

Sharing In The Resurrection of Christ

by Todd Atkinson

This sermon emphasizes the importance of embracing both the resurrection and mission aspects of Christianity. It highlights the need to share equally in Christ's resurrection and to carry hope into the fallen world. The sermon delves into the cultural challenges faced by Christians, urging them to understand and engage with both the culture they are reaching and the culture inherent to being a follower of Jesus.

Scripture: John 13:1, Matthew 28:18, Romans 6:5, Colossians 2:12, Acts 1:8, Acts 10:34, 1 Peter 2:9, Philippians 2:3, Galatians 3:28

Topics: "Resurrection", "Engaging Culture"

Description

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Transcript

Please let me add to what Father Stephen has said and welcome you wholeheartedly to Canon Conference 2019. Thank you for coming, for all the effort that that represents. Canon Conference is a time annually where we gather to be together.

Our churches now are spread across three provinces, and so this is a really important gathering time. And there's also what we call friends of Ea, people who are dear friends of ours, cherished friends, and even quite a few people who are coming to learn what we're about. And a number of you here this evening are here for that reason, and thank you for coming.

It's also a time where we gather to worship Jesus together and to experience the power of heavenly worship. We also gather to hear what God is saying to us at this time through Holy Scripture. And I think that if there were only two things that God was impressing upon Vea with urgency at this time, I'm sure there's many things, but I wanna speak about two things that he is impressing upon us with urgency.

Number one, we have always sought to share in the death of our Lord. Lent is an important time for us. We have spent a lot of time, good time, preaching about the cross, understanding what Romans, the teaching of Romans 6, Colossians chapter two, what does it mean to share in the death and the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ? That's a keystone in who we are.

But I'm assured that Jesus is wanting us to share equally in his resurrection, equally in his risenness, as fully as we have thought about his death, reflected upon it, imbibed it. I know that. The Lord wants us to be united to him in his risenness, number two, second emphasis, so that we can go in that risenness into the fallen world with great hope, a hope so strong that it would wipe away despair.

And so these two themes, resurrection and mission, to go into all the world, but affected by the resurrection of Jesus. And so it will be very hard for me now to wanna just push everything aside and preach the resurrection. The last two or three days, we've just had 50, 60 of our national leaders here, and I've just been teaching on the resurrection.

So that's in me, you cut me anyway, that's what's gonna come out. But it may be just that your pastors will have to go through some of the things that I've been teaching them. So if that's the case, these two great emphasis, resurrection and mission, then this is going to require that we learn a lot of new things, three in particular.

That we understand the resurrection in a new way, enter into it in a new way, be impacted by the resurrection in a new and personal way. Number two, that we understand the world that we're bringing the message of the resurrection into. And number three, we have to understand the reality of how culture is going to play into those two things.

Hence the name of this conference, Christ and Culture. Let me expand a little upon that last one, the word culture. We are not born into a vacuum.

No, you were born into a country that has something called a culture. What do we mean when we use the word culture? Simple definition, culture is defined as a set of beliefs, values, morals, and behaviors shared by a group of people. It is their way of life.

In Canada, we probably have more than one culture. Perhaps we should be speaking about Canadian cultures plural that we have multiple cultures at play. So if you're a Canadian, there's that sense of national culture.

But in our case, we live in Southern Alberta. It kind of has a culture of its own. And in our case, we're part of a Southern Alberta church culture, which definitely has a culture of its own that we have went against, kind of salmon against the flow of the stream.

But it gets a lot more complicated than that. We live in the Canadian culture of 2019. It's a very unique point of time as regards culture.

At this time, Canadian culture is in a state of tumult. Or we might say our cultures plural are in tumult. Cultures are acting as opposing forces, each looking for survival, and many of them looking for something stronger than survival, dominance, the one that comes out on top.

I say cultures plural because cultural values are no longer uniform in Canada, if they ever were. There's many, and they are in tension with one another. Take just one example.

It's not uncommon in Canada to speak about Canada East and Canada West, about some of the differences between Eastern Canada and Western Canada. Voting patterns are certainly markedly different in different regions of Canada. But however, even West and East speaking in those terms is a really unhelpful oversimplification.

