

Irresistible

Why it Needs to be Irresistible

1 Corinthians 15:12-22

September 15, 2019

We're going to start a series of messages today that I believe has the potential to change our congregations and what it means to be a part of CrossPoint Church and what it means for us to be Christians. This series is going to challenge all of us in some way because it's going to ask all of us to think differently about some of the things that we were taught...and that's never an easy thing to do. For some of us, this is going to be as radical as telling you that blue is red and red is now blue. But, I believe we need to wrestle with some things because – as you've heard me say before – eternity is at stake and there are people who are missing out on the Kingdom of God who are our friends, who living in our neighborhoods, who we work along side of or we go to the gym with every day. There is an urgency about the message that we're going to peel back over these six weeks that we've forgotten about or worse yet – have become lackadaisical about...which should upset all of us but, it doesn't. That's how we got here.

Where is here? The current state of the Christianity in America is possibly the worst it has ever been since the founding of our nation. What I mean by that is this: more people today identify as non-believers than ever before, atheists have gained ground through the scientific method, college professors have systematically destroyed the faith of many young believers, pastoral respect in communities has fallen, and congregations are dying at an alarming rate because Christians have stopped fighting the good fight. The statistics are shattering and point to the decline of Christianity in America. We have gone from a New World founded by people who were religiously motivated to come to this land to escape persecution and worship freely to a land where we are encouraged to

freely worship what ever it is we find valuable and what makes us happy. That thought process stands in direct opposition to a Savior who calls His followers to submit, sacrifice, surrender, and obey. Weekend attendance at worship services is on the decline in America and thousands of churches are closing their doors each year because the next generation has found the faith resistible. It is easy to understand what has made Christianity so resistible.

If you'll stay with me for a few moments I'd like to help all of us understand what has happened to the – as the song says – Faith of our Fathers. Not long ago, this country was fond of saying things like “in God We Trust.” We sang songs like My Country Tis of Thee and God Bless America and America the Beautiful that all had God as the source and provider of all we have. By the way, the hymns of every one of the five branches of the military mentions God and the songs of many of the first universities and colleges of our country claim God as the source of all knowledge. Over the years from World War II until now the church has struggled. Prosperity and wealth and the baby boom along with all kinds of technological and scientific advances have moved us into an age of self-reliance. It's hard to see the need for God when I have all I need already. Along with these advances came a new curiosity that generated questions that had never been asked before. Some of the questions were good ones that spurred innovative research that offered new and exciting information about things like the creation of the world, the lost places of the Bible, and more accurate translations of ancient texts.

But there was this other side – this world where the church and culture fought new battles about doctrine and dogma and theology. And for the most part, Christians gave the world a singular answer to all of the challenging and complex questions that came up that our neighbors and our co-workers, and our family and friends all heard and did not believe and this is the answer we gave...because the Bible says so. Galileo was

excommunicated because he refused to believe the world was flat. The Bible says that the message of Jesus will go out to the four corners of the world and therefore the world must be flat. Galileo looked at the heavens and discovered that – not only is the world round...the earth is not the center of the solar system or the universe. Archaeology and geology and paleontology and so many other -ologies show us that the world we live in has taken millions of years to develop. But, there are those who believe that the world was made in a literal 6 days and that it is only between 5-7 thousand years old. Why, because the Bible says so.

And while I could ask the question – how many in this room today believe that Jesus came to the earth, was born of a virgin, suffered and died on a cross outside the walls of Jerusalem, was laid in a tomb that could not hold him and on the third day he rose from the dead and because of that – is the Savior of our souls and of the entire world – most of us would say that we believe that as truth. And for many of us, we are the same people who would make this statement; the Bible is the foundation of our faith. And because we have placed the Bible as the foundation and said the world that we believe it because the Bible says it we have – I believe in advertently – made our faith resistible. Because here's what we've done...we've given the Bible, as a book holding 66 separate books, as a collection of writings, a higher position and status than Jesus. And let me just say this for all of us to hear, **it's easy to reject or refuse a book, it's hard to reject a life changed by Jesus.**

Here's what I mean by that. We live in a time and in a culture when we have been taught, and rightly so, to not believe everything we read. So, where we tell people that we believe something because we read it...are you with me. But, it's hard to disbelieve the life that has been changed, altered, renewed, restored, revived, uplifted, empowered, encouraged, and joy filled because of a dramatic encounter with Jesus Christ. We love eyewitness accounts, so much so that the evening news specializes in

interviewing someone who saw what happened. Rarely do we get excited about the person who tells us about an event because they read about it but, if they were there...that gets our attention, that's irresistible. We do a disservice to our faith and to the work of Jesus when **we reduce all we believe to a book about Jesus** and how we are supposed to live **instead of telling people about the Jesus who lives in us.**

