

Introduction:

- A. *Illus.*: A few years ago I was talking to a friend at the coffee shop a couple days before Easter. “*I know you aren’t much of a churchgoer,*” I said, “*but I’d like to invite you to church this Sunday for Easter.*” “*Thanks,*” he said, “*That’s very kind of you, but I have a tee time reserved for Sunday morning.*” I don’t quite know what came over me—probably a bad case of self-righteousness, but I said, “*The day we celebrate the most important thing that ever happened in human history, and you’re going to play golf!?*”

I don’t know if Phil believes in the resurrection of Jesus or not but he certainly didn’t understand its importance. I don’t want you to leave today without understanding the importance of Jesus’ resurrection. John 5 tells us a kind of pre-resurrection story; Easter in disguise. And Jesus used what happened to teach us just what his resurrection means.

- B. There was a pool in Jerusalem and the belief was that an angel occasionally would stir the waters of the pool and the first person in the water would be healed. So as you can imagine, the pool was surrounded by disabled people—“*the blind, the lame, the paralyzed.*” People who had no life but waiting for the water to ripple.

One man there had been an invalid for 38 years. He lay by that pool every day, just an arm’s reach from a new life, and it never came.

One day Jesus came to that pool and walked up to that man. The man didn’t know who Jesus was so imagine his surprise when Jesus said, “*Do you want to get well?*” “*Of course,*” the man said, “*but when the water is stirred I don’t have anyone to help me into the pool. Someone else always gets there first.*” Implying: *Are you volunteering?*

Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” And just like that, the man was healthy. That’s a kind of Easter story. He picked up his mat and walked!

- C. Ah, but the plot thickens. No sooner did the man leave the pool with his mat over his shoulder, than the Jewish leaders stopped him and told him he was breaking the law—carrying a burden on the Sabbath day. “*Keep the Sabbath day holy,*” said one. “*On it you shall do no work,*” said another. “*And carrying that mat is work,*” said a third.

But the man said, “*The man who made me healthy said to me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’*”

“*Who told you that?!*” they demanded.

“*I don’t know who he was,*” the man said. “*After he healed me he just disappeared in the crowd.*”

Later Jesus found him at the temple [a good place to be found!] and said to him, “*See, you are healthy. Stop sinning or something worse [than your last infirmity] may happen to you.*” *The man went away and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had made him well.* [vv.14-15]

The leaders came after Jesus for breaking the law—for two offenses, actually. For working on the Sabbath himself by healing the man, and by telling the man to work by carrying his mat. And when they started persecuting Jesus for these things, what Jesus *didn’t* say was what I might have said: *O for crying out loud! Healing isn’t work. And how in the world can you think it is a sin for a man whom God has just healed to carry his mat home?!* What he *did* say is recorded in **Jn 5:17-18,**

In his defense Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.” For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

In other words, Jesus said, *My Father is God and he works on the Sabbath, so I work on the Sabbath. Healing that man was the Father’s work. My Father and I brought the Sabbath to that man for the first time in 38 years.*

But as you heard, the leaders now had two reasons to go after Jesus: (1) defying God’s cardinal command against working on the Sabbath and (2) “making himself equal with God.” That’s tough to defend!

(Some of you are getting restless. *What's this got to do with Easter?* is what you're thinking. I know. I'm getting to that.)

D. Three times in the next few verses Jesus begins a statement by saying, "Very truly I tell you..." "Now hear this!"

Three things we have to get straight! This is Jesus talking to my golfing friend, to people who watch all the Jesus TV shows, to people who are "spiritual", or who admire Jesus, and to our Jewish friends. *Listen to me! This is crucial!*

Turn to **John 5:19-25**.

Vv.19-23 is a complex statement. We'll just move through it quickly, phrase by phrase. Remember, they've accused Jesus, rightly, of "*even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.*" In our foolish culture, that wouldn't ruffle anyone's feathers, but the Jews knew that if a sane man said such a thing he had crossed a line. **If this man is actually equal with God then he has the last word on your life and death.**

Jesus gave them this answer: "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does." –

Since God is one, God the Father and God the Son must always be in synch. The Son's work (on the Sabbath) mirrors the Father's work. How could it be any different?

V.20a: "*For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does.*" The love between Father and Son guarantees that there are no secrets between them. God doesn't have purposes Jesus doesn't know and share.

V.20b: "*Yes, and he will show him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed.*" You've seen the things that the Father has already done through the Son, like healing this man by the pool on the Sabbath. Well, the Father is going to show the Son greater deeds than that that will astonish you. (Here it comes! Here comes Easter!) **V.21,** "*For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life [lit., makes alive], even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.*" The Father is going to raise the dead to immortality and then Jesus, will give that same immortal life as he wishes. Come to find out, the Father raises the Son from

the dead, and the Son is pleased to give that same life to all who trust him for it. And that's not all...

V.22, “*Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son....*” **Now we're not talking about life-giving, but about judgment.** The leaders had accused Jesus of breaking God's law, but Jesus is saying, *I am the Son of God, and I am the Judge, appointed by God the Father, so you are the ones who should be fearing judgment for defying the Son of God.* And here's why the Father entrusted all judgment to the Son (**vv.22b, 23**): “*that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.*” There is a line in the sand.

