

March 23, 2008

“So What’s All the Fuss About?”
1 Corinthians 15:1-11

FCF: Failure to grasp the significance of the resurrection

PROPOSITION: (magnet) Because of the facts surrounding the resurrection,
(anchor) it is indeed worth a great deal of fuss.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

There’s much made of this time of year. One could even say a lot of fuss. I was watching a basketball game the other night and saw the Easter Bunny sitting in the stands. The Easter Beagle was on TV last week. So too were various specials on the history and traditions. There was even some talk about how the timing of the holiday this year has interfered with the celebration of St. Patrick’s Day. That was interesting.

My point in bringing all this up is simply to ask a question. What’s all the fuss about? What’s it all for? What’s it all mean? Why is Easter worth celebrating?

SCRIPTURE READING: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

It’s amazing the difference a few little words can make. For me, it was three little words spoken in the fall of 1989. It was a beautiful autumn day at Mountain Lake in the southwest part of VA. I was kneeling amidst giant rocks on the shore, working up the courage to ask a question of this beautiful woman before me. “Will you marry me?”

Sarah, of course, had a few options before her. She could have laughed. She could have run. She could have said, “Are you nuts?” But she said those words, “Yes, I will.” And those three little words have made a world of difference ever since.

Let me give you three other words to consider, words with such far-reaching implications they affect us all in one way or another. We’ve heard them already. “*He has risen.*” I say they affect us all. That’s because of the dramatic realities behind them.

Which is exactly Paul’s point in 1 Corinthians 15. The Apostle is making a point of reminding his readers of the gospel itself, stressing that it’s possible to be professors of this message without ever really grasping its implications. So, with that, he presses certain facts upon them, facts surrounding the death and resurrection of Christ, facts that clearly both for them and for us are worth our attention. Indeed, even a great deal of fuss.

I. LONG AWAITED

The first thing Paul brings to bear is that the death and resurrection of Jesus were long awaited. Paul, in a sense, calls in his first witnesses (**READ 1 Corinthians 15:3-4**).

A) His Death

“Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.” Think with me here.

1. What was said

What’s being said? This is referring not to an accident or an afterthought but to the atoning death of Christ – a death planned, prepared for long ago (**READ Luke 24:25-27**).

2. When it was said

When was this spoken of? How long ago? One example is Isaiah 53 (**READ Isaiah 53:4-6**). And when was this text written? Roughly 700 years before the events occurred.

B) His Resurrection

Yet Paul also tells us “that (Christ) was buried, that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.” Again, consider how stunning this is.

1. What was said

It wasn't just Jesus who foretold this. The Old Testament prophets had spoken of this long before. They had proclaimed both the suffering and death of the Messiah as well as His universal and everlasting dominion. Well, how could they both be true?

2. When it was said

The Church's earliest sermons appealed to this (**READ Acts 2:22-32**). Peter is quoting here from the Psalms making the point this couldn't ultimately be speaking of David. It had to be the Son of David. And when was this written? Roughly 1,000 years before.

Application:

My point? This should get our attention. Just the simple fact that these detailed prophecies should speak so clearly so long before the death and resurrection of Jesus should get our attention and rattle the cages. Could it be it just might be worth the fuss?

II. HISTORICALLY VERIFIABLE

To the second point. These events were long awaited. And historically verifiable.

A) The Style

I know it sounds strange but consider the style, the language used here.

1. Not mythical

This doesn't have a fictional or mythical feel to it at all. "He was raised on the third day." There's no "once upon a time." This is not the stuff of nursery rhymes.

2. But dateable

This is the stuff of history books. There are names and dates, places and events. All of which is traceable, none of which is fictional. This is how it's intended to be understood.

It has a certain style, a certain feel to it that just rings as historical.

B) The Substance

Then there's the substance of it. Not just the way it's written and recorded but the what of was written and recorded. Look again (**READ 1 Corinthians 15:5-8**).

