



The Resurrection is a Personal Experience

REFERENCES

- I Corinthians 15 and verses listed throughout lesson
- Book by Alexander Schmemmann, “O Death, where is thy sting?”
- Book by Anthony Coniaris, “God speaks from the cross.”

MEMORY VERSE

“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die...” John 11:25-26

MAIN POINTS

- We learn a lot about the power of Christ’s resurrection when we look at how His disciples were transformed by His resurrection.
 - It gave them new strength, joy, hope, and the ability to focus on heaven
- To understand the significance of Christ’s resurrection in my life, I need to understand the importance of His resurrection for all of humanity.
 - Christ’s resurrection defeated death and offered the promise of eternal salvation for all humanity.
- Christ’s resurrection has the power to bring great joy, victory over sin, faith, and purpose to our personal lives.

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION FOR THE SERVANT(S)

Read I Corinthians 15. Try to spend some time reading other material related to the resurrection of Christ and meditate on its significance for us and for all humanity.

ACTIVITY

Divide the white board into 2 (right and left side). Try to get the students to imagine what our lives would be like if we didn’t believe that there was eternal life with God in heaven. Have one student write down on the left side of the white board some of the consequences (behaviors, actions, feelings, etc). Then ask the students to think about how the fact that we believe that we will be resurrected, i.e. live eternally, affects the way we live our lives. Have another student write these behaviors, feelings, or actions on the right side of the board. Through the talk refer to the ideas that the students raised, where appropriate.

You may find that the students have quite a few jokes or may even make the left side seem more appealing – but during the activity and/or certainly during the lesson it should be obvious to the students that our lives without the resurrection of Christ would have no focus, no meaning, and no lasting joy. Everything in this world perishes, but eternal life with Christ is an eternity of love, joy and peace.

INTRODUCTION

Christ teaches us that the pleasures of this world, and in fact, the world itself will pass away. What’s more, the sin and desires of this world lead to separation from God which is a spiritual death. Christ promises us that if we live our lives with Him and for Him, we will live forever in His love, joy and peace. It is an amazing promise indeed.

THE LESSON

The power of the Resurrection in the disciples' lives

1. Transformed their fear and despair into joy and hope
 - a. The disciples were afraid – afraid that they too could be arrested; afraid that the Man, Jesus, whom they followed was not the Messiah; afraid of the future and their livelihood
 - i. *“...when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews...”* John 20:19
 - a. When Christ first appeared to His disciples they were terrified
 - i. *“Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, ‘Peace to you.’ But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit.”* Luke 24:36-37
 - ii. Their fear was turned into joy and amazement – Luke 24:41, 52-53
1. Transformed their disbelief into strong faith
 - a. When the women told the disciples that Christ had risen, they did not believe. *“And their words seemed like idle tales, and they did not believe them.”* Luke 24:11
 - b. After Christ appeared to them, He strengthened their faith and commissioned them to preach His good news to the whole world (Matt 28:18-20)
 - c. They were able to preach to all people without fear of the Jews anymore. And they did suffer for their belief in Christ (St Stephen was martyred; the many imprisonments and beatings of St Peter and the other disciples (and later St Paul))
1. Helped them to understand that Christ’s kingdom is not on this earth but is in heaven
 - a. They initially thought that Christ was going to deliver Israel on **this earth**; that He was going to overthrow the Romans and establish Israel as a great nation on earth (Acts 1:6)
 - b. St Peter preached Christ’s glorious resurrection and the promise of eternal life to thousands after the Holy Spirit had descended upon him (Acts 2:24, 32, 33)

The importance of the Resurrection for all of humanity

1. The promise of our own resurrection and spending eternity with our Lord

- There is a promise from Christ Himself that we will live with Him after we leave this world
 - Christ told Martha this when Lazarus had died
 - *“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”* John 11:25-26
 - Christ also explained this to His disciples
 - *“In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know.”* John 14:2-4
 - *“...and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”* Mat 28:20
 - Christ also promised that if we partake of His Holy Body and Blood we will have eternal life
 - *“Whoever eats my flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up in the last day.”* John 6:54
 - *“...He who eats this bread will live forever.”* John 6:58
- We are promised that the dead will rise with a “spiritual body” I Cor 15:35-49
 - St Paul affirms that on the last day the dead will rise, and those living will be changed
 - *“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we*

shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” I Cor 15:51-53

- *“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. **And the dead in Christ will rise first.** Then those who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” I Thess 4:16-17*
- St Paul describes the nature of this spiritual body – incorruptible, glorious, powerful, and spiritual
 - *“...The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in **incorruption.** It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in **glory.** It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a **spiritual body...**” I Cor 15:42-44*
- We cannot know fully the nature of our resurrected bodies, Christ’s resurrection body reveals some things to us
 - He appeared to his disciples after His glorious Resurrection with a body – they could touch Him; He still had nail prints and the wound on His side; He ate with them; yet He also could pass through locked doors

