

Totally Intended Consequences of the Resurrection

Acts 2:22-41

Introduction: Do you remember where you were on January 28, 1986? If you are over 40 this morning, I'll wager that you do, once I give you a clue to what happened that day. Personally, I was 7 years old in my 2nd grade class with nothing but recess and after school sports on my mind. As space exploration and travel was fast paced in the 60's and 70's, the creation of the Space Shuttle led to a new excitement as the Space Transportation System (STS) allowed for a shuttle to bring up payload into space, return, be refurbished and travel again. Two flights in 1981 gave way to 9 in 1985, and ramped up excitement to begin sending "civilians", normal people, like Christa McAuliffe, a 37-year-old school teacher from Concord, New Hampshire won a nationwide contest to go to space on the *Challenger* mission. She was not only the payload officer, but was going to teach two lessons from space, which would have been exceptional for her class then, just as it would be today. On an exceptionally cold day at launch, the shuttle *Challenger* took off with high excitement, enthusiasm, and expectation only to face the great grief of unexpected tragedy. 73 seconds into the flight, an O-ring in the right solid rocket booster failed, causing a fireball that led to the loss of all 7 crew members to the shock of a nation watching, including 2nd graders in a California classroom.

No one could have anticipated this disaster. Some had tried to signal some flaws in the system, but no one could have imagined or planned for this tragedy, which not only cost people their life but set back the space program for almost 3 years. Sometimes good things come out of unintended ways like penicillin, plastic, Vaseline, and corn flakes, all 'discovered' by accident. But most often the unintended comes with negative impacts. **The Cross and death of Jesus had all the makings of a tragedy of unintended consequences:** Jesus was betrayed by one of His own trusted followers. Maybe Jesus should have pled the 5th when He was before Caiaphas when asked if He was the Christ, the Son of God (Matt. 26:64). Perhaps He would have re-thought being in Jerusalem at the time He had a death and arrest warrant out for Him (John 11:53, 57). Or maybe He needed to pull a "Sound of Music" finish and flea over the Mount of Olives and get back over the Jordan River into Peres and out of harm's way.

When Jesus was caught, arrested, tried (6 different times – all illegal), scourged, and nailed to the cross early on a Friday morning, several questions are asked; **Did God fail? Did Jesus make a mistake? Did Jesus enemies really find a way to rid themselves of this threat to their power? Did Satan win? Was this whole thing a tragedy of epic proportions based on unintended consequences?**

The reality is this: The death of Jesus on the cross was a signal of victory because it ushered in the greatest INTENDED CONSEQUENCE of all time — **the RESURRECTION**. The resurrection is the most earth-shattering event this world has ever known. Jesus' death on the cross was unique only for the fact that He was the only SINLESS person to ever die. But many others who claimed to be Messiah and countless others also died, many on a cross. Resurrection itself happened before, most recently with the raising of Lazarus a few weeks earlier, but also in the OT (Widow of Zarephath's son – 1 Kings 17:17-24 by Elijah and the Shunamite's son in 2 Kings 4 by Elisha) and the NT (Widow of Nain's son and Jairus' daughter raised by Jesus – Luke 7:11-17 and Mark 5:35-43) as well as Tabitha and Eutychus in the book of Acts (Acts 9 and 20). But the reality of each of these that was raised? **They all died again**. The resurrection of Jesus was not only the perfect plan of God, but it had immense implication to our life. In fact, if Jesus had NOT rose from the grave:

- **We would still be in our sins** (1 Cor. 15:17) and our faith would be in vain

- **We would have zero hope for the future** (1 Cor. 15:32; 50-58) – the best counsel, the best hope we could offer would be “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die’ (v. 32)
- **God the Father and Jesus the Son would be made out to be liars** – (John 2:19; Matt. 12:39-40) – Jesus made it known that He would die, but that He would not stay that way. If Jesus failed to raise from the dead, He would have been like every other messianic charlatan who claimed to be the Promised Messiah
- **God is weak and beholden to sin and death** – If death had defeated Jesus, holding Him down and not allowing Him to raise again, it would prove that sin was too powerful for redemption to take place

So, this morning we want to look at one of the first sermons given in the NT after Jesus has raised and ascended. Its relatively short (as opposed to this one 😊) and focuses totally on the person and work of Jesus Christ, giving proofs that He was exactly who He said He was. What we’ll see is that God was overt, proactive, and obvious in all that happened with Jesus, which drives everyone, especially those here this morning, to a decision. No tricks, nothing hidden, no emotional refrain calling for a reactive decision. God simply lays out the reality of our life, sin, and how Jesus is the solution to our longing need, our future hope and search for joy.

