

“Of First Importance”

Everyone has priorities. On this upcoming festive week-end, for example, your priorities may well include boiling and coloring Easter eggs, procuring an ample supply of jelly beans or other favorite Easter candy, cleaning the house for anticipated guests, getting the yard ship-shape, laying in plenty of Easter ham (or your favorite holiday main dish), making it to church, and hopefully, squeezing in a few moments to simply enjoy the weekend and relax.

Resurrection Sunday is also a day when God asserts and affirms His own priorities - what is most important to Him, where His treasure lies.

What do you think is most important to God? What is His top priority? One possibility is certainly “sin.” After all, in the Bible God seems to spend a great deal of time dwelling on sin and the sad consequences of sin. As another possibility, perhaps what is most important to God, the topic about which He would have us be most informed is “death” - eternal death, and the dark, foreboding cloud of mortality that hangs over the entire human race. Those two topics certainly seem to demand God’s top billing, don’t they?

However, and most graciously, the Lord has another subject that is His top priority. This is what God mercifully did about our sin and death. St. Paul brings us this very news: “For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures...” (1 Corinthians 15)

First, Christ died and was buried, just as the Scriptures faithfully foretold. But Christ’s death (attested to by the fact that He was buried) was most unique. “He was wounded...by His stripes we are healed...” (Isaiah 53) The death He died, He died for all - for you; for me. His was a “paid in full for you and for me” death that means we will never, ever face the death we justly deserve. That death - its punishment, abandonment, and, indeed, damnation - has been experienced in full for us. As Jesus Himself reassures you, “Dearly beloved, it is finished.” (John 19)

The second part of God’s declaration to us is this: Christ was raised on the third day, just as God promised in His Word. What was apparently a dark defeat on Good Friday, became the realization that those three dark hours on Calvary were God’s ultimate victory over sin, over, death, and over the devil. Our victorious Lord came alive again to assure us, “Christ has indeed been raised from the dead...For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive...” (1 Corinthians 15)

On Resurrection Sunday and, indeed, on each day, the Lord most earnestly wants you to know the one truth that is most important to Him. This is the news, “Christ is risen!” In bringing you this life-giving assurance of unequalled joy, He also wants you to know, believe, trust, and take comfort in the accompanying assurance that YOU are most important to Him and that you

always will be. This is the glorious assurance we, like Paul, receive and eagerly pass on: The Lord has risen! He has risen, indeed!

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