

Christ is risen!

Let's read part of Luke's account of Jesus' resurrection this morning.

Luke 24:1-12, 36-49 - *On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. ² They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. ⁵ In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men **said to them**, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? ⁶ He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ⁷ 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' " ⁸ Then they remembered his words. ⁹ When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. ¹⁰ It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹ But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. ¹² Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened...*

(skipping over the story of Jesus on the road to Emmaus, and then picking up when the two disciples return to tell the other disciples about their encounter with the risen Jesus)

³⁶ *While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." ³⁷ They were startled and frightened, thinking they **saw a ghost**. ³⁸ He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? ³⁹ Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." ⁴⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. ⁴¹ And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and **ate it in their presence**. ⁴⁴ He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, **beginning at Jerusalem**. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses*

of these things. ⁴⁹ I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

Jesus has risen. In v. 46-47, Jesus summarizes what the significance of his death and resurrection is, telling his disciples that “repentance for the forgiveness of sins” will be preached in his name to all nations. In His death on the cross, a way has been made for sinful humans to be forgiven, to be restored to a right relationship with God, as Jesus dies in our place on the cross, taking the punishment we deserved. That way involves repentance – turning from sin and self-centeredness to trust that by Jesus’ death we are saved from the consequences of our sin, eternal separation from God.

In addition to the good news of a restored relationship to God, the amazing news is that Jesus’ resurrection means resurrection for us as well. As Jesus said to Martha in John 11 at the tomb of her brother Lazarus:

John 11:20–26 - *When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. ²¹ “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.” ²³ Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”*

²⁴ *Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”*

²⁵ *Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; ²⁶ and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”*

Because He lives, we will live forever. Not as some disembodied beings up in heaven, but in the end, we will live in resurrected bodies with our God on a renewed heaven and earth:

Revelation 21:1–5 - *Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” ⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”*

Heaven and earth will be one, sin and death and decay will be no more, and we will be with God forever. How does that change the way we live today? **What happens when you shift from YOLO to YWLF?** Four things I want to highlight:

1) Death has been defeated and everything you do matters eternally, so live out your purpose without fear

You can live with a fearless purpose, or purposeful fearlessness.

Hebrews 2:14–15 - Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

We do not have to be afraid of dying any more. In fact, Paul says this:

Philippians 1:20–25 - I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹ **For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.** ²² If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! ²³ I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; ²⁴ but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. ²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith,

Life after death will be better. We don't have to fear! But that does not mean suicide. No – if you woke up today – if God has not seen fit to take you to heaven yet – then God has work for you to do, and it involves other people.

Ephesians 2:8–10 - For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

You have been saved for good works. You are here for a purpose. To be witnesses to the gospel. To love your neighbor. To love your family. Give yourself fully to that purpose until the day you die.

At the end of Paul's great chapter on the resurrection, he writes:

1 Corinthians 15:58 - Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Because of the resurrection, everything you do for the Lord matters eternally. As Jesus put it:

Matthew 10:42 - And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward."

We live in a world with a growing meaning crisis. Deaths of despair – deaths due to overdose, suicide, liver disease - are rising. And many experience the Mid-life crisis – I have to do so many things before I die. But how perspective changes when you know you have eternal life! I do not have to fear death, because it will be better by far to be with God. And as long as I am living here, I know I have a purpose. You have been gifted by God, and your life matters. Take up the responsibility He has for you, and give yourself fully to the work of the Lord, because it all matters eternally.

2) **You are already rich, so live generously**

Powerball is around \$1 billion. If I won the lottery, I would give money away. You already have won the lottery. You have a God who will provide everything you need, and you have a vast inheritance of wealth waiting for you.

1 Peter 1:3–5 - Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

We have eternal wealth because of the gospel. Nothing on this earth can compare to what God has in store for us. Listen to Jesus:

*Matthew 13:44-46 - "The kingdom of heaven is like **treasure hidden** in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. ⁴⁵ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking*

for fine pearls. ⁴⁶ When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.”

