1 Corinthians 15:3-4 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.”

In truth my life is very much like yours with maybe a few interesting twists. As my family and I go through our lives just like you we have all kinds of concerns. Like all the inflation going on right now. Things are getting tighter and more difficult with all the rising prices and such. Truth is, all of us are back to being careful with our money and watching what we spend be it food or gas or whatever.

And just like you I see the news stories and the problems they indicate are coming. You don’t even have to spend careful attention to the news to realize that we are more and more becoming a lawless society, but right now it is more a society that is all wrapped up in “me, me, me” and has absolutely no regard for anyone else. Here are a few of the news stories that really make me think:

The referee that is attacked following a game. But this is not college or high school, this is at an elementary game where students and players decided that attacking the referee was an okay thing to do.

The teacher who is attacked and hospitalized by a 16 year old. She is working with the kid and trying to help him with his grades and his response is to attack her and choke her until she passes out. After he left, she is lucky someone found her and rendered aid.

Or in one of our bigger cities over Palm Sunday weekend, 6 killed, 60 some wounded, umpteen robbed and attacked in some way. So far the death toll by crime in this city, mind you it is only April is over 600! Nothing is being done and nothing is being changed, because no one seems to have the will or even the desire to engage in a battle against evil.

You see, your world is my world with one little exception. I am a pastor. I live in a glass house. If what I do pleases you, life goes on. If what I do doesn’t please you, you blame me, hold it against me and where you can you speak ill of me. And to top it off, every week, I need to have a sermon that is engaging and likeable or you begin to wonder exactly what it is that I am doing with the money you pay me. Yep, I live in a glass house with a very visible job.

In truth that last part doesn’t really bother me. It doesn’t bother me because of this day. This day is my heart and core. This day is the whole reason I am in the ministry in the first place. Where I have failures, and I do, I find my comfort in Jesus. Where I have successes, in truth, I am not so foolish as to take the credit for myself, but rather give thanks to the Lord for his grace and love. When you cast the old harsh eye my way, I find my comfort and peace in Jesus. And when you pat me on the back and show me you care, I am filled with appreciation and I give thanks to Jesus for his goodness and love. Even when it comes to all the things I see going on in the world that give me pause for thought, I am not filled with fear and worry. Nope, I put it in Jesus’ hands and let Him take care of things in accord with his good and holy will. In truth, a lot of what I have just told you are things that I have learned to see and think about and just move on. And the reason I can do that is because of what this day is all about.

This day is about our Savior and our faith. This day is about our hope and joy, our comfort, strength and worldly direction. This day is the greatest day of all the world. Our theme will be: **THE CRUCIAL MORNING: JESUS LIVES!**

I am going to guess you grasp and understand that my theme is a play on the theme we have been using during the Lent season this year. Our lent season was based on some thoughts and ideas taken from a book titled: **The Crucial Hours**, a book written by William Lauterbach in 1977. Again I will tell you that it is still one of the best books to read in order to understand all that took place in the final days of Jesus. No other book as clearly lays out all that was the Passion of Jesus. Yet you have to understand that the history and purpose of Jesus does not end on Friday with his death and burial.

Do you know why that must be true? Take a look at the words of our text. It is clear that our text wants to share and help you grasp something that is called **“of first importance.”** That thing of first importance is then said to be, “**that Christ died for our sins….**and….**that he was raised on the third day.”** Now did you notice something else about those lines? Both of those lines concluded with the point, **“in accordance with the Scriptures.”** There is the key. What happened to Jesus both before his death and after his death is all in accord with the Scriptures. In other words, it had to be!

It had to be that Jesus came to fulfill God’s Holy Word. He had to be born of a virgin in Bethlehem. He had to be praised and honored by the Magi and their gifts. He had to be God’s Son called out of Egypt. He had to be the holy and perfect Son of God who came to live the perfect life we could not all for one explicit and clear purpose. Jesus came to die for our sins. And that is what our text tells us. **Christ died for our sins.**

Let’s just look closer at what that says. First of all, please note that Christ is not Jesus’ name, it is his office. The word Christ is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word Messiah. In other words, Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the one promised and revealed Savior in God’s Holy Word. Some would say, “There are 350 prophecies about Jesus that are fulfilled.” Me, I would say, “People, there are at least 1,000!” Doesn’t matter how many you count. What matters is that you grasp and understand that Jesus fulfills and keeps every single promise of God the Father concerning the Savior, the Messiah that the Father is going to send for the sake of the world. None of it is an accident!

A key point of this life of Jesus is his death. God’s Word clearly tells us his Christ is going to die for the sake of the sins of the world. I think one of the best places to see that is in Isaiah 53. We hear such things like: **4Surely he was taking up our weaknesses, and he was carrying our sufferings. We thought it was because of God that he was stricken, smitten, and afflicted, 5but it was because of our rebellion that he was pierced. He was crushed for the guilt our sins deserved. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. 6We all have gone astray like sheep. Each of us has turned to his own way, but the Lord has charged all our guilt to him.**

Those words tells us the God given purpose of Jesus. He came to atone for our sins. He came to be our Savior and with the redemption he would win, Jesus offers and opens the wonder and joy of eternal life and salvation. Jesus is our Savior. All of this because God’s Word says so.

