

Sermon Reading: 2 Timothy 2:8

Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel.

Sermon Theme: Remember Jesus Christ

One of the first things my catechism students will do on the first day of class is take a quiz. It's a fun little quiz that I give to test their bible knowledge. No grades are kept; I just want to get a general idea of what we are working with for the next year. It helps me to help them. One question on that quiz is: "What happened on the first Easter?" Thankfully, the majority of the classes answer correctly. It's concerning when students haven't known the answer. What's just as concerning is the response to the follow-up question, "What does Jesus rising from the dead mean for you?" More often than not that's met with blank stares and uncomfortable shifting in the seats.

I don't bring this up to embarrass past students. I also understand that you can't base everything on answers from quizzes and tests. But I think it does reveal some important information. It's not only an issue here but it can be a statement of the type of world we live in today. Compared with Christmas—where that holiday is inundated with all sorts of extra-curricular activities that cloud the meaning of why we celebrate it—it almost feels like Easter is ignored or forgotten. So how would you answer if you are asked, "What does Easter mean for you? What does Jesus rising from the dead mean for you?"

St. Paul tells us in 2 Timothy 2:8, "**Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel.**"

Remember Jesus Christ. It has been said that everyone knows about Jesus, but many don't know who he is. I think you would be hard-pressed to find someone—especially in our area—who hasn't heard about Jesus. At the very least, most people know that he is a guy from the Bible that church people talk about. But who is Jesus? That can be difficult because different people seem to be looking for different types of Jesus. They want a Jesus who is going to be the Social Activist and right all the wrongs of the down-trodden. They're looking for patriotic Jesus who will rule in the government and fix all the problems in this sin-filled society making a Christian world. Others are looking for financial planner Jesus who will better their bank account. Or a Jesus who is going to be their life coach. Still others want a Jesus who is going to make them feel good about themselves and all their

decisions they make; even if those life-style choices and habits are contrary to God's Word.

St. Paul simply says, "Remember Jesus Christ." And just with those two names Paul tells us who this Jesus is. Jesus is the name the angel gave Joseph for the child born to the virgin mother Mary. That name was given to him because, as the angel said, "He will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). That's what this human child's mission would be: he was born to save us. The name Christ points to the type of work that he would do. Christ means "Anointed One"; so God chose him to be the one who would fulfill all the promises of the Old Testament to save mankind. That name Christ points to Jesus' work as the Prophet who speaks to us in God's Word. Christ is our Priest who sacrificed himself on the cross for us and now is our go-between with God. Christ is our King who rules over all things for the good of you and his church. Jesus Christ. 100% true God and 100% true Man in one person. Not mixed; not dual-personalities. One. Man to be born and live under God's Law as our substitute; God to do it perfectly. Man to die for us; God so his death counts for something. On Good Friday God dies for us! What a profound mystery. But that's Jesus Christ who we need, who we need to know, and in whom our hope is found.

Remember him, Paul is saying. And notice what we are to remember about this Jesus Christ. Paul isn't pointing us here to the baby in the manger. It's not the one who cast out demons and performed miracles. It's not even the Jesus who struggled under the weight of the cross and died. No, "**Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead.**" This is the central message of the gospel; the central message to Christianity. Without it, our faith is useless, Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15. He would go on to write that if this is not true we are to be pitied more than all men because our faith would be based on a lie (1 Corinthians 15:12-19).

Without being raised from the dead, Jesus' life would have been just another life that had some great highlights with some good teachable moments and nothing else. It would mean that Jesus' death on the cross was nothing more than a tragic story of another miscarriage of justice. Without this, Satan wins. Without rising from the dead, we are still in our sins. This means that you would have God's hatred for not just your sins, but you the sinner. That would mean there would be no answer for your aching conscience as you try to make up for everything you've done wrong. You are lost. Without this we have no hope. All you would have to

look forward to is the few years that we have in this world...what a sad existence that would be. And even worse, death wins. Death that we try so hard to avoid. Death would be the end here and beginning of eternal suffering.

But Paul says, “**Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead.**” Christ is risen! This means that Jesus has returned from the tomb, the realm of the dead and he lives. It means that when Jesus took your sin with him on the cross it died with him and was buried in that tomb. And that’s where it stayed because Jesus lives. This means your sins are no longer yours. In Baptism you were buried with Jesus in that tomb, and from those waters you rise with Jesus to a new life (Romans 6). Since your sin has been taken from you, this means that guilt has been forgiven too and removed from you. When Satan comes accusing, you call him a liar and point to the cross and empty tomb. Jesus has been raised to life because of your justification (Romans 4:25). Jesus died for your sin on the cross so that you are declared not-guilty of sin—you are justified. And so, for that reason, Jesus was raised to life. The payment was accepted by the Father. That empty tomb is the proof that your sin and its guilt no longer belong to you because Jesus lives.

And with his rising from the dead this means that that the last enemy of death has been defeated (1 Corinthians 15:26). This life is not the end. You can be afraid of death, who wouldn’t be? But fear doesn’t need to overtake you because we know what comes next. Death is now God’s servant that he uses to welcome his people home to his waiting arms in heaven.

This gives a new perspective on life. My best days on earth and in this world cannot begin to compare to my worst day in heaven (if bad days were even possible). There is so much more waiting for you than the few years and temporary joys and happiness we have here. The pains you feel, the struggles you have in your relationships with family and friends, the temptations you endure, and the sin you face every day eventually has an end date. And they can’t reach you in heaven where there is no sadness, sickness, or pain. You don’t have to try and live your life earning God’s love and making sure you make up for all your wrongs. You already have God’s love. All your wrongs, your sins, Jesus already made up for all of them with his perfect life and innocent death. So you are not burdened by the demands of God’s Law, you have been set free to serve God and your neighbor because Jesus lives! You can get out of bed every single morning with the confidence that no matter what comes your way, all is well between you and God and all is well with your future. It is secured in heaven because Jesus lives.

Remember Jesus Christ, the risen and living one, the descendant of David. Don't underestimate this. He wasn't just human-like. He didn't just have some human characteristics. He was true man, descended from David; you can trace his lineage back in history (as Matthew and Luke do in the Bible!). He chose to live in weakness have struggles and difficulties, like you and me. He was tempted to sin, in every way, like you and me. He didn't come into this world a conquering king, he came as your brother to have flesh and blood like you and me. Since he, who was descended from David, a human being died and was raised to live again, what does that mean for you and me who will die? Jesus tells us, "**Because I live, you also will live**" (John 14:19).

"Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descended from David." Paul says, "**This is my gospel.**" Paul didn't need to try and make this message more relevant. He wasn't trying to appeal to the masses. We don't either. This good news is meant for so much more than a feel good story. We don't need Jesus to be our financial planner, the social activist, the government runner. We need **this** Good News. In his rising from the dead, we have no guilt in life nor fear in death. Death and sin have been defeated. This isn't a possibility of something in the future. We aren't waiting to see what's going to come of all this. With Jesus rising from the dead, this is your guarantee. This is what Easter means for you.

Remember, Jesus Christ, not just on Easter Sunday but in the next days and coming weeks. This is your gospel that God in his grace has given to you. Share it. Live it. Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David. This is your gospel. Christ is risen, he is risen indeed! Amen.