

Resurrecting Hope

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning, church.

We're so glad that you've chosen to celebrate today with us this morning, the Sunday that we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Today we're filled with a renewed hope because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He is alive. He is risen. Oh, indeed, He is risen.

Have you ever thought about the fact that before that Sunday morning was a celebration of life, it was a time of mourning for Jesus' followers?

They had been following Jesus for some three, three and a half years, and their hopes were dashed. Jesus, their awaited Messiah, was hanging there on the cross of Calvary.

[1 : 15] And when He breathed, before He breathed His last, He said, it is finished. And He gave up His spirit. They took Him down off the cross.

He was checked, made sure that He was dead. He was placed into a borrowed tomb. And dejected, His disciples walked away, probably thinking, what was it all for?

Why did we sell our boats? Why did we give up our jobs? Why did we follow? I thought we were going to be ruling and reigning with Him.

You know, it would only be a few days before they would realize that, in fact, they had not followed Jesus in vain.

Because on that first day, early in the morning, when the ladies would go to the tomb, they would find that He was not there.

[2 : 24] They had placed all of their hopes and dreams in the coming Messiah. And on that Friday, they were dejected. It's Friday, as the message was preached years ago.

It's Friday, but Sunday's coming. And on that Sunday morning, that first day of the week, you know, it was the finality of that blow to the disciples' thoughts, their intentions.

It was a world that they were expecting Jesus to rule and reign, where they were expecting Him to free them from sin, free them from the tyranny of Rome.

And their hopes were dashed. Do you realize that unrealized hope is probably one of the most painful things in life?

You know, we hope for something, and it doesn't come to pass. Unrealized hope, the pain that that brings in life. You know, sometimes those disappointments come from things that really aren't all that important, but sometimes it comes from, that unrealized hope comes from life-altering trials.

[3 : 44] And I want to show you some disappointments, what disappointments are like, in different places in life where we encounter it. The first one is this.

You know, you had your hopes up. Your sweet tooth was expecting to open the box and find cookies.

But all you found was this. Unrealized hope, right? What about the next one? I don't know what you guys feel about the Broncos. I'm not much for sports teams, but there are some people who place all their hopes, all their dreams in a sports team, and then their team loses.

You know, that's a picture of sadness, unrealized expectation, unrealized hope. But the third one, you know, each of these pictures carries with it all kinds of emotions.

If you've ever found yourself in one of these situations, maybe you can relate to the followers of Jesus on that weekend. Unrealized hope.

[4 : 53] Their hopes were dashed. And they were wondering what was going to happen. And after three days of deep sorrow, they were in need of a resurrected hope.

And if you're honest this morning, maybe there are some of you that have come here today, maybe with some unrealized expectations. Maybe you need some renewed hope as well.

Maybe it's a health issue. Maybe it's a family issue. Maybe it's a financial issue. Life maybe hasn't been easy. You know, some of us maybe have faced some great challenges this morning.

Maybe you've experienced a devastating loss this year. Maybe your closest relationships have suffered. Maybe someone has come to terms with a diagnosis that maybe is life-altering.

You know, these things can sometimes be so heavy that they may cause us to question the goodness of God. They may cause us to question, how does God still love me?

[5 : 59] Does God still care about me? But the gospel tells us that right in the middle of the disciples' unrealized hope and expectation, there comes the light of hope because hope appears when we least expect it.

Isn't that amazing? Sometimes, especially when we are followers of Jesus Christ, we have lost all hope. Hope comes when we least expect it.

Early in the morning on that third day after Jesus' death, a woman named Mary Magdalene made her way to the tomb that morning. You know, other places in Scripture tell us that she's come to anoint the body of Jesus.

She expects it to find Him there. And she was wanting to complete the process because Jesus had been hastily buried and placed in that borrowed tomb.

And she comes and Scripture says she looks in and she sees an empty tomb. And I'm sure she assumes, Scripture tells us, she assumes that someone had stolen the body of Jesus.

[7 : 10] Let's look at the Gospel of John this morning. The Gospel of John, chapter 20, in verses 11 through verse 14. It says, But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping.

And as she wept, she stooped down and looked into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

But then they said to her, Woman, why are you weeping? She said to them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.

