

MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

March 31, 2024

Pastor James Enderle

Easter Festival

First Lesson: [Job 23-27](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 118 CW

Second Lesson/Sermon Text: [1 Corinthians 15:19-26](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Mark 16:1-8](#)

Resurrection Reality: All will be Made Alive The Resurrection is a Big Deal

1. _____ if...
2. **But** _____
 - a. _____ for all
 - b. _____ and forever

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our Lord:

Today as we celebrate this Easter Festival, I want us to consider that **the resurrection is a big deal**. Why do we know that? Here we are on Easter and if you can imagine first service, there were even more people. I think there were people in almost the second row up front. Why do we all gather together here on Easter Sunday? Why is the resurrection such a big deal? This is the question that Paul is going to answer in 1 Corinthians. The question that was kind of asked of him was IS IT a big deal? When he is answering the Corinthians, he posed this question about "What if..." What if we don't rise and what if Jesus hadn't risen from the dead?

Before we get to that, I want us to think a little bit about that question "What if..." and how that is kind of a popular concept today. If you have seen this picture before, this is something popular right now. Maybe you are a fan of comic books and super hero movies, but there is this "What if..." TV series where it's all about the multiverse and it is considering "What if things were just a little bit different?" It's kind of hard to get a super hero movie today that doesn't talk about the multiverse. If you don't know what the multiverse is, it's the idea that there are all these other universes



out there and if something is changed, it changes everything just a little bit. Then maybe it changes everything in a huge way. If you haven't seen it, here is a picture of what some of the episodes are about (this next picture).



One of them is "What if the super heroes became zombies?" What would that be like if the super heroes were zombies? That would be crazy. One of the more popular ones is if Captain America didn't take that super serum but instead, Peggy Carter did so the first super hero during WWII was this British agent, Peggy Carter. That one is really popular right now. The idea of "What if..."

What if things were a little bit different? I think that's an easy thought for us to think about, What if...

Do you ever think that way? What if this thing had changed just a little bit? What if this thing didn't happen? What if this went just a little bit different, what would be different? What in your life would you want to change just a little bit, or maybe a big thing and then you would be happier? It's easy to dream. That's why I think that multiverse concept is so popular in today's world, because we like to think that way. What could we change? What if our lives were just a little bit different?

When we think about what if things were a little bit different, now we get to what Paul was talking about and the question posed to him: what if the resurrection isn't real? What if we don't live after this life? Is that a far-fetched question? It's actually one of the biggest questions that people ask in the world today. What happens after death?

With our seventh and eighth graders for confirmation class, I showed a video of a late-night talk show host. He asks a lot of his people on the show about 20 questions. A lot of them are silly, but one of the questions he asked was what happens when you die? Most of them were "I hope it's something good." But a lot of them were "Nothing happens." That's more and more popular. Stephen Hawking said that we're just like a computer. When we die, there is just an off switch and we're done. What do you do with old computers? You just throw them away. We're done. So is that what it is? After we die, then we're just done. What if?

What if that's true and there is no resurrection? This is the question that Paul is answering. Is that a relevant question today? I think so. When we get into our text, he says that ***Christ has indeed been raised***, but we have to go back to what the questions were all about and what would have happened IF HE wasn't raised from the dead.

A few verses earlier, in [Chapter 15](#), Paul writes this: ¹³ ***If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.*** ¹⁴ ***And if Christ has not been***

raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. So what if? What if there is no resurrection and what if Jesus didn't rise from the dead. What does that mean? Does it mean anything? It means a lot! If we don't rise, if Jesus didn't rise from the dead, it means that our whole faith is pointless. Go home! Just leave on Easter morning. Let's not come back. Don't come back next Sunday because if Jesus hasn't risen from the dead, our whole faith is pointless. Why?

Jesus came to live a life, a perfect life for you and for me, to go to the cross, to die for your sins, to pay for those sins and to suffer hell so we don't have to suffer hell. Your sins are forgiven. But if He didn't rise from the dead, then those sins aren't paid for. It shows that He did not defeat sin, death and the devil. So why are we here if Jesus didn't rise from the dead? Paul is saying it's all pointless if Christ has not been raised from the dead. If there is no resurrection, Christ didn't rise from the dead, our preaching is useless, our faith is futile, and then to begin our text he says, ***If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.*** We come to church on Sundays. We spend time reading God's Word. But if Jesus didn't rise from the dead, there's no point.

