pensées and Other Writings: A New Translation*, trans. Honor Levi (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995), 12.

¹⁷ J. Gresham Machen, *What Is Faith?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 149.