For example, how much cultural commonality does Toronto, Ontario have with St. John's, Newfoundland, both out in Eastern Canada, and yet worlds apart from one another? In the West, what about the cultural differences between Vancouver versus Calgary versus Saskatoon? Worlds of difference. Just within the single city of Vancouver, now over 50% of the population of Vancouver is now composed of what has been called visible minorities. So even that phrase has become a cultural contradiction because if you're over 50%, how are you a minority any longer? And I love those cultures.

Oh, I just love them, fascinated by them, want to learn from them, be in them, rub up against them. And these issues are simply the tip of the cultural iceberg. We could never take the time to do justice to that, even in a city, of one city, if we had to try to dissect the multiple cultures at work, at play there.

We're not even touching generational differences, and many others. So we have some work to do. You may ask, where would we even begin? Well, I'm going to point you in two directions.

Number one, to seek to try and understand the culture of the particular people that you feel God has wants you to reach. Colmox Valley, learn those people. If culture is defined as a set of beliefs, values, morals, behaviors shared by a group of people, then study your area.

What do they believe? How would you find that out? What are their values? What are their morals, if any? They do have morals. Everybody has some sense of what is right and what is wrong. That's morality by definition.

They just have different sets. What are their behaviors? And what do those behaviors say about what they hold as important? And so on with all of our cities, towns, villages that we are reaching into. So seek to understand the culture or cultures of the particular people that you feel God is sending you to.

But there's a second charge I want to give you. You must understand the culture that is inherent to being a Jesus follower. There is a distinct culture you are reaching, but there is a distinct culture you are bringing.

If culture means a set of beliefs, values, morals, and behaviors shared by a group of people, and if Jesus provided his followers the teachings as we see in Scripture, if he provided us with a set of beliefs, did he not? If he provided us a set of values, morals, behaviors, read the Beatitudes, read the Sermon on the Mount, any of his teaching, all of his teaching, and that we're meant to share all those that know and love him, share those things in common, then we actually have a culture more than we think we do. And it's a culture that is a dominant culture. It's strong in us.

Our highest allegiance is to it. Those who love Jesus therefore have a culture of their own. We are called to reach a culture and bring a culture.

When Jesus in his incarnation, he came to a Jewish culture, but he brought the culture of heaven. The culture he brought is called the kingdom of God. Consequently, mission becomes a matter of learning how to relate to other cultures while also being true to our own.

Or else if you don't do the second one, you arrive in that culture, have a lot to learn, but nothing to give, nothing to impart. So if your whole mission is to be liked, then just do the first one. If your mission is to bring salvation to the world, you gotta do the second one too.

Understand? If our entire goal is only one of those, to understand the cultures in which we live, that's a great recipe to like and be liked. But if you're on the Jesus mission, which is to bring redemption and

salvation to the world, then you can't compromise the message of salvation in the process. You will get there and be empty handed.

So I want us to look at a familiar story from the gospel, very familiar story, that sheds some light on this as the gospel always does. John 13, we had it read out before us. I don't wanna take us out of the spirit of Easter.

That's what I really wanna be preaching. But if we could, for an evening, turn our attention backwards to the last supper. At that last meal together, Jesus did something that absolutely horrified his most prominent disciple, undid him, even offended him, the chiefest of the apostles, Peter.

Why? Because after supper, he rose from the table, he removed his outer garment, he took a towel, he tied it around his waist, he poured water into a basin, he knelt on the floor and he began washing his disciples' feet. And at that moment, three powerful things happened culturally. Number one, Jesus wanted to communicate something very deep in his heart.

There's something he wants to impart because his death is nigh. There are truths that he wants to pass onto his disciples in the hope that they would carry those on after his departure. This is a very significant moment in time, the last supper, the teaching that takes place in and around it.

However, the truths that he wants to impart to them are largely unfamiliar. They're kind of foreign to their culture. Even could come across as strange, even unwanted.

Here's people that had walked very closely with Jesus for three to three and a half years, and Jesus has to bring some truths that he knows they're not gonna want. But he needs them, not only to want them, he needs them to imbibe them and embody them and carry them on. And then even to accelerate them, but it's gonna rock their world a little first.