Now, as awesome as it is that Jesus as the Christ dies for us, in truth it means nothing and has no impact unless the next thing happens that we are told is of first importance: **“He {Christ} was raised on the third day.”** Again, notice that this is all **“in accordance with the Scriptures.”** That is the key again.

(Now if a whole bunch of pious people were just making up all this stuff about Jesus, if the entire New Testament were filled with this stuff these pious people had made up, that would be one thing. Grasp that this is what liberal theology wants us to believe, that pious, spiritual, God concerned people came up with all kinds of lies about Jesus and his life because…people if this is true then they weren’t pious, spiritual, God concerned people but charlatans and liars out for their own purpose and good! But the good those first believers got was persecution and death in the name of Jesus. Makes you wonder what the point of our liberal theologians today is!)

All of this in in accordance with the Scriptures! With the Old Testament scriptures! The youngest book at this point in the Old Testament is over 400 years old. Many of the books with promises of Jesus are way older than that. How do you explain Isaiah’s 700 plus year old words and clearly they fit Jesus! Or the words of Psalm 22 written by David, containing the very words Jesus uttered on the cross. Those words are at least 1,000 years old and they still fit Jesus!

One of the things that is clear is that this Christ is not only going to die, but he is going to come back to life. That is the one thing, the unshakeable thing that God points to as the foundation of knowing who His son is: the resurrection from the dead! The Christ will die and the Christ will come back to life. That’s the fool proof measure of the Christ. He dies. He lives!

And here is Jesus. He does all of this stuff in accordance with the Scripture. He dies. He lives! Now, again, if he dies and stays dead, then we have nothing to talk about, nothing to celebrate, no sin counts for anything, no concerns for heaven or hell. What you have is your life. You live, you die, that is it! You are just a product of the accident of evolution and in truth there is no purpose, no reason, no answer for your life or mine. Just an accident of nature and we are really only on the same level with mice, ants, and other living things. Just accidental beings!

Man, that is one sad paragraph that I just spoke. I can’t begin to tell you how I reject and totally turn from that sadness. I do that because of God’s Word. Because God’s Word has clearly shown that it is just that God’s Word. It is shown by the fact of the promises of the Christ and it is shown by the fulfillment of the promise of the Christ in Jesus. It is God’s Word. There is a God and thus there is a heaven and a hell. Yet the point of God revealing himself to us is so that we grasp the wonder of his gift of heaven. The point isn’t to be scared to heaven by hell. The point is to be awed by heaven and the gift of the Lord Jesus and what he has done.

He died. He lives! That is the measure of it all. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God come to be our Savior. He promises us forgiveness and eternal life. He promises to make us his children and heirs of His Father’s eternal kingdom. And I want you to grasp, that such is only the beginning of the awesome promise found in Jesus.

Jesus told us that if He lives, then we will live. Simple as that. With faith in Jesus, with trust in what He has declared and said to us, we have the gift of eternal life and heaven. Even though we may close our eyes in this world, we will open our eyes to the glory, wonder and perfection of eternal life in God heavenly kingdom. Because God says so. Because Jesus made it a fact by his coming back to life.

Jesus told us He is always with us until this world comes to an end! God is on your side. God is walking with you and watching over you. God is holding your hand and in many cases carrying you through the rough and tough spots. The beauty of this promise is just to know that God is always by my side and helping me along. (Sometimes like rebellious children we kick back and force our way into sin and disobedience. But Jesus is always there encouraging our repentance and return back to His ways and love.) Jesus is always with us!

Or the simple fact that God tells us he will never give us more than we can bear. Let that awesome promise of God sink in. Here is how I have translated this awesome promise of Jesus in my head. Since Jesus says He will never give me more than I can bear, I simply think, “Hey if it is happening Jesus says I can take it! Let’s keep moving, let’s keep serving! And now you know why I said at the beginning that some of the serious quirks about being a Pastor don’t bother me…Jesus says I can take it! Jesus says He will provide the strength and wisdom to endure! And you know what? I say to you, “Trust Jesus in the same way! It is one of the many blessings of our faith.”

So there it is. This wonder of what this day is about. We don’t have to be concerned with the reality of hell because we have the gift of Jesus for heaven. We don’t have to stew and worry that we aren’t good enough to follow Jesus, because none of us is, but Jesus calls us to be His, to repent and trust His ways of love, grace and compassion. The valley of the shadow of death we all walk through, well, it just isn’t all that horrid and frightful because I have Jesus with me and, seriously, with Jesus beside you what is there you can’t get through?

All because of this day, this morning of Resurrection. All because Jesus died and Jesus lives. It is what our faith is about. This wonder, this marvel, this joy of the gift of Jesus because He Lives. Amen.