

Of First Importance 3

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning, friends. Let me add my welcome to you as well this morning. It's great to be at church and considering the things of God's Word and the things of the resurrection again this weekend.

Let's pray and ask God to help us understand well His Word. Let's pray. Our Father in Heaven, thank you that you speak to us and you give us clarity on the things that we can expect in this world and the next.

Please help us as we contemplate the priority of the resurrection and what that means for our lives, that we will be growing more and more like our Saviour and bringing glory and honour to Him in all that we do.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, I wonder if you've heard the word woke. You probably can't have avoided hearing the word woke.

It's the idea that someone has woken up. That's the idea. Someone has got with the time. Someone has seen the failures of society and recognised the injustices of language and attitudes towards victims of various groups in society.

[1 : 09] That's the idea of woke. There are preachers of wokeness and there are disciples of wokeness. Those who have woken up and so repented of their wrong attitudes.

And so the Merriam-Webster's Dictionary states, this term was originally coined by progressive black Americans and used in racial justice movements in the early to mid-1900s.

To be woke politically in the black community means that someone is informed, educated and conscious of social injustices and racial inequality. But it comes up in all kinds of ways in society today.

In education, I mean, what do you read to the kids in the libraries, in our schools? How does it affect our school curriculums? In redefining gender and relationships in general.

In renaming street names. Cancelling monuments to people of history. So, like defacing Captain Cook statue in Sydney's Hyde Park.

[2 : 19] Redefining Australia Day. Now, I would argue that waking up now to and adopting the agenda of progressives is, and to do so is, and being this kind of woke, well, it's to sleepwalk into self-destruction.

It's wanting to change things, but not really particularly knowing what you want to change it to. And while it's important to understand history, so that we don't repeat the same mistakes, that's imperative, right?

If this is waking up, it's nothing like the waking up that God would have us wake up to. Over Easter, we've been looking at the things of first importance, that Christ died for sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried and that He was raised according to the Scriptures.

This is the message that Paul delivered to the Corinthians, which he considered of first importance, right? Not second, not third, not as an afterthought, but of first importance.

It's more important than anything else he had to say. And the reasons of first importance is that this is the message of salvation.

[3 : 44] It's not a message of salvation, one of many. It is the only message which has the power to save.

It is this message that gives life and enlightens and wakes people up. You can find all kinds of people who will tell us how to save money, live longer, be smarter, but compared to knowing how it is to be right with God, save from both the power and the penalty of sin, anything else is of at least secondary importance or far less importance, really.

For God would have us to wake up to the reality of the resurrection. And this is something that will change every society in the world for the better.

So let's consider waking up for a minute or two. The thing of first importance is waking up to the reality of the resurrection. If you think people waking up to the injustice of the world is one thing, it's another thing to wake up to the reality of the resurrection.

The resurrection of Jesus guarantees our resurrection, we saw on Easter Sunday. Back in verse 20 of 1 Corinthians chapter 15, have a look at it with me.

[5 : 11] 1 Corinthians chapter 15 verse 20. But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. The fact is, Christ has been raised from the dead.

He is the first fruits of those who have died. And since he has been raised, like the first ripe tomato on the vine, so the rest of the crop is guaranteed to come.

The harvest is guaranteed. There will be an ingathering. Now, in Acts chapter 17, Paul preached about the resurrection. And some people, when they heard Paul preach, mocked.

They said, you're mad. And some people, when they heard Paul preach about the resurrection, they wanted to think about it some more. So they mused. They wondered what this could mean. And they investigated some more.

And some people, when they heard Paul preach about the resurrection, were moved, moved to believe that it's true. And so they woke up. They were dead before God.

[6 : 17] And then God brought them to life. They became children of God. Heirs of the kingdom of heaven. Saved from the coming judgment of God.

Now, that is something. That kind of wake-up call is worth something. It really is. And as God works by his spirit to shine the light of the glory of Jesus in our hearts, he brings us from death to life.

This is the thing of first importance, is to wake up to the truth of the resurrection. It is this reality that needs to shape how we think about the rest of this world.

Otherwise, verse 29, otherwise, what do people mean by being baptised? On behalf of the dead? Or baptised for the dead?

Or baptised on account of the dead? They're all reasonable translations. If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptised on their behalf? Or baptised for them?

[7 : 21] Or baptised on account of them? Apparently, this is a really hard verse for the Bible to get a hold of, right? If you're struggling, that's fair enough, because I struggle with it this week as well. Apparently, there are over 40 ways of trying to understand.

This verse. Now, let's think about it heavily together now. Not one of the early church fathers practiced the idea that people will be baptised vicariously for those who already died, and they'd be okay with God.

