



GETTING IT ALL BACK: JESUS' RESURRECTION AS ULTIMATE VICTORY

By Pastor David Fields

Philippians 2:3-11; 1 Corinthians 15

"I therefore conclude that the meaning of life is the most urgent of questions. How to answer it?"¹

I. Jesus' U-Shaped Life

"Christ Jesus...

⁶Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

⁷rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

⁸And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

⁹Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,

¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Philippians 2:6-11

Jesus' U-Shaped Life includes a downward trajectory, meeting humanity at our lowest. And then being 'vindicated' by God the Father, honoured for who he is and what he has done.

Vindication: the act of clearing someone from blame. It's proving them right, justified, innocent. It re-establishes a person's reputation.

The Father vindicates the Son through his resurrection. This means:

1. Jesus is proved innocent. He suffers, not for his own sins, but for ours.
2. Jesus' love and obedience means he is deserving of all praise and worship and honour. That he is worthy of all our trust and affection and love and obedience.
3. Jesus' words about forgiveness and mercy, about God's deep love for us – his promises to us – they are all true.
4. Jesus' own way of life - a life of love for God and others - is proven to be our true purpose, the true way to live, the true way to be human.

Here's what this means: God will vindicate us as we follow the crucified and risen Messiah, Jesus.

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C.S. Lewis reminds us of how Jesus demonstrates what love is all about:

“For when He [Jesus] was crucified on Calvary He did that in the wild weather of His outlying provinces [that is, here on earth] what [for all eternity] He had done at home in glory and gladness....From the highest to the lowest, self exists to be abdicated [given up]...This is not a...law which we can escape...What is outside the system of self-giving is... simply and solely Hell... that fierce imprisonment in the self... Self-giving is absolute reality.”²

At the centre of the universe is a God who gives. And calls us to the same kind of ‘self-giving.’

Listen to this promise we see repeated throughout the Bible:

“Humble yourself, therefore, under God’s mighty hand that he may lift you up in due time.”
1 Peter 5:6

Just as Jesus is ‘lifted up’ after giving Himself, as He follows the ‘down’ trajectory of the ‘U-Shape,’ God’s mighty hand will lift you too, in due time.

II. Living The U-Shaped Life

Living the U-Shaped life means:

A) *Your Life Has Purpose*

Albert Camus asks the right question: “What does life mean?” Followed by, “How to answer?”¹

Camus, in his essay, basically starts with an assumption that there is no God. His essay isn’t trying to offer any evidence against God. So, he’s trying to give an answer to what simply becomes the absurdity of life that has no God, and therefore no purpose, no morality.

As his title suggests, Camus points to the ancient Greek myth of Sisyphus to be our ‘hero.’ In this myth, Sisyphus is consigned by the gods to an eternity of repetitive work, of meaninglessness – of rolling a heavy stone up a mountain, only to reach the top where it rolls back down, and he starts all over again. Endlessly. Forever and ever.

For Camus, he imagines Sisyphus coming to terms with this meaninglessness, rebelling against it, and then ends his essay with these words: “The struggle itself towards the heights is enough to fill a man’s heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy.”¹

Horizontal lines for taking notes.

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I, for one, do not imagine Sisyphus happy at all. Struggling through what you know is a meaningless existence does not, to me, seem to leave us happy. Does not, to me, seem to 'fill a man's heart.'

To try and make 'meaning for yourself,' when you know there is no ultimate meaning, amounts to a kind of self-deception. You must simply 'pretend' that your life means something, while knowing it actually means nothing.

Which I don't think is very satisfying at all. Not only because it means we have to live in self-deception. But much more importantly; because it's not true.

The Christian message, in contrast, shoots in exactly the opposite direction.

"The books or the music in which we thought the beauty was located will betray us if we trust to them; it was not in them, it only came through them, and what came through them was longing. These things—the beauty, the memory of our own past—are good images of what we really desire; but if they are mistaken for the thing itself, they turn into dumb idols, breaking the hearts of their worshippers. For they are not the thing itself; they are only the scent of a flower we have not found, the echo of a tune we have not heard, news from a country we have never yet visited."³

The Christian faith says that in our Maker, our Creator, in God we find the home we've been homesick for. It says we were made by the God of love in order to love God and love others.

Some might wonder: but can I believe it?

The early church offers the same kind of evidence we look for when we are assessing a court case today. You look to witnesses – to the people who were there, who saw the events. And Paul says, don't just take my word for it – this is based on what real people saw, and most of them are still alive to ask. Here's what he writes in 1 Corinthians 15:3-6:

"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas [that is, Peter], and then to the Twelve.⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep."

Horizontal lines for taking notes.

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And the meaning? Well, Paul will go on to say:

...If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

1 Corinthians 15:32b

Which means what? Means that nothing you do ultimately counts for anything. It's all just going to burn up with the sun. So, drink up, just seek the little bit of pleasure you can find in food, because it's all for nothing anyways.

Why care about the poor or the environment? Why try and make any progress in education or providing opportunities for those who are on the margins?

Not only that - Paul is saying, in that phrase, "...for tomorrow we die..." is - If Jesus has not been raised, then you are still wrestling with your guilt - there is no forgiveness - and you are still in a struggle with your own mortality. Like, the fact that your death will be the end of you. The end of your relationships. The end.

B. We Can Live With Real Hope

Life, for all of us, will include those moments of loss; but on this Resurrection Sunday - this event in history means what is lost can be found. What is broken can be restored. Yes, in the future - but even, in some important ways - right now. Jesus' victory, on this day, how He beats death, vanquishes that enemy, this becomes our ultimate victory too.

C. Nothing We Do Is In Vain

"Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

1 Corinthians 15:58

When we let this event grab hold of us - when Jesus' resurrection becomes our grounding reality - we can act with courage and kindness. We can work for justice and truth because we know that God will 'lift us up' in the end.

Only when we stop seeking 'happiness' as our goal, and begin to simply seek Jesus, and doing what He has for



getting it all back
Jesus' resurrection as ultimate victory
DISCUSSION

Open Up

1. Have you ever lost something you really loved, and found it again, or got it back somehow? What was that like?
2. In Jesus' 'U-Shaped life' - of His downward trajectory in humble self-giving, and subsequent vindication by the Father, He 'gets it all back' we might say.

Dig In

1. Read **Philippians 2:3-11**. What does Jesus 'give up' in the 'downward trajectory' of this section (vv.6-8)?
2. What does He gain in the 'upward swing' of His story - in His vindication by God the Father (vv.9-11)?
3. How do you think that would encourage this ancient Christian community in Philippi who are facing increased pressure and persecution because of their Christian faith (Phil 1:29-30)?
4. How does Jesus' vindication encourage you when you are tempted to take the way of pride versus the way of humility, when you are tempted to push your way through rather than considering the needs of others?
5. Read 1 Corinthians 15:54-58. In the message we saw that Jesus' resurrection means that nothing we do is in vain. Where in your life are you challenged to think your work is in vain? How does this text speak to that? Encourage you?

Prayer:

Give thanks to God that Jesus' resurrection guarantees our future hope! Give thanks that our lives have real purpose - to love God, and love others. Ask for God's help to live in the way of self-giving love, even when it's difficult because you know that "he will lift you up in due time." Pray for the requests of your group.