



**Resurrection Sunday 2022
Life After Death**

Summary: The Resurrection is proof of the power and love of God who can bring good things out of bad situations.

We gather today to consider and celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ – that He lived, He died and was buried, and then He rose again.

The resurrection is the essential foundation of the Christian faith. The apostle Paul said that if there is no resurrection then your pastor's preaching is empty and so is your faith (1 Cor 11:14). He went on to say [If we have put our hope in Christ for this life only, we should be pitied more than anyone](#) (1 Corinthians 11:19, CSB).

But we have not put our hope in Christ for this life only. Instead, the resurrection gives us both hope for the future and strength for today because the resurrection is proof of the power and love of God who brings good things out of bad situations - and that is what I want to talk to you about this morning – the resurrection as proof of God's ability to bring good things out of bad situations.

I have no doubt that you are well aware of some bad situations. Whether things happening in your own life, or the life of someone you love, whether you're concerned about the direction of the culture or politics, a resurgence of COVID or current events, you're very aware of things that are going wrong or which could go wrong any moment. And yet, the good news is: the resurrection can give you hope today.

In order to understand why, I need to take you back, before the resurrection, before the crucifixion. In the final days of His life on earth, Jesus came to the city of Jerusalem, the center of religious and political life for the nation of Israel. And during an event known as the Triumphal Entry, he rode into the city on a donkey to present Himself as king.

Imagine Him coming down 66, crossing the Roosevelt bridge, then down Constitution Avenue – without a motorcade, without police escort, without two dozen black Suburbans and motorcycles at each intersection, just walking into the center of the city as a crowd grows larger and larger around Him singing Hosanna, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD, the King of Israel!

And then He says, (the words are printed for you in your bulletin, they come from John's gospel)

[John 12:23...The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.](#)

Those twelve little words, sound like the beginning of something big. They seem to signal something very important. Jesus says everything else has been preparation for this – all His teaching, all the miracles, all the lives He has touched were building up to this.

Think of it. Marvel over it. Wonder about it. Of all that Jesus has said and done up to this point in His life, *now* is the time when the Son of Man will be glorified.

We're curious. We're excited. We want to know, what's going to happen? What could be even bigger than every else? What will it mean to glorify Jesus? And then, He says:

[24 Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.](#)

It's not quite what you expect to happen. Jesus says the hour of His glorification has come and it's going to involve death, [falling into the ground](#), but after death, like a seed buried in fertile soil, it's going to produce something new. All of which says Jesus knew two very important facts: life is hard, but God is good.

He knew that He was going to go through some hard things. He knew what the next days of His life held. He knew He would be betrayed by one of His own disciples, He even knew who it was. He knew He would be rejected by the religious and political establishment. He knew even the people He came to help and to save would turn their back on Him and cry out for His crucifixion. He knew these things would happen.

He knew He was on a crash course with suffering, rejection, and pain, but like a woman facing the agony of labor, He knew there would be joy on the other side.

He knew He would be placed in a tomb, buried like a seed, but then burst up out of the ground again with new life to produce even more. This would be His glory and He wants all of us to know it and understand. He wants the Church, and the world, to know that the resurrection is proof of the power and love of God who brings good things *out of* bad situations.

Sometimes we look at the bad things happening in our lives and say I didn't do anything to deserve this. Well, consider Jesus. He never did anything wrong. Never hurt anyone. Was never part of a scandal, never did anything shady. Never mistreated or manipulated anyone.

He helped people. Had compassion on people, and not just good people, not just nice people, not just the influencers of His day. He reached out to the underprivileged, the marginalized, the overlooked. The popular and powerful actually criticized and questioned Jesus about the kind of people He focused on.

He healed hurting people, fed hungry people, cared for and about needy people. He spent His life investing into others. If there was ever a good person that didn't deserve bad things to happen to them, it was Jesus.

And yet, His life was filled with challenges and trials and suffering even before His death.

The Scriptures are amazingly honest in the details they include. We learn that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was tired at times, so tired that He slept through storms while other people were freaking out – you know the deep sleep that comes from utter exhaustion, Jesus knew it too.

