

Easter 2016

Matthew 28.1-15

What will you do with the resurrection?

Serve Charlotte Recap

- 185 of us went around serving our city in 9 different organizations. This is just the beginning for us.
- Blessed to be a blessing.
- That's a core part of who we are as a church. Displaying the love of Christ to everyone.

Intro

Happy Easter Mercy Church! It's our very first one! I feel like you aren't really a church until you've celebrated Easter so, in some ways...today we are finally official! Ok lets be honest, For some of you Easter has already been a long day. And its not over. So many traditions that people do on this weekend. It truly has the most bizzare mix of traditions of any holiday I know. So, naturally I put some pics together for us all to reflect on...

EASTER EGG HUNT. First one is the traditional easter egg hunt. Which is great fun...and has nothing at all to do with Easter. Hey how we gonna celebrate easter? How bout eggs? We'll color them and hide them you know...just like the disciples did.

Then there are **Peeps**. These things were actually last made in 1995. But they never deteriorate because they are the twinkly of holiday candy. The nastiest things on earth. Who likes peeps? You people are gross. Who likes Cadbury eggs? You are my people.

How many of you already tried to take that "we're all dressed up & matching for Easter" family picture? Turns out John & I both grew up with that tradition and we have pics dating back to my childhood. Back when cameras had shoulder straps. I appreciate John's family doing the Straddle the tree limb pose **FAMILY ON TREE**....a true easter special. I'm not sure why, but this is like the number one pose for 90s families.

I THOUGHT my parents and I made an agreement to burn all pictures from my middle school years. But, this one surfaced this week and it is rough
SHELTON BROTHERS ON EASTER SUNDAY

Last one is of our worship director Charlie when his family let him go and meet Easter's OTHER mascot. The Easter Bunny. **Scary Bunny**. Don't care how you do it...6ft tall man in a bunny costume is creepy.

I'm not sure how to transition away from that image. So, this is my transition.

Ok. On from that. Hey my name is Spence and I am one of the pastors here at Mercy Church. If you are new with us, welcome! We are only 6 months old so we are all pretty new here. Hopefully today you will get a feel for who we are as a church. We want to help you develop a healthy relationship with God and with other people. Our purpose is pretty simple. Before Jesus left earth he looked at his followers and said hey, go tell everyone what has happened here. The way we say it is we exist to make disciples of Jesus who Love God, Love Each Other, and Love our World.

And today of course is Easter. The biggest day of the year for the church because its where we celebrate the most important part of our faith. So, Again if you are new this is a great week for you to be here because hopefully you'll walk away today with a good grasp of the core of what Christians believe and how it connects to your life.

So here's what we are going to do. I'm going to read the account of the most important thing that ever happened in the history of the whole world. At least, as Christians see it.

A fellow pastor asked me yesterday what I was preaching on today...I was like...the resurrection bro. He says to me "typical 1st Easter move." I'm pretty sure I'm ok with that.

As we walk through the resurrection of Jesus I'm going to pause along the way to explain what is happening. Because my goal in doing this is to help you experience the scene. For some of you it's a familiar story and that means you

have to especially pay attention or, you will remember a version of the story you have in your head instead of the actual story as the bible tells it.

For others, maybe you know about it...Jesus rose...so lets color some eggs & hide them...And a bunny was there...but you've never really sat down and looked through the actual account of it. I want us to go to the resurrection scene for a minute together. So that we can see and hear what happened.

Then, we'll talk about why it matters so much to you and I today. We'll look at what happened, and talk about how we here and now should respond to it.

Main idea today is a question:

- **What are you going to do with the resurrection of Jesus?**

Now I have to say up front...what we are going to read today is one of the most controversial things about Christianity. Because the bible is so clear and absolute that Jesus did rise from the grave that it forces you to make a decision about it. All four gospels & the new testament letters all say Jesus physically rose from the dead. So, you either believe that or you don't, but the bible doesn't have any ambiguity. Now today isn't going to be me trying to give you a bunch of historical evidence to prove it happened. It's to show what the bible says happened and then to show you why it is such a big deal for you to make up your own mind about it. Up front I will tell you that

some of you, we've been praying, will feel called to take a step to align yourself with Jesus. We don't always do this but today we'll give you the chance to take that step by being baptized at the end of our service.

