

**Sunday, February 13, 2022 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church**

**Bible Study – 1 Corinthians 15:12-20**  
**“The First Fruits: Love Never Ends: Being the Body of Christ”**

Open with a word of prayer

**Gathering Time** (5-10 minutes) In groups of two or three, respond to the following, “When was the first time you heard about Jesus’ resurrection? What did you understand? What questions did you have?”

**1 Corinthians 15:12-20 Context.** In the verses that immediately precede this week’s reading, Paul has outlined to the Corinthians the witness to Christ’s resurrection – not only the witness of the apostles, but also that of hundreds of others, including himself – that vouchsafed the truth of that event. But Paul doesn’t leave it there: for him, the resurrection of Jesus wasn’t just some unique event that simply demonstrated God’s incredible power. Rather, in keeping with the Jewish tradition that believed in the resurrection of the just to eternal life and of the unjust to eternal punishment, Paul, like all Christians who had come from Judaism, believed that Jesus’ resurrection was the anticipation, pledge and proof of the resurrection of everyone at the end of time. The Corinthians, it appears, considered the resurrection of Jesus a special case that didn’t apply to anyone else. In this week’s reading Paul argues that you can’t have one without the other.

**Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-20**

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn’t make sense to you in the story?

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

**Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-20 again.**

**Some reflection questions – Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.**

- How do you understand the idea of “resurrection”? What are some common misunderstandings of resurrection? [That resurrection is the same as reincarnation; our souls escape the body at death; immortality of the soul; resurrection happened only to Jesus, etc.]
- Why do you think the concept of resurrection from the dead was controversial to Paul’s audience? Why do you think it is debated even today?
- Paul’s point in verse 19 suggests that Christ’s resurrection gives hope for this life and the next. We often focus on the hope of eternal life. How does Christ’s resurrection also give hope for the life we live here and now?
- How is our hope connected to Jesus’ resurrection?

- Why do you think Paul is so insistent that our faith is futile (v. 17) without the resurrection of Christ?
- Read **Exodus 23:14-20**. Notice the repetition of the phrase “first fruits.” What does the phrase “first fruits” refer to in this passage about annual festivals of the Israelites? (If you have time, you might also read **Leviticus 23:1, 9-22**.) [First Fruits were a sacrifice, often costly, presenting the best to God, which also served to represent that all we have is God’s.]
- How is Christ “the first fruits of those who have died” (v. 20)? [Christ is the best of us and is a costly sacrifice representing all of us, guaranteeing more to come.]
- **(R)** How might our belief in Jesus’ resurrection be the bedrock of our faith?

**Closing Reflection Question**

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

**Prayer** (10 minutes). Share prayer requests and respond appropriately.

**Sending Forth** (2 minutes). After all, have shared, pray the closing prayer. Ask for a volunteer to lead the group or read the following prayer in unison:

God of Resurrection, because of Jesus’ death and resurrection, we can trust that there is nothing that will separate us from your love. We give thanks for your faithfulness and the hope we have for this life and the next. Help us to be resurrection people. Help us to see all things through the eyes of faith. **Amen.**

And now we pray The Lord’s Prayer....

Our Father who art in Heaven  
 hallowed be thy name.  
 Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,  
 on earth as it is in Heaven.  
 Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,  
 as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
 Lead us not into temptation  
 but deliver us from evil.  
 For thine is the kingdom, the power  
 and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.