

## Christ Is Worthy

### *1 Corinthians 15:1-9*

The tagline for our church is “**Following Jesus Together**”.

This little phrase is the first message you see when you open our webpage. We placed this phrase right in the center of the page in prominent letters so that no one misses it.

These three words are the first message you see when you step in to the front door of our church. They are in gold and bold letters hanging from the center circle.

These are not throw-away words to us, but a meaningful expression of our identity and mission. Our elders desire for our members to think often and deeply upon, “Following Jesus Together”.

The natural question that flows from our emphasis is, “**What does it mean to follow Jesus?**”

Jesus gives us the answer. A major part of Jesus’ answer appears in Mark 1 when Jesus speaks to Simon Peter and Andrew as they are casting their nets into the Sea of Galilee. Jesus says to them,

*“Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” (Mark 1:17 [ESV](#))*

Clearly, calling people **to Jesus** is a key component of being a follower **of Jesus**. Two weeks ago, I made the statement,

**Truth: A disciple who does not seek to call others to Jesus falls short of the definition of a disciple. If we remove “evangelism” from the core responsibilities of following Jesus, we change Jesus’ definition of what it means to “follow”.**

Someone might say, “*But Pastor, is that not a bit of an overstatement?*”

Consider that Jesus did not use the fishing metaphor with Peter and Andrew on only one occasion, but Luke records another event a bit later to the one mentioned in Mark 1.

**Luke 5 records a story where Jesus sees Andrew and Peter again on the water, but this time they are washing their nets after spending all night fishing.**

*On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."*

*And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.*

*For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon."*" (Luke 5:1-9 *ESV*)

Here Jesus builds off of His initial command, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." After showing them His power, He restates His vision for their lives.

***And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.*" (Luke 5:9-11 *ESV*)**

### **Truth: To follow Jesus requires we fish for men.**

For three consecutive years, our church has set aside the sermons in January to think about God's call upon our lives to fish for men . . . to call people to believe in Jesus and receive eternal life.

In January 2024, we asked you to Pray the Miracle. We believe that evangelism begins with praying for people to receive Jesus as Savior and Lord.

In January 2025, we asked you to Listen to Their Story. We believe that evangelism takes root in the soil of understanding and interest in the story of people's spiritual journey with God.

This year, we are asking you to Share Your Hope. We believe that following Jesus means telling others about Him. So in January, we are focusing upon the message that Jesus calls us to proclaim to others. Each week, we cover a different part of the Gospel message.

### **We fish for men when we ...**

- 1. Talk to people about who God is. (January 4)**

2. Talk to people about the problem we have. (January 11)
3. Talk to people about what God has done. (January 18)
4. Talk to people about what we must do. (January 25)

**Main Idea: God in love sent His Son Jesus into the world to die in our place for our sin. God raised Jesus bodily from the dead to testify to the effectiveness of Jesus' sacrifice for sin and to testify to Jesus' victory over death.**

We open our Bibles to 1 Corinthians 15. This is a passage that highlights the importance of Jesus' death and resurrection.

**It seems that the believers in Corinth affirmed Jesus' bodily resurrection, but they denied that there would be a future bodily resurrection for them. Some considered that the resurrection of believers is a spiritual one and not a physical one.**

Some of us may be asking, "Well, what's the big deal? Why make a big stink of this doctrinal matter of a future resurrection? If people do not believe in a bodily resurrection, they may be wrong, but should we really confront them for it?" Paul's answer in 1 Corinthians 15 is "YES!"

Paul begins his answer to this serious doctrinal problem regarding the future resurrection by focusing our attention upon the Gospel itself.

Paul makes **four affirmations about the Gospel that are central to fishing for men.**

### **Affirmation #1: The Gospel Changes Lives**

*Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and **by which you are being saved**, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:1-2 [ESV](#))*

**Application: When we share the Gospel, it is good to tell people that the Gospel will change their life if they receive it. As you fish for men, tell your story of God's transforming power in your life.**

Notice how Paul reminds the Corinthians of their personal experience with the saving power of the Gospel.

*Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and **by which you are being saved**,*

Every person who RECEIVES the Gospel by faith is TRANSFORMED by the Gospel.

Our new birth is not an imagined fiction, but a real gift from God. **So Paul's presses the Christians in Corinth to remember what the Gospel accomplished in our soul!** Paul uses this transformational experience to help the believers remain confident in their future resurrection. Yet the truth of the Gospel's power to change lives is foundational to SO MANY applications.

**Application: As we look for motivation to fish for men, remind yourself of the Gospel's transforming work in your own life.**

In Romans, Paul confesses that his own motivation to proclaim the Gospel is tied to the Gospel's power to change lives.