But first let's all jump into the scene together. Matthew 28.

[1] Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.

- Mary Magdalene was the Mary who Luke tells us had 7 demons cast out of her during Jesus' ministry. So, she's a fan. With her is the "other Mary." *Guess Matthew wasn't that impressed with her.* All I keep thinking is that it's like when you had that best friend who got all the attention from the girls and you were "the other one." You saw the pic.
- Actually if you were to read the entire story it's really no surprise these two Marys are here. Both of these women had followed Jesus in his ministry, they were there at the crucifixion, they followed his body to the tomb, and then sat outside of it as the stone was rolled in front. They went home for the Sabbath, our Saturday, and then got up first thing Sunday AM to go back to the tomb. They loved Jesus! He was their friend and leader.
- BTW – one of the things you see right out of the gate here is the prominent role women play in the most critical episode in the Christian faith. People often

knock Christianity for having misogynistic views towards women. But to the contrary, women play central roles throughout the story of Jesus like "chief eye witness" and in the development of the early church. This puts Christianity way ahead of its time. I know some people think the Bible is antiquated and irrelevant. And I'm only pausing here to tell you the more you search the Bible the more relevant it is to the issues of our day. Let's keep going

[2] And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. [3] His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. [4] And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men.

- So things get pretty wild pretty fast. The earthquake is important because *another* earthquake happened the moment Jesus died on the cross. It's as if the moments of his death & his resurrection are so big the earth itself shakes in response to it.
- Then an angel comes down. And right there, if you are a skeptic, things might start getting unbelievable for you. But I promise the unbelievable is just getting started.
- So the angel comes down, then, it says he just rolled away the stone. This stone was about 4.5 feet large & about a foot thick somewhere in the 600 – 800lb

range.¹ So it was big but not too big. Our set up & tear down team throws that weight around each week. And they are accepting applications. (can I get an AMEN!) Here's the thing though, not only was the stone big. It was guarded. And it was guarded because Matthew tells us at the end of chapter 27 that the people who had Jesus killed were worried something was going to go down at the tomb. Look...

[62] The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate [63] and said, "Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise.' [64] Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last fraud (fake resurrection) will be worse than the first (claiming to be God)." [65] Pilate said to them, "You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can." [66] So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.

- Pilate says "Make it as secure as you can." NIV translates it "as secure as you know how." Go get Luke Keachley from that cheesy security commercial and put him in front of it. Whatever it takes...There is already a big stone. On top of that, these guys come in and put a seal on it. That's a security feature.

¹ Leen Ritmeyer PhD. Cited in Justin Taylor's interview

Historians think It was probably a cord attached to the stone and to the tomb "with wax imprinted with the roman seal anchoring both ends so that tampering could be detected."²

- On top of that, they put guards around it. There isn't just a rock. This is officially a restricted area. Nobody in or out. Especially for the next 3 days.
- Look, This is the best devised plan man could put together to stop the resurrection...and it gets overwhelmed in about 5 seconds by the power of God. Matthew our author is almost laughing as he writes this. The guards, these roman soldiers trained to react to anything, are so terrified by this angel that verse 4 tells us they pass out like little old ladies. [4] And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men.
- And the angel...he *sits* on the stone after he rolled it away. This is angelic show boating. He selfied and angel snapped it to all his boys. #IjuststartedEaster #blessed. The point matthew seems to be getting at is that: the best devised plans of man to stop Jesus are impotent. They are laughable.

Then, after the guards pass out, he addresses Mary and the other one.

[5] But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. [6] He is not

² Archeological Study bible notes on Matthew 27.66.

here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.

