

Remember the Gospel

Easter Sunday

April 5 2026

1 Cor. 15:1-6

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.

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: 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, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

Dear Friends in Christ Jesus,

Christ is Risen! That's the message of the Angel in today's Gospel lesson. Some of the women who had been following

Jesus came to the tomb early that first day of the week. They expected to find the body of Jesus. Suddenly they remembered the stone. How would they ever remove it so they could finish the burial rites on Jesus' body? But instead, they encountered, a great earthquake, strong guards lying as dead men, a heavenly visitor sitting on the stone, and an empty tomb. And they were afraid. Who wouldn't be?

But the angel tells them, "Don't be afraid. Jesus has risen just as he said he would." And before you know it, their fear is replaced by the assurance of Jesus' victory over death. Christ is risen, indeed!

A few years ago I used today's Epistle lesson as the text for the funeral sermon for dear Christian woman. I wanted to strengthen her family with St. Paul's strong affirmation of the resurrection. This morning I would like to assure YOU also of Christ's victory and His love for you by reminding you of the Gospel. That's what St. Paul does in our text. He says: "I want to remind you of the Gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand". He wrote that letter because there were many troubles in that congregation. They had lots of problems. There was great immorality there, there were divisions and factions within the congregation, there were worship issues, marriage issues, lawsuits and intolerance within the church. All of these concerns had come to Paul's attention through information he

had received from some of the members there, and he responds by writing this letter, 1 Corinthians.

Paul addresses these various issues one at a time: lawsuits, sexual immorality, marriage, eating food offered to idols, disruptive worship practices, disunity in the body. Sometimes he harshly admonishes them for their sin, sometimes he teaches them, sometimes reasons with them, sometimes praises them -- all in an attempt to restore unity of doctrine and unity of faith. And then, before he draws his letter to a close, Paul wants to remind them once again of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He does this because he knows that Christians won't be what God has called them to be if they don't have the Gospel. Without the Gospel they will only argue and

separate into factions. Without the Gospel they will only hurt and blame and find fault with each other.

So he says in our text: "Now brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand"... Here Paul is reminding these Christians that they had already heard the Gospel. He had preached it to them before. He did that when he established their congregation. Paul preached it, the people received it and had even committed themselves to it — they "took their stand" on it. But now it seems that they have forgotten it. Other matters have become more important. They have let other issues take over in their lives and push this good news away. So they needed to be reminded.

I guess that happens to us, too, doesn't it? Issues come up. Maybe it's an argument within the family or within the church. Maybe it's the press of balancing family, work, community and personal time. Maybe it's worry or doubt or fear. Maybe it's the anxiety of dealing with death -- all sort of things that push God to the sidelines of life instead where he truly belongs -- number one in our life. So we, too, need to be reminded of what is of first importance.

Paul explains why the Gospel is so important. He says in our text: "By this Gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain..." The Gospel saves! Nothing else will save you... not

your good works... not your good intentions... not your fervent prayers... not your devotion to your loved ones... not even your lifelong membership in a congregation will save you. Only the Gospel has the power to save. In his letter to the Romans, Paul states it even more clearly: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes..."

And what is this Gospel that has such awesome power to save, this Good News that Paul first received and then passed on to those people who lived so long ago, who had pushed God to the sidelines of their lives? Listen to how he describes it: "For what I received, I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was

buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures and appeared to Peter and then to the Twelve...”

Notice that there are two parts to this important Gospel message. The first part is that Christ died for our sins. The Christian story is not the story of a good man who helped many people and then got himself executed in a political power play by a weak Roman governor. That’s the view of a CNN’s program, “Finding Jesus”. According to that program, Jesus’ motivation for entering Jerusalem was political – to gain a following and set himself up as an earthly king. But he failed and got himself crucified. That’s the speculation of modern interpreters who think they know more than even the eyewitnesses who were there and accurately recorded what

really happened. Jesus was not the victim of a failed political move. No, says the Apostle Paul. He died FOR OUR SINS. He died for the times we push God to the sidelines instead of making him front and center of our lives...For the times we put ourselves in the center of life and push one another aside.

Christ died for OUR sins, ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES.

Isaiah, writing centuries earlier, had prophesied it: "Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed." That's the first part of the Gospel, Christ died for our sins as promised in the

Scriptures. And what's the proof that he died? Paul says: "He was buried." You don't bury someone who is alive. He really died. The end! That's it. Game over!

Or so it should have been. But then comes the second part of this powerful, saving Gospel, the totally unexpected, truly awesome and astounding part: "he was raised on the third day". Death could not hold the author of life. For three days later, on the first Easter, at early dawn, he burst forth from that tomb, alive and glorious, showing that his sacrifice for sin was successful. And how do we know it's true? Because He appeared, Paul writes, "first to Peter and then to the Twelve. And after that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the

brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, but some have fallen asleep.”

My friends, you know some of those who have fallen asleep in Christ. They were your loved ones who by faith also saw Christ. They believed in him, trusted in him, listened to him, followed him in life and now live with him in eternity.

They weren't afraid to die. They knew that in Holy Baptism they had already died with Christ and that they would one day rise again, as Christ Himself rose.

Later on, in this same chapter, 1 Corinthians 15, St. Paul says that Christ Jesus is the “firstfruits of those who have fallen

asleep". In ancient Israel the first fruit (the very first part) of the harvest was offered to God to show the confidence that the rest of the harvest would follow. Paul declares that Jesus is the firstfruit of a great harvest of living bodies who will be raised when He comes again.

Christ is also the head and we are His body. When a baby is born, the first and most difficult labor is the birth of the head. Once the head is born, the rest of the body is easily delivered. So it is with the resurrection. Christ, our head, has done the most difficult part. In His resurrection he conquered death, destroying its fearsome hold and power. Our resurrection, the resurrection of Christ's body, will be easy because the victory over death has already been won for us.

My friends, believe this good news. Jesus died for your sins and rose again to give you everlasting life. This Gospel is of first importance! It will keep God at the center of your life. And there's nothing more comforting, nothing more important than that. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.