1. The numerous appearances

Paul says there were numerous post-resurrection appearances of Jesus – three individuals, three groups – a challenge to the reader to check these things out. The impressive thing being not just the numbers of people but that so many were still alive at the time.

2. The events themselves

Then there were the events themselves – Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, and then the appearances – each in the physical realm. Nothing along the lines of a vision or a ghost. Again, this has the feel of something historical, something verifiable, something that set a movement in motion, that served as its foundation, something worth our attention.

Application:

If the fact the death and resurrection of Jesus was long awaited should get our attention, then the fact these events are historically verifiable should make us skeptics – skeptics of what the skeptics would have us buy into. How else do we explain the birth and growth of the Church? How else do we explain its beginnings, its success, the institution of the sacraments, the shifting of the Sabbath, their stubborn conviction in the face of persecution that "Jesus is Lord"? How else outside of these events being real?

Doesn't that then sound like something worth making a fuss over?

III. THOROUGHLY SIGNIFICANT

Which brings us to this. Long awaited and historically verifiable, the death and resurrection of Jesus are then events thoroughly significant as well. Think with me here.

A) Things About Him

What does all this tell us about God? What are the logical implications?

1. God is real

That God is real. He is not a creation of wish fulfillment or a figment of our imagination.

2. Jesus really is the Way, the Truth, the Life

That Jesus really is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. That He is who He said He is.

Those are the implications. That's where the facts of His death and resurrection take us.

B) Things About Us

To such things about God. And to some things about us as well.

1. There is life after death

That there is life after death. The end is not a cliff with a drop. It's a runway for takeoff.

2. There is a future for us

That there is a future for us. Not ethereal spirits but renewed bodies in a renewed world.

3. Suffering and death in a new light

That suffering and death can now be seen and approached in a whole new light.

4. That the gospel is real

That the good news of the gospel is real – clearly implicit in Paul's humble self-reflection in this text. The grace of God had transformed him and was driving him forward.

The point being that if all this be true, it then has huge ramifications.

Application:

No wonder then Paul says from the beginning that this was central. Other things are important – Jesus' miraculous birth, sinless life, mighty works, teaching, ascension, continuing reign, future return. But His death and resurrection are "of first importance."

This should get our attention, make us skeptics, and grip our hearts. For this is "thoroughly significant" – not an inch of our lives unaffected. Where we're from and where we're going. Why we're here and what we're about. It's thoroughly significant.

CONCLUSION:

Well, back to where we started. There are things worth our attention, worth making much of, even some fuss. Wedding plans – it's a big day and there's much to do. A birthday party – an opportunity to show one's affections. Coronations – the chance to mark the coming rule of the king. Victory parades – the chance to celebrate the defeat of one's enemy, the conquest by a hero. How much more so the death and resurrection of Jesus? Weighing its significance, all its implications, how much more so these events?

In fact, when you really understand what Paul is getting at, the death and resurrection of Jesus is worth a whole lot more "fuss" than it receives. We should at least be honestly asking some hard questions. "*What are the implications of this for me?*"

For some of us, it takes us to the end of 1 Corinthians 15 (**READ 1 Corinthians 15:58**). This frees the follower of Christ to live with abandon, knowing the security we have in the love of the One who has conquered death itself. For others, it should compel our going to people we trust with a question of our own. "*How has this changed you? Can you help me understand?*" Or, better yet, going to God in prayer, asking Him to help us understand. Going to God in His Word, reading a Gospel that we might learn more about Him, helping us see what it might look like to trust Him with our life. Perhaps you've run and rebelled against Him and hurt others long enough. Perhaps now it's time.

My point is this. You can't just weigh the death and resurrection of Jesus and do nothing. Considering all that surrounds it, all it entails, it's worth a great deal of fuss.

PROPOSITION: (magnet) Because of the facts surrounding the resurrection,

(anchor) it is indeed worth a great deal of fuss. > **PRAYER (Gregory the Great)**