Verse 6 is really our key verse today. The announcement of the angel is the anthem of the church. It's what everything hinges on for us and you'll see that in the two responses to it found later in the chapter. But first let's break down what he says:

He is not here – The angel affirms Jesus was crucified. And this is a critical part of the gospel message. Jesus did get up on the cross and he did die. And the reason he did it was to pay the price for our sins. And the price for sin is death. Jesus had to die. Our sin demands a payment and the only payment is death. This is why we call the day Jesus died "Good Friday." His death was a tragedy, but because he died for our sins, it was good. We were freed from the penalty of sin on that Friday. But the dead Jesus...isn't where you put him the angel says. He was here. In fact pretty much all scholars Christian and not agree Jesus died and was put into a tomb. But, the angel says, he is not here. In the tomb. Usually dead people stay where you put them. Not Jesus.

He has risen – Here it is. Jesus did not stay dead. The reason he isn't here...is because this is a place for dead people. Jesus is Alive! Luke's gospel records the angel saying to the Marys "why do you seek the living among the dead?" Here in three words, is the hope of the world and the cornerstone of the Christian faith. He has risen. This is what makes Christianity stand out among the religions of the world. The figurehead of every other major religion is dead

and you can go to their burial place. But you cannot go to the place where Jesus is buried. Because He has risen. Jesus is alive.

He satisfied the payment owed for sin. But he didn't stay dead. He died once for all. So now all sin, past present and future is paid for through his death. And by coming back from the dead, he defeated the power of sin.

The central tenet of Christianity hangs on whether or not this really happened. And if he didn't rise,...well then what fools are we! Paul says this in 1 Corinthians 15.

"[17] And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. [18] Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. [19] If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

If it isn't true...we are fools! We are wasting our time. We are pitiful. Especially me! I'm the biggest fool in the room. And some people think this. Maybe you think this. Paul went on to say

[20] But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. [21] For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. [22] For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

See. Either we are fools, or he is God and we must give our whole lives to him. Its one or the other.

As he said – Briefly all I'll say here is that Jesus said this was coming. Matthew 17.22-23³

[22] As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men, [23] and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day." And they were greatly distressed.

When you see "as he said" you need to see God in complete control of this whole thing. Jesus knew he had to die to pay for the sins of the world. But he also knew he would defeat death. And once God says he will do something, you can bank on him doing it.

We watched the Sandlot the other day with our kids. My son asked me about babe ruth and then says "what does it mean to call your shot?" I said well, its great skill, some confidence, and some luck. OR, you can be God. And if you are God, well that's really the only pre-requisite. So his resurrection, Jesus called this shot already.

That's what Jesus does. The difference is...by God saying it, it is guaranteed. So when he says "if you confess in your

³ Though we are in matthew for this sermon, several passages in Luke stand out as well: Luke 9.22, 44, 12.50, 13.32-33,18.32-33,24.6-7,25-26,46.

mouth that Jesus is Lord & believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead...you will be saved" (Rom 10.9)...you can be sure of it. Because he said it. Jesus getting out of the grave is THE guarantee to you and I that God is faithful to his promises. That's why we say the gospel changes everything. Because I can center my life on the faithfulness of God.

- God is with you: John 14.6...why do I believe it? Because Jesus got out of the grave like he said he would
- God is a father who loves you. How do I know its true? Well, God is good on his word. He got out of the grave like he said.
- God is working for my good. Romans 8.28: In the middle of pain & trouble how do I believe that? Jesus got out of the grave
- Oh death where is your sting? Oh hell where is your victory? 1 corinthians 15. We sing it. And why are we so confident that death is not the end? JESUS GOT OUT OF THE GRAVE!

Ya'll the only hope I have, the only hope my kids have...and the hope I'm staking my whole life on, is that Jesus got up out of the grave LIKE HE SAID HE WOULD.

Come and see

I love this moment here. It seems it would be enough for you if an *angel* tells you Jesus is alive. But he takes it a step further. He says come see for yourself. Come look at the empty tomb. Come see the shroud he was wrapped in now laying by itself. This is the invitation

God gives to you. Come investigate it for yourself. Consider the claim for yourself. Weigh the evidence of the resurrection.

The most immediate evidence is hundreds of eye witnesses and an empty tomb. Both of which, together, make the resurrection a historical certainty.

