



Life Guide

applying God's Word to life

Jesus Reigns!
November 22nd, 2020

1 Corinthians 15:20-28

²⁰ But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ²² For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. ²³ But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. ²⁴ Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷ For he “has put everything under his feet.” Now when it says that “everything” has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. ²⁸ When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.

1. Share with the group a funny 2020 meme that you've seen. How well does the meme capture the “mood” in our country? Personally, I found the “Ground Hog’s Day” meme the funniest. Like the movie to which it refers, we seem to be doing the “same day” over and over again. The news has been unchanging: Number of Coronavirus cases, hospitalizations, deaths, etc. In the movie, Bill Murray’s character lost heart, living in this hopeless scenario from which he couldn’t escape. I think that captures the mood of a lot of people these days.
2. Read the verses prior to our text (vv.12-17). What happens if Christ has not been raised from the dead? What is the significance of word “But” in verse 20? Paul explains that if

Christ has not been raised, then he’s a liar, we are still guilty of sin, subject to eternal punishment, and all those who have died trusting in Christ are eternally lost. With one little word, “But,” Paul takes all of that bad news and turns it upside down! “Forget everything I just said! Christ has been raised!”

3. Agree or disagree and why? Christ is a 2nd Adam. Agree! In fact, in 1 Corinthians 15:45, Paul refers to Jesus as the “last” Adam. Paul presents a wonderful piece of logic here. If someone thinks it foolish to suggest that Jesus’ resurrection can impact others, just think about Adam. From this one man’s sin came a race of sinners. All people inherit Adam’s sin. This is evident in the selfish ways that appear in the youngest of children. They don’t have to learn to be selfish. Adam’s impact is undeniable. It stands to reason that if one man can bring death to the human race, another man, the God-man Jesus, can bring life. In this way, Jesus is like Adam. There is a notable difference. Adam’s sin infects everyone (except Jesus). The life that comes through the risen Jesus is received only through faith (believers are referred to in our text as “those who belong to Jesus” (verse 23). While it is true that all the dead will rise on the last day, unbelievers will not rise “to live.” They will rise as the “living dead” for all eternity.
4. In what way is Jesus the “firstfruits” of those who will rise? Paul takes a picture from agriculture. When the first fruit ripens, it’s just the beginning of much more to come. Jesus is the first to rise, but not the last. Paul uses this picture to demonstrate that what “happened” to Jesus won’t happen to him alone. This is more than an interesting event in history. This is a life-giving event. I find it interesting that the Old Testament believers were to offer to God the “firstfruits of their harvest (Exodus 23:16-19) as an expression of trust. Rather than keeping the firstfruits for themselves, thinking that if something goes wrong, this may be all that they get – God told his people, “Give me the firstfruits” and trust me to care for you. We have a similar “invitation” here. God inspires Paul to refer to Jesus as the firstfruits of those that will rise. God is

“inviting” us to trust that he will care for us by raising us from the dead.

5. What is meant by all “dominion, authority and power” in verse 24? These words are a reference to the evil that works against God and his church both seen and unseen. Satan leads and coordinates the efforts of these enemies. The words that Paul uses remind us that we are not to trifle with these enemies. They are extremely powerful. In the sermon I mentioned those unseen demons that Satan leads. Though we cannot see or hear them, the threat is real and constant. Satan also uses forces in this world. It may be a government unfriendly to the church. This also includes the enemy within us – our sinful nature that hates Jesus and loves sin.
6. Paul says that Christ “must” reign. Why “must” he? The “must” here is not in the sense that Jesus “got stuck” with the job. In love he took up the mission on which God the Father sent him. He volunteered to save us. The same love that brought him to our world to live perfectly in our place, die obediently as our Substitute, and then rise to who himself triumphant over sin and death, this same love compels him to “reign.” He “must” reign to finish what he started. Unless he is ruling all things for us, we will not benefit from his saving work. Satan will get the best of us and we will still be lost. So Jesus rules to bring us safely to himself. This is all about the love of a Shepherd-King who tends his flock, defending us from all evil, seen and unseen.
7. Agree or disagree and why? Jesus defeated death when he rose from the grave? Someone might say, “Disagree, because God’s people still die. And it says in verse 26 that “the last enemy to be destroyed is death.” You can also “Agree” with the statement. As Paul points out later in the chapter (15:55-57), Jesus has already taken the “sting” out of death. Because his resurrection proves that he paid the wages of our sin in full, death cannot hurt us anymore. In the sermon I put it this way: Jesus has turned death into a servant. Once death delivered the sinner to everlasting punishment. Now through faith in Jesus,

death deliver’s the believer’s soul to Jesus’ waiting arm in heaven. Yes, we still die, but the grave is not a dead end – it’s a “through street” to heaven. On the last day, death will be destroyed in the sense that when the dead in Christ are raised, they will never die again. Death will be swallowed up (1 Corinthians 15:54). It will be a thing of the past. Death will be put to death.

