

The Essence of the Church: Gospel – Witness – Partnership

In a world of compounding challenges against our faith, and many from within the church, I want to spend the first three weeks of 2022 considering the Essence of the Christian faith. I will speak to this more next week, and why I chose the word “essence”, but today I want to begin with the center of our faith. The Essence of the church – the heart of who we are – begins with the gospel, God’s power that makes us His own.

The Gospel: The Power of God for Salvation for All Who Believe.

MPS Christians live to abound in the Lord’s work because in Jesus we are alive in the Kingdom of God.

OBJ Every Christian should live to abound in the gospel work of God’s Kingdom because of four resurrection realities.

INTRO **WHAT** have you set forth in 2022 that will REALLY matter to you? Will it be a word by which all things will be measured, (at least til mid-january)? **WHY** will that really matter?

What really matters is that we remember the gospel, the most important, glorious truth! Paul begins 1 Corinthians with the gospel and applies it to the problems in the church; divisions among the people, rampant sexual immorality, lawsuits against one another, contemporary cultural issues, idolatry, drunkenness at the Lord’s Supper, perversions and craziness in worship and ministry. **And how is it that, according to Paul, the gospel applies to all these situations? Is it because the gospel dismisses the rest of the Bible and excuses all sin in light of love or forgiveness?** No. Quite the opposite. Paul applies the gospel by showing how the gospel enables and motivates a Christian’s obedience out of love for Jesus Christ. **The gospel does not truncate the whole counsel of God but fulfills it so that those who trust in Christ can believe and obey. Do we obey perfectly?** No. **But Jesus did obey perfectly to fulfill the Law. And when we repent and put our trust in Him, His perfect obedience is credited to us.** THIS is our good news! Because of Jesus we no longer live under the Law’s condemnation in its guilt and shame. Now in Christ, love for God is our new law that sets us free to live by faith in obedience to God.

TRANS So, as Paul prepares to close his letter, he makes a final appeal to remind the Corinthians, and subsequently all Christians, of the gospel he preached so they can remain in it, and not some substitute, false hope.

The Gospel Clarified and Verified: saved and sent to preach to others may hear and believe. .1-11

*Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ²and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. ³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ...so we preach and so you believed. **1 Cor 15:1-4, 11b***

Paul reminds the Corinthians of the gospel. **After all he taught them, why a reminder?** We need reminding because we are prone to forget, to make some substitution, or to trust in what we want it to produce above what God provides. **Life with God only comes through Jesus Christ by the gospel.**

TRANS So, Paul clarifies the gospel.

Jesus died for our sins, was buried, placed into death’s grasp in the grave, and then raised on the third day. All of this was in accord with the Scriptures, meaning it was not an afterthought of, but a revelation of God. God’s power that resurrected Jesus was His revelation to demonstrate His power of sin, death, hell and the grave. Jesus died in our place for our sin to satisfy God’s wrath so that when we believe in Him we have peace with God. The wrath of God against sin is no longer on us because our debt is paid and penalty removed. Because of Jesus, the curse of sin, death, is no longer true of the one who trusts in Him because we are now made alive unto God in Him. **God’s resurrection power proves that when we truly believe in Jesus, when we immerse our whole life in Him by faith, we are removed from the kingdom of sin’s darkness and brought into Jesus’ Kingdom of light.**

Verses 5-11 record the people Jesus appeared to after his resurrection that verifies it by personal eyewitness and testimony. And Paul tells how Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus too, to qualify him for apostleship. Then Paul says that the gospel may be preached for people to hear and believe.



By faith through the gospel, Jesus becomes our all in all. No matter what you face in life or what slams against you, Jesus is always faithful, always available, and always able to provide all that we need. Jesus doesn't make our life perfect. He does forgive our imperfect life and give us credit for His perfect life. [The gospel is the good news that God sent His Son, Jesus, to die for our sins and give us life with Him. And less than life in Jesus is no life at all.](#)

[Christians live to abound in the Lord's work because we are alive in the Kingdom of God.](#)

APPL [Do your new year plans center on God's Kingdom, to abound in the Lord's work of sharing the gospel so others can hear and believe?](#)

OBJ [Four Resurrection realities establish why Christians live to abound in gospel work of God's Kingdom.](#)

TRANS Paul applies the meaning of the resurrection to show how the gospel changes all of life for the one who believes.

[Four Resurrection Realities](#)

Reality #1. [The resurrection fills us with a hope to live now for eternity. .12-34](#)

If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. 1 Cor 15:19-20, 22

Jesus' resurrection means there is eternal life after death. Jesus was not only raised, but God raised him as a first fruit, which means there is more to come! That "more to come" is every one who trusts in Jesus. Jesus' resurrection was an eternal declaration of salvation for all who place their faith in Him. And that's why Paul says this is a matter of "First Importance". The resurrection proves to all who believe in Jesus that this life is not all there is; we too shall be raised to new life. [The resurrection means that our hope in his life is eternal.](#)

Eternal hope determines the way we live now. The resurrection tells us that sin is no longer our master, the prince of darkness does not rule us, death and the grave are no threat to us, and the power of this world is less than the power that is within us. People who believe in Jesus do not continue in the pleasures of this world, "go on sinning"³⁴, because our hope is in the One who has conquered sin. The life we live now is lived for God's eternal glory by His resurrection power.