1. Sir Lionel Luckhoo, *Guinness Book of World Records* record holder for most trials won. World's most successful lawyer: "I say unequivocally that the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ is so overwhelming that it compels acceptance by proof which leaves absolutely no room for doubt."⁴
2. But listen, there were those who saw the risen Jesus and didn't worship him. Because it wasn't really about scientific evidence for them, it was about personal autonomy. And we're going to talk about that in a second.

Come and see isn't really about evidence. It's more about your heart. And for those who are willing, It's in an instant having your weeping heart turned to joy. Spurgeon said of this moment with the angel.

"Now, Christian, change thy note in a moment. Come see the place where the Lord lay, with *joy and gladness. Weep*

⁴ Lee Strobel, "The Truth About the Resurrection." www.preachingtodaysermons.com

when ye see the tomb of Christ, but rejoice because it is empty."

Then the angel says

[7] Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you." [8] So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

- So they go running with fear and joy. Fear because they recognize they are dealing with holy God-sized news. And joy because it means their friend, their Lord, their savior, is alive. Joy because it means the gospel he taught them is true!

So that's the claim. That Jesus rose again. What I want to show you next are the two reactions people had to the resurrection because it's the same options you have today

What do you do with the resurrection? Two options

[9] And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and **worshiped him....** [16] Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. [17] And when they saw him they **worshiped him**, but some doubted.

1st option: Worship

See for the followers of Jesus, the resurrection meant 100% assurance of everything they've built their lives on. So they

worshipped him! What are you going to do with this? Do you understand the scene here? Both the Marys, and the 11 disciples fell down at his feet. Grabbed his feet (Because he was a real embodied person) and wept and worshipped. Then, they got up and devoted their entire lives to him. They embraced him as their savior and gave him their 100% all of life obedience. He was Lord over every aspect of their lives. Out of the 12 disciples, 11 would die as martyrs for proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus. What do you do with that?

James, Jesus' half brother, was taken to the top of the temple after the resurrection and told to deny Jesus, but he refused, which led to the authorities breaking both of James' legs and leaving him in a pool of his own blood. James then looked up to heaven and prayed to his half brother, to forgive them, which spurred a man to become so enraged that he clubbed James over the head. What do you do with that!?

Any of you have siblings? What would they have to do to convince you they are God? I don't know everything in the world, but I know neither of my brothers are divine beings. People say "yeah but people die for their religion all the time. Doesn't make what they believe true." Agreed. Awesome point. But what is different here is that all of the apostles would have been in on the lie. If Jesus didn't get out of the grave & they didn't see Jesus walking around, you have to argue that they knowingly died for a lie. And that seems a little far fetched. Line-up you and your other

conspirators. Is this true? Yes. Head chopped off. Second guy...yes. Same thing. You are third in line...You know it's a lie...I know what I'm saying... "NOPE! IT'S A HOAX! SORRY GUYS! NOT WORTH IT!"

They died because they knew Christ lived.

Can I tell you what I love about Mercy Church? It's that this church is full of people, of worshippers, I know who would follow James, and the disciples, right to a Martyr's death. It's people who are sacrificing their time, their treasure, their talents to see the gospel proclaimed here in Charlotte and around the world. To you believers here listen, what do you do with the resurrection? Today your heart should be like Marys & the disciples. It should explode in joy. He's alive! What confidence you can live with today because your God is alive!

The response of those who believe that Jesus rose from the dead is Worship!
And worship is not just singing songs on Sunday. Worshipping Jesus means 100% complete obedience to Jesus in all areas of life. Now we aren't perfect so we don't always live like we want to live, but worship as Romans 12.1 says is presenting your whole body as a living sacrifice to God. It's putting a "under new management" sign on your forehead and re-aligning every part of your life under his authority.

So if you are here today and you call yourself a Christian....IS THAT YOU!? The south, where we live, has a real problem with this. Many say he got out of the grave, but live like he didn't. We say yes he rose, but I'm in charge of my life.