I love the way Jesus does that. So how's he gonna do that? Well, he chooses to relay these truths, kind of foreign to them, using something that was culturally familiar to them. He communicates the unfamiliar by means of the familiar.

He communicates the unknown by means of the known. He's gonna talk to them about the culture of the kingdom of heaven by referencing their own Jewish culture. When the son of God became man, he was incarnated into a culture.

He was Jewish. He imbibed, embodied the Jewish culture. He understood that culture.

He operated within that culture. He spoke from that culture and he spoke to that culture. Foot washing was a familiar part of this culture and he employed it.

I wonder what some of our own cultural starting points could be. Well, I've noticed that coffee features quite highly in our culture. Perhaps Christians might think of starting a really cool coffee shop that serves really great coffee and putting it on 13th Street North.

I mean, it seems like a lot of our cultural values in this day seem to be embodied in coffee. I wonder if anybody ever thought of that. Let's just start a great coffee shop that serves just the best coffee in the city and let's just put it in a place that people wouldn't have expected.

That's a good idea. I wonder if Jesus would have done that. I've seen the rise of interest in old vintage red brick buildings.

Wouldn't it be great if Christians would restore a great red brick building and maybe turn it into something like a rental space, I don't know, something that would put lots of people in the community through it. High exposure, make it really beautiful. I don't know, it seems like a modern day foot washing.

People that people could identify with, something that they seem to be craving. What about the rise in personal fitness? I think most Christians think, I relate more to the good coffee part of our culture. Fine.

I've even noticed a recent fascination in culture with beards, but I don't wanna talk about that. It's just kinda out there. Well, Jesus lived in a society where foot washing was a normal practice.

People have seen it, they knew it, even valued it. So it shouldn't surprise us that he would use foot washing to convey his truth to the culture. So let your wheels start to work.

Who's God called you to reach? What kind of culture do they have? How would you speak to them using their own cultural starting points? However, something else is happening in this same story. Jesus doesn't simply speak from their culture, he speaks to their culture. And when he does, Peter is offended at this because it strikes at his cultural sensitivities.

He is affronted, offended. He actually says to Jesus, you shall never wash my feet. I mean, Jesus is washing feet, but according to Peter, he's not doing it right.

Yes, it's a big part of our culture, but not that way. In Jewish culture, foot washing wasn't a universal practice. Not everybody got that kind of specialized treatment.

Not everybody visiting a house got their feet washed. It was something you reserved for distinguished guests. It was for people you wanted to especially honor.

And as the host, you wouldn't do it yourself. That was considered beneath you. You would get a servant to do it.

And not even just any servant, your lowest ranking servant. It was considered a vulgar job, so you would get a vulgar person to do it. That is the way foot washing was done.

That was their cultural understanding. It was their way of life. Washing feet this way did embody their values and beliefs.

But Jesus, though he speaks to culture, though he actually uses it as a kind of starting point, an inroad to communicate the higher culture of the kingdom of God. So even though he uses this culture, he's also at odds with it. Some of its values and beliefs according to his own values and beliefs, he wanted to wash everybody's feet, not just dignitaries.

Notice how in the text he washed everybody's feet. Not just the highest ranking apostles. Everybody got it.

Because everybody was worth so much to him. That's the value, that's the culture of heaven. And he's bringing that to bear.

Also, if you really wanted to honor your guests by washing their feet, why wouldn't you do it yourself? So Jesus does it himself. Why get your lowest servant to do it? Nobody had ever seen anything like this, and they actually found it offensive. Furthermore, he was doing this, as you heard in the text, as an example, there's an expectation that those that know him and love him are gonna keep doing this, even though it's really a part of their culture, but the way he's doing it is at odds with their culture.

If I, your teacher and Lord, are doing this, I want you to start doing this also. Lord, that's gonna get us in a lot of trouble. People are not going to understand.

And this made Peter very angry. He felt like his cultural values were under threat, like they were not being respected. Like the world, as he thought it should be ordered, was being wronged, even though it was being righted.

