

## Scripture Reading

### 1 Corinthians 15:20-34

*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.”[a] 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.*

*29 Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them? 30 And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour? 31 I face death every day—yes, just as surely as I boast about you in Christ Jesus our Lord. 32 If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus with no more than human hopes, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised,*

*“Let us eat and drink,  
for tomorrow we die.”[b]*

*33 Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.”[c] 34 Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame.*

Footnotes:

1 Corinthians 15:27 Psalm 8:6

1 Corinthians 15:32 Isaiah 22:13

1 Corinthians 15:33 From the Greek poet Menander

## **Morning Message**

### **#3 - “Resurrection & Your Lifestyle”**

This past week thousands of people could not finish a race. Chaos, confusion and worry replaced the anticipated feelings of completion & victory.

- Despite \$300 entry fees & months of dedicated training,
- despite the best running shoes their money could buy and a carbo-loading meal the night before,
- despite well-coordinated logistics and the encouragement of family & friends, even strangers along the Marathon route, thousands of people could not finish the race.

Because of the free will of two men,

- people died,
- people were crippled,
- people were bruised & terrorized, and
- the runners, together with the people of Massachusetts, the US and the world, grieved at a time we all expected to celebrate the human spirit and personal accomplishment.

This week we shared, in varying degrees, the human dilemma; that we are broken and vulnerable; a people unable to insure that a race will finish well. And despite yesterday’s sigh of relief with the death and capture of the bombing suspects, we look to tomorrow, we look to next month, we look to next year’s Patriot’s Day running of the Boston Marathon and we pause and wonder.

How will we live tomorrow, in light of the truth about our brokenness and vulnerability reiterated so graphically this past week?

- Will we further retreat from life; seeking a salvation in isolation?
- Will we lose any hope we once had and just give into the *“Let’s eat and drink, for tomorrow we die”* mentality?
- Will we find new hope to keep going through new training, new technology, new surveillance, and new strategies?
- Or will we recognize what God offers us today; that the hope we need to live for tomorrow can be found in Jesus’ resurrection; a hope that can disarm the most corrupted of hearts, even as it fills us with the courage needed to live a new life offered to us through Jesus.

Beginning with Easter Sunday and through the month of April we are celebrating how Jesus’ resurrection has made all things new. And that includes us:

**2 Corinthians 5:17.**

*... if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:  
The old has gone, the new is here!*

Next week we will be exploring the wonder of God’s promises regarding our future resurrected bodies, but (TS) today we celebrate how Jesus’ resurrection changes how we live life today. The first change I want to touch on is a big one:

**1. Living resurrection-life means that Christ has put to death your sin.**

It is purely by God’s gracious timing that today’s message coordinated with Benjamin’s baptism, for it is in this sacred act of water that we find a strong symbolic truth describing the Christian life; the resurrected life. For whether we come as infants or adults, to be sprinkled or immersed, the scriptures ask:

## Romans 6:3-10

.... don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. (Romans 6 goes on to say)

<sup>5</sup> For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. <sup>6</sup> For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— <sup>7</sup> because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

<sup>8</sup> Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. <sup>9</sup> For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. <sup>10</sup> The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

This morning's baptism has reminded us that living "resurrection-life" means that Christ has put to death our sin. If you believe that, and walk in the guidance of His Spirit, you can right now walk away from any and everything sinful in your life!

What comes to mind?

With what are you wrestling these days?

What addiction, predispositions, thoughts & actions, keep you from standing before Holy God? Whatever they are, Jesus Christ took all those things with Him to the cross, and there they died with Him. In God's eyes you stand before him as does Christ; holy & righteous.

And new life in Christ is offered to all people (Gospel we get to share!); a life free from the sins which once brought condemnation and eternal separation from God. It is offered, and it awaits our free will to decide.

In the Gospel of Matthew we are told that at that moment when Jesus died on the cross, not only did the great 60 foot tall curtain split in two, a barrier that separated people from God's holy presence, but also that:

### **Matthew 27:51b-53**

*The earth shook, the rocks split<sup>52</sup> and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life.<sup>53</sup> They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.*

Do you realize the effect that Christ's death and resurrection has upon humanity? It's as if we too were dead in our sins, lying in those very tombs, but suddenly the tomb opens and we are made alive!

What would you do if your tomb opened and you were freed from sin?

Would you stay in that tomb rationalizing "I'm died" and "I'm stinky"?

Would you willfully continue to live in your stinky sin, or would you come out into a new day, a new opportunity?

Would you recognize the new life God gives you through Jesus?

call it a "redo"; a "mulligan"; and "second chance".

A pastor-friend of mine planted a Covenant Church in Colorado, and he nicknamed this church "The Church of the Second-Chance". What a great description of what resurrection-life in Christ is all about!!