- Yes he's alive, but NO he doesn't have say over *my* money.
- Yes he rose but NO he can't speak into *my* sex life.
- Yes he rose but No he can't control *my* career plans.
- Yes he saved me but its still *MY* life.

LISTEN, if you assent to the resurrection up here but still live like you are in charge, you are Rejecting Him! That isn't worship. THE number one plague on the church in the bible belt is we've neutered the gospel! BELIEF, WITHOUT WHOLE LIFE SURRENDER, is not worship. PERIOD.

Listen, some of you need to finally fall down to the feet of Jesus. Maybe You've been religious, or semi-religious but you've never fallen to his feet and said my whole life is yours. You are in control, not me. Listen...he's not judging your life right now. One day he will. But today he's saying come home. Stop pretending. Stop living the lie and come home. If that's you who has been playing the church game, today you can come home. We are bent on this being a church where you can feel safe surrendering your whole life to Jesus. That's a one time decision that takes a lifetime to work through. And it begins in baptism. I'm going to come back to that in a second. Let me show you the other response to the resurrection though:

[11] While they (the Marys) were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. [12] And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers [13] and said, "Tell people, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.' [14] And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." [15] So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.

2nd Option: Reject Him

I want you to notice what happens here. The religious power brokers of the day hear that Jesus rose from the grave. And they know that if this is true, and word gets out, it has real implications. The biggest is...it means they really aren't in power anymore. Because when it comes to who is more powerful, you kinda gotta defer to the dead guy who came back to life. Because that's a feat you can't do. So you either have to believe it and surrender to it, or figure out a way to make it go away.

Like the chief priests the reason I see many reject Christ as their Lord is that they are living a sinful lifestyle they don't want to give up. They know Jesus will overturn their lives and they just aren't interested in that. They are having a good time doing things their way. So you put Jesus off until later one day

Can I tell you something most of you know? Thanks. Look at any moment your supposedly fulfilling life can come crashing down on you. We are all one phone call, one MRI scan, one slip of the steering wheel, one meeting with the boss, one market collapse, away from our lives coming to a screeching halt. I don't say that to scare you. But to wake you up that none of those things gives you true life! Not only that, but many of you have tried to find fulfillment in those things and now realize its coming up empty! But the resurrection shows you that true life can be found in Christ.

Or maybe its not that you are having a good time. Maybe you've experienced one of those calls, those scans, and you've been hurt. And what I want to tell you is the resurrection of Jesus says that your story doesn't have to end in tragedy. Because Jesus defeated the grave there is hope for you in whatever pain you are dealing with. He can handle it and his resurrection assures us that one day he will make good on his promise to wipe away every tear. That there will be no more pain. Just as he got out of the grave so he can breathe life and hope into even your darkest moments.

Here's how we are going to end our time:

I'm going to give you a chance to respond now and here is what will happen. Every head bowed and every eye closed. Time for you to do business with God.

1. Accept the gospel: If you've never done that before, its really easy. The gospel says repent & believe. Repent means

turning from the life where you are in charge, turning from your rebellion against God. And believing in his death and resurrection. To believe is to place the weight of your life on him. And for the first time maybe you need to stop pretending and finally worship Jesus with your whole life.

2. Reject: You can deny him. you can refuse to believe the gospel. We implore you to be reconciled to Christ but Christianity is a message of good news. Its up to you to decide what to do with it.

3. Neglect: Some of you don't deny the gospel is true but you think you will put it off until later. You need to see that you are rejecting Jesus. And you aren't promised tomorrow. If the weight of your eternity really hangs in the balance, why would you put this off? Don't wait. Come to Jesus. Now is your time.

If you are ready, I want to lead you through the prayer to give your life to Christ.

SINNERS PRAYER – RAISE HANDS

If that's you – I want to challenge you to something. The first thing Jesus says to do when you give your life to him is to be baptized. Its your way to publicly align yourself with Jesus. And if you put your life in his hands today, he's calling you to proclaim it. And let me tell you something, its going to be a celebration. We want to celebrate with you. In fact, we were praying for this moment and we are

prepared. So if that's you and you had no intention of getting baptized, but here you are knowing this is your step of faith...We've got you covered.