The most valuable thing in the world is knowing God, living with Him as your King. Why? Because when you have an all-powerful, benevolent King, the citizens of that kingdom never have to live in fear or anxiety. They know they are taken care of. What you need is not to hit the lottery, or to marry a rich man or to inherit a great sum of money. What your heart needs is to be freed from the fear and anxiety that you are on your own, to know that you are a citizen of a Kingdom with an all-powerful, benevolent King who will not let you go hungry, in whom is found safety and security.

Real wealth that can not be taken away is our salvation, our adoption, our sanctification – that gives us security. Recognize that real wealth can not be taken away from you.

We are heirs of a vast fortune. And we live our lives for real wealth. The gospel transforms our heart. We are children of a loving, caring Father who has declared us worthy and righteous because of Jesus, and He will provide what we need. He calls us to trust in Him by stewarding His money in such a way that we care for those in need, trusting that as we do that, we are storing up treasure in heaven, true riches that we will enjoy for all eternity.

Luke 12:22–34 - *Then Jesus said to his disciples: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. ²³ For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. ²⁴ Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! ²⁵ Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? ²⁶ Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you **worry about the rest**? ²⁷ “Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ²⁸ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! ²⁹ And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. ³⁰ For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that **you need them**. ³¹ But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. ³² “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where*

no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴ *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

Be generous. God will supply what you need.

2 Corinthians 9:6–11 - *Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.* ⁷ *Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.* ⁸ *And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will **abound in every good work.*** ⁹ *As it is written: “They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever.”* ¹⁰ *Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.* ¹¹ *You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.*

The biggest givers and servers are those who know that this life is not all there is.

3) **The best is yet to come, so be content with what God has given you**

The grass is greener? In heaven it is.

Think of how this changes your perspective on marriage, your work, and church.

In Matthew 22, a group of religious leaders called the Sadducees, who did not believe in life after death, ask Jesus a question in hopes of exposing how ridiculous views on the afterlife are:

Matthew 22:24-28 - *Teacher," they said, "Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and have children for him.* ²⁵ *Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother.* ²⁶ *The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh.* ²⁷ *Finally, the woman died.* ²⁸ *Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?"*

Interesting question, which I'm sure people have thought of. **If I've been married a couple of times, how awkward is that going to be in heaven?** Am I going to be a

polygamist in heaven? **And if heaven contains all good things, will there be sex in heaven?** Let's look at how Jesus responds to the Sadducees:

Matthew 22:29-30 - *Jesus replied, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. ³⁰ At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.*

Notice how Jesus responds. In heaven, there will be no marriage. There will be no sex. They will not be necessary. **Jesus responds by saying that if you think there is marriage in heaven, you don't understand the Scriptures or the power of God – you don't realize that there is something greater in store.**

One of the images used most often in reference to the second coming is the image of a wedding:

Revelation 21:2-5, 9-10 - *I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a **bride** beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things **has passed away...**" ⁹ One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the **bride**, the wife of the Lamb." ¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.*

The people of God are described collectively (not individually) as the bride of Christ, and on the last day, as we come into eternity, it is described as a wedding with a wedding feast. What does this all mean?

I believe this means that if you are married, you and your wife will no longer be husband and wife in heaven; the long-lost reunion with your departed spouse that is so popular in culture may not be exactly as you envision in your head when you arrive in heaven. Not that you won't be reunited, but Jesus is saying that the joy of marital oneness that you experience on earth will be nothing compared to what you will be experiencing in eternity, in the presence of God. That's worth considering for a second. **As great as marriage, companionship, sex, and raising children can be on earth, Jesus says that you won't even be thinking about those things once**

you are in the presence of God, because there's something there that will be so much greater than even the best married life here on earth.

