

**“Hope is Rising”**  
**1 Corinthians 15:12-26**

*Greeting:*

- All kids! Wave to me... You guys have an amazing time in Redemption Kids!!
- And to the rest of you, let me say: “Happy Easter & Happy Resurrection Sunday!” (Greet FTGs... - Connect Card)
- This morning we are going to hear from one of the most important sections in the Bible on the resurrection of Jesus. Please open your Bible, or Bible app, to 1 Corinthians 15:12-26.

No matter where you are in your spiritual journey, it is so easy to allow Easter Sunday to become an event in the Spring, but miss its profound meaning and depth. One of my goals this morning is to help us keep that from happening!

The moment Jesus robbed death and stepped out of the tomb (like no champion the world has ever seen) HOPE came crashing down like avalanche forever changing the narrative of our world and the narrative of our lives, both for the calendar box we call today and our future forever destiny in the life to come.

Some try to domesticate Easter by reducing it to a bunny and some eggs (and listen I thank God every year for Reese’s Eggs - can I get a witness out there!), but the story of Easter is one that cannot be tamed. It is the most powerful, most life-giving, most hope-producing moment the world has ever known.

There are so many gifts Easter brings, but the one I want us to consider this morning is the gift of HOPE. Hope lifts our spirits and pushes us forward.

Hope is so important because there is so much in our world that causes us to lose hope. When we see the rising number of people effected by depression and addiction, when we scan the political scene or look at the health of so many of our relationships and work lives, it may seem that hope is declining rather than rising.

BUT that is why we need to close look at the resurrection of Jesus today. The resurrection of Jesus provides the greatest reason for our hopes to rise. I want to invite you to get your hopes up, not just on Easter Sunday, but every day of your life.

What are we talking about when we talk about hope? **Hope is the confident expectation that our deepest desires will be fulfilled.**

Ordinarily, when we express hope today, it carries a level of uncertainty: “I hope I will pass that exam, get that job, see my loved one healed, but maybe it will happen, maybe it won’t.” BUT the biblical idea of hope carries confidence that it is actually going to happen!

Today, I want to invite you to see and believe that...

**The Point: Hope is rising because Jesus is risen.**

As we look to 1 Corinthians 15, we’re going to hear from a man named Paul, one of the greatest leaders in the church. He’s going to argue for the necessity of Jesus’ resurrection by first showing the negative consequences if the resurrection is not true and then the positive consequences if it is true.

*Read 15:12-26*

**1. If the dead do not rise, Christianity is dead (12-19).**

And so is our hope...

### The Situation in Corinth.

Verse 12 tells us that some people in the ancient city of Corinth were saying: “there is no resurrection of the dead” contradicting the central message of Christianity.

- While they may have denied any possibility of resurrection, it is likely they affirmed a person’s soul going on to live forever, but claimed our bodies would never rise again.
- But the story of the Christianity asserts that God made our souls and bodies to live forever, and the bodily resurrection of Jesus shows us that is STILL God’s plan.

T: So, in a very logical argument, Paul is going to show us four brutal consequences if the dead do not rise and Christianity is not true.

His first point is this... If the dead do not rise...

#### 1. Jesus is dead (13).

- If people do not rise from the dead, that includes Jesus. Jesus was a real human being, fully God *and* fully man. Like us, his heart pulsed with life. He really lived. He really died.
- And if he remained dead, he lied to us because he said he would rise from the dead multiple times. Not only that, but everything else he said and did can no longer be trusted. That whole bit about abundant life now and eternal life forever must all be a cruel joke.

T: Not only that, if the dead do not rise...

#### 2. Telling the story of Jesus is a waste of time (14-15).

- Remove the resurrection and you completely change the message of Christ. You empty it of its power.
- Anyone talking about Jesus being our satisfaction in life, our way back to God, our peace in the midst of the storms of life is all meaningless. It’s a waste of time.
- Your boy might as well apply for a job at Fenway Park selling peanuts this summer (that would be fun!) or maybe plow some snow in the winter, or maybe enter in the Local 40 (that’s the carpenter’s union – wait, I could never do that! - Command Clips). Anything would be better than this - if Jesus is still dead.
- Verse 15 says, this would all be a project in misrepresenting God.

T: Not only would all talk about Jesus be a waste, so would your faith - if you’ve place your faith in Jesus.

#### 3. Faith in Christ is empty and the human predicament is unresolved (17).

- Remove the resurrection, and our faith crumbles to the ground. Why?
- No resurrection, no defeat of death. No defeat of death, no defeat of our sin. Why? Because sin earns us death (physically and spiritually - Romans 6:23). No defeat of sin, no salvation.

Listen: Every person and every faith system asks the questions: What is wrong with our world? And how will it be made right?

- The Bible's answers are clear. Sin is the issue. Jesus is the answer.
- The resurrection provides the evidence that sin and death received a death blow in the death and resurrection of Jesus.
- This is what Paul goes on to say verses 54-57

**“When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 15:54-57)**

T: What a hope for the future! But Paul says, if there is no resurrection, there is...

#### 4. No hope for the future.

- Verse 18 says, “Then those who have fallen asleep...” In other words, our loved ones (my grandmothers and grandfathers who trusted in Jesus) simply died if there is no hope beyond the grave.
- And that means, there is no hope for the future at all. Listen to verse 19.
- Christians are the most deceived people in the world: the greatest hope turns out to be the greatest disappointment!
- Did you notice how Paul says, “we of all people.” At one level, he’s including anyone who ever believes in Jesus. But at another level, he speaks very personally. Surely he has in mind the death threats, the times he was flogged with whips, arrested and imprisoned, beaten with rods and left for dead. I have risked it all — for nothing!”
  - By the way, the evidence for the resurrection is abundant. How else do you explain Paul, who once persecuted Christians joining their team?
  - How do you explain the transformation of the disciples who cowered back in fear when Jesus was crucified (who could blame them! “We’re next”), then boldly telling people he rose from the dead?
  - How do you explain the empty tomb? Or the unconventional details in the Bible like Women being the first eyewitnesses, or the fact that Christianity spread and NT was written in a time when hundreds of people could have verified the same story (thus debunking popular theories against the resurrection like the Hallucination Theory)?
  - If you find yourself doubting, let me encourage you to take a really hard look, dare I say, an extensive and urgent look at the claim of Jesus’ resurrection.

