

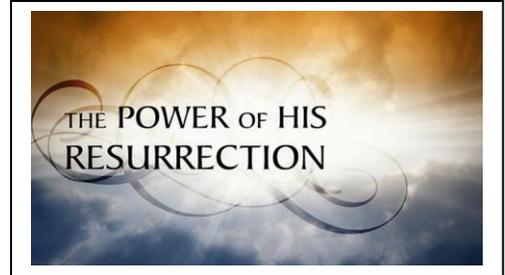
# 'The Prayer 20/20 Impact' - Knowing Jesus More! August 23rd, 2020

*Dear Praying Friends, and Partners In Prayer Team, and whole Church Family,*

*"That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection" **Philippians 3:10 (NKJV)***

*"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory."*

**Colossians 3:1-4 (NKJV)**

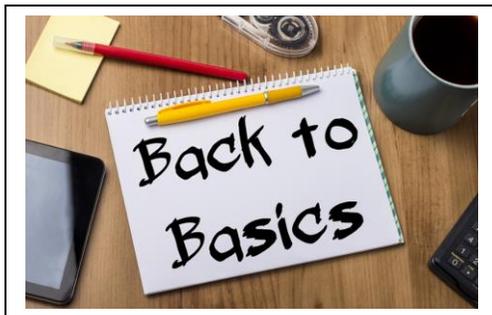


Are you ready to get back to the basics? Before I get into my diatribe about the need to return to basic Christianity, I need to remind us about the importance of basic "prayer." We are calling our church people back to basic intercession and prayer for revival -not only for our country and the unsaved of the community, but also for the revival and recommitment of the church and Christ's people. We want to move the mountains of unbelief! E. M. Bounds says: *"The effectual fervent prayer have been the mightiest weapon of God's mightiest soldiers."* (*Power Through Prayer*, pg. 74). He even left me with this very convicting statement for pastors: **"The preacher who has never learned in the school of Christ the high and divine art of intercession for his people will never learn the art of preaching!"** (*Power Through Prayer*, pg. 59). That hits me hard!!! I must be a pastor of passionate prayer for each of you in order for any of my message to be used of God. So we are calling all prayer warriors to prayer! Tonight, Sunday August 23, the prayer partners are meeting for prayer time at church. Please come at 6:30 pm and bring a lawn chair. We will meet at the back of the church. We are also calling all saints to our revival hour of prayer every Sunday morning beginning at 9:00 am August 30<sup>th</sup>. This will be in place of Sunday School. We will meet in my office, share prayer needs, and then branch off to pray in groups. We are praying to be devoted to the divine work of prayer. We are praying mightily that God will work in lives. We are praying with fervor, urgency, and perseverance that God will work strongly here and along this 611 corridor. Please join us!



I love and have shared several times the story of NFL football coach and legend Vince Lombardi. His records for football wins are astounding! Yet, one time when the season was not going right, he walked into the locker room and said to his football team while

holding up a ball: “Men, we need to start over! If we don’t, we will lose the game! Men let’s get back to the basics. So, look at this, this here is a ‘football!’” I think we also need to hold up our Bibles and return to the basics of our Christ. So why should we at Palisades Community Bible Church stop and think about getting back to the basics? Think about this for a minute, since March 15<sup>th</sup> we have been shut down and the American church has had to halt in its tracks and do church differently. We no longer are relying on our “programs” and “ministries.” Sunday School isn’t able to be done as we’ve always done. Churches have had to change how they still keep in touch through Zoom and small groups. We’ve had to mask up, glove up, and social distance. That is a good thing, because we don’t want the coronavirus to continue unabated and lives to be lost. But during this “shut” down we’ve all been brought back to interact with our families. We’ve been challenged about our jobs and our economic needs. We’ve had to rely on prayer and our relationship with Jesus. We’ve become the “church” without walls. We no longer rely on the way we’ve always done church. We don’t just go through the motions anymore. Is it that God is trying to tell us something? Like Lombardi, I want to stop and hold up the Bible and see Christ! I want to say: “Folks, this is the Bible and we need to get back to the basics of living for Jesus.”