*"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." (Romans 1:16 ESV)*

Many people know that their lives are not on track . . . they know that SOMETHING is missing, SOMETHING is not right. And yet they have no understanding of the solution to their longing. **Part of fishing for men is telling them that God's Gospel will change their lives . . . for the much much better!**

*"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." (2 Corinthians 5:17 ESV)*

**Reminding ourselves of the Gospel's power to change lives brings us strong motivation to tell the Gospel to others.**

**Affirmation #1: The Gospel Changes Lives**

**Affirmation #2: The Gospel Is a Message from God**

*Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved,*

**The word “gospel” literally means “a good message”.** So inside the meaning of the word “Gospel” we find the idea of a communication from God that is joyful

and beneficial. This message can be lived, but its communication requires words. This is why Paul says “I preached” it to you. The Gospel is not something communicated through mime or through obscure actions. The Gospel requires words because the message is profound, specific and life altering. The idea that we do not need words to communicate the Gospel defies the very definition of the thing.

**What do you think about when you think of the ministry of Jesus?** This is a very important matter because what you think about when you think of Jesus’ ministry will largely define what you think following Him means.

So think with me for a moment about this question. “What is the ministry of Jesus?” Many in the church would answer this question, “***Well, when I think about the ministry of Jesus I think of His love for individuals. I think of His merciful and gentle interactions with sinners. I think of His kind provision for people in trouble.***” Others might say, “***When I think about the ministry of Jesus, I think of His exalted morality. I think of the Sermon on the Mount. I think of the way he taught us to live humbly before the Lord and before others.***” Others would answer, “***When I think about the ministry of Jesus, I think about social justice . . . I think about how Jesus stood up for the poor and the downtrodden and how He spoke truth to power.***”

Of course, the Gospels record these details in Jesus’ earthly ministry. I do not deny that these things are very important.

But let me challenge you to change your central thoughts of Jesus’ ministry. Let us consider the writers of the New Testament. If we ask, “**What did the writers of the Gospels emphasize about Jesus’ ministry?**”

We note that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John focused primarily on Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection.

And if we ask, “**What did the apostles emphasize about Jesus’ ministry in their preaching and their inspired letters?**” We would find that they emphasized the exact things that the Gospel writers did.

**Truth: The apostles did not emphasize Jesus’ compassion, nor His emphasis on love, nor His heightened morality, nor His miracles so much as the apostles placed primary attention upon his atoning work . . . a work completed in His death, burial and resurrection.**

**This is the important matter for the apostles.**

We find this abundantly evident in the passage in front of us in 1 Corinthians 15. **Paul says what is of “first importance”** is the factual nature of Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection, not His teachings nor His compassion.

**Why are these historical facts so important? Because Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection are central to God’s salvation of our soul.**

If Jesus had not died and rose from the dead, His kind actions, loving example and good teachings would have no ability to rescue us from our sin. We would still be living in darkness and under God’s eternal condemnation.

**So I urge you to make the New Testament’s focus your focus when you think about Jesus and His ministry.** Do not be sidetracked away from Jesus’ essential work by the good but lesser aspects of His time on this earth.

The Gospel is a MESSAGE from God.

The Gospel is a message FROM GOD.

*“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received:” (1 Corinthians 15:3 [ESV](#))*

The question we ask is, “From where? Where did you receive this good message?

*For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man’s gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.” (Galatians 1:11-12 [ESV](#))*

**Application: When we share the Gospel, it is good to tell people that the Gospel is from God. Let them know that we ourselves or other men did not make this message up but that this message is SO IMPORTANT to our lives that God Himself delivered it to us.**

**Affirmation #1: The Gospel Changes Lives**

**Affirmation #2: The Gospel Is a Message from God**

You say, “OK. If I am to fish for men, I do well to tell people that the Gospel changes lives and that it is a message from God. But what if they ask me, “What is the message that God delivers to us?”

**Affirmation #3: The Gospel Prioritizes Jesus’ Death**

*“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures,” (1 Corinthians 15:3 [ESV](#))*

Perhaps you have heard the phrase, “The crux of the matter.” This phrase describes the most important aspect of an issue. The “crux of the matter” is the central idea or the heart of the matter that is being discussed. But have you considered the phrase itself? The word “crux” is an old Latin way of saying “cross”. The phrase carries meaning because the cross IS the MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF HUMAN HISTORY. The cross is the heart of God’s message to you and to me. Paul affirms this here in verse 3 when he describes the death of Jesus as being “of first importance”.