2. The destruction of death

- Death entered into the world because of man’s sin. Death was not in God’s plan for man (of course He knew what would happen, but it was not His desire or hope for humanity).
 - *“God did not make death, and He does not delight in the death of the living”*
Wisdom 1:13
 - *“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned...Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses...”* Romans 5:12, 14
 - *“God created life. Always and everywhere God is himself called the Life and the giver of life.” – Alexander Schmemmann*
- Death is considered to be an enemy of man
 - *“The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.”* I Cor 15:26
 - *”Christ weeps at the grave of his dead friend Lazarus—what a powerful witness! He does not say, ‘Well, now he is in heaven, everything is well; he is separated from this difficult and tormented life.’ ...In fact he says nothing—he weeps. And then according to the Gospels, he raises his friend, that is, he restores him into that life from which we are supposedly to find liberation toward a higher good.” - Alexander Schmemmann (John 11:35 “Jesus wept”)*
- Death was destroyed or defeated by the Resurrection
 - *“For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.”* I Cor 15:21-22
 - Romans 5:12-21
 - *“So when this incorruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: **‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ ‘O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?’** The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* I Cor 15:54-57
 - In our Easter mass and for the 50 days, we sing **“Trampling down death by death!”** when we sing “Ekhrastos Anesti or Christ is Risen”

The power of the Resurrection in my life

1. The Resurrection of Christ brings great **joy** to my life
 - Joy because death no longer has hold over me, because I look forward to life with Christ now and for eternity, because Christ is victorious in my life and gives me His strength, etc.

- This was the first word which our resurrected Lord said to the women disciples “*Rejoice*” (Matt 28:9)
 - Of this joy, Christ says, “*no one will take your joy from you.*” John 16:22
 - “Easter breaks in upon us every year with an explosion of joy that tells us: LIVE! Live full of hope. Live nobly, for you will live forever. Live in the light of the Resurrection. Live in the faith that God is for you, having not spared His only Son in your behalf. Live to spread the joy of the Resurrection to those about you.” - Anthony Coniaris
1. Christ’s defeat of death and sin gives me **victory over sin through Christ**
 - “*The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*” I Cor 15:56, 57
 - “*For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.*” Rom 6:14
 - Christ gave power over Satan to his disciples and followers. He told them, “*I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you authority over serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing by any means shall hurt you.*” Luke 10:18, 19
 1. We **no longer fear death** because we know that eternal life awaits us
 - “Let none fear death, for the death of the Saviour has set us free. Christ is risen and the demons have fallen. Christ is risen and the angels rejoice. Christ is risen and life is liberated. Christ is risen and not one dead remains in the grave. For Christ, being risen from the dead, is become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep.” – St John Chrysostom
 2. Christ’s resurrection gives me **purpose in my life** - I lift my eyes to heaven and the eternal life
 - a. We don’t just live for today, we live with our minds focused on eternity (Lk 12:16-21)
 - b. We know that we will be judged by Christ according to our actions
 - “*When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as the shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left...*” Matt 25:31-33 (cont to verse 46 if kids have questions)
 - c. We work hard to try to make ourselves worthy of this great honour
 - i. “*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*” I Cor 15:58
 - ii. The gate to eternal life is narrow and the way is difficult. “*Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.*” Matt 7:13, 14

CONCLUSION

The resurrection of Christ has an amazing power that we often don’t consider. Through Christ’s resurrection He defeated death itself, sin, and the power of the devil over us. We pray that God allows us to understand the depth of His amazing victory and feel its power in our lives.

APPENDIX

A few excerpts from books listed above as references

“Up to this moment the purpose of religion, as well as the purpose of philosophy, consisted in enabling man to come to terms with death, and if possible to make death desirable: death as the liberation from suffering... But Christ *weeps* at the grave of his friend, and in so doing he reveals his own struggle with death, his refusal to acknowledge it and to come to terms with it. Suddenly, death ceases to be a normal and natural fact, it appears as something foreign, as unnatural, as fearsome and perverted, and it is acknowledged as an enemy: ‘The last enemy to be destroyed is death.’” – Alexander Schmemmann

“The Church is the entrance into the risen life of Christ; it is communion in life eternal, ‘joy and peace in the Holy Spirit.’ And it is the expectation of the ‘day without evening’ of the kingdom; not of any ‘other world,’ but of the fulfilment of all things and all life in Christ. In him death has become an act of life, for he has filled it with himself, with his love and light. In him ‘all things are yours; whether... the world or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours; and you are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s’ (I Cor 3:21-23). And if I make this new life mine, mine this hunger and thirst for the kingdom, mine this expectation of Christ, mine the certitude that Christ is Life, then my very death will be an act of communion with Life. For neither life nor death can separate us from the love of Christ. I do not know when and how the fulfilment will come... But I know that in Christ this great Passage, the Pascha of the world has begun, that the light of the ‘world to come’ comes to us in the joy and peace of the Holy Spirit, for *Christ is rien and Life reigns.*” - Alexander Schmemmann

“The deepest foundation of hope and joy which characterise Orthodoxy and which penetrate all its worship is the Resurrection. Easter, the center of Orthodox worship, is an explosion of joy, the same joy which the disciples felt when they saw the risen Saviour. It is the explosion of cosmic joy at the triumph of life, after the overwhelming sorrow of death – death which even the Lord of life had to suffer when He became man.” – quote by Fr. Dumitru Staniloae, a Romanian Orthodox theologian, cited by A. Coniaris in “God speaks from the cross.”

“Peter denied his Lord in public, the penitent thief confessed Jesus in public. ‘Remember me, Lord, when you come into Your kingdom.’ The response on the part of Jesus was instantaneous: ‘Today you will be with me in paradise.’ Here is salvation in one sentence. The first person to enter heaven was a thief – a forgiven thief, but a thief to the very end, for he ended up stealing heaven by God’s grace through repentance. If one who is so bad that he has to be executed for his crimes is the first to enter heaven, then there is hope for me.” – Anthony Coniaris

SERVANT FEEDBACK

This is a section for the servant to provide any constructive feedback to enable the lesson to be improved, or additional references