Living resurrection-life means that Christ has put to death your sin. By God's grace and mercy you are a forgiven person able to live a new life; a life devoted to the One who set you free:

*The death he died, he died to sin once for all;  
but the life he lives, he lives to God.*

Are you living life in the excitement of & the opportunities offered by Jesus' resurrection? Resurrection makes all the difference, even right now in our lives.

A second life-blessing of God's gracious work in Christ is that:

**2. Living resurrection-life means you will have the courage to face whatever comes your way.**

I am sure that as this past week unfolded you found opportunities to cry and to cheer; to grieve loss and feel compassion for families and for the wounded. I'm glad we have opportunity after church to act upon those feelings in ways that those hurting might be comforted.

One thing that caught my eye & ear this past week happened just before a Bruin's hockey game. Do you know what I'm talking about? A well-loved singer, Rene Rancourt, had asked to sing the National Anthem, but within seconds he went from soloist to the conductor of a 16,000 person choir who sang our National Anthem like I never heard it before. (It's worth a visit to YouTube if you missed it.)

And as these 16,000 fans sang, the final chorus jumped out at me; where we sing about our flag still waving "o'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave". And at that moment a truth found a whole new dimension for me. For

while I've long recognized and appreciated that we are a free country because of the courage of many, the truth is we can only experience freedom when we have courage to live as free people.

Do you know what I'm saying? You can live among the "free" in the United States of America, but if you live in fear you are not really free are you. You'd be like a resident of Watertown who had to stay home with doors locked all day Friday, waiting for the S.W.A.T. team to inspect your house and take away the source of your fear. You'd be like Jesus' disciples immediately after his death; hiding behind locked doors, fearful of being dragged away and killed.

But Jesus changed all that, didn't he? Not by his teachings or miracles; but by His resurrection. And I would declare to you today that through that same resurrection which transformed fearful followers into fearless proclaimers of the risen Christ, we too are offered the courage to live freely; as free as God intended us to live. We need courage to be free, and through Christ's resurrection you will have the courage to face whatever comes your way

- Like the Apostles Peter & John we can boldly go into Jerusalem and bring healing in Jesus' name, and though the religious leaders who orchestrated Jesus' death tell us to "shut up or else", we find the courage to say *“Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges!”*<sup>20</sup> *As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.*” (Acts 4:19b-20)
- And like Stephen, a beloved deacon in the early church, who did not hold back his witness of seeing Christ at the right hand of God though it meant death. Courageous Stephen knew that God had defeated death on the cross, and that through baptism he not only die with Christ, but he too would rise again as Christ arose:

*For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.*

Today you may want to argue that the human spirit and personal accomplishment is what gives us hope for tomorrow; after all didn't we catch the Marathon bombers in 5 days, and won't there be justice served? After all, isn't it science and genetics that promise us whole new avenues for healing and restoration? Isn't it technology that will make this a safe world in which to life?

If you were listening carefully to this morning's reading from 1 Corinthians 15 then you heard something rather weird:

*29 Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them? 30 And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour? 31 I face death every day—yes, just as surely as I boast about you in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

*32 If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus with no more than human hopes, what have I gained?*

In this weird interlude Paul is not endorsing the Corinthian practice of a living person being baptized for the dead, he is just using this cultural ritual to point to the extent that human beings look for hope in lots of ways. For us it's science, technology, genetics and good police work. But as Paul goes on to note, human hope cannot even compare to the hope we have been given through Jesus' death and resurrection.

Today, please be careful not to put your hope in things that will fade tomorrow. As you celebrate the successes of science, technology, genetics and

good police work, and pray for God to work through all those avenues, don't gloss over their failures as well; failures that ought cause us to pause and wonder about our sure hope for tomorrow.

This past week I was blessed with many caring emails from friends literally "around the world"; people thinking about and praying for us in Massachusetts.

- Bill, a seminary friends from Chicago,
- Pauline, a missionary friends from Japan,
- Karl Abel, our friend from India who chose to worship with us during his weeks in Hopkinton,
- My brother Mark.

But the email I treasure the most was from Dr. Boaz Johnson, head of North Park University's Biblical & Theological Studies program, and one of our former Marathon runners.

Having read one of our 2013 runner's account of nearing the finish line and seeing the bombs exploding; worrying about his families welfare, Boaz emailed me on Tuesday;

- the day after the bombing,
- long before anyone could address the ways the Marathon will be "safer" next year;

... and Boaz volunteered to run the race next year!

Through Boaz' offer I was reminded that followers of Christ race toward the finish line because they know they will finish the race:

- we run, as Cheryl Turner reminded us last week, with perseverance,
- we run together, as a family sharing the joys & sorrows of the journey,

- and we run bravely, not because of our own power & training, not because of body armor or weapons, and not because we've made the race "safer".

We run fueled by resurrection-life; the very hope we have been given through Christ's resurrection.

### **Romans 6:4**

*We were ... buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

As you have been baptized into Christ's death,  
live a new life, live as resurrected people today. AMEN