

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

April 9, 2023 "What was important to Jesus. Us, and hope" Easter.

I Intro.

We're so ready for spring now. This year will bring some new and innovative ideas in all areas of our church life. We have seen an increased activity in our children's ministry, and we're working on new ideas for both our children and our students. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know. This is our weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from Sunday's message. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. You can use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey.

II Recap.

This is our fifth and final Sunday in this series. I know that seems like an awfully long time. It's been a great journey. We've just experienced our Good Friday service and today is resurrection Sunday. Through all of this we've been looking at what was important to Jesus. If Jesus spent a lot of time teaching about certain specific things, then it must be something we need to take seriously. This series is also to address the creep of politics, and other things we place our trust in, into the church, and to refocus our hearts on the teachings of Jesus. This is not to say that Christians shouldn't be involved in politics. This is saying we should be wise in how we engage politics and other things we place our trust in. Making sure they align with the teachings of Jesus. These topics address the struggles we face in life, and give us some tools to use to guide us.

The first Sunday we talked about Jesus caring about things that are 'lost'. What we discovered is we all are lost in some way, looking for meaning in life. And this will come from understanding God wants a relationship with us. The second Sunday Kristen led us on a look into who Jesus considered "the least of these", and what our relationship should be with others. The third week we talked about eternal life and how that begins now. And last week we dove into what 'believe' actually means. Today, we celebrate and talk about where our hope is found and grounded.

III Sunday.

IT'S EASTER!! What Christians call- Resurrection Sunday. We kept the message short and sweet Sunday, so we'll do the same here. We hope you have a great Easter day, and celebrate the foundation of our faith with us. Let's just reminisce about Easter, so a few questions.

How did you celebrate Easter in your past? What made Easter special?

What would the church look like if we really understood Easter?

Just a little background before we hit the Easter message. The resurrection of Jesus is what powered the early movement of the followers of Jesus called 'The Way', and the growth of small churches springing up in homes. The early believers had no bible. Every once in a while they would get a letter from Paul, Peter, John or others that were floating around. But they had no real organized teachings

or content to instruct them. The movement grew like a wildfire. And it was all because they believed that Jesus had come to show them God, was executed by the Roman empire, and came back from the dead. That alone was enough for people to believe, and fully commit to joining 'The Way'.

We used one scripture Sunday to talk about being people of hope. Read **Hebrews 11:1**.

What jumped to you about this passage?

How do you see the message of hope tied to the resurrection?

Here are some real world benefits of the resurrection and being the 'hope people'.

1. Hope grounded in the resurrection redirects our mind. Our mind is where we make decisions and handle the difficulties of life. Hope points our mind towards places to make more life-giving choices. We believe Jesus was crucified, dead and buried, and rose from the dead. And this strengthens our mind.

2. Hope grounded in the resurrection focuses on possibilities. Hope pushes us to let go of the things we think will bring hope, but don't. Hope keeps us from dwelling on the bad we see all around us, and see God at work. Hope helps us see God, AND our situation, and not just our situation.

3. Hope grounded in the resurrection gives us a real, tangible tool to use in the midst of the worst of life. Hope doesn't deny or pretend life isn't hard. That's toxic positivity. Hope says; nothing is permanent, even death. This struggle won't last. If you surround yourself with people who are for you you can be carried through your own worst of life. There is this powerful gift called hope, that can hold us in place.

4. Hope grounded in the resurrection focuses our ability to trust not on ourselves or undependable things. Hope frees us from the unwinnable expectation that we alone can only fix our life. **How many of you think you alone, your political party, or the things of the world, can fix all your problems and tough situations? If none of them can, then who/what is able?** Hope says, even though you may not see a way out, solution, answer to your situation, there are people who trust in a God who can see things you can't.

IV Wrap up and Challenge

The thought of nihilism (the belief that there is nothing but this world) is crushing. We refuse to believe this is all there is. What a stunningly despair filled, crushingly hopeless, sit in the dirt and wait for the coming end of the world life, we would live if we didn't believe there was more. Sure we could "eat, drink, and be merry". But some of us have tried that, and it leads nowhere good.

We have hope. And it's not dulled by not being able to see the better. Because of this day. We believe Jesus was who he said he was and was resurrected. We don't have all the answers. ALL of us are still trying to figure a lot of things out. We're not perfect, some of us even more 'not perfect' than others. We are struggling to be an open, inclusive, loving, welcoming community of people all trying to figure out who Jesus was, and how that can help us where we are right now.

All of this belief, gathering to encourage is undergirded, built on, this thing called hope. That God is at work, even when we can't see or feel it at times, and we trust in that truth not our own perspective.

We believe, with all the trust we can muster, this world can be better, and we can find peace, encouragement, in the midst of the most challenging times. And there is a God who is working towards that, in us and through us.

How can you be a 'hope person' as we move forward this year?