

5. Resurrection Love

Introduction:

Our rebellion against God has birthed in all of us, the belief that we can control our own lives. As a result, even as Christians, we have a difficult time fully relying on God, even though his word teaches us that we can do nothing without him. We like the world's philosophy that tells us that we are only limited by ourselves, and we bring that belief into our Christian faith, assuming incorrectly that it will merge nicely. Bringing the world's philosophy into Christianity is called 'syncretism'. We do this because we refuse to let go of our own agenda for our lives.

Going to the cross was such a struggle for Christ's followers to accept. It seemed to be the worst possible outcome for them, because they were waiting for a political saviour. Yet, it proves that our ways and our understanding will always fall short, and that God's ways are always higher and perfect (Isaiah 55:9).

God's love for us was demonstrated throughout Jesus' time on earth, as he taught and loved his disciples, healed the sick, engaged with and healed the broken etc. But it was revealed most acutely in his decision to choose to die for our sins.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is a worldview and how does it influence our perspective on God?
2. What is the danger of having a syncretistic worldview? (Syncretism is the mixing of multiple belief systems into one).
3. ♥ Personal Reflection: in what ways have Christians absorbed some of culture's beliefs and philosophies into Christianity, which are incompatible with what the Bible teaches? (E.g. Christians sleeping with their partners, when they are not married. This societal norm has been bought into as "reasonable" by many Christians, even though scripture teaches against sex outside of marriage.)
4. ♥ Personal Reflection: Apply the same question to your own personal life. In what way/s are you guilty of being syncretistic?

Text: John 20:1-18

The conquering love of Christ is revealed and demonstrated through his resurrection.

1. The resurrection can only be believed by faith

Jesus walked with his followers for three years, and yet when tested, most of them abandoned him because they did not have enough faith to believe he was the messiah. The miracles and signs he performed made them hope, but it was not enough to secure their belief. Once he had risen from the dead, they still struggled to believe that it was really him. They had to see the evidence for themselves, and Jesus had to reveal himself to them so that they could believe. They needed revelation and faith.



NO GREATER LOVE

When Mary Magdalene got to the tomb and saw that Jesus' body had disappeared, she was heartbroken. It did not occur to her that he had risen from the dead. Only in speaking to him face to face, did she realise that he was the risen Christ. He had to reveal himself to her, so that she could believe.

Evidence for the resurrection is not enough for us to believe that Jesus is alive. It is not something we just choose to believe. God's grace is revealed to us, and in so doing we are given the faith to believe. We cannot believe in a supernatural God, without supernatural grace. (See Ephesians 2:8-9).

2. The resurrection gives us real and eternal hope

Jesus rising from the dead is the reason why all of the promises in scripture hold true. Right in the beginning when humanity rebelled against God, God promised that he would deal with Satan once and for all, through the death of Christ (Genesis 3:15). Jesus paid the price for sin in his death, but he conquered death once and for all in his resurrection. Though we will still face death in the body, death no longer has the last word. Because Jesus rose from the dead, we will too. Every curse of sin has been dealt with once and for all. There is nothing more for Christ to conquer. It is finished. This leaves us with the certain hope of his return when he will cast Satan away once and for all, and restore all things. Therefore, our hope lies in Christ alone.

3. The resurrection reveals the conquering love of Jesus

- Read Romans 8:31-39

Mary Magdalene encountered Jesus' love tangibly, when he cast demons out of her, and then loved her. She had experienced his saving power in her own reality. One can only imagine the depth of her grief when she arrived at the tomb and found his body missing. She knew he deserved better than to have his body stolen and not treated with respect.

Jesus had told his followers that he would rise from the dead, but in their humanness, they did not really believe him or understand why he said these things. They did not grasp what he had come to do for them in his death. When they realised that he was alive, it was only then that they started to grasp who he was and what he had done. After the resurrection, they started to believe that he was in fact God. His resurrection meant he could be trusted, and that everything he had told them was true. So, not only had they experienced his love and kindness during their time with him, they now began to understand the depths of his love for them, in him sacrificing his own life for them (John 3:16).

His resurrection body was also further evidence of his love because it showed their future hope.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it impossible for us to believe in the resurrection without God's grace giving us the faith to believe? (Ephesians 2:8-9)
2. What insight does this give us for our friends and family who do not yet know Christ?
3. Why is the resurrection the basis for our trust in God's word, and all of his promises?
4. In what way does the resurrection reveal God's love to you, and what impact does that have on your own life?

