
“Get Along For God’s Glory”

ROMANS 12:1-16:27

APRIL 13, 2025

PASTOR BRIAN SMITH

WILDWOOD CHURCH

EAST MOLINE, ILLINOIS

AT A GLANCE

What if everything you’ve ever hoped for—life after death, forgiveness, true purpose—hinged on one staggering claim? This sermon dives into the heart of Christianity’s boldest truth: that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. If it’s false, faith crumbles; if it’s true, everything changes. Read on to wrestle with the question that demands an answer: *Do you believe He is risen—and worthy?*

THE CLAIM AT THE HEART OF CHRISTIANITY

This morning, we are dealing with the most important claim in all of Christianity. Not just *a* claim—but *the* claim. Either Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead, or He hasn’t. There is no middle ground. There’s no “good teacher” Jesus, no “moral example” Jesus, if He’s still in the grave. If Christ is not risen, then this—all of this—is pointless. Our preaching is empty, our faith is futile, and we’re just wasting a perfectly good Sunday morning.

But if He has been raised—if Jesus is alive—then everything changes. That means our faith isn’t in vain. That means your sins really can be forgiven. That means death isn’t the end. That means this message has eternal weight, eternal consequence, eternal hope.

That’s why we’re here today. We’re not playing church. We’re not going through religious motions. We’re here to proclaim and rejoice in this simple but world-shaking truth: Christ is risen—and He is worthy.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:14-23

¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. ¹⁵ We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. ²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.

IF CHRIST IS NOT RISEN, ALL HOPE IS LOST

Either Jesus has been raised from the dead or He hasn't. If He has not, then there is nothing redeemable about Christ. **Verse 14 And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.** There is nothing that can be said positively about Jesus Christ if He stayed dead.

He made audacious claims – “*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*” John 2:19 “*No one comes to the Father but by me.*” John 14:6 “*I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.*” John 12:32 “*Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.*” John 14:9 “*I am the resurrection and the life.*” John 11:25 “*I came to give life and life abundant.*” John 10:10

These are not claims that a good, moral teacher who is merely a man can make. If He remained dead, as men do, there is nothing we can say that redeems Him or the message we preach. This is why Paul continues in **verse 15, We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised.**

THE RESURRECTION IS NOT OPTIONAL—IT’S FOUNDATIONAL

Not only is Christ irredeemable if He is still dead, but so too are the men who preached His resurrection from the dead. They are liars. They misrepresented God - they ascribed something to God that is not true.

Logically, it flows, **verse 16, For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised.** So if you reject the idea that God raises people from the dead, then Christ is not raised. And if Christ is not raised, go back to verse 15 - we're misrepresenting God, our faith is in vain, and **verse 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.**

There are implications to what you believe. If Jesus stayed dead, why would we imagine that our sins are atoned for? If Jesus stayed dead, His death counted for nothing. All of this is meaningless. **Verses 18-19 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.**

There is nothing redeemable about Jesus, about your faith, about any of what we're doing here if Jesus remained in the grave. It's worse than nothing, it's pitiable. Why? Because we're deluded, we're left without hope, death is the end, and we're over here looking for a better life on the other side. And we're fools if Jesus is still dead. That's Paul's message to the Corinthians.

Christianity devoid of the resurrection, seen merely as a means to a better, more moral life, Paul is telling you, that's nonsense. There is nothing moral or virtuous about this faith if Jesus is not raised from the dead! It's anti-virtuous! It's immoral! It's a lie!

Paul is confronting you right now - what do you believe? This really does matter. For this to mean anything in the ultimate sense, you must believe that God raised Jesus from the dead. That's how it works. Paul said elsewhere, “*... if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*” Romans 10:9

You can get some sentimental warm-fuzzies from attending Easter services. You can build strong friendships by attending regularly. You can find something to give your time and resources to, like humanitarian aide, through the church. But if you want salvation for your soul, you must believe that God raised Him from the dead.

JESUS HAS IN FACT BEEN RAISED FROM THE DEAD!

The good news is that Jesus has in fact been raised from the dead! **Verse 20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead...** Praise the Lord Jesus is alive! Previously in this chapter, in verses 3-8 Paul said that Jesus appeared to a number of people after His death - Peter (called Cephas), to the original 12 disciples, then to "more than 500 at one time, most of whom are still alive...", then to James, and then finally to Paul.