[Christians do not live consumed only in the moment but compelled to make every moment matter for eternity.](#)

Reality #2: [The resurrection destroys fear by faith for God's greater glory / purpose. .35-49](#)

The people of Corinth were very anxious, even upset, over death and whether we could be raised. Truth be known, death upsets me too if I let it. When we look at our physical bodies on this earth and realize that they are wasting away in so many ways, it is hard to imagine them being raised and that being a 'good' thing. Our bodies provide us much pleasure and good in this world. But when confronted by the reality of death and mortality of life, the reality of pain and sickness, disease and suffering, it can cause us to wonder, even question, whether believing Jesus is worth it. Many people in first century Corinth were riddled by the problems these often un-explainable, always un-desirable and, at times, incomprehensible situations create. This was not unique to them, and its not new nor unique for us today. But it's not ultimate for us either.

Paul doesn't try to dismiss their questions. He addresses them by the gospel. In the face of real fear, he gives courage to keep going because of the resurrection.

⁴²*So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable.*

⁴⁵*Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. ⁴⁷The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. ⁴⁸As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. ⁴⁹Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. 1 Cor 15:42, 45-49*



The wasting away of this world, the slow decay of our aging bodies, the terminal nature of so many realities in this world press upon us so that we cannot ignore them. The reality of our mortality and its many expressions often causes fear and being overwhelmed when faced with hard questions about life that we don't know the answer to. When faced with the unknown of life, Jesus provides the hope and courage to keep going. [Faith doesn't mean you will never be tempted to or will never feel fear. Faith means you have a way to conquer your fear.](#)

Jesus is the only one in whom we find real courage to walk on, to keep going in the midst of a life full of heartache, pain, suffering, injustice, and evil. For the 'wasting away' of this earthly body and the mortality of this earthly life are not the end for the person who places their faith in Jesus. Consider the last part of verses 47 and 48. The resurrection promises that those who believe in shall "*bear the image of the man of heaven*", Jesus Christ. Paul reminds Timothy, "*for God gave us a spirit not of fear, but of power and love and self-control.*"¹[Timothy 1:7](#) [The resurrection provides for us the spirit of God's power, love, and self-control in Jesus Christ to conquer fear and live by faith for His greater glory.](#)

Reality #3: [The resurrection secures our victory over death and sin.](#) .50-57

Paul reminds the Corinthians by telling them that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. This life is not intended to be our highest or greatest victory. Jesus alone holds our victory! Jesus conquered sin and death, proving that he held authority of the death and the grave. [Our ultimate victory is only in Jesus as we put on the imperishable life of Christ's Spirit.](#)

but we shall all be changed, ... For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Cor 15:51c, 57

God gives victory over death because he conquered sin in Jesus sacrifice and resurrection. While we are not made perfect in this life, this changes everything for us. In Jesus we have ultimate victory over sin and death. One way we see a glimpse of Jesus' ultimate victory is that we can have real victory over sins that entangle and condemn us now in this world. When we daily put on the Lord Jesus Christ, we walk in his victory, even when we walk through the heartaches, the disappointments, the struggles, and problems of this world. Today we still wear the mortal and perishable, but we are getting dressed for "The Day". [When you make your plans this year, Christian, before you put anything else down, put on the Lord Jesus Christ!](#)^{Romans 13:14}

Reality #4: [The resurrection gives power, meaning, and purpose to the life we live now.](#) .58

Therefore, my beloved rothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the world of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

Christians live differently now because of all we know to be true of our new life in Jesus Christ, secured by the resurrection. We do not set our goals by the world's glory. We do not make our plans to see the outcomes this world deems right and good. We do not order our steps by the priorities of this world. We do not reason by the ideologies or philosophies of this world. We are not motivated by the promises of this world. Christians live differently, or distinctively, because the gospel of Jesus Christ speaks a better word to all of these as it empowers our life to live for Him! [Christian – be steadfast, immovable, always abound in the Lord's work because you know that not one ounce of energy or effort will be wasted.](#)

[These Four Resurrection realities establish our why!](#)

[Christians live to abound in the Lord's work because we are alive in the Kingdom of God.](#)

MOVIE The Alpinist [28:30 left] is a documentary following Matt-Andre Leclerc, a Canadian solo alpinist who free climbed unbelievable peaks. As he solos the head wall of Torre Egger, the tallest mountain in Patagonia, Argentina, in the winter, when all other climbers are gone, he reflects on the difficulty and challenge of what he is doing and states, "When you encounter a situation you're like, 'okay, this is real.' I can either keep it together and do this, or I can fall apart and have a meltdown. You gotta do one or the other. And that process of evaluating the situation and getting it together and carrying on...it's a challenge every time."



Today is a situation to evaluate your life, to see if you are living by faith. **Is the life you are planning in 2022 one that believes to trust fully in God's resurrection power?** **Christian, God is leading you to live in His resurrection power.**