Now when she had said this, she turned around and she saw Jesus standing there. And I want you to pay attention to that last phrase. And did not know that it was Jesus.

Now this was not the first time after Jesus' resurrection that He came to one of His followers and they didn't recognize Him for who He was.

[8 : 16] So as Mary looks into the tomb where Jesus had been laid, all she can see is what's missing. She fails to see what is there initially because what did she expect when she came?

She expected to come and see a dead Jesus. But Jesus wasn't there. And through her tears, the angels tell her that she is heartbroken, not because only that Jesus is dead, but that He has disappeared.

You know, this is what can happen to us when we lose hope. Mary comes to the tomb expecting to see a dead Jesus, expecting to see His body, and all she saw was what was missing.

It didn't make sense in her mind right away that He had told them, had He not, that He would rise again from the dead. He told them that He was power, He had power over death and that after three days, just like Noah was in the belly of the fish, that He would rise again.

And the thing is, when our dreams are shattered, sometimes the future becomes unclear. It's all too easy to fixate on what has not happened, to fixate on what we don't have, sometimes on what someone else didn't do, and what's missing in our life.

[9 : 54] And so after Mary speaks to the angel, she turns to leave, and with whom does she come face to face? Jesus Christ. Verse 14 says, she didn't realize, she did not know that it was Jesus.

You know, here's resurrection hope standing right in front of her, and she didn't realize it. It's because she was looking for what she expected, and she was not expecting the resurrected hope that Jesus Christ was, in fact, alive.

She was unable to see it because of the fog of her despair. You know, I have counsel with people who just couldn't see the light, couldn't see hope, because they were so fixated on how they felt.

They were so fixated on what was wrong with life that they couldn't see that Jesus was waiting to give them hope. He was waiting to provide the hope that only comes from Him and the peace that comes from Him.

See, Jesus' resurrection is a reminder that God is in the business of reawakening hope within us. That's what Jesus did. You know, how this happens, it happens sometimes in many different ways.

[11 : 13] Maybe hope can come through a simple conversation. With a friend, maybe hope is sparked with a text that comes. Sometimes someone can come to you and just share with you an encouraging word when you're down in the dumps and maybe when you're hurting.

And God can speak a word through another person and can encourage you. See, hope can be found in so many different ways. The key to hope, I believe, is our level of expectation.

Mary's problem was she wasn't expecting to find a resurrected Jesus. She wasn't expecting to find Jesus alive because Jesus' resurrection comes at just the right time.

On that third day, on that first morning, first day of the week, Jesus Christ had, in fact, risen from the dead. It was Jesus' compassion for you and for me that led him to give up the glory that he experienced in heaven to come down and be a human being.

And it was because Jesus Christ had satisfied the payment for your sin and mine that God raised Jesus from the dead.

[12 : 29] as he meets Mary in the doorway of the now empty tomb, Jesus sees the immediate concern on Mary's face. And in John chapter 20, as we continue verse 15 through 18, Jesus said to her, verse 15 of John 20, Woman, why are you weeping?

Whom are you seeking? She, supposing him to be the gardener, said to him, Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you've lain him and I will take him away.

And I believe very compassionately, Jesus says to her, Mary, Mary. She turns to him and says, Rabboni, that is to say, teacher.

Jesus said to her, do not cling to me. In other words, what Jesus said, the word that was used here means to grab a hold of.

And I believe what Jesus was saying to her was, Mary, don't hold on to me because I can't stay here. I've got to go back to my father. He said that I haven't yet ascended to my father, but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my father and your father and to my God and to your God.

[13 : 58] In verse 18, Mary Magdalene came, she told the disciples that she had seen the Lord and that he had spoken these things to her. And just as Mary had given up all hope, Jesus meets her in her tears.

She says, Mary, why are you crying? And I think John, the author of this book, explains that she thought that he was the gardener and I believe John put this here on purpose.

First of all, number one, because she really did think he was the gardener. But secondly, I think because she was absolutely correct. Jesus was tending to the broken things in life.

It all started in the garden or in a garden. Adam and Eve were told not to eat of a particular fruit from a particular tree.

He said, God told them that in the day that you eat, you're going to surely die. Well, they died spiritually. They were separated from God from that moment forward.

[15 : 11] but they began to die physically. There was perfection when God created humankind, Adam and Eve.