It's out of step with everything, the understanding of baptism elsewhere. So, I can't mean that. Now, it might mean that they're doing something which is wrong, right?

But even if it's wrong, it's based on their belief in the resurrection, and Paul didn't approve of it. Could mean that. And yet, it seems like he's actually commending whatever is being done as appropriate, and giving the resurrection of the dead to come.

They're doing it. So, my understanding of what it's saying is this. First of all, it's pretty clear to understand that the dead people are people who are really dead.

[8 : 44] Let's get that right. It's not talking about people who might be dead, or spiritually dead. No, they're dead. They have died. They're asleep in Christ. That's the first thing.

Then the question comes up to the word for, on behalf of, right? The little word is *hooper* in Greek. It's translated on behalf of in ESV, the American Standard Version and the New International Translation.

They put for. That's a good translation for it as well. There's a range of meanings that you can hold to this word, including for, because of, for the sake of, on account of, on behalf of.

All good understandings of the word. Okay then. So, the question is, let's push back a bit, just go back a bit. Who are the dead? Well, it's not dead people in general, right?

It's dead Christians, like our brother Peter. Right? Who was dead and we've had a memorial service from yesterday. It's dead Christians.

[9 : 53] Those who have fallen asleep, who have died in Christ. That's who we're talking about. So, back in verse 18, verse 22, verse 23, they're the people we're talking about in the context here.

So, it seems it's appropriate to read that those who are baptised on account of the dead, they're not saying that they can become Christians by their baptising, because they already are Christians, right?

But they're being baptised on account of the dead, because of the dead, who have fallen asleep in Christ. those who will be raised imperishable.

So, it's people baptised on account of the faithful who are now dead, who died as followers of Jesus. So, believers who had been baptised on account of the dead, who will be raised in glory, is what we're talking about now, right?

believers who have been baptised, right? On account of the dead, who will be raised in glory. So, it's like, Roy gets baptised on account of someone like, considering someone like Peter Nixon, right?

[11 : 15] That's what we're up to. They have believed because they've heard about the hope of those who have died in Christ and that they had of the resurrection of the dead.

And so, we're up now in a part of that group. They have believed because they have heard about the hope that those who died in Christ have of the resurrection of the dead.

Follow me? No. Okay. Okay. Bill Bloggs has become a Christian because he's heard about the Lord Jesus Christ and he's heard about Peter Nixon who's died, who died in Christ and has great hope in Jesus.

and on account of that testimony they have now been baptised. They've become, that's the initiation right into Christian living, into Christianity because that is evidence to them that the resurrection hope that they had is what they want to be part of as well.

Okay? That's the idea. So, a paraphrase could go like this. if there's no resurrection what will be accomplished by those who get baptised because of what they've heard about how the dead will be raised.

[12 : 59] If the dead are not raised at all why are some people undergoing baptism on account of them? Their witness, their testimony, their confidence confidence that these guys would be right with Christ.

Right? So, that's the idea here. So, if the dead are not raised in verse 30 to 32 then there's no point in being a follower of Jesus. That's clear.

Paul and those like and we're better off living just for this world, right? Sucking the life out of this life and not suffering for the sake of Christ Jesus and him crucified if he hasn't risen from the dead.

The question then for everyone in this room is have we woken up to the reality of the resurrection of Jesus? And that will look like verse 30 to 34 all fleeing from worldly living.

See, those who do not believe in the resurrection demonstrate it's pretty clearly by the way they live and the priorities that they have. Eat and drink for tomorrow we die verse 32.

[14 : 15] There's no resurrection, there's no accountability, there's no point beyond this world, just suck it up now. Or put in a similar way, you only live once.

So make the most of this life now before you die. Not only that, it doesn't matter how you live or what you do, as long as it makes you feel good and brings you pleasure, that's good.

Don't let anyone hinder you or life's ambitions. Be proud of who you are, what you are, do what you want to do. There's no accountability for the way you live, you just worm food when you die, so suck it up now.

I think it pretty much summarises the way Australians live these days. Live for pleasure, self-fulfillment and fun.

Aspire for life without any responsibility, be served rather than serve, my rights, your responsibility. Now, if death is the end, well, verse 32, indulge now, see, indulge, get in with it, right into it.

[15 : 28] What do I gain if humanly speaking I fought with wild beasts in Ephesus? Paul wasted his time, energy, suffering for nothing. If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.

Indulge now, live for now, there's no tomorrow. Behind all sin is the rejection of the resurrection. Because the resurrection guarantees that there is a tomorrow, that there will be an accounting for what we do in the body, with our bodies, that there is a day of judgment, that's what Acts 17 speaks about.