Understand? Heaven was making something right. It was honoring something in foot-washing. It had some merits, but now heaven is coming along and saying, this could be a whole lot better.

What happens if we gave this to everybody? Instead of reserving it for dignitaries, what happens if the dignitaries got low and washed people? That's what we mean when we say something is counter-cultural. Heaven both touches base with culture and is counter-cultural at the exact same time and story. What else do you notice about this story? How many of the disciples were so affronted? How many of them flatly refused? Just Peter.

Why is that? The other disciples are as Jewish as he is. They share the exact same culture. So why are they glad to go along with this, to have Jesus adjust their culture, speak to it, address it? But Peter is fighting him on this.

Cultural psychologists identify two kinds of culture now. They speak of what is called individualistic cultures and collectivist cultures. An individualistic culture is one that exalts the needs of the individual over the needs of the group as a whole.

That's not my definition, that's a psychologist. To speaking to modern cultures and saying an individualistic culture is one that exalts the needs of the individual above everything else. Sounds kind of familiar.

We've seen a lot of that. We've all been a lot like that. And I wonder if this is what I see in Peter.

He thinks he's defending the culture, but he's really defending something a lot more individual. He's the only guy doing it. There's something more inside that's raging that is offended.

He's the only one really struggling with having Jesus speak to this part of his culture. If we really think Jesus is the one and only Son of God, then it actually makes a whole lot of sense that A, he understands cultures, but B, it's actually his right to speak to them. If we have a lot lower version of Jesus, then we can understand like, why would you address this? But if we thought that he was the one that had all authority on heaven and earth as per the Great Commission, the Lord of all, then it would make some sense that that which he created, he can speak to, address it, and even challenge it.

When Jesus said, let me say one other point. What'll happen when Jesus does that with our Canadian culture? Comes to it, affirms, loves parts of it, but also challenges parts of it. What will we do when the Lord of all wants to do that here? Because the story is a kind of a distant reality.

It's kind of out there. We don't really do foot washing. I mean, we do it at a sacred service.

We do it in a, and I love that, but it's not like something enshrined in our culture, that there's a whole lot of cultural sensitivity towards. But that's why Peter's so upset because there is sensitivity toward that. The implications of what he's doing feel like they could tip the entire social order.

When you're asking the guys on top to act like the guys on the bottom, and the guys on bottom, you're treating them like the guys on top can tip the entire social order. So how will we feel if Jesus wants to address some things in a Canadian culture? And we won't know it's in us until we're offended by it. Will we be offended like Peter when he does that? I see Christians sometimes feeling like they have to defend the culture rather than defending Jesus to challenge the culture.

Kind of protect the culture from Jesus. Oh, yes. I don't need to protect my country from Jesus.

Protect the culture from Jesus. He came to foot washing, totally turned the whole thing around, and it came out in a way better place. A way better practice.

I think he'll do that to everything. When Jesus said to Peter, or Peter says to Jesus, Jesus says, you shall never wash my feet. That's strong, you shall never wash my feet.

You're not gonna do this. I'm not going along with this. This offends my personal culture.

Jesus answers him these words, if I do not wash you, Peter, you will have no share with me. The word share, the Greek word there is the word we would use for inheritance. It's used in other stories of the New Testament that pertain to inheritance.

Families hand down inheritance. Your inheritance is on the line. It is at risk of being lost, Peter.

He said, what I'm doing now, you will not understand, but later you will understand. Whether you understand this or not, he said, if you call me teacher and Lord, then you have to trust that I know what I'm doing, whether you understand it or not. And if you wanna be a representative of the kingdom of God, then you must help me understand that.

You have to put its culture above your own personal culture. You will never be its representative either because you're judging the kingdom, whether it's right or wrong, instead of letting the kingdom judge your personal culture. If you do not, if I do not wash you, you will have no share with me.

You will have no inheritance. You will lose out. Peter, if you don't let me wash you, if you keep resisting me on this, it will not be without consequence.

You will suffer loss over this. And that is what Peter needed to hear. I'm fascinated with it.

That's actually what turns his heart. He still didn't understand. What he did understand is if I keep fighting Jesus on this, it's not gonna go well for me.