Scripture tells us He was hungry at times. He was thirsty. He sweat. He walked long distances and worked with His hands. He had a lot of people around Him at times, but none of them were His servants in the traditional sense of the word. He didn't have an assistant or a driver or an aide. Instead, He relied on the Spirit and the Father to provide everything He needed while grinding out daily life in pursuit of eternal goals.

So, you need to know, that Jesus faced all the normal frictions and frustrations of life *while* trying to do good. Don't be surprised if the same thing happens to you.

He also faced the opposition of people who didn't like what He was doing, who didn't like what He was about. They were people in positions of power who liked being in control and who didn't want to change. And they didn't like Him. And, you also need to know they came from both sides of the spectrum. In the religious realm, Jesus was opposed by both the Sadducees the social and theological progressives of His day, *and* the Pharisees who were staunch conservatives and nationalists. Jesus didn't fit squarely in either party.

In the political realm, He was opposed by the Romans which probably wasn't too surprising since they were an occupying force in Israel at the time, but He was also opposed by the national leaders from among His own people - men like Herod were curious about Him and what He was doing, but they weren't interested in including Him or platforming Him, because they saw Him as competition and a threat. And all of this, remember, *while He was doing nothing but good things for a broad group of people.*

If Jesus didn't receive support, encouragement, or acknowledgement from the powerful and popular people of His day, don't be surprised if they overlook or oppose you too.

And of course, behind all the physical things and people of this world, there are very real spiritual forces. Satan himself was opposed to what Jesus was doing and inserted himself into the process wherever possible to subvert and sabotage. They had a face-to-face confrontation in the wilderness where Satan tried three times to tempt Jesus, to get Him off course, but each time Jesus chose to remain on task as directed by the Father.

Friends, in a day and age of virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and commercial space travel, you need to know there are demonic forces at work in this world. And you should not be surprised to learn that they oppose you and the good things you hope to do.

Well, all of these forces came to bear on Jesus during the final hours of His life. He experienced physical exhaustion and pain, to the point of death, he experienced betrayal

and abandonment by His friends, the political and religious powers of the day combined to stand against Him and condemn Him, and the entire event was coaxed on by Satan. At one point, on the cross, He cried out, “[My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? \(Matt 27:46\).](#)”

It seemed as though everything in the world was against or at least ambivalent to, the One man in all of history *who had never done anything but good.*

And if that was the end of the story, it would be the darkest of tragedies. It would strip all the hope out of our already difficult existence. If this is what happens to the best among us, what hope is there for any of us?

Is this what happens when you show up with the best possible motives, work hard to accomplish the best possible things, for anyone and everyone? Is this how it all turns out? If so, what’s the point in even trying?

I say that because I know the feeling, and so do you. We know the feeling of trying really hard to do something that seems really good, only to see it all fall apart or never get off the ground. In those moments, it all feels pointless. It feels useless. It feels like a waste.

But then, the resurrection. Then the empty tomb. Then the promise of new life and the fruit that comes from it.

The glorification of Jesus wasn’t that He spent His life doing good. It wasn’t that He was nice to people. Smiled at people. Helped people. Stood up for justice.

No. The glorification of Jesus was the fact that He did all of that, and even though it was hard and He was opposed at every step, even though it seemed to end in suffering and death, God knew what was happening, planned for it, and used it all for His glory and our good. What seemed like the end was really just a plot twist, the planting of a seed about to grow.

You see, you need to know that Jesus endured the worst of everything this life could throw at Him and He emerged on the other side, victorious. Nothing could stop Him. You need to know: *the resurrection is God showing you that life is hard, but He is good, and there is nothing He cannot save you from or pull you through.*

You might go through difficult times. You might face opposition. People in leadership and power might be against you. Your friends might betray you or abandon you. You might grow tired and weary from the things you’re doing. All of that happens. It might get really bad. You might actually suffer. You might actually lose things and people that are important to you.

But God sees, He knows, and He has a plan. Even if there’s a burial in the ground, new life can spring forth. There really is hope for tomorrow and this is central to the Christian faith.

There's something to look forward to, even in dark days – because yes, Jesus died, *but He also rose again.*

And what is most important of all is to understand why – *why* did all this happen? The answer is, it happened for you and me. It happened because Jesus is the only person who ever lived a perfect life. He is the only person who ever only did good, to all people.