Wake up from your drunken stupor, is what Paul says, is what God says about that. Don't be deceived, don't be led astray, don't believe a lie.

Those with the philosophy of life, eat, drink, for tomorrow we die, are bad fellows, are bad travelling companions, are not the crowd to live with and live for, to hang out with.

[16:42] Wake up and repent from that way of living. Now it's evident that many in the Corinthian church have lost sight of the resurrection and in doing so were living completely ungodly lives and there's a count of them scattered through the first seven chapters of 1 Corinthians.

And the great danger is that we in Brisbane, Australia, can as well. Knowledge of God and his plans and purposes are paramount when it comes to living in this world.

Right knowledge of God and right doctrine must lead to right living for God. So now is not the time nor the place to be living just for the pleasure of this world.

Food is important, yes, and then there's MasterChef. food is important, yes, and then there's the massive and immoral food waste problem we have.

Water is important, yes, and then there's the massive alcohol problem that we have. Proverbs chapter 20 verse 1, wine is a mocker, strong drinker, brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.

[18:05] Or Isaiah chapter 5 verse 22, woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine and valiant men in mixing strong drink. Sometimes we know far too much about food and drink in the finer points of cuisine and have little or no knowledge of God and his word.

The first thing we need to make sure of is that we have not gone to sleep about the resurrection, forgotten about the resurrection of Jesus and adopted the values this world run about us.

If so, wake up! Now, that's my first point.

The second point comes at the end of the chapter and I'm not going to spend time looking at verses 35 to 39. What we're told about there is how the dead are raised.

It's pretty clear. They're saying one thing raised another thing. And then we're told what it means to look like when Jesus returns, when the resurrection occurs. Verses 50 to 58.

[19:15] Now, we can't go into all those things now, but since this is the case, we come to the punchline. Come to the punchline down in verse 58. 58. Therefore, in light of all the above, in light that there is a resurrection, and in light that there will be a timing and a way of being raised from the grave, right, in light of all this, and because death is now beaten and completely and utterly destroyed by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, hold on to your nerve, right?

Verse 58. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.

Hold your nerve in this turbulent, fraudulent, false world. Remain steadfast, we have the victory over sin and death, Christ has triumphed over death, don't give up on this truth, don't roll over on this truth, and notice this, it's not just enough to hold on to this truth, this will lead to an abounding, right, in the work of the Lord.

Believers will be outstanding, be prominent, be excelling in the work of the Lord. It will mean that this work will shine out and be evident by the works of what we get on about all around about us. Now to be clear, there is a work that is to the Lord, right, Ephesians chapter 4, Colossians chapter 1, Colossians chapter 3, everything we do should be for the Lord, pleasing to the Lord, being faithful in what we do, honouring our employer in what we do, not stealing from them, doing an honest day's work and getting an honest day's pay, being willing to work, not being idle, not being lazy, yeah, that's good work, appropriate work, and then there is work of the Lord, and note this work is not in vain, Timothy and Paul are engaged in the work of the Lord, see chapter 16 verse 10, let's go to chapter 16 verse 10, when Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am, so there's a different category of work, which is work of the Lord, and this is the work, which is of first importance,

[22:21] I'll say it again, the work of the Lord, is the work, which is of first importance, 1 Corinthians chapter 3 speaks about the kind of works people do, how people build on the foundation which is Christ and him crucified, that work will be tested by fire, some work is burnt up, some work endures, survives, now what work can survive the fire of God's righteous, judging, purifying time to come?

Only work that is built on the foundation of Jesus Christ, and that, brothers and sisters, is gospel work, bringing the great news of Jesus Christ who died for our sins according to the scriptures, who was buried and who was raised on the third day according to the scriptures, and by believing this message people are saved, it is as we instruct in the knowledge of God and as we grow in maturity

of God, this is the work of the Lord.

Lord, and notice who's to be involved in this work, back in chapter 15 verse 58, notice who's to be involved, therefore my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

It is ordinary Christian Corinthians who's to be involved in this work, not just Paul, not just the apostles, ordinary everyday believers like you and me.

Therefore, let me give you some impossible applications from this passage, followed by some possible applications from this passage. Here we go.

[24 : 35] Becoming the Prime Minister of Australia cannot be of first importance. What mum does, reading the Bible to her child, explaining the things of Jesus to her kids, is of far, far greater importance.

Yeah? What dad does, praying for his wife and children and leading them to the Lord and his word, making it a priority of being at church, is of far, far greater importance.

Being a sporting hero cannot be of first importance. Training in spiritual fitness that will see us cross the finish line confident in Christ is of far, far, far greater importance.

That's of first importance. becoming the CEO of a company cannot be of first importance. But investing time and energy in other people knowing Jesus is never in vain.

