

The role of resurrection

By Paul Viggiano

Posted: 04/03/2010 07:40:39 PM PDT

For more than 50 years I've been active in the South Bay community. As a student, teacher, coach and minister, I've interacted with thousands of residents in various capacities. As a minister, you make an effort to help people through difficult seasons in their lives - struggling marriages, addictions, rebellious children, illness of loved ones - you name it. Sometimes you see people get back on their feet, sometimes you don't. Then you get that dreaded call.

Living in the same place all my life, I've received that phone call all too many times - somebody's time on this earth has come to an end. This kind of news ignites a recalibration of one's heart. Social issues, politics, embattled relationships, enslavement to chemicals, joblessness, et al, fade to black in the face of death. In sets perspective.

On this day, the cultures of the world acknowledge what churches are called to recognize in their every meeting: That man's greatest adversary - the devil and his death - are vanquished in the cross and resurrection of Christ. As one who sees the value of addressing the philosophies, ethics and ideologies that run the engines of society, I believe it essential to address those social and political issues that confront our ever-increasing apostate society. But, as a minister, I also realize what the Apostle Paul made ever so clear: "If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. If Christ is not risen you are still in your sins."

It is the height of misguided thinking for the church to place its social, ethical or political pursuits on a coordinate platform with the resurrection; a surefire method for Christianity to fail as a culture-enriching entity is to do just that. A true and lasting amelioration of any civilization is fully dependent upon hearts being regenerated one by one. Such regeneration comes through the preaching of a resurrected Christ, who grants His victory to all who trust that He died and rose for them.

It is the responsibility of every human to defend what they believe is right and oppose what they believe is evil; such actions are inherently religious in that they revert to convictions that cannot be proved or justified apart

from appealing to an ultimate moral authority. But religion falls on its face, becomes empty and miserable, when the resurrection is not heralded as the supreme hope of all mankind.

A person does not carry ethics or social justice to the cross; we receive it from the cross. But over and above fitting moral codes, the cross and resurrection of Christ produces life itself.

The root of the human problem - the problem from which all other ills flow - is not social or political, but the darkness of the human heart before a holy and righteous Creator and the consequential eternal death and judgment.

The resurrection of Christ, among other things, was God's testimony that He accepted the atoning work of His Son and, therefore, accepts and grants eternal life to those who trust in His name. Accordingly, all battles are won or lost in the preaching of the resurrection. Apart from that, what remains is vanity.

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