And more than that, what do we say about our faith? We say that we can suffer in this life. As Jesus took up His cross, Jesus says to take up our cross, to deny ourselves, to not live for this world, to not go after sin and pleasure, to not live for just money, but to praise God and worship God and to love Him and then to love others, to put others first. But if Jesus didn't rise and the point is just to eat, drink and be merry because there is nothing after this, then it's all pointless that we are willing to suffer. And that Christians for centuries before us have been willing to be martyred, to be killed for their faith, and if there is no resurrection, if Jesus didn't rise, then we are to be more pitied than anyone else because we've put our hope in Christ and the resurrection. So what if? What if Christ did not rise? There's no point.

But what does Paul say? He says ***But Christ...*** I want you to remember that and think about that today and in the future, ***but Christ.*** What does it mean then that Christ has indeed been raised from the dead? But Christ HAS risen. This is what it means. It means that He is ***the firstfruits 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.*** If Christ was raised, then He has defeated our enemies. He says that. ***Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.*** The last enemy to be destroyed is death. The power of sin is death and Jesus has defeated death. What does that mean? That means forgiveness for you and for me. It means forgiveness for all. That sin entered the world through Adam. It's kind of simple. All are sinful, it says. Death and sin came through Adam. But through Christ, what do we have? We have forgiveness. But Christ... it means ***forgiveness for all.***

That's what the resurrection means. You are no longer in your sin. You are forgiven. But what does that mean, to be forgiven? And if Jesus has risen, what do I look at? I look at my sins. When I look at my sins, I can say "This thing hurts God. This hurts others. It hurts me and I don't want to continue in that sin." If you were here on Good Friday, we came up and put nails with red ribbons in this cross reminding us that our sins put Jesus on the cross. He died for our sins. So why would I continue to commit those sins that hurt God and hurt others? If I know my sins hurt me and hurt God, then I don't want to continue in them.

But I also need to be reminded that I am forgiven. If God has forgiven me through Christ who has risen from the dead, can you take away that guilt? He doesn't remember them anymore, but we say "What if?" "What if I didn't do that?" We hold onto it and we can't let go of our sins because we are so filled with guilt of what we did. "How could I do that? Could God really forgive me for this?" God says "You are forgiven." How do I know? I know because Jesus died on the cross for you. ***For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*** ^(John 3:16) Are you included in the world? You are. So you are forgiven. When tempted and afraid, when struggling with sin, say "But Christ." "But Christ has risen and He died and rose again for me."

But more than that, what does it mean to know we are forgiven? As it talks about ***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.*** That was the theme of our service today. **All will be made alive.** Because Christ has died and rose again, we are made alive. I think as Christians we understand that there is this resurrection. But I want us to think about what it means to *live now and forever.*

If you are younger or you're getting closer to going to heaven, you know that you are forgiven and heaven is in store, so we take heart like Job, who says, ***I know that my redeemer lives*** and we rejoice in heaven. But sometimes do we struggle with living now? We can live for heaven, but can we live for now knowing that I'm at peace and I'm forgiven? Do we live with joy knowing the struggles that we have? Maybe one of the struggles is that a loved one has died. We struggle and wonder why God would have done that, or we're filled with sadness. But if we believe in the resurrection, if Christ has risen and we say "But Christ has risen," what does it mean for that person that we love who has passed and has fallen asleep? Christ is the firstfruits and they are alive in heaven with Him forever. So we can go on living with joy and peace knowing our loved one is at peace and perfect with God. We can go on living, understanding what it means to be a Christian; to live with an Easter joy every day; to know that God loves me. I am His child. I don't have to fear or make myself into anything else. I know that my identity is in Christ. I am a baptized child of God. So I can live in that peace and forgiveness every day.

How else can you live, knowing you are forgiven? Can you forgive those around you? Even if the world says "Take revenge," or your enemies, you don't have to love and forgive them? Knowing we are loved and forgiven, we can show a love and peace that the world doesn't understand, not because it comes from something special inside of us, but because it comes from Christ, who came to this world to live and to die for us.

We struggle very often with thinking of what if. What if these change...? What if I didn't do that...? What if I should have done that...? But the resurrection peace we have and the joy and truth of knowing that Jesus really died and really rose again for you. He is not just a good teacher. There is no question if it's true or not. The facts that He really was alive, that Jesus is real and what it means for you is so important. We say "But Christ" and we live and understand that His resurrection is a big deal. It makes us come here on Sunday and it makes us live our lives in a different way, not just following His commands, the way to show love and thanks, but mainly knowing you are forgiven and that you can have a joy and peace of forgiveness and living a true life thankful to God, now and in forever, knowing that you are redeemed by Jesus alone and that you will have peace forever, now, because of Christ alone. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [\(Philippians 4:7\)](#) Amen.