It's of far, far greater importance. Having a property portfolio cocktail cannot be of first importance.

[26 : 24] But investing time and energy in other people knowing Jesus is never in vain. That is of far, far greater importance.

This is a bit cheeky, this one. Having cocktail parties in the middle of the day, eating and drinking, cannot be of first importance. But teaching RI to class after class of kids in the schools while we can is of first importance.

It's of far greater importance. Gaining entry into the degree of your dreams at uni cannot be of first importance.

It might be important, but it's not of first importance. Teaching kids at kids' church, praying for missionaries and their work, that is the work of the Lord, which is never in vain, which is of first importance.

Brothers and sisters, we're all to be involved in the work of the Lord, abounding in it, excelling in it, demonstrating it, having it evident to the world around about us.

[27 : 53] For that is the natural, or should be, the natural outworking of the gospel in our lives. Now you want to fix the problems of this world, it's not a matter of waking up, right?

It won't be by politics, by better policing, more rules, better policy, it'll only come by people waking up to the reality of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that will only come by people who themselves have woken up and recognised the first importance of the gospel of Jesus.

So let me paint a picture of a woke church. Here we go. We're recruiting. You see on all the places around the place, we're recruiting, well we are recruiting.

We're after a woke church. We're after a church that's full of people who are captured by this priority, that we're alert, that we're savvy, that we're aware, that we're alive to the priority of the gospel.

A church full of people who recognise the things that are of first importance, what might that look like? Well, first importance and first and foremost, it'll look like people who are given to the work of the Lord as the highest priority in our lives.

[29 : 07] that work will look differently for all of us because we're all different, different members in the body of Christ, but we are members of the body of Christ and so we need to be on about the things that Jesus is on about, which will mean that we'll be a people of prayer.

For that demonstrates our dependence upon and so faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, there's a prayer meeting that meets every week here before church.

I'm sure that anyone else would be warmly welcome to join it. I understand that it's not the best of time for many, that's okay, but it'd be lovely if it doubled in size. And we have a prayer diary that you can sign up to and it comes out in our inboxes and you can get a hard copy if you want to, you can respond and say I'd like to get a hold of that.

That five minutes work of a morning or whenever you get to do it, is the work of the Lord. We've got scheduled prayer meetings each school term this year.

Wonderful that we've prayed, had one of them so far this year, it's been great, that was real work of the Lord going on there. And there'll be another one this term. It'd be great if you could all come along on Wednesday night to do that.

[30 : 36] I know you can't all come but some representative from your family would be great to have them there. Awoke Church will also be a place where our home lives will be places of discipleship.

Our homes will be places of discipleship where the scriptures are opened and prayerful dependence upon God is modelled, where our life choices are modelled and discussed with our kids.

We'll be willing to be known as followers of Jesus and we'll be praying for our neighbours and our neighbourhood and the people in our street that they might see Jesus in us and they might come to know Jesus.

We'll be engaging with people about the faith of Christ. Unashamed to be known as Jesus' people in our streets. church. Now, I would love to have a good news course running every school term. I'd love that to be happening. Led and run by a team of people from our church in the morning church crowd. The uni church crowd has it on Monday nights in the Belltop cafe and that's wonderful to see but I know that we can't necessarily make that one but we're going to try and have one on Wednesday nights here.

[31 : 51] But I'd love to have a team of people from morning church saying yes, I will actually give myself to being on a team to make that happen. Right? I'd be excited and encouraged and I guess we would be all as well if we could have a team of people like that.

I would love to have our hall half filled by people each Wednesday night here who are loving, gathering around God's word, growing more and more in the light of Jesus.

We're rubbing shoulders with each other there and getting on with the work of the Lord there but also in growth groups around the place if you can't make it to Wednesday nights.

I'd love to hear of people opening up the scriptures with people in their workplace partnering with the City Bible Forum. I'd love to hear of our mission prayer team meeting regularly.

see we're getting somewhere there and seeing the gospel work of the Lord happening actively and proactively there.

[33 : 02] That would be awesome to see that happen. Wouldn't it be great to see more and more people making the gospel of Jesus the first importance in our lives and seeing people one by one coming to faith through our work of the Lord and growing in maturity as we continue to grow in maturity.

Having that priority shape all that we do individually and also corporately here at St. Lucia Bible Church.

Let's pray. Father in heaven only you can do the work but help us with those who plant the seed and water the seed that you might give the growth.

Help us to give ourselves to the first things of first importance that we might be immovable that we might be always abounding in the work of yours knowing that as we serve you and get on about that work that labour is not in vain.

For we pray in Jesus name Amen.