

# All for Hope, Hope for All

Date: Easter 2024

Transition: Band continues spontaneous worship, table is brought out, then take stage.

How many of you know God is in this place today? How many of you could use some hope today? To the best of my ability, I want to teach you some things about resurrection and how that gives us hope from God's Word. AND to lay the foundation, the Apostle Paul writes this to the church in Ephesus about 27 years after Jesus. Paul says to those early Christians: (Eph 1:17-22)

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. [Who would like to know God better today? V.18] I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the [Say that word with me...] HOPE to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he RAISED CHRIST FROM THE DEAD and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed [What?] ALL THINGS under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything.

The title of my Easter message is:

## **All for Hope, Hope for All**

I don't know where you are at today, I don't know the struggles of your life, I don't know the things you carry. BUT no matter who you are, there is hope for ALL! The resurrection of Jesus was all for hope and that means there is hope for all! Let's ask God to open our hearts and minds, would you pray with me?

### [PRAYER TIME]

Hey before you grab a seat why don't take a few seconds and welcome the people around you, shake a hand, tell someone they look nice today. Welcome to everyone joining us on our app or social channels. No matter when you may be watching this I want you to know there is hope for you and that God is for you! Thanks for spending some time with us.

Well happy Easter! Because being a pastor is a little different we always celebrate on Saturday, we had Tomb Rolls for breakfast yesterday. How many of you know what Tomb Rolls are? You basically dip a marshmallow in melted butter and cinnamon sugar and then wrap it inside crescent roll dough. When you bake them the marshmallow does what? Right, it melts! So, when you cut into them after they are done it represents the empty tomb! It's supposed to be a joyous moment but when my youngest daughter was about 3 and we did this, she was almost in tears because she just wanted the marshmallow and didn't care about our silly tradition.

On that first Easter 2,000 years ago, there were about 120 people who were also baffled and in tears by the empty tomb. BUT that was it. On the first Easter there were only 120 followers of Jesus, everyone else had given up hope. Today, 2,000 years later, 2.4 billion people in the world claim to be a follower of Christ. 2.4 billion! That's 1 out of every 3 people on earth! That's more than the populations of China and Europe put together!

My question is, HOW? How in the world did that happen? Why did Christianity spread so far and so fast? How did a little band of 120 people expand into one out of every three people on planet earth? Sociologists and historians have tried to answer that for years, but I'll give you the answer in one word, **resurrection!** The resurrection changed everything!

When God said, "I'm going to come to earth, put on human flesh, and die for the sins of the world AND then I'm going to prove that I am God by coming back to life three days later... That is the single most significant event in history! Nothing else even comes close.

AND what it did is it turned these first few followers of Jesus from dejected, depressed, disillusioned, and defeated into courageous and contagious people of HOPE! They began to spread the message of hope everywhere because when they saw Jesus had come back to life, it changed everything!

AND I believe it can change everything for you this Easter too! As I have been preparing for this message I've come up with six reasons why followers of Jesus are the most hope-filled people on the planet. You can write these down on your service guide or even in our app, but here's what I mean. May the Holy Spirit open our eyes today:

## **THE RESURRECTION GIVES US HOPE BECAUSE** *{Use this above each point}*

### **1. We have been completely forgiven!**

Every single human being, regardless of their beliefs, has done things they regret. We all carry remorse, and we all wish we had done things differently. The Bible says, "all have sinned," whether you call it that or not, and as a result we carry around guilt and shame. BUT God doesn't want you carrying guilt and shame through life!

Guilt wastes so much energy. It fatigues you; it robs you of your peace of mind. But Jesus says, "I came to die for your sins, so you don't have to die for them. I was hung on the cross, so you can quit hanging yourself on the cross." In other words, you can be completely forgiven.

BUT have you ever wondered about who really killed Jesus, who put Jesus on the cross? Who is to blame for Jesus' death? Some say Judas or Caiaphas the high priest. Some say it was Pilate and the Romans. Others say, no it was the Jews and the Pharisees. But who put Jesus on the cross? The answer is twofold, and this may shock you.