God proved Jesus was the Messiah through His Works (v. 22)

“Men of Israel, hear the words Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves know —

The fact that this sermon was given by **Peter** is significant. Peter was a fisherman, not formally trained, and bit reactive or impulsive by nature. Though a leader among the 12 disciples Jesus had called to Himself to train for over 3 years of public service, Peter had major failings along the way. Several months earlier, before Jesus went to the cross, Peter swore up and down and sideways that He did not know Jesus, becoming fearful (even of a little girl) that the implications would cause him harm or death. This was prophesied by Jesus Himself, and Jesus made sure to restore him after the resurrection, and redirecting Him to feed His sheep, three times encouraging him since he denied Jesus three times (see John 21:15-19). Here is what is important to see: God uses all people, even the most unlikely, to accomplish great things. Peter was a common worker, uneducated, with a shameful past. Yet he was given the task of preaching at a gathering at Pentecost, a large gathering in Jerusalem, to his own people of Israel, after which **3000 souls** would begin to follow Jesus and join the burgeoning church. What made this sermon so powerful? Amazing eloquence? Powerful metaphors? Soul-stirring music? Nope. In fact, the crowd thought he was drunk at first (2:13) since they could hear in their own native language. A purposeful and clear explanation of Jesus Christ, including who He was and what He did.

There are two things that Peter pointed out about Jesus as proof of Him being different than any other:

- **He did the miraculous** – We call a lot of things miraculous today – an Olympic hockey victory (‘Do you believe in miracles’), unexplained medical cures (cancer was here yesterday, gone today), or the avoidance of an accident (I made it out of the crash alive – it’s a miracle). These are all fabulous things and show the power and providence of God, but they do not raise to the level of a Biblical miracle. A true miracle had to show great power over the natural world, a supernatural proof of divine action, an act that fills with wonderment and awe. Jesus raised the dead, had power over sickness, demons, weather, and the natural elements, like turning water to wine and multiplying bread and fish for a crowd. **What was the purpose behind each of these? John 20:30-31 says, “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples,**

which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”

- **He did the miraculous through the power of God the Father** – Jesus did not do miracles for self-promotion. He entrusted Himself to His Father for the authority to act, so that the point and purpose of miracles was proving His messiahship, not boosting His ego.

Jesus distinguished Himself by all others claiming to be Messiah by performing miracles and mighty works so that the crowds and His disciples would see and experience the power of God in a way that was undeniable. Only God could give the power to do what Jesus did. Yes, others did miracles (like Paul afterward), but these did them for the same reason: to prove they were representing God the Father and using His power, NOT as Messiah but pointing to the One and only Messiah Jesus.

God proved Jesus was the Messiah through the Resurrection (23-32)

*“this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. **God raised Him up, loosening the pangs of death, because it was not possible for Him to be held by it...***

This Jesus God raised up, and of that we are all witnesses.

I want us to go back to the weekend that Jesus died. Put yourself in the place of the followers of Jesus, not just the 12 but the thousands that had followed Him and believed in Him. The crucifixion would have been reason to reject Jesus, to throw in the towel, and reject His claim as Messiah —since He died the death of a criminal and seditious. But the resurrection of Jesus strengthened His followers in such a way that not only did the movement not burn out (which would have been expected) but it picked up steam like never before. 12 disciples began to preach and teach, followers were added, and the world was literally “turned upside down” (Acts 17:6-7) through the preaching of another king named Jesus. How else do we know the resurrection happened?

- **It was God’s plan to do it all along** – Notice the text does not mince words. Who killed Jesus? The people who arrested, tried, convicted, nailed, and lifted Him up on the cross were certainly culpable of guilt for killing the Messiah King of the universe. But notice that Jesus was delivered up **according to a definite plan and foreknowledge of God**. This was the plan which was created before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:2-4), promised in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:16) and played out over thousands of years through a seed of Eve, a child of Abraham, and descendent of King David. But this was not some sort of divine manipulation or child abuse as some have claimed, but an agreement between God the Father and Son, since Jesus said He freely lays down His life and no one takes it from Him (John 10). Jesus was obedient to the Father, but did so of His own free will. If God was faithful to put Jesus to death through the hands of sinful men, God also showed His power and authority to **raise Jesus up, loosening the pangs of death**. In other words, God not only worked everything out to have Jesus die, but also followed through on His promise to raise Him up again, glorifying the Son in His presence with glory that He had with the Father before the world existed (John 17:5). God is not a liar and Christ became the just and justifier of sinners.
- **The crowds of the day were witnesses** – This was the fulfillment of an Old Testament promise in Psalm 16, which said the Holy One would not see corruption, but would be the pathway of gladness in His presence. Many in the crowd would have seen the post-resurrection Jesus, who

walked the earth after He raised from the dead, even though the authorities tried to spread rumors that His body had simply been taken by the disciples (Matt. 27:62-66; 28:11-15)

