Easter Sunday 2020

Title: The Firstfruits

Text 1 Corinthians 15:20

Announcements:

1. Worship with your household via worship videos.
2. Connect. With life groups. Comment on the video. Join us for zoom after services.
3. Serve your neighbors as needs arise. One simple thing you can do is text a few friends each day and ask how you can pray for them.
4. Give generously. Antigocommunitychurch.org/give Check in with other organizations like the food pantry as well.
5. Share Christ. May God use THIS message to lead people to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ!

*Intro:*

Firstfruits.

10 Nissan (Monday) – Jesus enters his father’s house like a Passover lamb. Is there for 4 days as required.

14th of Nissan (Friday) – Jesus dies as the Passover lambs were being sacrificed.

15th of Nissan (Saturday) – a Sabbath starts a week of eating unleavened bread.

16th on Nissan (Sunday) – was the feast of firstfruits. This was the first day of the Spring harvest. People would take the best of that first harvest and offer it before God.

Leviticus 2:11–16

[11] “No grain offering that you bring to the LORD shall be made with leaven, for you shall burn no leaven nor any honey as a food offering to the LORD. [12] As an offering of firstfruits you may bring them to the LORD, but they shall not be offered on the altar for a pleasing aroma. [13] You shall season all your grain offerings with salt. You shall not let the salt of the covenant with your God be missing from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt.

[14] “If you offer a grain offering of firstfruits to the LORD, you shall offer for the grain offering of your firstfruits fresh ears, roasted with fire, crushed new grain. [15] And you shall put oil on it and lay frankincense on it; it is a grain offering. [16] And the priest shall burn as its memorial portion some of the crushed grain and some of the oil with all of its frankincense; it is a food offering to the LORD. (ESV)

-In spring after your first grain harvest starts, you take the best of the grain

-No leaven (often a picture of sin)

-With salt (a picture of a covenant with God, also a picture of eternity in Scripture – so an eternal covenant)

-Crush it

-Roast it

-Put oil on it

-Lay frankincense on it

There’s probably significance as it pertains to Jesus in every aspect of that process but Scripture doesn’t explicitly make those connections. But it does connect Jesus to firstfruits.

**1 Corinthians 15:20**

**[20] But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. (ESV)**

The day Jesus rose from the dead was the day of firstfruits! And Paul calls Jesus the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep! This is one more foreshadowing of Jesus that God gave to Moses a couple thousand years beforehand!

*Organizational Sentence:*

Today we’ll ask 4 questions about the gospel:

* What is the gospel?
* Did it *really* happen?
* How should I respond to the gospel?
* What difference does it make?

*Outline*:

**What is the gospel?**

1 Corinthians 15:3–8

[3] For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, [4] that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, [5] and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. [6] Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. [7] Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. [8] Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. (ESV)

* Christ died for our sins.
* Christ was buried.
* Christ rose from the dead.
* Christ was seen by many.