8. Read Acts 8:1,4,31; 11:19. Explain how King Jesus uses the efforts of his church’s enemies to bless his church? What encouragement does this give you? Can you cite any examples of how Jesus may be doing the same thing in 2020? In the early days of the New Testament church, a persecution drove the believers (primarily Jewish converts to Christianity) from Jerusalem and scattered them throughout the world. You must know that Satan was behind the scheme thinking that he could ruin the fledgling church. Jesus took these efforts and used them to spread his church. The Great Commission that Jesus gave his church was carried out in a powerful way. The persecuted Christians carried the gospel with them and proclaimed it to Jews and Gentiles alike. The church grew at a rapid pace and in wonderful ways! Jesus has done the same thing throughout history in a variety of ways. He’s doing the same thing today. We may not be able to cite any examples. That’s fine. We don’t have to know details. It is enough to know Jesus and his unfailing love. But...someone might offer a thought about the pandemic. It has been extremely difficult for us not to be able to gather for worship the way we did before. The situation “forced” us to “broadcast” our worship service with “livestream” technology. In these past months, we have heard from people near and far that we have reached with the gospel. Straying members have returned to worship. A few weeks ago an unchurched college student in Iowa who is from Appleton, “found” our worship service online. She wrote to tell us that she wants to be a member of Mount Olive. She enrolled in our Bible 101 class and shared our service with her unchurched parents. None of this is what we would choose for ourselves. We don’t want things to stay as they are. But even in the midst of all of this, God is at work in ways that we cannot

imagine. He is busy ruling. We can trust his plans for us and his church even if we can't comprehend everything he is doing.

9. Agree or disagree and why? It is a sin to put our trust in science to end the current pandemic. Agree, if science becomes a god to me – an idol that I worship, thinking it can solve all my problems. Science will never provide a way for me to atone for my sin. Disagree, if I see science as a wonderful gift from God. If I acknowledge that he is Ruler of all things, giving knowledge and insight to people that we might be blessed, then it is not wrong for me to look to science to find cures for illness and prevention from disease. The point I attempted to make in the sermon is that we must not abuse the blessings God gives us by putting our trust in the gifts rather than the Giver.
10. What Bible truth from the text and/or sermon do you find most comforting. Think of someone in your life with whom you will share these thoughts. I hope I captured, even to some small degree, the great comfort I received from our sermon text this week. I saw the text and an extension and expansion of the truths presented the week before in our Saints Triumphant worship. It is so comforting to me to know that Jesus is ruler over death and over life. He dries my tears with the truth that death will not be the “end” of me or those I love. At the same time, mine is not simply a “pie in the sky” religion. The One who conquered death is with me in the “here and now” calming my fears as I face life in a sin-infested world. I have so many people in my life with whom to share these thoughts. This year has taken a toll on nearly everyone I know and love. God gives me this encouragement to share with everyone: Jesus Reigns! He cares for us. He doesn't get tired of caring for us. He's busy at work to bless us even when we don't know “what he's up to.” In the same love that rescued us from our sins, he's working to bring us safely home to heaven. “He's got this!”

Christ's Resurrection Assures Our Resurrection **1 Corinthians 15:20–28**

²⁰But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ²²For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. ²³But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. ²⁴Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. ²⁵For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷For he “has put everything under his feet.” Now when it says that “everything” has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. ²⁸When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.

But away with all of this doubt and unbelief and the tragic end of idle dreams! “Christ has indeed been raised from the dead.” Easter is a fact not to be denied. It is a reality on which to rest a sure and certain hope. Christ himself is “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” Like the first sheaf of grain God's Old Testament people were to offer to the Lord as a thank offering for the rest of the harvest that was ready to be gathered in, so Christ is “the first in the harvest of those who are sleeping in their graves” (Beck). “Because I live, you also will live” (John 14:19) is our Lord's promise.

As death came by one man, so life has also come by one man. Because Adam died, all mankind must die, including believers; because Christ rose from the dead, all who believe in him as their Lord of life will rise from the dead.

For Christ the resurrection took place almost 20 centuries ago; for those who have believed in him, the resurrection will take place when he returns in glory on judgment day. The first sheaf was from a grave outside Jerusalem on the first Easter morning

nearly two thousand years ago; the harvest will be from graves all over the world when our risen Lord will appear on clouds of glory, and his own will rise from their graves and will be caught up to meet him in the skies.

Since Paul has been speaking only of believers who will rise to eternal life, the *then* in his statement, “Then the end will come,” refers to our Lord’s second coming, when Christians will be raised from the dead. “Then,” at his second coming, he will hand over “the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.” All “dominion, authority and power” will be destroyed when, at one moment, the judgment trumpets will sound, and the curtain will be rung down on this world’s history. That will be the end of the godless, sinful rule of mankind over this planet. The ungodly will also be brought back to life, but not to glory. They will meet their Judge, who will consign them and all their works to eternal damnation.

Christ will turn over his kingdom to his heavenly Father on that day. This will come as no surprise to those who know that the Son was sent by his Father to accomplish the salvation of the world and to establish his kingdom, the church. When the last chapter of human history has been written, he will offer to his heavenly Father the trophies of his victory and the spoils of his triumph. Every enemy, even that last great enemy, death, will have been overcome and put under his feet. With his mission accomplished, his victory won, the Son will turn over his kingdom to his Father and will reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit eternally.

A further word about “everything under his feet.” It is clear, Paul points out, that “everything” does not include “God himself, who put everything under Christ.” But the Son will place himself under God. He will be “subject to” the Father, who put everything, except himself, under his Son.

As the God-man, who took on human flesh and blood and became one of us, he can place himself under his Father. As the

eternal Son of God, he is equal to the Father and will reign with him as his equal. Both John 10:30, “I and the Father are one,” and John 14:28, “The Father is greater than I,” are true. Such is the mystery and the wonder of the Trinity and of the God-man, Jesus Christ.

Where, now, are the “reasonable” arguments of those Corinthians who said there was no resurrection of the dead? The resurrection of Jesus Christ and of those who die in the Lord is too great a miracle and a mystery for the small mind of unregenerate man to grasp or to destroy.¹

¹ Toppe, C. (1987). [*1 Corinthians*](#) (pp. 146–149). Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Pub. House.