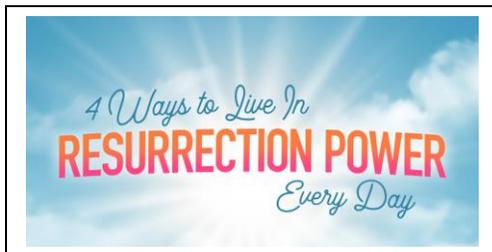
Do you know that every time I meet with other pastors, I’m hearing more and more stories of churches that are having a horrible time re-opening. Some churches are still not open after the shutdown. Some churches are losing the bulk of their people. Some churches are dwindling and losing all of their support. They can’t maintain their budgets. Some churches are losing their people. People will not come, masks or not. We don’t know if they are just attending church at different locations or not coming to church at all. Pastors report that even the online viewings are not increasing anymore. After Easter, it has been a steady decline. There has been a declining trend of people following their church’s messages but we don’t know if they are still seeking any spiritual truth anywhere at all. This all has left many pastors in our area to wonder what is happening. Are people really true followers of Christ? Are we finally showing we have little commitment, so maybe the professions are not truly there or real?

Throughout this Covid-19, I’ve been praying and seeking from God the answer to this hypothetical question: “If we continue to operate like this, with Covid-19 health restrictions, and we are not able to meet regularly as a body of Christ at church in His presence together, what should we be doing?” What is it that God wants for us His church people to be doing and learning right now? What if persecution comes to America and God ordains that before His second coming all American Gospel preaching churches are shut down or totally need

to operate outside the building? Will we learn to operate what it really means to be a “local Christian church” and are we doing those things that are really important to Jesus? I think it is an invitation to go back to the real organic basics of what the Christian life is and what God wants from our lives. Can and will we be the “church” without walls? Will we make sure we are doing what are essentially the basics of our Christian lives? “For we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7).

If going back to basics is the message we should be asking ourselves, I want to continue to ask ourselves this question: “What is it that we as Palisades Community Bible Church must realize and do to go back to the basics of our Christian lives?” As I’ve been preaching Colossians, it has already reminded me and challenged me if my commitment to Christ is real. Do I know Jesus as my personal Lord and Savior? Is Christ in me, the hope of glory? So the first basic we need to go back to is: Jesus and His resurrection life. Is it real to me? Do I know how to live the resurrected life? What does the “resurrection” means to us”? Do we know the resurrection basics of our faith? Let’s go back to square one, and look at the four basic truths to the resurrected life:

**1. First, the resurrection is the absolute essential for our Christian lives to be real and work!** It is the absolute basis of all a Christian stands for. The living resurrection is the whole basis of our lives. Without a resurrected



Savior, we are no different than any other religion. Paul tells us the Gospel message of salvation is in the resurrection. In 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 he lays out the gospel in a “nutshell”: “Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you

hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”

Charles Spurgeon reminds us of the importance of the resurrection in his message: “*Following the Risen Christ*” #1530 when his opening words from Colossians 3 were: “*The resurrection of our divine Lord from the dead is the cornerstone of Christian doctrine. Perhaps I might more accurately call it the keystone of the arch of Christianity, for if that fact could be disproved the whole fabric of the gospel would fall to the ground. If Jesus Christ be not risen then is our preaching in vain, and your faith is also in vain, you are yet in your sins. If Christ be not risen, then they which have fallen asleep in Christ have perished, and we ourselves, in missing so glorious a hope as that of resurrection, are of all men the most miserable. Because of the great importance of His resurrection, our Lord was pleased to give many infallible proofs of it by appearing again and*

*again in the midst of His followers. It would be interesting to search out how many times He appeared, I think we have mention of some sixteen manifestations. He showed Himself openly before His disciples, and did eat and drink with them. They touched His hands and His side, and heard His voice, and knew that it was the same Jesus that was crucified. He was not content with giving evidence to the ears and to the eyes, but even to the sense of touch He proved the reality of His resurrection.” (Charles Spurgeon, #1530, Pg. 1)*

Paul goes on to remind us that without the resurrection being real, “If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God” (1 Cor. 15:13-15). It is clear that without the resurrection, we are just like every other religion in the world. We would be no different from Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, or Eastern Mysticism. We would never need to point out the dead religiousness of those who have trusted their own good works. We would never need to be any different in our practices from Chathology, or Luthernism. It wouldn’t matter if we were worshiping trees, rocks, or just scientism. We would all be on the same level. There would be nothing to distinguish Christianity from Judaism or any other cult. We would all just be doing our best to make our lives more moral, better, and feel whatever we want about our destiny and what happens after death. We would all believe that “all roads lead to the truth” because there would be no reason to think otherwise. The reason Christianity stands above and different from all other philosophies and belief systems is the fact of a “risen Savior.” What does the resurrection of Jesus mean to you? What does it mean to me?

**2. Second, Jesus assures our promised future resurrection.** Because Jesus both died and rose again, we will be raised like Him. 1 Corinthians 15:20 says, “But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” The word “firstfruits” speaks of a sampling, a foretaste, a glimpse. Jesus is the firstfruit.

