What if Jesus had not been Raised?

What if Christ has not been raised? What difference would it make for your life? Have you ever considered that question? In the great resurrection chapter, 1 Corinthians 15, the Apostle Paul spends several verses playing out that scenario. "If Christ has not been raised," what disastrous results would ensue! "If Christ has not been raised," Paul explains, the apostles' preaching and our faith are useless. "If Christ has not been raised," the apostles are false witnesses. "If Christ has not been raised," we are still in our sins, and those who have died in faith in Christ are lost. "If Christ has not been raised," we are to be pitied more than all men since our hope for Christ is only for this life. In other words, without the resurrection of Christ, our Christian faith falls like a house of cards. We would be without salvation or a Saviour or eternal life in heaven.

After building our suspense for several verses, Paul makes the triumphant declaration: "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20). Rather than living in uncertainty, we now live in the certainty of knowing that our sins are forgiven. This means that we don't have to walk around carrying the burden of our sins anymore. Christ has carried that burden to the cross, and God has declared us "not guilty" by raising Jesus from the dead! What a load off our consciences!

Since "Christ has indeed been raised from the dead" our faith has a certain basis. Jesus is who He said He was, the Son of God, who indeed would suffer and die but would rise again the third day. In the words of an Easter hymn, "Had Christ, that once was slain,   Ne'er burst His three day prison,   Our faith would be in vain;   But now has Christ arisen, Arisen, arisen, arisen! (LH 767).

Since Christ has risen, we are freed from a life of serving ourselves and our sinful nature. Instead, we are set free to live our lives for Him who died for us and rose again. As Paul explains, "He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again" (2 Corinthians 5:15). The power to live for Christ comes to us in holy baptism. Through baptism, our sinful nature is buried with Christ and our new man is raised to walk in newness of life (Romans 6). In our daily lives as Christians, we daily make use of our baptisms as we confess our sins to God and are raised to new life through faith in Christ.

Because "Christ has indeed been raised from the dead," we have a certain future, an eternal future. As we confess in the words of the Nicene Creed, "We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come." We live in hope and expectation of Christ's return and of our future resurrection. "We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him" (1 Thessalonians 4:14). As Thomas King wrote in his hymn "Like the Golden Sun Ascending":

"Thou hast died for my transgression,
All my sins on Thee were laid;
Thou hast won for me salvation,
On the cross my debt was paid.

From the grave I shall arise
And shall meet Thee in the skies.
Death itself is transitory;
I shall lift my head in glory."