

“Resurrected + Called”

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Graphics: road, new life, calling

Big Truth: Jesus was resurrected from the dead to give us victory over death as well. Each believer not only will be resurrected into the life to come, but is called to live a resurrected life now! Each person at PUMC is resurrected at salvation by grace through faith in Jesus and His teachings, life, death, and resurrection. We may be unlikely candidates, but God calls nonetheless.

Focus Phrase: My resurrected life is a called life.

1. Introduction

- A. He lived the lifestyle of the rich and famous. Born into wealth and privilege, he was a notorious party animal. He lived a life of selfish ease. Much to the dismay of his mother, an upstanding Christian, he haunted the low-life dives of the city. He kept company with disreputable characters. He had a son by his live-in girlfriend and made no move to marry her. He was, in short, an embarrassment.
- B. One day, this entitled young man had a change of heart. Over the years he'd heard the rudiments of Christian teaching from his mother, but it had never stuck. On this particular day he found himself sitting in the garden of the family estate, a Bible in his hands. He felt troubled by the emptiness of his life.
- C. The young man opened the Bible and read these words: “Let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires” (Romans 13:13-14).
- D. Years later, the man wrote about how he felt that day: “Instantly, it was as if the light of peace was poured into my heart, and all the gloom of doubt vanished away.”
- E. Not long after, this dissolute young man surprised his friends by training for the priesthood. Ultimately, he became not only a priest, but a bishop.
- F. It is this very man — this one-time playboy — who is now called “Saint” in many Christian traditions. His name was Augustine, and he lived in the fourth century. He was as unlikely a candidate for sainthood as any you'll find.
- G. His life, his outlook, his lifestyle and goals, were all resurrected from the dead the day St. Augustine allowed Jesus to save him from death that his sin was causing in his life.
- H. Today and for the next two weeks, we'll be camped out in 1 Corinthians 15. This sermon series is called Resurrected. The resurrected life is a life that has been changed from a trajectory to death to a trajectory to everlasting life.

- I. We usually focus on the resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday. Yet, as followers of that risen Savior, we are, right now, called to live the resurrected life, with Jesus at the center of it, today! Today's message is entitled: Resurrected + Called, as we look at the first 11 verses of chapter 15.
- J. Another unlikely person to have his life resurrected from the dead, spiritually, was the Apostle Paul, although he wasn't always known by that name...which has something to do with his resurrection story.
- K. But Paul was the author of the letter to the Corinthians that we will be reading for three weeks. And it's precisely because of his resurrection encounter with Jesus that he can, at all, write the words he wrote...and with passion and authority to write them.
- L. My prayer for each one of us, over the next three weeks, is that through the faith we have in the bodily resurrection of Jesus after he died...and through the witness of Paul and others whose lives were resurrected (rescued) by Jesus, that you and I can live fully into the resurrected life Jesus gives to us today.
- M. If you're taking notes, write this down: **My resurrected life is a called life!**
- N. As we get closer to Lent and Easter, I pray that the resurrected life of Jesus will be YOUR life as you are called by Jesus to love those around us. Let's pray...
- O. PRAY!**
- P. Please bring your bibles with you to worship each week, since it's important to be reading along as I read...take notes in the margins, underline things...be ready to hear what the Holy Spirit is saying to you...ready?

2. Scripture

A. READ 1 Corinthians 15:1-2

- i. Paul's introduction, here, does two things:
 - a. First, by calling them brothers and sisters, he's connecting with them.
 - i) He was signaling to them that he was one of them...and in turn they are like him.
 - ii) It wasn't always that way. Paul's life was one of resurrection. Paul's name was not always Paul. He started out as Saul. Saul was a Pharisee - a Jewish religious leader - who went on a years-long rampage to persecute and kill Christians after Jesus' death and resurrection.
 - iii) Yet Saul one day had a conversion experience that changed his entire life from DEATH-bound to LIFE-bound.
 - iv) In the next section, Paul alludes to what happened, but he was on the road to Damascus one day, getting ready to persecute more Christians, when the resurrected Jesus stopped him in his tracks, blinded him, and asked, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" (Acts 9:4)

