

**Shawnee Presbyterian Church**  
**Rev. David Cornell**  
**July 12, 2020**  
**“He has been raised.”**

Welcome and Invitation to worship:

Hello everyone, and welcome to the online worship service of Shawnee Presbyterian Church.

We are glad you have chosen to set aside the time to worship the living God. And we are also glad to look forward to regathering in person at some point in the near future.

Now, since we are going to observe the Lord’s Table today, our call to worship, scripture readings and message topic will all lead into that observance. And if you wish to participate in the communion table at home, or wherever you may be, and need to prepare, please pause this video and take the time to do so.

Shall we come before the Living God together?

**Call to worship:** Ps. 121: 1-2,  
I will lift up my eyes to the hills.  
From where does my help come?  
My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.

Listen to what Eugene Peterson, longtime pastor of Christ the King Presbyterian church in Bel Air, Maryland says about these verses in his book, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*, a study of psalms 120-134.

I summarize: These psalms were sung by pilgrims climbing the steep, hilly, route from Jericho to Jerusalem. Regarding Psalm 121, dotting the hillsides along the route there were shrines containing idols. So when the pilgrims heading to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals looked up at the hills, they saw these idolatrous shrines. Now often when we quote this, we think, o, the psalmist is stating how great creation is. Well, creation is wonderful, but that is not what the Psalmist is saying here. For he follows the statement, I will lift my eyes to the hills with a question: from where does my help come?

And the answer is, not from the hills, or the idols we can easily resort to. My help comes from the Lord, who made everything, and only from the Lord.

**So with that in mind, here is a prayer of confession, heavily edited:**

As we read in Ps.139:3, O Lord, you know my goings out, and my comings in.  
You also know my mind and my actions, my motives, hopes and fears. There is nowhere I can go that you are not there, and I confess that I have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed.

Who do I have in heaven or on earth besides you? Apart you I have no hope. Yet I know that you cared enough to send your only Son to ransom my soul. Thank you for that.

Amen

**Assurance of forgiveness:**

Then, as we read in John’s first letter: If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Thank you Lord, for your willingness to do exactly that. I believe You. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## **Now the scripture reading for today is 1 Corinthians 15:1-3:**

If you have a Bible nearby, follow along with me as I read vv1-3:

Let's consider this for a few moments before we move to the Lord's Table.

To begin with, this letter of Paul to the believers at Corinth covers a number of topics which were controversial in that wealthy, difficult Greek church. Here in ch.15, Paul deals with their understanding of the physical resurrection of Jesus, about which some there were confused.

As William Barclay says, 1 Cor. 15 is at the same time one of the greatest chapters of the New Testament, and one of the most difficult. It is this chapter that furnished the creeds with the phrase, resurrection of the body.

Now the Greeks, which is who Paul was writing to, did not believe in the resurrection. In fact, Luke tells us in Acts 17 that in Athens they laughed at Paul when he spoke of it. So the Corinthians' understanding of the resurrection needed to be clarified. Their misunderstanding was that they were not denying the resurrection of Jesus, but rather the general doctrine of the resurrection of the body. Paul argues here that if one denies the physical resurrection of the body for all persons, they are therefore denying the resurrection of Jesus, and thus emptying the gospel of its truth and power. And the gospel, divine forgiveness, and our soul's eternal salvation all stand or fall on the truth of Christ's bodily resurrection.

That is why the apostle begins with the phrase, now I make known to you, which in layman's language is, I'm going to spell this out point by point, this gospel which I received and which I preached to you, and which you received. Received is a past tense which means a single act of reception. Once and done.

So Paul weighs in at the outset to say, it's the gospel which is the means God uses to bring about salvation. It is the gospel which opens blind minds and hearts. Friends, he continues, these are the truths you received from me, and by which your eternal salvation is secured.

Then, for emphasis, he states, for I delivered to you as of first importance that which I received: meaning: the most important truths which I declared to you consists of four emphases; and I did not make this up, it was given to me.

**First emphasis:** Christ Jesus died for our sins according to the scriptures. Now there are three bullet points Paul makes here.

- First, Christ died a real, human death. The cross is at the heart and is the beginning of the gospel.
- Second, He did this on behalf of us. It was my sin that put him there, as the song goes.
- Third, this death happened exactly the way the Bible foretold it would. It was no afterthought, or some concoction dreamed up in succeeding generations a la the da Vinci code.