Now, that might be your ambition, that might be your goal, but the fact is, at some point we've all let ourselves and others down with our actions, our attitudes, our behavior. We've all had moments when we were the good guy, but we've had moments when we were the bad guy too. The Bible calls that sin and it's what keeps you from God.

But when Jesus was put to death on the cross, He made it clear, it wasn't just an act of injustice or murder, He saw it as an act of intentional sacrifice – that He would become a kind of perfect, spotless, lamb sacrificed for us. So, on judgment day, instead of you trying to negotiate a deal with God or explain to Him why He should overlook the mistakes you've made, the times you came up short, the times you gave in to your temper or your desires, instead of having to make excuses, or amends or offer an explanation, you could claim the blood of Jesus instead. You could accept His offer to be a sacrifice for you – to let Him pay for your wrong, because He offers to do it.

Remember, Jesus said

23 ...“The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. 24 Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.

Jesus died, but rose again, and now those who will admit their sin, their wrongdoing, their failures and shortcomings, and come to Him for guidance, direction, and strength in this life, will be like the new grain produced by the buried seed. The conversion of every new Christian is like a validation of His death, evidence of the greater purpose He accomplished through it.

Which is why He went on to say:

25 He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.

This is the promise of Jesus to every Christian – if you follow Him, serve Him, draw near to Him and value the things of eternity more than the things of this earth, God will honor you. Even if you lose your life in the process. Even if you get tired in the process. Even if all your best plans get frustrated in the process. Even if you see setbacks. Even if all seems to be totally lost – God will honor you. The resurrection is proof to you that He can still bring something good out of something very, very bad. It's meant to give you hope.

Scripture begins with a good story, that goes bad quickly but from the beginning to the end you find this theme on display – God shows up in the darkest moments of our lives, and brings something good *out of* something bad. Abraham and Sarah have a son *after* decades of barrenness. Joseph becomes a government official *after* spending years unjustly in jail. Israel enters the Promised Land *after* four centuries of slavery in Egypt. David becomes king *after* years on the run. Israel is brought back into the land *after* decades in captivity. Jesus appears on the scene *after* four centuries of silence. He is crucified, but glorified through His resurrection and offers new life to each of us today.

Scripture is also full of examples of what that new life looks like. When you read the New Testament, you find story after story of transformation. You find people who had made a mess of their lives through poor personal choices now redeemed and transformed, so a harlot like Mary Magdalen was forgiven of her sexual sin and set free to follow Jesus. You see people who were actually demon possessed delivered from bondage. But you also see people who tried really hard to live a good life finally discover what they had been seeking all along. You see a deeply religious man like Nicodemus who found in Jesus what all of his rules and rituals couldn't give.

The transformation happens to a wide range of people – men and women from the Middle East to North Africa to Southern Europe – entrepreneurial businesswomen like Lydia, government subcontractors like Matthew, military officers like Cornelius, young men with absentee fathers like Timothy, a corrections officer like the Philippian jailer, widows, married couples, blue collar tradesmen and those who served in the highest seats of government. This one gospel, this one Jesus, is for them all. For us all.

He is the resurrection and the life and He had the audacity to say, that [no one comes to the Father except by Him \(John 14:6\)](#). The question is, have you done that?

Because, if you have, then you know, or you need to know, that the resurrection we celebrate today is proof of the power and love of God. It's power because nothing could stop Jesus, nothing could silence Jesus, the work that God wanted to see accomplished through His Son was accomplished – suffering and trials and even death itself were overcome and used for greater purpose, and it's love because He endured it all for you.

The resurrection is central to the hope we all share in Christ, the belief that God really can bring good things out of very bad situations. He has the final say. Things may get very, very bad at times, but He really is working all things together for good. What seems like a crisis or tragedy may turn out to be the very thing He's using for His glory and your good.

So I'm praying that when you leave here today, your life will be in His hands, fully committed to Him. That you would commit to serving Christ no matter what comes, that you would draw near to Him, invite Him deeper into your life, and serve Him, that you would value eternal life more than anything on earth, all because you know what Jesus has done for you and that God is capable of bringing something good out of very bad things.

Let's pray.