- v) And it was at that moment that Jesus changed Saul's name to Paul, told him to stop persecuting Christians, and gave him a calling to preach the gospel. God said, "This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel." (Acts 9:15)
- vi) Resurrected + called. And Paul was writing this letter to his brothers and sister in Corinth because he wanted the same for them.
- b. The second thing Paul wanted to tee up here was to remind them of the main thing...the Good News (he wrote in verse 1) - the *gospel*...the truth about Jesus Christ...and the POWER it has to resurrect and call them...
 - i) This gospel was proclaimed to them by Paul.
 - ii) This gospel was received by the church in Corinth.
 - iii) Through this gospel, they were saved.
 - iv) And it onto that gospel message that they needed to hold tightly (unless, of course, Paul adds, you have come to believe in vain.)
- ii. The stage is set. Paul's introduction is complete. The suspense is killing us.
- iii. What is the GOOD NEWS? (I'm glad you asked!) Let's keep reading...

B. Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-11

- i. Here's the GOOD NEWS! Here is the ONE THING that you need to know and believe to experience everlasting life: "For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: **that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day.**"
- ii. Then Paul starts to build the case for Jesus' resurrection: "He (Jesus) appeared to Cephas — Peter, in other words — then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters. ... Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles."
- iii. It is only after this great litany of the faithful that Paul dares to list his own name: "Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me."
- iv. "Untimely born" is a euphemism: a phrase meant to cover up a grisly reality. The translators chose it to protect our sensibilities: Paul's real language is more earthy than that. The Greek word Paul uses literally means, "abortion" or "miscarriage." "Last of all," Paul is saying, "as to a miscarried fetus, he appeared also to me."
- v. Paul, in other words, is not a legitimate son of the gospel. He's not even an illegitimate heir. He's a twisted, broken wreck of a human being.
- vi. If you grimace at the earthiness of Paul's words, remember that Saul of Tarsus was not just indifferent to Christianity, as Augustine was. He persecuted

the church. Saul was a religious bounty hunter; he rounded Christians up for execution. It was Saul who held the cloaks of the mob as they stoned Stephen to death.

- vii. “But by the grace of God,” Paul writes, “I am what I am.” Not by his own merits, but by the power of the living Lord who called out to him on the Damascus Road, who plucked him out of his hate-filled life and transported him into the light of the gospel. Paul is an unlikely apostle indeed! Yet, he was resurrected and called and became the driving force behind the Church!
- viii. Jesus’ disciples were like that, too.

- a. They were ordinary people, not the movers and shakers, the honored professionals of their world, but blue-collar laborers. None of them had much in the way of education. None of them had ever been to seminary. Yet, these are the ones Jesus invited to join him on a fishing expedition — fishing for the hearts and souls of people.
- b. Some say there’s an ancient scroll, discovered in Jesus’ hometown of Nazareth. They say it was written on papyrus, or maybe sheepskin.
- c. At the top of the letter — it’s hard to read, because it’s so brittle with age — you can make out the shadow of a letterhead: “Jordan Management Consultants.” It reads as follows:
- d. *Jesus, Son of Joseph
Woodcrafters Carpenter Shop
Nazareth, State of Galilee, Kingdom of Herod*

Dear Sir:

We are pleased to have reviewed the resumes of the 12 men you have picked for management positions in your organization. They have taken our battery of psychological tests, and our vocational counselors have interviewed each one.

It is our staff’s professional opinion that most of your nominees are lacking in background, education and vocational aptitude for the enterprise you are undertaking. They are not team players. We recommend that you continue your search until you find better-qualified candidates.

- *Simon Peter is emotionally unstable and given to fits of temper.*
- *Andrew has absolutely no qualities of leadership.*
- *The brothers, James and John, place personal interest above company loyalty.*
- *Thomas demonstrates a skeptical, questioning attitude that would tend to undermine morale.*

- Our investigators have discovered that the Jerusalem Better Business Bureau has an inch-thick file of ethics complaints against Matthew concerning his former employment as a tax collector.