But sin separated them and sin, we know, from that point forward began to be the problem of the whole human race.

And the problems that we are experiencing today, not only in our lives, in our communities, in our country, and around the world, it all points back to the sin problem.

The problem of sin. Because we are broken human beings in need of a Savior. In need of a new life. And the life that Jesus Christ can give to us.

Genesis chapter 3. Let's go back to the Old Testament for a moment. Genesis chapter number 3 verses 8 through 10. Speaking of Adam and Eve, they heard the sound of the Lord, God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.

[16 : 15] Adam said, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, where are you?

So he said, I heard your voice in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked and I hid myself. God came searching for his creation. He couldn't find them because for the first time in their existence, they experienced shame and guilt because they had disobeyed God.

See, the story of the resurrection is about a God who reenters the garden in search of those he loved and he rose again and Jesus Christ made right, made it possible for us to be right with him from what began in the garden many, many years before.

You know, as soon as Jesus speaks Mary's name, she recognizes him and she calls him teacher. You know, in the midst of her darkest moment, the resurrection came at just the right time.

You know, Easter often comes with the long-awaited birth of spring. Do you realize there are parts of the country where it actually snows? You know, we don't see that often very much here in South Louisiana, but there are parts of the country where it snows.

[17 : 47] Things turn to ice. The leaves fall off the trees and you know, that first snow might be nice. You know, you play and make a snowman, you shovel the snow off your driveway.

You know, but after months of snow and nasty brown slush, some of you up from the north know what I'm talking about, where you kind of get so used to seeing death all around you that the first signs of spring kind of take you by surprise.

You see the first bud on the trees. You see those first signs of life. But you know, spring always comes. New life always comes. It's like the German reformer Martin Luther once said, Our Lord has written the promise of resurrection not in the books alone, but in every leaf in springtime.

You know, Luther got it right. You know, it's not just in the words of God that he talks about new life. We see new life in the seasons that God created.

Every spring comes new life. The seasons of life remind us that God brings life from death. He can bring life in the most hopeless of places because God is always right on time.

[19 : 15] So you can, and we can feel the shift in tone in Mary's life at this point in the story. She, almost like she comes back to life. she gets excited again because of Jesus Christ and the dream of restoration and healing once again is a possibility.

You know, I wonder what would happen today if we could see Jesus all around us? If we could see life, the life that Jesus gives, and maybe in the places that have been missing around us and we see Jesus working, we see Jesus at work.

You know, this Resurrection Sunday is when we can look at Him face to face and hear Him call us by name and know that He can bring hope in the midst of despair.

And then, thirdly, the Resurrection gives victory over death. Resurrection brings victory over death.

You see, what Mary discovered early at the tomb that Sunday morning was the thing that she believed was the most final thing. Death.

[20 : 28] But it was only the beginning. Jesus rising from the dead meant that sin and the ultimate consequence of death couldn't overcome Jesus.

Jesus overcame sin and the grave. He held power. He held sway over it. That's the power that Jesus had. Just like the song we sang earlier, about Lazarus.

Lazarus, come forth, Jesus said. And Lazarus in his grave clothes, still stinking, after being dead four days, walks out of the tomb alive.

And he says, unbind him. Take those grave clothes off him. He doesn't need them anymore. And just like that, you and I have the opportunity to be made new.

behold, all things become new. The moment we trust Christ as our Savior, he gives us a brand new life. He forgives us of our sin.

[21 : 29] And his Holy Spirit comes to reside within us to give us power, to teach us, and to give us the ability to proclaim, to be his witnesses, and to carry on the mission that Jesus began.

And one day, Jesus said, don't worry, I've got a home prepared for you. Because when I come back, I'll take you with me, he says, in my Father's house, or many places of abode, many mansions.

He says, I am preparing a place for you. So the powerful revelation that comes is that if Jesus can overcome death, there's nothing in our lives that Jesus cannot overcome.

Think about that. If Jesus could overcome death, what in our life can Jesus not overcome?

Jesus can overcome any addiction. Jesus can overcome any problem. Jesus can overcome anything. Now, the matter still remains, though, that we still live in a sin-cursed world.

[22 : 41] And there are things that we will continue to struggle with, however. And it's the moment that we begin to struggle with something again that Jesus is waiting for us just as simply as to say, I messed up.

