

SERMON: THEY NEVER STOPPED TALKING ABOUT IT

Sunday, April 12, 2020

1st Corinthians 6:14

And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.

INTRODUCTION

In the early years of the church it was extremely dangerous to be a Christian. At worst you would be stoned to death; at best you would be ridiculed. The Jews saw the early church as a heretical, left wing radical cult. The Romans saw them as trouble makers that should be exterminated. The Greeks saw them as a bunch of silly and uncultured weirdos. Yet, despite the persecution and ridicule, they continued to proclaim the gospel message. They continued, without reservation or hesitation, to tell the story of Jesus' sojourn on earth. Of the many salient features of Jesus' earthly ministry, they seemed to emphasize the resurrection over and above all others. Peter spent extensive time on the resurrection in his sermon on the day of Pentecost. He referred to Psalm 16:5-11. Peter's Pentecost sermon is recorded in Acts 2:25-32. The Apostle Paul emphasized the resurrection in his first recorded sermon. He also referred to Psalm 16:5-11. Paul's sermon is recorded in Acts 13:32-38. Paul emphasized the resurrection in his discourse on Mars Hill. The resurrection was so significant that Paul wrote extensively about it in his letters. In fact, chapter fifteen of Paul's letter, we now call 1st Corinthians, covers the resurrection in minute details. Why was the resurrection so central and so fundamental to the early church? Why was it so important? Why do more than three hundred verses in the New Testaments refer to the resurrection? The answer: because the resurrection of Jesus gives us hope. To quote Peter, "It gives us living hope." The early church did not lose hope, despite difficulties. We must not lose hope in our present situation.

Exposition

1. The resurrection proves there is life beyond the grave
2. The resurrection makes Jesus our "Role Master"
(He is the "firstfruits" of them that slept)
3. The resurrection gives the blood of Jesus its sustaining power
(Because of the resurrection, the blood will never lose its power)
4. The ultimate victory belongs to God
(The score at the half-time does not matter-
Only the final score matters)

Closing Thoughts

I don't know who said it first, but it is worth repeating.

"The miracles of Jesus manifest the compassion of God.

The parables of Jesus reveal the wisdom of God.

The discourses of Jesus unfold the truth of God.

The crucifixion of Jesus shows the love of God.

The resurrection of Jesus proclaims the power of God!"

Give God glory! Give God all the glory!

Theological/Historical Note

"Firstfruits," as the name implies, were the initial harvest of the season. It was that portion of the fruits that ripen first. According to Mosaic Law, the agricultural "firstfruits" were to be given to God in the form of offerings and sacrifices. Please read Exodus 23:16-17; Exodus 23:19; Leviticus 23:10, Leviticus 23:17 and Deuteronomy 26:1-11. It was an act of allegiance to God the giver of all. No exact quantity was commanded, but it was left to the spiritual and moral sense of each individual. The "firstfruits" were brought to Jerusalem during the festival of Pentecost. Over time, another function was added for convenience and efficiency. The merchants and traders who would purchase the bounty of the harvest would evaluate the agricultural produce and would award contracts for the entire crop based on the "firstfruits." It was their counterpart of wheat or pork bellies futures today. Let me say that again: the entire harvest was judged and appraised by the "firstfruit" samples. Jesus is referred to as the "firstfruits" of them that slept, because all Christians shall all be judged by His righteousness. Please read 1st Corinthians 15:20-23. It's like sitting in a physics class with Einstein and the entire class will get the same grade as Einstein. You can surmise that everybody will get an A+. Paul was not referring to the chronological first, but the evaluative first.

End Note

The Columbia University sociologist, Robert King Merton, coined the term "role model." We have a choice to emulate or not to emulate a role model. Jesus, however, is our "Role Master." He is the master of our lives and in the end, if we are saved, we will be like Him. Please read 1st John 3:2.

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