The first answer is, God did. God did! God put Jesus on the cross. It was His plan from the very beginning. It's why Jesus came to Earth; it was God's plan before any of us were ever born. Here's what the Bible says in Isaiah 53: (v.6, 8-10)

We—every one of us—have strayed away like sheep! We, who left God's paths to follow our own. Yet God laid on him the guilt and sins of every one of us! From prison and trial they led him away to his death. But who among the people of that day realized it was their sins that he was dying for—that he was suffering their punishment? He was buried like a criminal, put in a rich man's grave; but he had done no wrong and had never spoken an evil word. But it was the Lord's good plan to bruise him and fill him with grief. [Did you see it? Whose plan? The Lord's plan! Now notice the change in tense here, past to future] Yet when his life is made an offering for sin, he will have many descendants. He will enjoy a long life, and the Lord's good plan will prosper in his hands.

Do you know why the change in tense? Because this was written 700 years before Jesus! This is a prophecy from Isaiah in 700 BC predicting exactly what's going to happen to the Messiah, the Savior, the Promised One of God who comes, and this is exactly how it happened because it was all a part of God's plan.

BUT the second answer to who is responsible for Jesus being nailed to the cross is maybe even more offensive. Who put Jesus on the cross? I did. You did. Romans 4, read the bold part out loud with me:

**He was handed over to die because of OUR sins, and he was raised to life to make US right with God.**

This is what Easter is all about. He's raised from the dead to make US right with God. Who's included in us? You, me, anyone who will accept His forgiveness! We are made right with God, we are completely forgiven, I'm not facing judgment, the resurrection gives me hope!

Number two, second reason Jesus' resurrection gives us hope:

## **2. We no longer have to fear death!**

The fear of death is a universal fear. Everybody has it because it's unknown. We just don't know. But what did Jesus do? He came back to life. BUT not just ordinary life, it was different, it was resurrection life!

Here's what Jesus said in John 11:25 before He was crucified, He said:

**"I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me will live, even though they die."**

That's a reason for hope. Amen? That even though you die you will live! If Jesus hadn't walked out of the grave then we're all helpless and all hopeless, death is it. It's over. BUT we have hope because death is not the end when you accept The Resurrection and the Life as your Savior!

After they took Jesus earthly body off the cross, Joseph of Arimathea volunteered his tomb, so they quickly prepared the body as best they could since the Sabbath was approaching. They laid Him inside and rolled a huge stone in front of it. Pilate then had it sealed, so it couldn't be moved, and he posted Roman guards on 24-hour watch to make sure no one tampered with it. The 12 disciples (11 of them now as Judas had hung himself) were scared to death so they run and hide. None of them were thinking resurrection. They were afraid they were going to be executed next.

BUT on Easter Sunday morning, after the Sabbath, one of the women who's a follower of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, decides she's going to go to the tomb to try and see if she can gain access to properly prepare the body. BUT when she gets there, she finds the seal has been broken, the stone has been rolled away, there's no body in there, and the grave clothes that Jesus had been wrapped in are folded and sitting on a step.

Then all of a sudden she hears a voice say "Mary." At first she thinks it's just the Gardner but the way He said it sounded so familiar, and then it hits her! "Teacher" she shouts! Jesus says, "Go tell the others that I'm alive and coming to see them." So, Mary runs to the house where the disciples were all huddled up in fear and says, "You guys aren't going to believe this. Jesus is alive!" And you know what these great men of faith did? They doubted her. None of them believed her. They said, "Mary, you are hallucinating, you're just in deep grief and disbelief..."

The point is this, none of Jesus' followers actually believed He'd come back to life until they became eyewitnesses of it themselves when one day He just appears in the room!

See one of the things that's difficult to explain without the resurrection is the sudden change in the disciples. At the crucifixion, they're all scared to death. They're running, they're defeated, they're demoralized. BUT three days later they're ready to take on King Herod, the religious leaders, and the Roman Empire. What happened? They had seen Jesus! They could not deny what they had seen and heard!

This is what Peter wrote: (2 Peter 1:16)

**When we told you about the powerful coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, we were not telling made up stories that someone invented. Rather, we were eyewitnesses.**

And not only these original 12, but Jesus came and stayed on earth for another 40 days, walked around Jerusalem for 40 days. That's why literally tens of thousands of people became believers in a very short time because there were so many eye witnesses. Here's what the Bible says. Acts 1:3:

**For 40 days after his death, Jesus appeared to people many times in many ways that proved beyond doubt that he was alive. They saw him, and he talked with them about the Kingdom of God.**

Can you imagine being one of the executors who put Jesus on the cross and then you see Him at the coffee shop! Can anyone say "awkward..." The Apostle Paul lists just a few of the eyewitnesses, in 1 Corinthians 15 he says: (v.3-8)

**Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and then he was raised from the dead on the third day. He was seen by Peter and then by the twelve apostles. After that, he was seen by more than five hundred of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died by now. Then he was seen by James and later by all of the apostles. Last of all, I saw him too."**

This is what's called conclusive proof. Definitive evidence. This is why the church exploded and within years, there were 30,000 members of the church just in Jerusalem, and then it grew to nearly half a million, and then it exploded all over the Roman empire. AND what had been persecuted within 300 years became the official religion of the Roman Empire. Why? Because of the resurrection! Because there were so many eye witnesses.