CS Lewis put it this way, when asked about sex in heaven: "I think our present outlook might be like that of a small boy who, on being told that the sexual act was the highest bodily pleasure should immediately ask whether you ate chocolates at the same time. On receiving the answer, "No," he might regard absence of chocolates as the chief characteristic of sexuality. In vain would you tell him that the reason why lovers in their carnal raptures don't bother about chocolates is that they have something better to think of. The boy knows chocolate; he does not know the positive thing that excludes it. We are in the same position. We know the sexual life; we do not know, except in glimpses, the other thing which, in Heaven, will leave no room for it."

As we've already seen in Ephesians 5:21-33, marriage is meant to point to the greater reality of Jesus' love for us. At the end of time, the writer of Revelation describes eternity as a wedding, the coming together of the bridegroom, Jesus, and his bride, the church. **Out of all the possible imagery that could have been used to describe heaven, God chose a wedding, the beginning of an eternal union.** By using this language, the writer of Revelation is communicating that eternity will be the perfect union between God and his people, where we enter into His eternal love, security, and joy forever. Our time in the new heavens and new earth are going to be one long celebration of this love and union.

We have a certain and glorious eternal hope and future. What are the implications for us?

Marriage is not the ultimate love, so those who are single should consider remaining single. The Bible is high on singleness.

1 Corinthians 7:32-35 I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs-- how he can please the Lord. ³³ But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world-- how he can please his wife-- ³⁴ and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world-- how she can please her husband. ³⁵ I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.

Our spouse is not our Savior, nor do we have to be our spouse's Savior. We can allow each other to be human. Someone once asked me if my wife was jealous of my love for Jesus, because she was not my top priority. One of the greatest gifts you can give your partner is to put Christ first. Let Him be the Savior. Put the burden on Him of being your perfect love. And let your partner be human.

Jesus is the only perfect love, so resist the temptation to look for it in any human. The grass is not always greener, and marriage is not the ultimate love. We can stay committed, knowing that Jesus is the only one who truly fulfills us. And if we feel stuck in a loveless marriage, we can still have in Jesus the greatest love of all.

Work or vocation

Trust that you will have perfect fulfillment in your vocation forever

The reality is that work is often fruitless and toilsome this side of heaven. You aren't always able to do what you want. Your sin gets in the way. Circumstances get in the way. We fall short of what we want to be or do. Our attitude becomes like that of the author of Ecclesiastes:

Ecclesiastes 2:17 - So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

But on that day when we are with God, the curse will be broken and all will be made new. And we will reign with God over the new heavens and new earth. All the frustrations with our vocations here on earth will fade away as we find our perfect vocation with Him.

Revelation 22:5 - There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

We will reign with him. Whatever we do here on earth, we will enjoy fulfillment in our labor forever.

We know that the only perfect church and community will be in heaven, so we love and serve our imperfect church to the glory of God.

Revelation 7:9-10 - After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing

before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

Every church has flaws. Serve where God has called you to be. Bear with one another. Speak the truth in love to each other in your imperfect church family, helping each other to grow in Christlikeness. And one day you will be a part of the perfect church forever.

4) Invite others to enjoy eternal life

Eternal life is depicted as a wedding feast. A party. The greatest work is to reconcile people to God

*2 Corinthians 5:17–21 - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! ¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were **making his appeal through us**. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

The goal is not happiness or worldly success. *Mark 8:35-6 - For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet **forfeit** his soul?*

The greatest of these works is to bring people back to God. We exist to help relieve the suffering and brokenness of the world, and no suffering is worse than the eternal suffering that some will experience if they do not know Jesus. So as we go and do good works, remember that the greatest work is to bring people back to God.

If you do not know Jesus, you can pray;

Jesus, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God. I believe that in you is found eternal life, life to the full. I believe that apart from faith in you, I will die in my sins, separated from God for all eternity. But I believe that you love me so much that you died on the cross in my place, taking the penalty for my sin, and that

you rose from the grave, conquering death. I turn from my sinful, self-centered way of life and I believe in you as my Savior and Lord. Amen.