Here’s another reason I believe in the resurrection? I call it the “Then what?” argument, and it matches what Paul is saying in verse 19.

- You work hard to get a job. Then what?
- You make a lot of money. Then what?

- You enjoy the best of human relationships with great friends, maybe a spouse, maybe children. Then what?
- You enjoy some of the best experiences in the world. Then what?

T: Is this life all there is? Is that truly satisfying? Is this as good as it gets?

Deep down we LONG for something more, and deep down we know there is something more. And that's where verse 20 takes us.

If the dead do not rise, Christianity is dead, BUT...

## 2. If Jesus rose from death, hope is rising with him! (20-26).

We saw what crumbles IF the resurrection is not true, but now we see how two monumental realities are coming because the resurrection IS true!

It's important for us to understand the imagery Paul uses in verse 20.

- "Firstfruits" was an agricultural concept. In the OT, the people of Israel would present the first bundle of the harvest as an offering to God.
- They did so, in large part, as a sign of assurance that the full harvest was on the way. You see this bundle of wheat? There are thousands upon thousands like it on the way.
- A more relatable image for us would be the idea of a down payment. Let's say one of you wanted to buy a new condo in Medford for \$400,000
  - Most banks would require you to put 5% down. Why?
  - You see this \$20k? There's \$380k more on the way.
- Paul says: You see Jesus? Everyone who follows him will rise to eternal life with him!

The resurrection of Jesus set in motion two irreversible realities. 1) The resurrection of all who believe in him. 2) The eradication of all evil in the world.

### First, the resurrection of Jesus brings the hope of our resurrection (20-23).

- We all have questions about death: What happens when I die? Where will I go? How will I get there?
- The central message of the cross and empty tomb of Jesus is that God offers all people, including you, the gift of life.
  - You need to hear that today!
  - Jesus lived the life we should have lived but did not. Jesus never sinned against God. He always loved him most, always honored him, always pointed to his greatness!
  - Because we *have sinned*, like Adam, we face death like Adam, but Jesus - died the death we should have dead, IN OUR PLACE, so that in him, by receiving his gift of salvation, we might receive LIFE.
- This is how Jesus summed it up in John 11: **"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26)**
- Have you ever traded possessions with someone? You give me your bike. I'll give you my tablet.

- That's what was going on at the cross... Jesus said...
  - I'll take your sin and give you my righteousness
  - I'll take your separation and give you my perfect relationship.
  - I'll take your death and give you my life!
- WOW!

I believe the most important question every person can answer in their life is this: Have I accepted what Jesus died and rose to bring me? Have I accepted this great exchange? Admit. Believe. Commit.

T: But it's not just a personal salvation, it's cosmic.

The resurrection of Jesus brings the hope of the eradication of all evil (24-26).

- Look at verses 24-26. What is this saying?
- God will defeat all of his enemies in the supernatural realm. With that comes the end of everything that opposes us in this life: injustice, abuse, broken relationships, all feelings of fear, worry, and anxiety, sickness, cancer. No more tears, or frustrations, or disappointments. Just unending life, and joy, and peace. Hope fulfilled!
- The resurrection of Jesus is the down payment guaranteeing that the longings of our hearts will be satisfied.

But the resurrection is not just an event WAY back there, or a moment that fills the future with immense hope WAY out there, but the decisive act that puts life and HOPE into every moment into every day.

- If our God conquered death and guarantees that we will conquer death through faith in Jesus, what can't we face in this life, what can't we do through his power at work in us and through us?!!
- We can't live defeated lives, when we've already been given the victory!
- There is every reason to get our hopes up. There is every reason to realize that hope is rising with the resurrection of Jesus!!

I know you want in on that and I want that for you more than anything!!

*Conclusion:*

\*I want to invite our Music Team up and as they do, I would like EVERYONE to pull out this **CONNECT CARD {PICTURE}** that you received when you walked in. No matter if this your first time or you come every week. [[Big Black Marker - BIG CHECK MARK...]]

I want to invite you to carefully consider your response to these questions

Do you have HOPE in this life because your hope is in Jesus Christ?

Do you have HOPE for the next life because your hope is in Jesus Christ?

Hope is rising, because Jesus is risen.

Today, I hope you will respond in one of three ways.

1. For some of you, maybe dozens that know deep down in your heart, today is the day you need to nail this down. Today is the day you need to say: I am going all in with Jesus Christ. I want the hope he offers. I want a real relationship with God. I am accepting the gift of salvation he offers.
2. For others, you might say, I'm not totally there, but I'll ask God to show me if this is true over the next 8 months (2019). I'll take a closer look.
3. If you already enjoy the hope of the resurrection, then maybe your next step is to simply pray: God, take me deeper! Let us know that, so we can pray for you!

Time of Prayer (bow your head with me and close your eyes).

- If you know you need to accept the gift God offers you through Christ, would you just lift up your hand. I want to lead you in a simple prayer...
- If you are not sure but you are open to exploring more, would you just repeat after me: God, show me if you are real. Show me if Jesus is who he says he is: that he died for me and rose again that I might experience his life.
- If you are in with Christ, but want to go deeper, would you join me as I pray for you.

Pray. Song