The Bible says Jesus was the first fruits of what's to come for you and I, even though we die, we will live. Let that give you hope today. Here's the third reason we have hope:

### **3. We now have God's Spirit in us!**

The night before Jesus went to the cross, he says, "Guys, I'm going to be leaving. I'm going back to heaven, but I'm going to send my Spirit to live inside you." And 40 days after the resurrection that's exactly what happens. You can read all about it in the New Testament Book of Acts.

This is why Christianity spread so fast. They had seen Jesus face to face. Now they have the power to do things you couldn't do on their own. They've gone from fearful to fearless. They've gone from hopeless to hopeful. They'd gone from being cowards to being courageous.

BUT here's the truth. God never intended for you to go through life on your own power either! God wants to have a personal connection with you by putting His Spirit inside you. AND here's the amazing thing. The

same power that raised Jesus from the dead, split history into AD and BC, that same power is available to you on a daily basis! I'm serious!

Romans 8, Paul reminds the early Christians after the resurrection: (v.11)

**The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.**

Well, what does that mean? It means if God's Spirit can raise the dead then He can raise a dead marriage! If God's spirit can raise the dead then He can raise a dead career! If God's Spirit, resurrection power, can raise a dead man then He can raise a dead dream!

What is this power? It's the power to be free from your past! It's the power to break those memories that have been holding you back! It's the power to start over when you feel like giving up! It's the power to change things you think you could never ever change! It's the power to overcome old habits and hang-ups! That power is available to you! It's the reason we have hope! If you feel it praise Him in the house!

The fourth reason we live with hope:

#### **4. God will never stop loving us!**

God will never, ever stop loving us. Why? Because God's love is based on who He is, not who you are. God will never stop loving you. This is the fourth reason Christianity spread so fast, because they carried not just a message of hope, but they carried a message of love.

God doesn't wait for you to love Him before He starts loving you. God loved you first. The Prophet Jeremiah relays God's message to His people, God says: (Jeremiah 31:3)

**"I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself."**

God wants you to know His love. God not only wants you to know His love, but He also wants you to experience His love. Because when you experience God's love it transforms you! When God's love hits your heart, it changes you!

The most amazing example of this in the Bible is the Apostle Paul. Paul (or Saul when we meet him in the New Testament) was a religious terrorist. His job was to round up and have early followers of Jesus killed. He traveled all around the Palestine area trying to stomp out this rebellious sect of Judaism. That was his job. Having Christians tortured and killed. When one day he's on the road to Damascus to terrorize Christians there. Suddenly, he encounters the resurrected Jesus and Jesus says to Paul, "Why are you persecuting me?" Paul falls to his knees and says, "My Lord and my God." From there this religious terrorist becomes an Apostle of love. The guy who would go on to write some of the most beautiful words ever in 1 Corinthians 13, words used at weddings every single day.

The point is God will never stop loving you and He desperately wants you to not just know of His love, but to experience it in your heart of hearts.

Two more reasons the resurrection was all for hope and hope for all:

#### **5. We know the purpose we were created for!**

Why am I here? Why do I exist? What is the purpose of life? Does my life have any meaning? These are the fundamental questions of life, right? When you don't know your purpose, when you don't know why you're here, there's this big hole in you and you try to fill that emptiness with a lot of other stuff. Money, sex, family, achievement, success, travel, pleasure, sports, hobbies, and those are all good things, but they're never going to take the place of knowing why in the world are you here?

Even if you're living the good life here in Suburbia, you put your head down on the pillow at night, and you go, "There's got to be more to life than this." Because there is! You were created by God for so much more than simply the good life!

Fortunately, God has not left us ignorant. He has given us insight, wisdom, and a manual for life with clear instructions about why we are here on earth. But the Bible is a big book and there is no one specific section with the heading "the purpose of life." Thankfully we are not the first people to think about these things. Many smart people who have gone before us have tried to understand the purpose of why God created us, and to summarize it for us.