**Did it *really* happen?**

1. Historians basically all recognize that Jesus really lived in the first century. There is no archeological evidence – but you wouldn’t expect any since Jesus was a peasant who did not so much as own a house. There is basically no archeological evidence for almost anybody who lived at that time other than the rulers like Herod. We did not even have archeological evidence for Pilate until quite recently. We do have a fairly convincing location for Peter’s house near the shores of the sea of galilee in Capernaum, which is pretty neat. In the middle of the first century, the stone walls were plastered over – an extreme rarity for the day. And the pottery changed to things that would facilitate large groups with wine and oil. It had become a communal meeting space! Fascinating. While you wouldn’t expect archaological evidence for an itinerant rabbi, you would expect documents. And there are many of them. Not merely Christian documents either. First century Jewish sources say Jesus existed and was a magician who led people astray, which the Biblical accounts more-or-less record them saying.
2. Nearly all accounts of Jesus include his execution under the oversight of Pontius Pilate.
3. The account of Jesus’ burial seems credible.
	1. They name the guy whose tomb he was in – Joseph of Arimathea. That is very specific. If it was a lie, Joseph – a congressman – a member of the Sanhedrin would have squashed that rumor!
	2. Jesus’ opponents did not deny his death or burial. The lie recorded in both Scripture and other writers is that the disciples hid Jesus body. So that is testimony from people who hated Jesus that he died, was buried, and his body was no longer in the tomb!
4. The accounts of Jesus’ resurrection – while “impossible” – bear the marks of credibility.
	1. The guys who would have invented it ALL look bad in the narrative – it shows a desire for the truth; not power.
		1. Even before the crucifixion, they are really up and down – often selfish, ignorant, unbelieving, etc.
		2. Peter denied Jesus three times and ran back to fishing.
		3. The rest of the disciples ditched Jesus when the going got tough.
		4. Thomas didn’t believe the rest of the disciples until he saw Jesus.
		5. Paul hated Christians and was supervising their murder
		6. James, Jesus’ brother, is portrayed as thinking Jesus was crazy during his earthly ministry.
	2. It did not happen the way anybody would have written it IF they wanted people to believe it. – The first eyewitnesses were women. In that culture, their testimony was inadmissible in court. You would NOT write it that way.
	3. The eyewitnesses all died or suffered miserably testifying to what they had seen. If you did not believe Jesus conquered death, and if you KNEW you had not REALLY seen it, this life is all you have to live for, so you should recant. At least 1 of them should have. But NONE of them did.
	4. Christianity took off in Jerusalem – where Jesus was crucified, buried, and appeared to many people. Why else would a bunch of Jews who weeks earlier cried out for Jesus to be crucified… and whose highest religious law forbids idolatry… turn around to worship a man that they had all seen crucified?
	5. The earliest written new testament letter was probably 1 Corinthians. Everything in it pins is to the early 50’s AD. And the gospel Paul preached, that we just read is not in Paul’s usual writing style. He says he received it… in Galatians he says he went to Jerusalem and met with Peter within 3 years. Then James the brother of Jesus and Peter, and John.
5. The Bible says it happened. The Bible is God’s Word. God cannot lie.

**So, Did it really happen?** It seems more likely than any other explanation of the facts.

**How should I respond to the gospel?**

1 John 1:8–10

[8] If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. [9] If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. [10] If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. (ESV)

* Confess your sins (Christ died FOR OUR SINS)

1 Corinthians 15:1–2

[1] Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, [2] and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. (ESV)

* Receive it (believe in it) and hold fast to it.

Romans 10:9–10[9] because, 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. [10] For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. (ESV)

* Confess that Jesus is Lord.

Acts 2:37–39

[37] Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” [38] And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. [39] For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” (ESV)

* Repent
* Be baptized

This is a well-rounded portrait of faith:

* You confess your sins to God and receive forgiveness.
* You start believing in Jesus (which is a lifelong reliance if you are truly being saved)
* You repent (turning away from that life of sin to follow Christ)
* You profess that Jesus is Lord (you’re following him as your master now)
* You get baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and Holy Spirit (which is an act that pictures everything we just talked about) dying to self, being raised back to life to walk in newness of life – following Jesus rather than your sin.

**What difference does it make?**

**If it didn’t happen – don’t be a Christian. It is all pointless. Heaven is a life. Forgiveness has not been secured. Jesus was a sham. The Bible is nothing but a record of lies.**But since is happened…

We can have

* Salvation
* Forgiveness
* Justification
* Receiving the Holy Spirit

1 Corinthians 15:20–24

[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. [24] Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. (ESV)

* Since Christ is the firstfruits, there will be a harvest consistent with those fristfruits. Those who are Christ’s will be also be raised with glorified bodies after Jesus returns!

*Application:*

Make sure you are one of Christ’s before it is too late!

Hold fast to Christ!