- James, son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus definitely have radical leanings, and both register a low score on tests of psychological stability.

- Only one of your candidates shows high potential. He is a man of ability and resourcefulness. He meets people well, has a keen business mind and has contacts in the highest places. He is highly motivated, ambitious and responsible. Therefore, we recommend Judas Iscariot as your chief operating officer.

*Wishing you every success in your new venture,
Jordan Management Consultants*

- ix. You get the point. Had Jesus set out to start a smoothly functioning global nonprofit, he surely could've picked better people.
- x. But Jesus didn't set out to create an organization. He came into the world, like his cousin John, "as a witness to testify to the light" (John 1:6). Those who saw divine light reflected in his face followed him.
- xi. By the power of the Holy Spirit, those feeble disciples did the most astounding things, amazing even themselves. They were resurrected to new life and then they answered the call. And God used even the most unlikely, untimely, and seemingly unfit, for His Holy purposes.

3. Application

- A. **My resurrected life is a called life!** Are you resurrected? Are you called?
- B. There's only one requirement for a resurrected disciple, in the last analysis: **a willingness to obediently submit to God's call.** You don't have to be smart, strong, healthy, or even particularly religious. All you need to do is listen when God calls, and then get up and do what's needed.
- C. You don't even need to respond immediately. The Bible is full of people like Jonah, who — as soon as they hear God calling — run off in the opposite direction. Yet, one thing you must admit about God's call is that it's persistent. God will stick with it, until finally you cease your resistance and give in to being resurrected and called.
- D. There's so much in us that tries to block God's call — as if that were possible. There's so much pride, so much determination to seek glory for ourselves. It's only when we can heave a great sigh, like Paul, and turn ourselves over to God, that we can say, with him, "But by the grace of God I am what I am" (1

Corinthians 15:10). Only then can we take those first hesitant steps in the direction of our resurrected calling.

- E. Is there something you've been meaning to do lately, but haven't?
 - i. Maybe there's some effort where you know you can be useful. Maybe a lonely neighbor who could use some companionship. Or a ministry task in the church no one else is doing.
 - ii. Maybe you're feeling restless in your occupation — or even in your retirement — and you sense God tugging you in a new direction. Maybe you've even wondered if God is calling you to ordained ministry.
- F. **We're all unlikely candidates for discipleship, every last one of us.** Yet Jesus resurrects each one of us to do His work in the world!
- G. Just look at me! Look around the typical church sanctuary. There are no super-Christians here or worshipping online — only ordinary people, hesitant in their faith, sometimes wavering in their commitment, oftentimes difficult to live with.
- H. As a collective group, we're sinful, hypocritical, stingy, short-tempered, insecure — in short, no different from any other gathering of human beings on this globe.
- I. Yet we are here because Jesus was the one person ever to walk out of his own grave under his own power! And THAT power is available to resurrect YOU and ME right here right now and forever!
- J. God continues to do the work of resurrection and calling...to rebirth your life today and everyday SO THAT He can use you for as long as you have.
- K. Don't think for one minutes that you can't pray. Don't think for one minute that you can sing songs of praise. Don't think for one minute that you aren't worthy to serve or worship or love others.
- L. **My resurrected life is a called life!** You are RESURRECTED! And YOU are CALLED!

4. Conclusion

- A. St. Augustine's story of resurrection is incredible, but his legacy of ministry has impacted more people than we can count.
- B. If you Google quotes from St. Augustine, they are countless, but here's one of my favorites: *"Do you wish to be great? Then begin by being. Do you desire to construct a vast and lofty fabric? Think first about the foundations of humility. The higher your structure is to be, the deeper must be its foundation."*
- C. Be resurrected. It's the foundation of your call to love and serve the Lord and others in all you do. What say you?
- D. **Let's pray...**