The English word “crucial” also points to the fact that the cross is essential or necessary.

**Two weeks ago, as we studied Acts 17, we set our hearts on this important truth regarding our message:**

**God is the Gospel. We proclaim the Gospel when we talk about God. So the more we know about God, the more we have to say about the Gospel.**

We affirm the truth that we are involved with the work of fishing for men **when we talk very generally about God to people around us.** We are proclaiming key parts of the message that God has given us to share when **we talk with others about God being the Creator of the world or about God loving us, or about giving us good gifts, or about God creating us in His image** to know Him. All of these general ideas are key components of the MESSAGE that God places in our hands to deliver to others.

YET we also acknowledge that the central part of God’s Gospel is the proclamation of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Without the cross and the empty tomb, we have no good news to give to men and women.

**Truth: We do not fish for men if we avoid the cross of Christ in our conversations with others. We know that the cross of Jesus is of first importance to salvation.**

I understand that we feel less vulnerable, less threatened by conversations that are more general in nature. And we are right to engage people at a general level. BUT if we never get to Jesus and His death on our behalf, we are not giving others what they need to experience God’s forgiveness and eternal life.

*“For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” (1 Corinthians 1:18 [ESV](#))*

To proclaim the Gospel fully, we must get to the matters that are “of first importance”.

**Question: Why is the death of Jesus “of first importance”.**

**Two key reasons the death of Jesus is primary:**

**Reason #1: The death of Jesus satisfies God’s punishment against our sin.**

**Reason #2: The death of Jesus defeats our enemy’s labor to destroy us.**

**Reason #1: The death of Jesus satisfies God’s punishment against our sin.**

*“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures,” (1 Corinthians 15:3 [ESV](#))*

God makes very clear to us **all through His Word** that the cross of Jesus is central to the forgiveness of our sin . . . fundamental to His plan of salvation. The cross is like a golden thread woven in every part of God’s written revelation to man.

In the OT, God points to the death of Jesus in stories like Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac on Mt Moriah. The LORD Himself provides the lamb.

**In the OT, God points us to the death of Jesus in the sacrificial system** that He gave to the Israelites to make as a central part of their daily lives. Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

**In the OT, God points us to** the death of Jesus through prophesies like Isaiah 53:

*But he was pierced **for our transgressions**; he was crushed **for our iniquities**; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him **the iniquity of us all.**” (Isaiah 53:5-6 [ESV](#))*

With His wounds we are spiritually made whole before the LORD.

**In the NT, God points us to the death of Jesus in the four Gospels written about Him.** Each of the four Gospels devote 30-40 percent of Jesus’ story to the last week of Jesus’ life. The life of Jesus possesses saving power because of the death of Jesus.

**In the NT, God points us to the death of Jesus in the preaching and writing of all the apostles.** The cross of Christ is not a side note, but is the main point of the MESSAGE given to us by God.

*And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.* (1 Corinthians 2:1-2 [ESV](#))

*“But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” (Galatians 6:14 [ESV](#))*

**The death of Jesus is of first importance because it shows us the love of God for us.** In love, God did not withhold even His own Son from us. His ONLY Son. Jesus, the Son whom He loves! We have no stronger proof of God’s love than the cross of Jesus.

**The death of Jesus is of first importance because it shows us the dark evil of our own sins.** Our sins are so terrible that they required the death of Jesus to cover them. All our good works and efforts could never undo the offense that our sin has made toward God.

**The death of Jesus is of first importance because it shows us that God’s solution of our sin problem is FULLY resolved.** Jesus cries, “It is finished!” and full payment is made in Him. **The sacrifice of God’s Lamb meets all the demands of God’s Law.** Jesus becomes the cursed and we become the blessed!

*“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died **for our sins** in accordance with the Scriptures,” (1 Corinthians 15:3 [ESV](#))*

**Paul emphasizes here that He “died for our sins.”** Underline those three little words. They are central to our life with God.

**What happened at the cross that made Jesus’ death so central to the message we bring to others?**

In short, Jesus suffered the curse of our sin.  
 He bore our sins in His body.  
 He took upon Himself the wrath of God against our sin.  
 He paid our debt.  
 He fully satisfied the legal demands of our sin.  
 He received our punishment.  
 He died the death that we should have died.

He became God's instrument to take our sins from us so that we do not bear the guilt and condemnation that our sins deserve.

Jesus did not die merely as an example of humility and love. **Jesus died to *for our sins!* In OUR PLACE.**

In theological terms, this truth is called **penal substitutionary atonement**. These are big words. Yet I believe the truth these terms carry are of FIRST IMPORTANCE. They communicate the specific meaning of the cross of Jesus.