Paul was writing to an enlightened audience. These were Greek people - their fathers were Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle. They understood basic concepts like eye-witness testimony to verify the truthfulness of a claim. Thus, Paul told them there are hundreds of eyewitnesses who saw Jesus alive after His death. (v. 6)

Paul is a particularly important eyewitness because unlike the original disciples, Paul began as a violent opponent of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul was a Pharisee who persecuted the Church until Jesus saved him, meeting him on the Road to Damascus as Paul was on his way to persecute Christians there.

Paul would later be stoned nearly to death, imprisoned, beaten, whipped, and ultimately, we believe, beheaded in Rome for preaching the Gospel he once persecuted. If there is any man's testimony that you can believe, it is one who has radically changed positions. He who was once willing to kill those who preached the Gospel was now willing to die for it. That is compelling testimony!

YOU MUST DECIDE: DO YOU BELIEVE?

This morning, each one of us is given an opportunity to believe or disbelieve Paul's claim that Jesus is risen. Ultimately, this is a matter of faith. Do you believe Jesus is risen or do you not? For those who do, you also will rise at Christ's return.

The rest of **verse 20** and **verses 21-23** form the basis of the Christian's hope in life after death. Paul continues, that since Christ has been raised, he is **the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.** ²¹**For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.** ²²**For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.** ²³**But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.**

Remember what Paul was arguing against here: that the dead are not raised, that there is nothing after death. When you die, that's it. If Christ is not raised, there's no point to any of this. Join a social club. Be a philanthropist. But Christianity is meaningless without the resurrection.

But if Christ is raised then His resurrection has power to give life to your dead body, too! And this is what we long for. There is more to this life than what you can see, hear, taste, and smell. You have an eternal soul in a temporal body.

One day your temporal body will be raised from the dead and you will dwell in an imperishable body forever with God. But I want you to see that this promise of eternal life, the promise of a resurrected body is to **those who belong to Christ. (v. 23)**

THE INVITATION TO SALVATION IS FOR YOU

So the question is, do you belong to Christ? Do you believe that God raised Him from the dead? If not, would you like to today? There is no special formula for salvation; no magical words by which you are saved. However, the Bible tells us that *"all who call on the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved."* (Romans 10:13)

It tells us that the one who called out to God from a place of humility, "Lord have mercy on me, a sinner" was saved. (Luke 18:13) It tells us that if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)

I want to invite you to do that right now. If you are hearing this message and you believe what I'm saying, and you've never responded in faith, you should do that now. You should confess that Jesus is Lord, believe God raised Him from the dead, call upon Him for salvation, saying, "Lord have mercy on me, a sinner."

If you would like to do that today, I want you to take a step of faith. In just a moment when the worship team returns and I step down, I want you to move out of your seat and come to me down in the front. It is easy to convince yourself you're good and to just stay in your seat, but the Gospel message requires response. It is a free gift that must be accepted. I am inviting you to accept it today.

HE IS WORTHY OF OUR WORSHIP

Before we do that, I want to address the second clause of our sermon's title this morning: he is worthy. We've covered the first part, "He is risen!" But now let me speak briefly to the latter.

In the book of Revelation, chapter 5, verse 12 we read, "*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!*" Revelation 5:12

As Christians, it is our conviction that not only is Jesus risen from the dead, but consequently, He is worthy of our heart's affection, adoration, and submission. Our lives are to be lived for His glory.

LIVING DAILY FOR HIS GLORY

In Philippians 2, Paul tells us God has exalted Jesus to the place of honor forever and He has given Him the name above all names. One day "*every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*" Philippians 2:10-11

Most will do this before being separated from Him forever. But those who put their hope in Him and who bow their knee before Him and confess with their mouths that He is Lord in this life, will be ushered into His presence forever in that.

Considering this, church, we acknowledge it is our undying task, and unmerited privilege to live for His glory every day of our lives. For the same reason Jesus is worthy of glory on that day, Jesus is worthy of glory every day! With that in mind, I want to invite you to return next week for the first part of a four-part series on Family Worship.

It is a biblical presupposition, and a historic church conviction that God is worthy of our worship seven days a week, not just one or two. He is worthy of being worshipped in our homes as a family unit, whether as one, two, or a dozen of you. We believe that Jesus is risen and worthy!

THE FINAL QUESTION: DO YOU BELIEVE?

So the question stands: *Do you believe that God raised Jesus from the dead?* Not in theory, not as a tradition—but as the living truth that demands a response. Because if Christ is risen—and He is—then He is worthy. Worthy of your trust, your worship, your entire life. One day, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. But today—*right now*—you are invited to make that confession willingly, joyfully, and in faith. He is risen—and He is worthy.