Jesus has died and has risen, so we know that our resurrected bodies in some way will resemble His resurrection body. To what extent, we cannot be certain. But if they were completely like His, it would mean that we would be clearly recognizable. We are and can live a resurrected life. It releases us from the world. It takes the power of sin away from holding us back. It gives us hope that someday we will be free of sin and self.

Early missionary David Brainer, who witnessed of Christ to the American Indians in our very area of Bucks County, years ago wrote this in his journal: *“Farewell, vain world, my soul can bid adieu. The Savior taught me to abandon you. While He thus lets me heavenly glories view, your beauties fade. My heart has no room for you anymore!” (April 25, 1742).*

**3. Third, the resurrection of Jesus is a proof of future judgment.** Now that may not sound all that exciting, but it's something we need to know. We live in a society, and indeed a world, in which justice is often perverted and neglected. We look at things that happen and say, "How can that be? How could that happen?" The resurrection means, among other things, that God's justice will ultimately prevail.

I received free through Our Daily Bread Ministries small booklets called: *Clinging to Hope in the Storm*, by Leslie Leyland Fields, and I want to make them available to you all. It takes us as believers through the storms of life. The author even explores the Scriptural accounts from Mark Chapters 4 and 6 of Jesus with His disciples. I'm providing them free for you to pick up after our services, or we can mail them to you (just contact us at our office). The small booklets will help us grow and trust God in the storms ahead for us as believers. I don't know when the current political and social storms will end. I love how Leslie begins by saying on page 27, "*Even if our boat sinks, and we go under, we're still safe. In this life, we know we're not always healed. Not everyone is saved from cancer. Not every car misses the collision. Not every sickness ends. Not every sinking boat is righted. Death often appears to be the worst of all possible outcomes. But it's not. Our real enemy is not that which kills the body, but that which kills the soul. It is sin, alienation from God. Jesus death and resurrection has already calmed the one storm we cannot survive: the storm of sin and earth. If we trust Jesus, when our bodies die, as someday they must, we move to the fullest new life possible.*" (pg. 27-28). Loved ones, that is real assurance that future resurrection will come for us.

We have a living Savior! I love the words of Robert Morgan: "*Jesus was a working man, a ragged carpenter with neither a roof above His head nor a pillow beneath it, sleeping under the stars in borrowed beds; His robe a blanket, His nightlight the moon. For thirty-six months He drifted about doing good and telling stories. He never hurt a soul. He healed the sick, taught the masses, fed the hungry, walked across the seas, and preached the good news. Wherever Jesus went the miraculous broke out-at weddings, at funerals, on the land and on the lake, on the mountainside and in the city streets. He became the help of the helpless and the hope of the hopeless. He turned water into wine, and with bread and fish He fed a multitude; yet He Himself was sometimes hungry, and in His death He cried out in thirst... He was buried in a donated mausoleum. Yet His tomb, guarded by Roman Soldiers, was open by heavenly agents- and found empty. And for two thousand years we can say that all the angels of heaven, all the demons of hell, all the stars in the sky, and all the men of the earth have never understood the influence of this child who was Jesus Christ our Lord. Because Jesus lived in history, and because His life was recorded, we can learn about Him. But because He rose from the grave and is now alive, we can have a personal relationship with Him and come to know Him more deeply and intimately. I'd like to help you grow closer to Jesus- the Beloved Son, the Everlasting Lord, the Promised Messiah, the Sacrificial Intercessor, the*

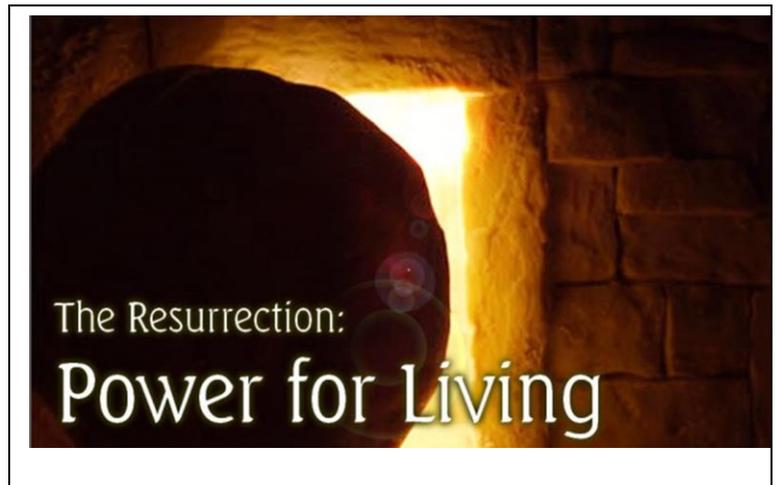
*Compassionate Servant, the Powerful Provider, the Trusted Teacher, the Great I AM, the Selfless Savior, the Worthy King, and my Best Friend. May He be yours too!* (Robert Morgan, *12 Stories of Christmas*, pg. 226-227). That is what we are basically here to do as believers! This basic teaching and hope is ours to share and experience now with others. “Christ lives in me, the hope of glory!”

