

Sermon Series: The Darkness and the Dawn—Lord of Life Lutheran Church, Westfield, IN----4/20/2003

Title: “What Is Your Verdict”

Text: 1 Corinthians 15: 17-22

Intro.: Ills.: Opening Monologue Drama: Word Association

Theme: After it is all said and done—after we have viewed the historical accounts of Jesus’ trial, suffering, death, and resurrection—we are led to grapple with what will we do with the truth and what difference does it make for us.

*How do we know that Jesus’ lived, died, and rose?*

- Ills.: Lee Stroble’s “*Case for Christ*”: convinced by the evidence
- Eye-witness evidence
  1. John’s three witness (*Mary, the disciples, Thomas*) of John chapter 20
    - *A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. Deut. 19:15*
  2. The five hundred post resurrection eye-witness (*1 Corinthians 15: 6*)
  3. The Apostle Paul himself on the Damascus Road (*Acts 9: 5*)
- Corroborating reports
  4. The soldiers who were sent to guard the tomb (*Matt 28: 11-15*)
  5. Ills.: Josephus--a Roman, non-Christian historian who reported the fact
- Integrity with regard to Scriptural testimony
  6. “*Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day."* Luke 24:45-46

*What difference does it make if Jesus did or did not rise?*

- If Jesus did not rise from the dead . . .
  1. Your Christian faith is impotent, impractical, and inconsequential (*vs. 17— useless*)
    1. Impotent because it can’t and won’t change you or any one else — *if Jesus did not rise*
      - **Ills.: The Ruby Slipper Myth**
    2. Impractical because it causes you, your family, your employers a lot of inconvenience to accommodate your faith — *if Jesus did not rise*
    3. Inconsequential because Christianity will pass into the dust heap of history with a whole host of other religions and philosophies— *if Jesus did not rise*
  2. You are still liable for your sin’s debt and consequence (*vs. 17 — still under condemnation for your sins*)
    1. Still liable for the debt of sin you inherited and do
      - **Ills.: Stolen credit card liability**
    2. Still under the power of sin and the devil to make you do all the horrible things of humanity
    3. *The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Cor. 15:56-57*
  3. You and your loved one’s will perish and go out of existence when you die (*vs. 18 — perish*)
    1. “When you die your dead and when you are dead you are the biggest loser of that day.”
    2. *I congratulate the dead, who have already died, rather than the living, who still have to carry on. But the person who hasn’t been born yet is better off than both of them.” Ecclesiastes 4:2-3*
    3. Played the cruelest joke when we eventually reach our moment of death and realize we have no future
  4. We are the laughing stock of the world and deserve it (*vs. 19 — most miserable people in the world*)
    1. Willing to be the doormats and bleeding hearts for the world which doesn’t care and won’t be changed by it
    2. Willing to suffer loss for a martyr who can do nothing to protect or deliver us from our persecutors
- If Jesus did rise from the dead . . .
  5. Jesus becomes the prototype of your own bodily resurrection (*vs. 20*)
    1. “*The Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will*

*transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.” Philip. 3:20-21*

6. We are beneficiaries of the greatest one for one exchange in all of human history (vs. 21)
7. We are empowered to live powerfully transformed lives (*all who are related to Christ will be given new life.*22)
  1. “As Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”  
*Rom. 6:4*
  2. **Ills.: Taste and See**

### **“On Jesus Christ” -- Josephus –Antiquities 18, chapter 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 received the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was Christ by name; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the 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 at this day. (*The Works of Josephus*, translated by William Whiston, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1996, p. 480)

### **Taste and See**

Have you tasted Jesus? One divinity school hosted an annual picnic, to which they invited one of the greatest minds to lecture in the theological education center. One year, the guest lecturer was a professor, who spoke for two and one-half hours "proving" that the resurrection of Jesus was false. The professor quoted scholar after scholar and book after book. He concluded that since there was no such thing as the historical resurrection, the religious tradition of the church was groundless, emotional mumbo-jumbo, because it was based on a relationship with a risen Jesus, who, in fact, never rose from the dead in any literal sense. He then asked if there were any questions. After about 30 seconds, an old preacher with a head of woolly white hair stood up in the back of the auditorium. "Docta Professor, I got one question", he said as all eyes turned toward him. He reached into his sack lunch and pulled out an apple and began eating it. CRUNCH, MUNCH, "My question is a simple question",....CRUNCH, MUNCH... "Now, I ain't never read them books you read" ...CRUNCH, MUNCH... "and I can't recite the Scriptures in the original Greek" ...CRUNCH, MUNCH... "I don't know nothin' about Niebuhr and Heidegger"....CRUNCH, MUNCH...He finished the apple. "All I wanna know is: This apple I just ate-----was it bitter or sweet?" The professor paused for a moment and answered in exemplary scholarly fashion: "I cannot possibly answer that question, for I haven't tasted your apple". The white-haired preacher dropped the core of his apple into his crumpled paper bag, looked up at the professor and said calmly, "Neither have you tasted my Jesus." The 1,000 plus in attendance could not contain themselves. The auditorium erupted with applause and cheers. The professor thanked his audience and promptly left the platform.

### **1 Corinthians 15: 17-22**

<sup>17</sup>And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless, and you are still under condemnation for your sins. <sup>18</sup>In that case, all who have died believing in Christ have perished! <sup>19</sup>And if we have hope in Christ only for this life, we are the most miserable people in the world. <sup>20</sup> But the fact is that Christ has been raised from the dead. He has become the first of a great harvest of those who will be raised to life again. <sup>21</sup> So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, Adam, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man, Christ. <sup>22</sup> Everyone dies because all of us are related to Adam, the first man. But all who are related to Christ, the other man, will be given new life. **1 Cor. 15:17-22** [New Living Translation, Tyndale Publishers, 1996]