I need your help again. And what does he do? He doesn't chide us. he doesn't say, we messed up so badly. No.

He knows we are frail as dust, the Bible says. And he can come, he can restore us again. And he can restore us again. And he can restore us again.

The resurrection proves that Jesus Christ has victory over everything in our life. John 11, 25, Jesus said to her, early in the book of John, this is what Jesus made, he made this claim, he made this audacious claim.

It was true. Jesus said, I am the resurrection. He doesn't say, I'm going to be resurrected. He said, I am the resurrection and the life.

[23 : 53] He who believes in me, though he may die, yet shall he live. Jesus said to his followers then, and Jesus says to his followers now, he's the resurrection, he's the life, he is the hope of life eternal, and he's the key to true life now.

You know, when you come across someone who their life is broken, they have lost hope, have no peace, have no joy in their life, maybe feel like they're ready to throw in the towel and give it all up, you and I have the opportunity to come to them and say, God loves you, hope.

And Jesus Christ lives to give you hope. He wants to have a relationship with you, he wants to give you a brand new life.

Now, it won't be perfect, at least not until we get back to heaven, but we have the opportunity to share this hope with everyone with whom we meet.

Jesus is alive. And so, this Resurrection Sunday, I want to invite you to believe in the resurrected Christ.

[25 : 30] If you have not done so, I urge you this morning to trust Christ. You see, knowing Jesus is not about a religion, knowing Jesus is not about church attendance, knowing Jesus is not about being baptized, knowing Jesus is not about taking communion, knowing Jesus is not about church attendance, knowing Jesus is not about following the Ten Commandments or living a good life.

Because the Bible says, all have come short of the glory of God. All have sinned. There is none righteous, no, not one.

sin. But the Bible says, all who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. So, this morning, do you believe that Jesus is God?

Do you believe that as a perfect, sinless, spotless Lamb of God, He came to earth, He was hung on an old wooden cross?

us. As the Bible said, Him who knew no sin became sin for us. He took upon His body your sin and mine.

[26 : 51] And for the span of close to three hours, there was total darkness upon the land. I believe it was at that time that God turned His back on Jesus because He couldn't look upon our sin.

That's when Jesus said, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? He wasn't forsaking His Son.

But Jesus was carrying our sin. And then in those final moments, when that penalty had been fully paid, Jesus said, to tell us to die, it is finished.

And the Bible said, He gave up the ghost. He gave up His spirit. And He willingly, He wasn't killed, Jesus willingly gave His life for us, for you and for me.

So if you believe that Jesus is God, you believe that Jesus, the perfect, sinless, spotless Lamb of God, died on the cross, in your place, took our penalty.

[28 : 06] And if you're trusting that, and in that alone, you've chosen to follow Him, the promise is, all who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

And Jesus said, follow me. It's just that simple. Follow me. I want to invite you this morning to give your life and allow Him to birth new life within you.

And trust Him as your Savior. Let's pray. Father, this morning, we're so thankful for what you've done in our life. We thank you, Lord God, for making a way possible for us to be reconciled with you, for us to be able to be brought back into your family.

and through the death of our Savior Jesus who took the penalty for our sin and paid eternally an eternal debt that we could never pay by your grace.

That salvation is available as a free gift or by grace. For we save through faith and it not of ourselves. It is a gift from you. So we couldn't boast about it.

[29 : 36] So, Father, this morning, if there's anyone who doesn't know Jesus Christ as their Savior, I pray that they would be able to find that hope today. Lord, thank you for the hope that we find in the resurrection of our Lord and our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Christ. I know, Lord God, that the account of the resurrected life of our Lord renews our spirits and, Lord, invites us to believe in you with all that we are.

Lord, I don't want to miss seeing all that you want to do in our lives today. Father, I give you all the dead places within me, all the areas that I haven't turned over yet to you.

Lord, I pray that you would inhabit me fully. And all often the hopeless thoughts in my mind, I pray that you would inhabit my mind and take captive all of my thoughts.

And all of my feeble prayers, I pray, dear Lord God, that you would do your work in my life and in the life of each one here this morning. Lord, we thank you for what you're going to do.

[30 : 55] We thank you, dear God, that Jesus is risen. We pray in Jesus' name.