

Sunday the 16th

RESURRECTION SUNDAY:
WITHOUT THE EMPTY TOMB THERE IS NO MESSAGE

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? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. 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. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

I Corinthians 15:12-15; 20-22

THE TOMB MUST BE EMPTY

The most important evidence our Christian message is that the tomb is empty. An empty tomb is more than an argument or a philosophical debate. An argument tries to validate a point of view or affirm an idea or even a belief. Christianity has no such argument. The evidence says it all. When Jesus was crucified he died and was buried. Everybody knows that. But that wasn't the end, three days later, the tomb where they buried Him was empty. Therefore, the summary of our Christian message is: The Empty Tomb.

In the gospels, we find many witnesses that saw the empty tomb. For instance, two women encountered an empty tomb. Peter saw the empty tomb. The Roman soldiers said the tomb was empty. The religious leaders tried to bribe the Roman soldiers to lie and say that the disciples had stolen the body to explain why the tomb was empty. Maybe they did not know where the body was, but of one thing, they were sure, the tomb was empty. That's pretty strong evidence about Jesus resurrection, don't you think?

LOTS OF OCCUPIED TOMBS

In Egypt, Latin America, Asia and other parts of the world, there are tombs with spectacular monuments of kings and princes and founders of religions or ideologies that have the remains of those people. Some were erected for the Pharaohs, or other religious leaders like Buda, some are erected to communist leaders that can be easily visited if people want to see their dead bodies.

When it comes to Jesus Christ, there is no such place. His tomb is empty! Even when you go to Jerusalem today, experts aren't sure where his tomb is.

JESUS LEFT AN EMPTY TOMB

Apart from the other tombs that have been mentioned, a tomb remained empty before Jesus' tomb. Ask the group if they can guess which one? The tomb was that of the man named Lazarus. Read John 11:38-44. When Jesus arrived at that tomb, it was occupied. When Jesus finished with the tomb, it was empty.

Jesus not only had the power to raise people from the dead, He raised himself from the dead.

BECAUSE THE TOMB IS EMPTY, WE HAVE TO SPEAK OF THE RESURRECTION WITH CONVICTION

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? 1 Corinthians 15:12

The Christian affirmation is that Christ rose from the dead. If Christ was raised from the dead, there is a very important conclusion the rest of us has to make. We will also be raised! Everyone who believes that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead is assured that they will also be raised. That is very important. We should have the conviction that this event, although incredible and miraculous, is true! The evidence shows it. We cannot say that there is no resurrection of the dead, because Jesus' tomb is empty.

Paul says that if Christ did not resurrect, then our message is in vain. We are wasting our time. It's a waste of time that we have a family altar or that we participate in a Life Group or that we come to church to worship. If Jesus is still in the tomb. Who then are we worshipping? Isn't He dead?

LET US AFFIRM THAT CHRIST HAS RESURRECTED!

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.
1 Corinthians 15:20-22

When Paul writes to the church in Corinth, he was aware that there were Christian people who had died. Today it's no different. Maybe a family member of yours who believed in Christ is no longer alive. Maybe a few years have passed by and the reality of them having died has become more and more real. What should your position be? As Christians, you should affirm that Jesus Christ is the "first fruit" of those who are sleeping.

Paul speaks of sleeping and not of dying. He who has died, before Jesus comes back for His church, "sleeps" until Christ resurrects him/her for eternal life. That is Wonderful!

In Christ we have been made alive! That means that we should not fear death because one of these days our tomb will also be left empty! If the tomb of Christ is empty, yours and mine will also be. That is the promise of Christ and that is the evidence of His empty tomb.

CONCLUSION: THERE IS A MESSAGE...THE EMPY TOMB SAYS IT ALL!

Many people believe that the Christian family has no message and that their faith is a waste of time. Not so. Our message is both beautiful and powerful. Nobody can claim what we can.

Jesus Christ has risen from the dead, and everyone who believes in Him even though they die will live again. That is the promise that Jesus gave to Martha and Mary; Lazarus sisters, the man who Jesus raised from the dead after four days of being dead.

The question for us is "Do we believe this or not?" The answer is, "Of course we do!" Christ lives in my heart and His Word gives me evidence that my faith is not in vain. The empty tomb says it all.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUR LIFE GROUP:

1. – What does this topic tell you about God?
2. – What does it say to my life?
3. – What does it say about others?