I. HONOR JESUS, THE SON OF GOD, AS THE GIVER OF LIFE AND THE JUDGE OF ALL

You can take it or leave it, but make no mistake: you dare not defy nor ignore Jesus. Jesus *is* equal with the Father. He doesn't *keep* the Sabbath, he *makes* the Sabbath. He *is* God's rest. He is the resurrection and the life.

Here comes another bold-face in **v.24**: “***Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.***”

“*Whoever hears my word*” means whoever hears that Jesus saying “I am the Son of God and the giver of life.” “*And believes him who sent me*” is the other side of the same coin: believes that God the Father sent Jesus, the Son of God, into the world to bring life or judgment. **Do you believe those two things: that Jesus tells the truth about who he is and that God the Father is the One who sent him?** That is the most important question in life!

Whoever does “*has eternal life and will not be judged.*”

Wait! What do I have to do? *Well, let me check the fine print. Hmmm. There is no fine print. Apparently you don't do anything. Simply listen to Jesus and believe he is sent by God. You mean we can live forever and never face judgment for our sins just by entrusting our lives to Jesus? That is good news!*

When we put our trust in Christ he says here we have “*crossed over from death to life.*” Another way to put that is, “*has been transferred out of death into life.*” From the Bible's perspective

people are born into the realm of death. And our dying is always guilt-ridden. We don't die just because our bodies give out; we die once and forever as the penalty for defying and disobeying God. Sin turns death into everlasting punishment. That's the environment we live in and we could no more escape it than we could fly to the sun.

But then, simply by believing Jesus we get a transfer. We *cross over—out of death into life*. We live in the realm of life, and we will live in the life of God forever. Do you know that the Bible says about heaven that life flows in its river and the river's headwaters is God's throne. The Bible says that in heaven, life grows on its trees like fruit!

II. ENTRUST YOURSELF TO JESUS, THE SON OF GOD, AND YOU CROSS OVER FROM DEATH TO EVERLASTING LIFE

In **v.25** Jesus arrests our attention once more: “*Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.*” **There is some word dancing here!**

There are two distinct time frames that have the same thing in common: a *coming* time and a *now* time.

In both the present and the future “*the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God.*” All the dead. Like all the spiritually dead people standing around Jesus then, and all the dead in their graves in the future.

“*And those who hear will live.*” A literal translation is, “*those having heard*” in the past “*will live... when the dead hear the voice of the Son of God*” calling them then out of their graves to everlasting life. “*Those **having heard** [the first time] will live [when the Son speaks the second time].*”

Look ahead to **v.28-29**, “*Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned.*” **So Jesus the Son of God will speak and all people will come out of their graves. Some will rise to live forever and some will rise to face judgment and death forever.**

III. LISTEN TO THE SON OF GOD NOW AND YOU WILL HEAR HIM WHEN HE SUMMONS THE DEAD TO EVERLASTING LIFE

The resurrection of Jesus by God the Father offers us a two-part assurance.

One, by trusting him we have that resurrection life in us right now. Paul says that these bodies are like clay pots holding the treasure of Christ's life.

Two, by trusting him, we have the assurance that when Jesus comes back—when the trumpet of God sounds and the archangel summons the people of God—we will rise to meet the Lord in the air and so be with him forever. We will never even enter the courtroom of God's judgment. There's no need. *"There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* The first Easter was the world's greatest wonder, but the second, when Jesus comes back, will be the greatest miracle of all.

Conclusion

So every time someone *hears and believes* Jesus' good news now, it is an Easter story—a resurrection miracle, right then and there. No matter what their sins are, the Son of God sets aside judgment because he himself died for your sins. And Jesus, the Son of God, gives them everlasting life, which begins in that moment, exempting them from his judgment. It is what we celebrate this morning. That is what the resurrection means!

Jane Victor told me her story not long ago. Jane was raised nearby in a Catholic church. Jane is a wonderful musician and when she was 12 or 13 she was helping choose music for the "folk services" there in her church. But like a lot of young people in church, what she heard was the church's rules, and the rules didn't change her. Going to confession didn't seem to make her a better person. And the priests were no better than other people. She became very disillusioned. She was adrift.

When she was a senior at Libertyville High School she took a course called, "The Bible as Literature," taught by a local pastor who couldn't preach out loud, but preached just fine by his life. In the course of the year they read the Bible from cover to cover and Jane was fascinated.

She said that because of her upbringing, *“I already believed that Jesus died for me. I had reverence for God. And I knew really well what a terrible person I was. But I found myself just wanting to soak up the Bible.”* Then came the aha experience. *“I read the verse, ‘There is one mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ.’ [1 Tim 2:5] Jesus is the High Priest. The other priests weren’t who I needed. What I need is to go to him, to go through him. Then things I’d heard about a relationship with Christ all came together. That verse did it.”* Jane’s never been the same since. She’s alive, now and forever.

That’s an Easter story. That’s a man-by-the-pool story. In effect, Jesus said to Jane, *“Do you want to get healthy?”* And she did. She knew she was sick at heart. She believed Jesus and he gave her eternal life. She will not face judgment. She has crossed over from death to life. That’s what the resurrection does.

Would you like to do that?