Some have asked, “Why doesn’t Jesus just show Himself to us today so we could believe?” The answer is: faith. Faith is the substance of things hoped for and evidence of things not seen. The crowds at Pentecost saw the miracles of Jesus, saw His death, and even His post-resurrection realities, but many STILL refused to believe and bow down to Jesus’ authority. The issue is faith, then and now. Do we believe Jesus died and rose again to satisfy the wrath of the Father and offer forgiveness in His death and resurrection?

God proved Jesus was the Messiah through the giving of the Holy Spirit (33-36)

Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing...

*Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made Him **both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.***

Finally, the Holy Spirit who is the third person of the Trinity, was poured out on believers in Jesus at Pentecost, with the apostles being able to speak in languages of all the pilgrims at the festival. The Holy Spirit was the big advantage gained by Jesus raising up and ascending to heaven (John 16:7). The Holy Spirit is our Helper, God who indwells believers, guides us in truth (John 16:13), who teaches us and helps us remember all that Jesus said (John 14:26) and convicts of sin (John 16:8). This was to fulfill what **Psalm 110:1 said about Jesus ascending to sit at the right hand of God.** All of this was to do one thing:

*Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made Him **both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.***

Peter’s point of the sermon was to prove to everyone there that there was no denying the fact that Jesus, the one who was crucified by the hands of men, was truly Lord and Christ, Savior and master. This is the same point we come to this morning. Nothing that happened on Easter weekend over 2000 years ago was an accident or part of some unintended consequence. It was the intentional, loving, and purposeful plan of God. And it **demand a response.**

God proved Jesus was the Messiah so that we could respond (37-38)

*“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?’***

*And Peter said to them, **‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’***

“What shall we do” is perhaps the greatest question any of us could ever ask. It admits we do not have all the answers and can’t figure out all things on our own. The answer is clear and not overly complicated, though it will cost you everything. You see God gives us His grace, which is unearned and unmerited, but it was not free since it cost Jesus His life to give it to us. God sees us for who we are, in all of our sin, shame, grossness, and filth. He knows everything we’ve done and all that’s been done to us. He knows what others have seen, what we thought no one saw, and even the sick thoughts in our head and heart. He understands our fears, anxieties, depression, and hopelessness. He sees all of this because He created us and loves us.

The reason He sent Christ and the reason Jesus came was to come to the sick, not the healthy. God knew that we could not find salvation on our own so He had to provide it. His wrath over our sin HAD to have satisfaction, so He poured out His wrath on Jesus on the cross, so that we could be forgiven THROUGH Jesus' life and death. When God raised Jesus from the dead, it meant that sin is defeated, death no longer holds us, and we have a life to come to look forward to. Jesus died for God so that He could offer life to sinners, to know Him and the Father (John 17:3).

But what are we supposed to do???!?!!

Repent and believe.

We repent toward God and have faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21). Repentance is a change of mind, change of direction, change of desire. It means that we once were moving away from God in rebellion and now turn toward Him in love and peace. We can do this when we have faith in Jesus Christ, ask Him for forgiveness, and trust in His work on the cross on our behalf. He gives us His righteousness and takes our sin.

All of Easter reminds us of this: God proactively did all things to bring sinful people back to Himself, and since He could not lower His standards of His glory, He had to provide a perfect sacrifice who met all the standards of righteousness and was willing to buy back sinful mankind. That is why Jesus is so amazing and glorious. He is our Savior and Lord, the one who saves us and owns us. There were clear, intentional consequences at Easter, and it had everything to do with salvation.

What will you do with this? This is not just something you raise your hand at or fill out a card for. This is something God does in you, and believing means you will turn from your sin and follow Christ with your whole life. We want to help you if that is you today. And for everyone here today, we rejoice and give thanks that God proactively sought us, bought us, and brought us to Himself. We never could have found Him on our own, but He gave us Christ, who is Lord, so that we could have life, both now and forever!!!!