

**Text: I Corinthians 15 (Pew Bible pg.1139)**

**Title: “Treasures from an Empty Tomb”**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Let me add my welcome to that which Alexis has already extended to you ... to Travis members and guests from our community. I'm trusting that many of you are here today because you need to hear from God. Some of you are here today in your Sunday best ... inside and out. Things are going great. Others are here with broken hearts, and shattered dreams, and deep regrets, and messed up lives. But we all need to hear from God today.

Open your Bibles please to I Corinthians 15:1 (Pew Bible, pg.1139). Read vv.1-4.

**ILLUSTRATION** - For several years an archeologist by the name of Howard Carter had been excavating in Egypt's Valley of the Kings in search of the tomb of a relatively unknown king named Tutankhamen (Tu-tank-amin), or as we know him today ... King Tut. King Tut and the other ancient kings of Egypt believed that if their bodies could somehow be preserved that they would one day come back to life after death. So they arranged for their dead bodies to be carefully embalmed and placed in massive tombs, many in the form of great pyramids. The tombs would also be filled with the king's personal treasures and other items he would need when he came back to life. This made the tombs a prime target for thieves and looters.

Howard Carter knew, however, that the tomb of King Tut had not been discovered and likely still contained, after 3000 years, all the contents, the body and vast riches of his treasures.

One day in 1922 Carter and his team made an amazing discovery. They uncovered a stairway that led down to a sealed vault ... the tomb of King Tut. Carter made a small peep-hole in the blocked inner doorway to the tomb ... a hole just large enough for him to poke his head inside. With a candle extended before him Howard Carter viewed with his eyes what had been a dream for years ... King Tut's incredible treasures stacked to the ceiling of the tomb. The glitter of gold was everywhere.

### **PHOTOS OF KING TUT 1-3**

In the following days they moved deeper and deeper into the tomb to ultimately discover the burial chamber, the coffin and, inside, the body of King Tut, amazingly well-preserved over the thousands of years by the dry Egyptian climate.

Nice looking man for being over 3000 years old, I would say.

Go with me now to another tomb. This is the tomb belonging to a certain Joseph of Arimathea. But Joseph would not be the first to use his own tomb. Here the body of Jesus Christ was laid after His crucifixion. This tomb had been sealed with an elite Roman guard to insure against someone taking the body. Rumors were that He predicted He would rise again. A stone that once covered the entrance is rolled to the side. We look inside ... but there is no body. Only the grave clothes of the

one who once occupied the tomb ... Jesus Christ. The tomb of Jesus is empty. The word around the city is out ... He's alive ... He is risen.

You see, when they discovered the tomb of King Tut they found earthly treasures inside, and they dug them out for the world to see.

What we have in I Corinthians 15 is the Apostle Paul dragging out of the empty tomb of Jesus the treasures that He has left behind for us all this Easter. But I'm here to tell you today that there are priceless eternal, spiritual treasures inside the empty tomb of Jesus ... treasures that are available to you and to me ... spiritual treasures of the rich promises of God.

Now with your Bibles open to I Corinthians 15 I want to remind you that Jesus is alive, but the tomb of Jesus is not completely empty. The body of Jesus is gone; it has been raised. But the empty tomb is filled with many spiritual treasures:

### **TREASURE CHEST #1 IS MARKED "THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD."**

In the wake of the resurrection of Jesus Christ we have this great promise and treasure left to us ... the faithfulness of God.

Now you need to know that the Apostle Paul is writing to a church in Corinth that isn't quite sure of the reality of the resurrection of the dead ... that there is life after death ... that we could become something more than we are now after we die.

Listen to how Paul answers this spiritual confusion:

**1 Corinthians 15:12 - But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?**

**1 Corinthians 15:13 - If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.**

**1 Corinthians 15:14 - And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.**

**1 Corinthians 15:15 - More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised.**

**1 Corinthians 15:16 - For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either.**

**1 Corinthians 15:17 - And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile...**

In other words, the very faithfulness of God and His Word rises or falls on the fact of the resurrection of Jesus. If Christ had not been raised then you could not believe anything God said ... your faith is empty.

Let me show you what I mean: Throughout Jesus' earthly ministry He predicted that ...

**Mark 9:31 – “The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.”**

So when Jesus was hanging on the Cross His enemies mocked Him saying, “He trusts in God, let God rescue Him now...” They thought they were mocking Jesus, but they were really doubting God.

And yet Jesus was able to endure the agony of the Cross and the sufferings of death for our sins because He knew His Father was faithful and would raise Him up. The promise of God sustained Jesus during that horrific time.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ tells us that God can be trusted. He is faithful to His Word. He did not allow Jesus to be crushed permanently by the weight of our sins. In just the right time, God came through.

You may think, “Well, God did that for Jesus, but will He do that for me?” The answer is “yes.” That is the grace and faithfulness of God, that He will treat you just like He treated His own Son.

So Treasure Chest #1 is the faithfulness of God.

**TREASURE CHEST #2 IS MARKED “FORGIVENESS OF SINS.”**

You see, the empty tomb means the cross worked ... that Jesus Christ's dying in our behalf, as a substitute for us, was sufficient to atone for the sins of all mankind for all of history. And the empty tomb of Jesus says, “It worked!”

**1 Corinthians 15:17 - And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.**

Without the resurrection, sin and death would have had the last word ... that the sacrifice of Jesus was not enough.

**ILLUSTRATION** – Imagine it like a huge avalanche. It was as if God saw this huge avalanche of sin crashing down through history, destroying lives and He planted the cross in the path of that great avalanche thinking, “There, that should stop it.” But without the resurrection it means that the great avalanche of sin rolled right over the body of Jesus Christ and kept going. There is no rescue from sin ... no forgiveness of sin ... no release from the guilt of our sin.