**4. Lastly, the resurrection of Christ gives us power to live the Christian life.** Scripture says, “But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you” (see Romans 8:11). Certainly the Bible does not teach that we will be sinless in this physical body we now live in. On the other hand, we can sin *less*, not by our own abilities, but by the power of the Spirit.

Christ can make us altogether different kinds of people. We must believe that. “Old things have passed away . . . all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). God can give you the power to live this Christian life. God’s “manner of love” is more surgical than you ever imagined. He knows every thought and intention of your heart (Hebrews 4:13), and He will not be stopped in His searching, probing, magnifying, and examining of every microscopic inch of your “naked soul” to make you like His Son.

So let me close with a call to action for the resurrected life found in Colossians 3: “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.” Colossians 3:1-4 (NKJV)

So let’s ask ourselves: “Do we know if we are living a resurrected life by our gratitude to God for all circumstances (1 Corinthians 1:4)?” Gratitude is one of the quickest and most effective tests of your Christian maturity. It is the will of God for you, and it is the litmus test that lets you know which mile marker you are at on the road of progressing suffering (sanctification). How would you describe your progress on the journey of the resurrected life? Do you understand it? Do you daily strive for it? What weights or sins hinder you (Hebrews 12:1) from knowing and being conformed to the death of Christ (Philippians 3:10)? What fear keeps you from forbearing under your cross? Are you willing to daily take up the cross and live the



resurrected life? Jesus said, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23). I read this as something none of us have exceptions to doing. Is there something you want more than Jesus or something you fear losing? "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die'" (John 11:25). Living the resurrected life is not a sentence to a life of misery and unhappiness.

After giving a talk about Jesus' resurrection to an unsaved student in college, I was asked, "Do you mean that if I don't believe in the resurrection, I can't be a Christian?" When I said that believing in the resurrection is at the heart of Christianity, the student turned away disappointed.

Remember that Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life." According to science, it's easy to reject Jesus' claim, because people have not observed anyone coming back to life. Nevertheless, Christians believe that on the third day following His crucifixion, Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus' resurrection sealed the victory over sin and death. The resurrection is so essential, Paul says, that if God didn't raise Jesus from the dead, our faith is useless and "we are of all people most to be pitied" (1 Corinthians 15:19).

By faith, however, through the Holy Spirit's work in our hearts, we believe that God did raise Jesus from the dead. And we enjoy new life in Jesus and look forward to life with Him forever. This is no myth or fanciful escape from the present; it is simply the truth at the heart of being a Christian.

Do you believe Jesus is the resurrection and the life? In what ways can Jesus' resurrection shape how you live today?

Pray with me, and don't forget to gather in fervent prayer:

***"Almighty God, we reflect on Your character as we seek wisdom for such a time as this. In these moments of fear, You remain perfect love. In these unsafe days, You remain all-powerful. You remain absolutely sovereign; our times are in Your hands. Thank You Jesus, that You are the resurrection and the life, and in You we have new life and the hope of eternal life. Give us the resurrection power we need. Holy Spirit help us live and seek the things above. Help us understand and live the basics of the resurrection life. Work in our hearts and lives today as we serve You and look forward to spending eternity with You. We ask in Jesus, our best friend and remarkable Saviors' Name, Amen."***

Quote: "Christianity is a religion of the open empty tomb." ... Roy L. Smith

Quote: Christianity is in its very essence a resurrection religion. The concept of

resurrection lies at its heart. If you remove it, Christianity is destroyed.” ...  
John R. Stott

Quote: The Gospels do not explain the Resurrection; the resurrection explains the Gospels. Belief in the resurrection is not an appendage to the Christian Faith; it is the Christian faith.” ... John S. Whale

Quote: “Jesus is risen! He shall the world restore! Awake, ye dead! Dull sinners, sleep no more!” ... John Wesley (1703-1791)

Quote: “Our Lord has written the promise of the resurrection not in books alone, but in every leaf in springtime.” ... Martin Luther (1483-1546)