**Definition: Penal Substitutionary Atonement is the covering for sin (atonement) that Jesus made in our place (substitutionary) by suffering the punishment of our sin (penal) for us.**

It is really important that we disciples of Jesus understand what it means that Jesus died for us so that we can tell others.

**Truth: When Jesus died, he took our sins upon His own body and suffered as our substitute. The punishment that we justly deserved for our rebellion against God is laid upon Jesus. His death is the remedy for our guilt.**

Beware of teachers who mute or deny the message of the cross. Where substitutionary atonement is neglected, the Gospel is not preached.

*Other religions have laws and moral precepts, forms and ceremonies, rewards and punishments. But other religions cannot tell us of a dying Savior. They cannot show us the cross. This is the crown and glory of the Gospel. J.C. Ryle*

#### **Affirmation #4: The Gospel Prioritizes Jesus' Resurrection**

*"that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures," (1 Corinthians 15:4 [ESV](#))*

**The resurrection of Jesus is also of "first importance". The empty grave is just as central to our message at the bloody cross.**

**Why is that? The resurrection assures us that Jesus is who He claims to be and that God the Father accepts His Son's sacrifice for our sin.**

**Significance #1: The resurrection assures us that Jesus is who He claims to be.**

Jesus claims to be equal to the Father. Jesus claims to be God of very God. Jesus claims to be the Resurrection and the Life. Jesus claims to be able to give us eternal life. Jesus claims to possess power over death and sin. Jesus claims to open heaven to us and invite us into the Father's House.

If Jesus does not rise from the dead, we have no proof to verify His claims. The resurrection is the necessary consequence of His claims about His divine Person.

**Significance #2: The resurrection assures us that the Father fully accepts His Son's sacrifice for sin.**

*"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." (1 Corinthians 15:17–18 ESV)*

The Gospel offers hope of forgiveness and life with God only if Jesus rose from the grave. **The resurrection of Jesus reveals that God accepts Jesus' sacrifice for our sin. The resurrection is the smile of God upon His Son's payment for our sin. The resurrection is God's statement, "Jesus paid it all."** Without the resurrection of Jesus the sacrifice of Jesus accomplishes nothing! **If sin and death permanently claims Jesus' body, sin and death will claim us too!!** If Jesus' body undergoes decay, we have no hope to escape death's corruption. **And if death overpowers Jesus, then death will overpower all who are in Jesus.**

Jesus' resurrection guarantees that all of His promises to us are true:

1. Because He lives, Jesus is who He claimed to be. He is both Lord and Savior.
2. Because He lives, our faith in Jesus is meaningful . . . we DO have eternal life through Him.
3. Because He lives, the Gospel is validated as completely true.
4. Because He lives, faith in Him brings the blessing of forgiveness and eternal life. We never need to fear God's condemnation.
5. Because He lives, our lives are most blessed. Rather than being pitied, we are to be envied. The last day will show this to be true.
6. Because He lives, we too will experience a bodily resurrection.

Theologian Erich Sauer has written, *"The present age is Easter time. It begins with the resurrection of the Redeemer and ends with the resurrection of the redeemed."*

*Between lies the spiritual resurrection of those called into life through Christ. So we live between two Easters, and in the power of the first Easter we go to meet the last Easter."*

Conclusion:

"Follow me and I will make you fishers of men."

**Truth: God places us in our location for the express purpose of bringing the Gospel through us to people who live around us. This labor is central to who we are as followers of Jesus.**

Our message is a historic one. Our message is a controversial one. Our message is a transformational one. Our message is a divine one. Our message is an eternal one. Our message is a relevant one. **Our message is an unchanging one. Our message is Jesus the Messiah, crucified, resurrected and coming again!**

Our world has LOTS of problems. Lots of important topics are worthy to consider when we gather together for fellowship and when we talk with those who do not know JESUS.

But brothers and sisters, there is ONE TOPIC of FIRST IMPORTANCE. Let the death and resurrection of Jesus be often on our minds and our lips! It is the one subject that possesses power to make a difference in our lives and those we love.

Are you seeking salvation—but doubtful whether you can find it? Are you desiring to have an interest in Christ—but doubting whether Christ will receive you? To you also I say this day, "Behold the cross of Christ." Here is encouragement if you really want it. Draw near to the Lord Jesus with boldness, for nothing need keep you back. His arms are open to receive you—His heart is full of love towards you. He has made a way by which you may approach Him with confidence. Think of the cross. Draw near, and fear not. J C Ryle