Look, the faith we claim today was started without the Bible, without a church building, without offering bags, without coffee bars, or youth groups. It was started by men and women who were so committed to the Jesus who had changed their lives forever that they could not keep it in. The foundation of the faith of people like Paul, or Peter, or Phoebe or John was not the Bible but, it was Jesus. The foundation of the faith of the thousands of Christians who gave their lives on crosses or in the Colosseum was not because of something they read in the Bible, the Bible didn't exist yet. Their faith was anchored in something different...their faith was anchored in the person of Jesus and the work he did for all of us. And what I want us to do, what I want each of us to consider is this – **are you willing to tell your story so that someone else might believe and know and have** what you believe and know and have. Because you see, people will and are writing off “because the Bible tells me so” but, they can't right off a life changed forever. Your story is irresistible and irrefutable. The story of what Jesus has done will matter to this generation not because the Bible says it but, because Jesus says it and Peter says it, and Luke says it and Mary says it, and I say it and you say it.

When I say from up front that believers should be reading the Bible what I'm saying is this, once you have given your life to Jesus you need to know more about what it means to be a follower and there are two really good ways to do that; read about the early followers who were living it out in the years right after Jesus, there stories can be found in the New

Testament, or hang out with people who are committed to living like Jesus and watch how they do it. That's why we here at CrossPoint Church say that we believe people need to read the Bible and attend worship services and be a part of a LifeGroup. But, what we cannot do is expect someone who does not believe to what to do those things – especially if we're not doing them ourselves while claiming that we are believers who have been saved and transformed by Jesus.

You see, people today are for the most part from Missouri. Do you know what I mean? Right, Missouri is known as what? The “show me state.” The world around us; our neighbors, our family members, our co-workers, our friends all need Jesus and need the faith in Jesus that many of us in this room have. And the approach to helping other people come to know and believe in Jesus is not telling them to read the Bible...because most of us don't read the Bible. Our approach should not be one where we hope they'll pick up the Gideon Bible on their next stay in a hotel and something mystical will happen. I'm not saying that hasn't happened it's just not the norm. Our approach needs to be one where people see and hear about Jesus when they...see and hear those who believe and follow him. **We need to stop defending the book and start living the faith like people who believe** in the death and resurrection of Jesus because that's what brought us the Bible...not the other way around. Trying to defend the Bible is exhausting some days and I understand that some days we need to help people see what we've learned about the Bible. But, we don't have the time to defend the Bible, maybe you do but, most likely not. But, living for Jesus is energizing and is the only way that believers help other people become believers for four hundred years...that's how long it took to get between Jesus and the Bible in the form we have it today.

Go back to the passage in the Bible that you heard read a few minutes ago. In 1 Corinthians 15:20-22 the apostle Paul says this: *But in fact,*

Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died. So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man. Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life. Our faith is based on what Paul is saying about Jesus to the people who are learning to live out their faith. It's not because the Bible says it...the Bible is a record of what was being said and what was happening. I know, for some of you this is semantics but here's what I believe...our faith has its foundation in an event – the resurrection.

In a culture that is questioning and in turn, leaving the faith in record numbers we cannot hide behind the ramparts we make out of the church and the Bible. We need to help this generation have an encounter with an event that changed the world forever that launched a movement that brought us the Bible and that event was the literal, physical, historical, factual, recorded, died for by those who saw it resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. That's what saves people. That's what changes lives and assures an eternity in heaven. If Jesus rose from the dead then it's game on. If he didn't, as Paul said to the people in Corinth, then none of this matters. But, if he did, am I'm telling you he says, I was there, then everything hinges on this man Jesus. Everything changes and that change is what changes us. It's what caused a movement, what started a religion, what changed governments, and what brought peace and hope to the world.

I believe in this so completely, so desperately, so fully that I am willing to give my entire life to spreading this message. And here's what's at stake if we don't take this seriously. The skeptics, the non-believers will choose the battleground for the next generation and we will lose our kids to a culture and a world that has no ability to save or to offer eternity. People have been giving their lives for this cause, for this movement for 2000

years. **Are we just going to offer the world** a book or are we going to offer them Jesus...the reason the book was written?

So, let me ask you something. Have you committed or re-committed your life to Jesus Christ. Not a book or a building...those come later. I'm asking you to commit your life to the One who gave his life for yours. If you do that – then we can talk about the covenant and the community that he'll call you to engage in. But, before any of that, do you believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Have you said in your heart and with your life that you believe that what he did on that cross, that what happened three days later when he walked out of that grave Jesus did for you so that you and the Father would be reconciled to each other and that you would be in heaven for all eternity because of what Jesus did?

Commit today!