Because Jesus rose victoriously on that first Easter morning, there is the promise that our sins can be forgiven. What Jesus died on the Cross to accomplish actually works because of His resurrection.

**John 11:25 - “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies;**

Now back to the empty tomb of Jesus. There is the treasure of the faithfulness of God. There is the treasure of forgiveness of our sin.

### **TREASURE CHEST #3 IS MARKED “HOPE FOR THE FUTURE.”**

Now let's keep reading:

#### **1 Corinthians 15:18 - Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.**

Note: The Bible often speaks of believers who die as though they had fallen asleep. They're actually dead, but there is a resurrection ahead for them when they will awaken and arise.

#### **1 Corinthians 15:19 - If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.**

#### **1 Corinthians 15:20 - But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.**

You see, Jesus came to this world clothed in a human body. He died in a body like ours and He arose with a new body, like we will have when we are resurrected. So we have the promise that what happened to Him can happen for us.

When it says in v.20 that Jesus is the “first-fruits” it means that He is the first to be resurrected in this way, and He is the promise that many others will come out just like He did. There is a great harvest that will follow.

So here's the way it works: Jesus, when He died on the Cross went to a place called heaven or paradise with His Father. He was there for three days, then He was resurrected and given His glorious new body with which he walked out of the tomb and appeared to hundreds of people around Jerusalem. And He was the “first-fruits,” the first of many who will come out just like He did.

So when I die, as a believer I go into the presence of God in a place called heaven. If a person dies without knowing Christ, when they die they go to a place of torment called hell or hades.

**ILLUSTRATION** – Time magazine this week... “What if There's no Hell?” I think the better way to ask that question is “What if there is hell?” Jesus clearly taught that there is such a place reserved for those who reject God and His offer of life through Jesus Christ.

Now when Christ returns there will be the final resurrection, and everyone is raised, believers and non-believers alike to stand before God. And when believers are raised it will be just like when Jesus was raised. We receive new bodies that our free from sin and sickness and death.

So when we make the choice to put our trust in what Christ did for us on the Cross, the promise is that we have a future filled with hope. When we die we will live again, but better than we ever

imagined. We don't just repeat this life, but we go on to something far more glorious than we could ever imagine.

You don't have to be afraid of dying.

So that third treasure chest is marked "Future with Hope."

### **TREASURE CHEST #4 IS MARKED "VICTORY OVER TRAGEDY."**

You could look at the Cross and come to the conclusion that this was just one huge tragedy. Jesus is dead. It doesn't get more final than that. If you didn't know anything else, death is defeat. Do your best to stay alive as long as you can, because when you die, that's it. I would say that's a tragedy. So if Jesus was still in the grave, then everyone who had put their hopes in Jesus were now sadly disappointed. This tragedy put an end to their dreams.

You know about that, don't you? The dreams of having a child in your arms put to an end by the tragedy of a miscarriage. The dreams of having a spouse that would love you for a lifetime put to an end by the tragedy of an affair. The dreams of a secure financial future put to an end by the tragedy of losing your job.

And without the resurrection, it doesn't get more tragic than death. But the empty tomb of Jesus leaves a great treasure behind ... the treasure of victory over tragedy. Look at what the Bible says:

**1 Corinthians 15:54 - When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."**

**1 Corinthians 15:55 - "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"**

**1 Corinthians 15:56 - The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.**

**1 Corinthians 15:57 - But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

The resurrection of Jesus Christ means God can take the worst tragedies this life hurls at us and bring victory in and through it.

When you put your trust in Christ your life is lashed to His life. What worked for Him will work for you. Jesus arose victorious over the ultimate tragedy of death, and no matter what the tragedy, death or otherwise, the power of the resurrection is the power that will give us victory today.

There's one last treasure chest.

### **TREASURE CHEST #5 IS MARKED, "NEW LIFE FOR YOU."**

The resurrection of Jesus unleashed the power that can give us a brand new life. Peter said this...

**1 Peter 1:3 - Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,**

Now there are basically two ways to look at life. If Jesus was not raised from the dead, then there is no life after death for anyone. So your only shot at any purpose or pleasure is in this life. Now look at v.32.

**1 Corinthians 15:32b - If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."**

You know, that's the extent of many lives. If Christ has not been raised from the dead, and if there is not the possibility that there will be something better for me in the future with Christ, then why not try to squeeze as much fun out of this life, because when we die it's all over.

**ILLUSTRATION** – This is the course that the great New York Yankee baseball player, Mickey Mantle, took for most of his life. Jane Leavy, in her biography of Mickey Mantle, tells about Mantle's last press conference on July 11, 1995. He stood before the press a man whose life had been ruined by sinful and selfish living. Mickey Mantle said, "God gave me a great body and an ability to play baseball. God gave me everything, and I just ... pffft!"

Mantle made a plea to children: "I'd like to say to the kids out there, if you're looking for a role model, this is a role model. Don't be like me." A reporter asked Mickey if he had signed an organ donor card. "Everything I've got is worn out," he said. "Although I've heard people say they'd like to have my heart ... it's never been used."

Why not, if there's nothing after this life?

But the fact that Jesus is alive, the great treasure is a new life that is possible for you and for me. And that's why Paul closes this great chapter with these words:

**1 Corinthians 15:58 - Therefore, my dear brothers, 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.**

Just think about the difference between those two ways of going about life:

Option 1 – Eat and drink and drain all the pleasure out of life, because when you die, that's it.  
Option 2 – Live my life in meaningful service to God and to others because I know there's a bright future after I die.

You make the choice and watch God make the change.