One of the best known, helpful, and brief summaries of the purpose of life according to the Bible comes from the Westminster Catechism. This catechism is a series of questions and answers that was used as a manual for instructing children in the 1600's. The first question and answer in the catechism is its most famous.

**Q. What is the chief end of man?**

**A. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.**

In other words, we glorify God by enjoying Him forever. This is our chief end or the very purpose of life. This is what Jesus said when questioned about the most important commandment. He says in Matthew 22: (v.37-38)

**"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment."**

Jesus is saying God is most glorified when we view Him as our all-satisfying treasure in life, the greatest joy and desire of our hearts. In fact, God takes our joy very seriously. He takes joy so seriously because what we enjoy most is what we love most. He wants to be the greatest love of our lives because the more we love and enjoy God, the more He is glorified in our lives.

Here's the stunning truth: God wants us to be happy! We could even say the purpose of life is to be happy. But not with happiness as an end in itself, happy in God, which is the greatest kind of happiness. God wants us to experience the deepest joy we possibly can—joy in Him. Anything less does not glorify God, and it cannot fully satisfy us either.

Finding joy in God means increasingly growing in our knowledge of Him and our time spent communing with Him in prayer. True joy in God makes us want to obey Him and makes us long to share our joy with others.

So, what is the purpose of life? It is living for God's glory and receiving our joy in Him. We were created to glorify God by enjoying Him and to do this forever. This is the beautiful purpose of life and until you understand that life won't ever fully make sense.

That leads us to the sixth reason we have hope because of the resurrection and it's because:

**6. We have an eternal home waiting for us!**

As a follower of Jesus, we can know that death is not the end. It's just a transition to better things.

A lot of people wonder what the afterlife or heaven will be like. Well, in a word, it's gonna be indescribable! You and I trying to understand what heaven is like is like my 18-pound Cockapoo trying to understand the Internet. We don't have the brain capacity. BUT it's going to be beautiful! It's going to be amazing! Why? Because look at the earth. This is a broken planet. Nothing works perfectly on this planet as a result of the curse of sin, and yet there's still a lot of beauty. Sunrises and sunsets, mountains, oceans, trees moments that take your breath away like the birth of a baby. All of this beauty and this is an imperfect planet, a shadow of what God created it to be.

Imagine what a perfect earth will be like with all the sights and sounds and colors and smells where it's absolutely perfect! The problem with most people and heaven is you have a TV version of heaven. How do they portray heaven? Total white out, right? Maybe white and gold. Maybe a kingdom of clouds. BUT why would the God who created all the colors make heaven so boring? You're walking around in fog up to your knees, wearing a white robe, and you've got angels wings, and you're playing a harp. That's not heaven, that would be hell! I don't want to go to that!

BUT the truth is you and I have a spiritual enemy that wants us to have the wrong idea of heaven. Satan doesn't have to get you hooked on meth or selling yourself on 19 to destroy you. All he has to do is distract us from the truth! Listen to what the Apostle Paul says, a guy who had some sort of out of body experience. He says in 1 Corinthians 2: (v.9)

**“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.”**

I'll be honest with you, I'm 45 now. I've been a pastor since I was 21. I have walked hundreds and hundreds of people personally through their pain and their sorrow and their suffering and their sadness and their grief. And the more that I see, the abuse, the affairs, the assaults, the violence, the prejudice, the things done to children, terrorism, war, and famine. Our world is broken and the older I get; the more heaven sounds like a good deal and the more I am ready for it.

This is why the resurrection gives us hope!

SO, here is my prayer for you this Easter no matter who you are, what you have done, or what you believe. That you would have a confidence that if you were to die tonight that you are certain you'd go to heaven and not go to hell, eternally separated from God. You say, “Well, I hope so!”

Hope isn't good enough. You need to be certain! AND God wants you to be certain. If you were to stand before God tonight and God says to you, “Why should I let you into My house? Why should I let you into my home for eternity?” Do you know the password? You say, “Well, I tried to be a nice person.” Ah, wrong answer. You can't be good enough! You need a savior! That's what Jesus came to do!

If Jesus didn't need to die on the cross for you, then it was a total waste of His blood. No! There's only one way! Before Jesus went back to heaven, He said to his followers: (John 14:1-7)

**“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.”** Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can

we know the way?" Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

I'm betting my life that Jesus Christ who rose from the dead is not a liar. What are you betting your life on? My prayer for you is that you will simply open your eyes, that you will today have a moment of clarity that maybe you've never ever seen before.

Let's pray...