I'm gonna miss out and I don't wanna miss out. I'm gonna suffer loss of inheritance and I don't wanna do that. So he just completely turns and becomes entirely compliant.

Okay, wash me. It's actually quite beautiful. And he still doesn't understand why.

He just knows he has to admit to his Lord in this. And it's gorgeous. He doesn't understand what Jesus is doing.

At this point, he doesn't even necessarily like it, but he is wise enough to know that decisions have consequences and that if he continues to resist Jesus, he's going to miss out. If he continues going down the road that he wants his culture intact and unchallenged, he will not get to be part of the culture of heaven and bringing a counter-cultural gospel and a counter-cultural kingdom to bear on the earth. And so he says, all of me, what part of our personal cultures is Jesus speaking to and challenging? I've heard people say, well, I don't do that.

The men in my family didn't do that. That's your personal culture then. And you are now exalting it above the culture of heaven.

You have some decisions to make. I've heard people say, it went bad for months. I am never gonna try that again.

Even if Jesus is asking me to do that, well, I wouldn't make you, but that's because that's part of your personal culture now. That's your beliefs and values and behaviors. But on the road to him doing that to the culture out there, he first does it to the culture in here.

So we're gonna go on to talk about Peter in the book of Acts and the other apostles. Guess what they're doing in the book of Acts? Doing the exact, they are doing to the dominant culture what Jesus just did to their internal culture. Hate to pick on you, Duncan.

Love this guy. The privilege of leading Duncan to the Lord. And I'm fascinated by him because he's like an icon of personal culture.

I mean, I learn from him. I ask him, what does society believe about this? What do people just ask him questions, learn from him? But the thing I've always loved about him is that when his culture and the culture he represents, Victoria, comes up against Jesus' culture, he always chooses Jesus' culture. I love it.

You've taught me so much about that. I remember our early conversations, which I will not divulge. Because even before you were a Christian, when you were weighing it, you were like, what about this? Great questions.

And I just had to say, well, it's really a question of authority. If you want Jesus to be called your Lord, your master, your teacher, like he said in the text, then the question is, who gets the final say? Oh. So I didn't even make it about the issue.

I made it about the Lord. And we did, we did everything from, we'll name them, but including even work and the people who, I mean, worked at a very kind of iconic, prestigious, well-known place, and his becoming a Christian had all kinds of ripple effects. And so, because it was literally, he works at a place called Victory Barbershop, which is kind of, was like this iconic barber thing that set stuff around all over the world in motion.

And he was the associate manager there. So it was kind of like the iconic, cool place in Victoria in many ways. Personally, I think it was him that made it that.

And now he has to, he's being invited to follow Jesus. That is gonna make him look anything but cool. Will he imbibe the culture of heaven? Now, what's really interesting is they give him a very hard time there.

Because all their stereotypes of Christians, all their resentments, and he, I watch this, he's never turned his heart from them. He's never stopped loving them. And this Good Friday, the owner, the manager, won't tell his name, quite a famous guy, put on his, is it his Instagram website? Whatever it is, I can't imagine how many followers that guy has.

63,000 on Instagram or something. So what did he do? He put a picture of Good Friday. Three crosses, a caption, and Duncan reached out to him and said, I think it's probably time for us to meet, eh? Duncan wouldn't bend his culture.

And now here he is bending to Duncan's new culture. The kingdom of heaven. So we're gonna go to the Lord's table.

And I have no idea what the Lord is saying to you personally. I just know what I'm supposed to say. And so if you'd bow your head in a word of prayer and just ask your Lord and teacher, is there some part of my culture personally or my Canadian culture that you are trying to address the way I do conflict, the way I handle disagreements, the way I handle jealousy, the way I handle the way I constantly feel overlooked regardless of how many people love me and pay attention to me, on and on.

May the Lord himself speak to our hearts. No accident, this happened at the Last Supper. We are going to the Lord's table, the continuation of the Last Supper, where the Lord is taking us to experience firsthand his resurrection and to then go in resurrection life and power into the world, this is something he is requiring of us.

So what's the area of life that the handbrake is on? The resistance.

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