**Second emphasis:** That Jesus was buried. This was a real human death, and his physical being was committed to the ground. Paul is defining the gospel this way because of a heresy called docetism, which denied that God had come in truly human form. Nothing is vague or insubstantial or incomplete about this. As far as human life is concerned, His was over. And all four gospels recount his burial.

The triumph of death over life looked complete. Yet as C.S. Lewis relates in his wonderful book *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, our Lord's human death masked a deeper magic in which the power of evil was broken forever in Christ's death.

**Third emphasis:** This same Jesus whose body was placed into the ground, who was mocked as He hung on the cross for His claims to be Messiah and the very Son of God, rose bodily out of the grave on the third day, as He said he would.

Actually the phrase, He arose is a passive, so a better way to translate it is 'He has been raised', which points to the Father's activity in raising Him. And it points with the utmost possible emphasis to the abiding result: which is- Jesus continues forever in the character of risen Lord.

The reason this is noteworthy is not that Christ died. All humans do. And it is not that he died a martyr's death, or a noble death. Many have.

It is that He personally stated this enormous claim, I will be executed but rise again, and then fulfilled it exactly as he said he would, rising bodily from the dead.

For anyone to dismiss Christ, and His claim to being Deity, one has to get rid of the resurrection.

**And so Paul adds a fourth emphasis basically has two points:**

First, not only is all of this accurate, it be verified from hundreds of people who are still alive. This is why the list of witnesses in the next two verses is so important. Not only did the remaining 11 closest followers of Jesus see him in his post resurrection body, so did about 500 other people, most of whom were still alive when Paul wrote to the Corinthians. Add to that that according to church historical tradition at least 10 of the remaining 11 disciples were martyred for their Christian witness, and the 11th, John, was exiled to a prison island under emperor Domitian, and one has to ask, why would people willingly die terrible deaths for Jesus, unless they were convinced He did rise physically from the dead.

Second, Paul says, this Jesus appeared personally to me also. Ever wonder why the man who persecuted the early church so violently switched and both preached and suffered prodigiously for Jesus? It was because he also was convinced that Jesus was alive, after atoning for our sins.

Friends, it is this stubborn reality, that Jesus of Nazareth is alive, and cannot be dismissed as a hoax, which is the foundation on which the gospel of our salvation hinges.

This is the truth that matters, that our eternal forgiveness from the penalty and power of sin is based on Christ's death, but it gains its power and value because the bodily resurrection is true, and He is alive.

This is the gospel, and the truth that we celebrate when we come to the Lord's Table is, as 2 Cor. 5:21 states: He (God the Father) made Him (God the Son) to be sin, that we might become the righteousness of God.

That is a great exchange. The penalty for our sin was loaded on Christ, and His righteousness was credited to us. Now that is something to celebrate and remember.  
So join me if you would.

**Service of the Lord's Table:**

As we come to the Table we are enjoined to take a few moments and examine ourselves, and allow the spotlight of God's Spirit to pass over our souls and point out that which needs to be addressed.

**The Bread:**

We read in 1 Corinthians 11:23:

“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread, and when He had given thanks He broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’”

**Prayer:** Thank you Lord for willingly allowing yourself to be broken on that cross, and yielding your life in the place of my life.

Take, eat the bread.

### **The Cup:**

Again we read in 1 Corinthians 11:25:

“In the same way He took the cup after supper saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’”

**Prayer:** We thank you, Lord, for willingly suffering the wrath of God in our place, and so atoning for our sins.

Take, drink the cup.

Paul closes with this word: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.”

The Lord’s Table is the gospel in a picture.

It is the counterintuitive truth that God takes the unworthy who will trust the despised offering of Himself on Calvary and makes them worthy, by faith alone, in His grace alone. That God loves to take the disqualified, every one of us if we think about it, and qualify us by His grace alone to be fit for His presence.

That Jesus called Himself the friend of sinners, of whom we can each say along with the apostle Paul, “I am chief”.

God takes unworthy, disqualified sinners to be His friends, by faith alone on the basis of grace alone mediated through His living Son, alone. Now that is good news.

And now may you go with your feet shod in the gospel of peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.