TITLE: He Has Risen!

TEXT: Isaiah 9:6; Jn. 3:16; Ephesians 2:8; 1st Co. 15:12-19 & 11:24-28; Phil. 3:10-14; 1st John 3:1-3

INTRODUCTION: Jesus Has Risen! Do you realize that these are the three most important words that have ever been spoken?

 Scripture is filled with important words and important statements.

 **Isaiah 9:6 “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given and His name will be called wonderful councilor, mighty God, everlasting father....”**

 **Jn. 3:16 “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that who ever believes in Him should not perish but have ever lasting life....”**

**Ephesians 2:8 “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God”**

 All of these are extremely important words..

 They all offer wonderful promise. They contain tremendous truths.... They are all important words...

 But if it were not for the words**-"He Has Risen"**, all these other words that this book contain would mean absolutely nothing and in fact would be all but worthless...

 There were those in Paul’s day who believed in God but didn't believe in a resurrection of the dead....

 Paul has this to say to them....

 **1Cor 15:12 (NIV) 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 to be pitied more than all men.**

 Evidently, there were some who may have believed in, even accepted the gospel message, that Jesus was the Son of God and that He came and died on a cross for their sin, and that the only way that they could find forgiveness for sin and acceptance by God was through belief in Him..

 Yet they didn't believe in a resurrection.

 What Paul was trying to impress upon them was that if there is no resurrection than there is no hope…

 Think about it? What possible good is there in being a Christian, in believing in God, if everything ends for us at the Grave?

 **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.**

 I mean, why have faith in something that is not true?

 Why have faith in a lie?

**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 to be pitied more than all men.**

 Look at this from Paul’s perspective....

 Paul didn't go from church to Church in a brand new Cadillac. He didn't even have an old chariot.

 His relationship with Christ didn't make Paul a rich man.

 Once, when in prison, Paul writes to Timothy and asks him to bring him some of his most treasured possessions that he has left at friend’s house. Was it a TV or a laptop or his collection of valuable gladiator cards?

No!

**2Tim 4:13 (NIV) When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.**

 Bring me my old coat and my Bible!

 Just listen to what this life, "in Christ" had to offer Paul...

**2Cor 11:24 (NIV) Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one.**

**25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea,**

**26 I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers.**

**27 I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.**

**28 Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.**

If there is no resurrection of the dead, If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men!

 If there is no resurrection, then why on earth would we be willing to go through this?

 If there is no resurrection, then we should be pitted for the fools that we are!

 If there is no resurrection then I am still lost in my sin and you are still lost in yours!

**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 his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.**

  **But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead!**

 It was over 2000 years ago that the statement of all statements was made..

 **Matt 28:5 (NIV) The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified.**

**6 He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.**

 Church, the fact is undeniable! God established it by many witnesses..

 Jesus first appeared to the women and then to Peter and then to the Emmaus disciples and then to the 11 disciples and then to 500 people all at one time!

 Why? To establish the fact that He indeed had risen from the dead!

 This was such an established fact in the fist century that even the Jewish historian Josephus recorded it...

From the works of Josephus

The Antiquities of the Jews, Book 18 Ch 3.

*"Now, there was about this time, Jesus, a wise man, If it be lawful to call Him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works--a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the gentiles. He was (the ) Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principle men among us, had condemned Him to the cross, those that loved Him at first did not forsake him, for He appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning Him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from Him, are not extinct to this day."*

Josephus was not a religious man. He was a secular historian that recorded historical events.

 God even went outside of Scripture to establish the resurrection as fact!

 Church, Jesus has risen! These are important words! This is good news!

**20 But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.**

Firstfruit=**536 aparche {ap-ar-khay'}**

**2) to take away the firstfruits of the productions of the earth which was offered to God. The first portion of the dough, from which sacred**

**loaves were to be prepared. Hence term used of persons consecrated to God for all time.**

 Jesus resurrection from the dead was the firstfruit,

 the first portion from which all other portions come.

 Through Jesus, we will be resurrected to eternal life, a life eternally consecrated to God for all of time.

 Church, He has risen! These are important words!

 Because He has risen, we who believe in Him will one day also!

 This is a promise established in fact.

 This is the blessed hope that Scripture speaks of for the believer.

 This is the goal that Christians have pressed on toward ever sense the tomb was found empty and the angel declared **"He is not here! He has risen!**

**Phil 3:10 (NIV) I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,**

**11 and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.**

**12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.**

**13 Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,**

**14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.**

 **I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.**

**I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.**

 What is it that we are to take hold of that is the reason that Jesus has taken hold of us?

 What is the goal that we are to press on toward?

 What is the prize that God is calling us heavenward to receive in Christ Jesus?

 It is the resurrection!

 As a Christian, our ultimate goal, the ultimate prize that we are to press on toward is to be raised from the dead into the fullness of resurrected, eternal life just as Jesus was raised from the dead to the fullness of resurrected, eternal life.

 The way that we achieve that goal, the way that we obtain that prize, is simply to come to the foot of the cross for the forgiveness of our sin and accept the sacrifice that God Himself has provided for us, to invite Jesus into our heart and allow Him to be the Lord and savior of our life, and then to go on from that point allowing Him to live His life through us.....

 I want to close with this promise, this great statement of faith, this morning....

 **1Joh 3:1 (NIV) How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.**

**2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.**

**3 Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.**

**What we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him!**

 Is this your hope, the goal, the prize that you are pressing on toward this morning?

 That when Jesus appears, you will become like He is now....

 How is Jesus now? He has been raised into eternal glory with a resurrected body that will never again experience pain, suffering or death..

 He dwells united with the father and the Spirit.

Scripture speaks of this fulfillment in the life of the believer in:

**Revelation 21:1-5(NIV)**  **1Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.**

**2I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.**  **3And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.**  **4He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”**  **5He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”**

This is what Christ has secured for us when He rose from the dead..

 Have you secured this hope for your life today? Have you embraced Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior? Are you living your life anticipating the resurrection?

 This morning we are going to celebrate that which Christ has secured for us, a resurrection into eternal life, by sharing communion together....

 **1Cor 11:23 (NIV) For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread,**

**24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."**

**25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."**

**26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.**

**27 Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.**

**28 A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.**

**29 For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.**

**30 That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.**

 This is an open communion and all are invited to partake of communion this morning.

 We are admonished in scripture to; examine ourselves before we eat of the bread and drink of the cup of the Lord.

 I think that this self examination is best described by King David in--

**Psal 139:23 (NIV) Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.**

**24 See if there is any offensive way in me,**

**and lead me in the way everlasting.**

 So before we partake of communion this morning, I am going to ask Pam to come to the piano and as she plays, I encourage you to just be still before the Lord and ask Him to search your heart and prepare it for what we are about to do...

 (chorus--Change my heart Oh God--

 Would Randy and Gary come up and help serve---

(Serve bread-hold your portion till all is served and we will partake together)

**1Cor 11:23 : The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."**

(pray)

**25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."**

**26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.**

(You may partake of the cup as you are served)

Close in prayer…