- We've got clothes in every size, we've got towels
- We've got hair products (Where is Bre?) for those who need that.
- We've got quality locker rooms for you. Really everything you can think of.
- Embarrassed? The only one whose opinion matters has set his love on you. Not only that, you are around a whole bunch of people who will celebrate with you!
- 11am – you won't be alone. Already some people planning on getting baptized
- Here in a second our band is going to come up and we are going to sing a couple of songs. We are going to have some of our team members in the back of the room who you can talk with about this decision to get baptized. So if you are even thinking about it a little bit, and not sure where you are, go back there and talk with them.

So when we stand up to sing, you make your way to the back.

END OF SERVICE

And starting next week, we are getting into a new series of sermons that is geared to help you do exactly that. In that series we'll be reading through the book of James. We are

calling it "Mirrors." And we are doing it because James is like entry level training for the church. So if you haven't been around church before or it's been a while, James is like training wheels. Romans is like Crossfit, James is like those 10 pushups you do before you go out to the beach. It's called mirrors because James is going to tell us that the bible is like a mirror that when you read it, it reads you back. It shows you the real you, and also a vision for what a healthy relationship with God and other people looks like. And it does so in a really easy to understand way. So that's next week.

Research

Listen to why this is so important: His new life creates new life for each of us. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5.17 if anyone is “in Christ” he is a new creation. The old has gone and the new has come. We’ll see that pictured in baptism later. Just like Christ rose up out of the grave, you will see people rise up out of the water. What they are doing is symbolically expressing their very real union with Jesus. That they really are dead to their old life. And that because Jesus was our representative on the cross, he is also our representative in the resurrection. So the same power that got him out of the dead can create a new life in us as well.

In 1982, noted Jewish scholar Pinchas Lapide surprised many (especially liberal Protestants) with his book, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A Jewish Perspective*, in which, after careful evaluation, he concludes that Jesus was raised by God from the dead after three days. Unsatisfied by alternative explanations (mass hallucination, a mere vision of a spiritually risen Christ, the disciples’ theft of the body from the tomb, etc.), Lapide challenges liberal theologians:

I cannot rid myself of the impression that some modern Christian theologians are ashamed of the material facticity of the resurrection. Their varying attempts at dehistoricizing the Easter experience which give the lie to all four evangelists are simply not understandable to me in any other way. Indeed, the

four authors of the Gospels definitely compete with one another in illustrating the tangible, substantial dimension of this resurrection explicitly.

For Jews, as well as for Christians, Lapide argues, God’s faithfulness to his covenant promises is inextricable from history. One has to read Gentile philosophical categories (spirit versus matter, symbolic or existential truth versus historical fact) into Jewish texts like the Gospels in order to make them say what liberals require. “However, for the first Christians who though, believed, and hoped in a Jewish manner, the immediate historicity was not only a part of that happening but the indispensable precondition for the recognition of its significance for salvation.”⁸

Therefore, belief in a “resurrection” that is short of literal and physical was not even an option for Jewish disciples of Jesus. In fact, a mystical, symbolic, or allegorical interpretation would have been a dead give-away that the claim was influenced by Greek thought. Therefore, it is not the early Christians, but liberal Protestants, who turn the deeply Jewish understanding of resurrection on its head. The spiritualization of the resurrection evidently arose in a Gentile Christian milieu and it is this interpretation, indistinguishable from the liberal view, that Paul refutes with the earliest Christian confession.

There is no consolation prize if Jesus was not raised bodily, no symbolic “Easter experience.” Paul was unwilling to entertain the possibility that a subjective interpretation could count as faith in the resurrected Lord. He would not have sung, “You ask me how I know he lives? He lives within my heart.” Rather, Paul says in a rather straightforward way,

And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain

and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised...And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied" ([1 Cor 15:12-19](#)).⁵

⁵ Pinchas Lapide, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A Jewish Perspective*, trans. Wilhelm C. Linss (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1982), 130.