



Praise the Lord that Jesus is risen, amen? We have been continuously celebrating during the service, and churches around the world are rejoicing in the fact that Jesus is risen from the dead. But as we rejoice, there are many who may simply think that we're ignoring reality. Why are we rejoicing when there's so much suffering? Did Jesus actually accomplish anything when we all have brokenness in our own lives, neighborhoods, towns, nation, world? Karl Marx, the German philosopher, once said that religion was "the opium of the masses." In other words, religion helped to dull our senses to painful realities.

This seems to be a dominant view held by many irreligious in our society. And in some ways, I can understand why they say that. I do think that many people can hold to certain religions to simply ignore reality. And, there are people who hold to forms and vestiges of the Christian message to hide away from reality and ignore pain. But what about us? We hold to the truthfulness of the entire Scriptures. We hold to Jesus' literal death and resurrection. And in singing joyfully today, are we blinding ourselves to reality or are we actually facing real life?

We have just sung about a man who rose from the dead. That is a pretty crazy story, isn't it? In some ways, it sounds like ancient mythologies. And now, in the 21st century, that we know more about science and philosophy, we shouldn't need to go back to ancient stories to give us meaning, right? But what if *this specific* narrative is true? A British theologian, who did immense study on the resurrection claims once wrote the following about the fact that Jesus' disciples proclaimed the message of the resurrection:

*In not one single case do we hear the slightest mention of the disappointed followers [of other first century messianic movements] claiming that their hero had been raised from the dead. They knew better. Resurrection was not a private event. Jewish revolutionaries whose leader had been executed by the authorities, and who managed to escape arrest themselves, had two options: give up the revolution, or find another leader. Claiming that the original leader was alive again was simply not an option. Unless, of course, he was. (quoted in *The Reason for God*, p. 208, from *Who Was Jesus?* by N.T. Wright, p. 63).*

"Unless, of course, he was." That's a very important line to contemplate. First century thinkers would not have thought of an individual resurrection. The Greeks thought of resurrection as only spiritual. Many Jews thought of it as a corporate resurrection. To think of an individual, physical resurrection like Jesus' was generally unthinkable! If something like the resurrection of Jesus wasn't assumed by Greeks or Jews, how or why would the disciples even come up with this message?

This, among many other reasons, have led myriads of people throughout the centuries to believe the message that the disciples proclaimed. Here are a few more quotes regarding Jesus' resurrection from some others:

- **“No one fact in the history of mankind...is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort [than the fact that] Christ died and rose from the dead.” Thomas Arnold (professor of modern history at Oxford)**
- **“In the whole story of Jesus Christ, the most important event is the resurrection.” William Lyon Phelps (Yale professor)**
- **“Our Savior’s resurrection...is truly of great importance in Christianity; so great that His being or not being the Messiah stands or falls with it.” John Locke**

If Jesus did not physically rise from the dead, we shouldn’t believe any of the New Testament. But if it’s true that he did, then everything he said – and everything the apostles teach – are to be taken with joyful and immense seriousness. And, if this narrative is true, which I firmly believe it is, then we aren’t ignoring reality. Instead, the resurrection of Jesus actually reveals the reality of both the pain and suffering of this world as well as glorious hope. And that’s the main idea of the sermon today: **Jesus’ resurrection forces humanity to face reality and frees Christians to face reality with steadfast hope.**

1. Jesus’ resurrection forces humanity to face reality.

Years ago, I was listening to a woman share about the tragedy in her life when she was a teenager. She jumped into a lake, and her head hit the floor bottom, snapping her neck. She would have died, but her sister brought her back to shore. From that moment on, she was a quadriplegic. She is now 73 years old, and has suffered under the weight and pains of quadriplegia for about 56 years. She’s actually the longest living quadriplegic. After her accident, she struggled immensely with the goodness of God. She even took time to evaluate other religions to see what hope they might provide in her suffering. What she discovered was that out of all the religious books she read, the Bible spoke most about and to the suffering. The Bible didn’t ignore pain, but acknowledged it and came to come alongside those who suffer. Not only that, but God himself, the Son, came into this pain-filled world and suffered in both his life and his death. She saw that Christianity isn’t an opiate. Christianity faces reality head-on.

I agree with my dear sister in the faith. This year, we have begun a journey in Genesis, and within the first couple verses, we discover that God is not only the Creator, but he’s the One who acknowledges chaos and is the One who brings order from chaos. So, when we get to Adam and Eve’s rebellion, we read of Adam and Eve’s punishment, and all of creation’s crumbling into disarray. But we also read of hope of One who is going to come to crush the serpent – meaning, One who is going to reverse the curse and restore all things. While humanity now rejects God and seeks to live life on their own terms, God will send One who will reach into people’s hearts, change them and give them a new home where there’s life eternal. But that doesn’t happen immediately. Until then, there’s joy intermixed with pain in this broken world. The good news of a serpent crusher doesn’t rid us of trials.

This is what we also see in the oldest book in the Bible. Do you know what the oldest book of the Bible is? You might think Genesis because it begins with creation, but the answer is that Job was probably written before Genesis. And what is that book all about? Suffering. Job is a man who followed the Lord, and then all of his children died in one day, and then he suffers from intense physical pain and trauma. His wife, in the midst of all the suffering urges Job to curse God and die – essentially to deny God because reality is too painful to bear. But, Job’s faith in the Lord was intact. His faith didn’t exempt him from suffering. Instead, his dependence led him to wrestling with the Lord, and he was brought closer to God.

By the end of the book, we read Job's conclusion, where he says, "I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you. . ."¹ He then goes on to say that he's comforted in his humanity (the dust and ashes). What we see in the book of Job is not God and religious beliefs hiding Job from reality, but causing him to face it head-on in light of God himself. But in the midst of this entire book, Job declares a hope that keeps him steadfast in his trials: **For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.** ²

Almost halfway through the book, Job declares that he knows there is a savior who lives and this Savior will be on this earth. Job says that after his flesh is destroyed, yet in his flesh he will see God! He's talking about a future resurrection where this old, fallen world is done away with and there's a new world where the serpent-crusher reigns! This reality gives Job endurance. He's experiencing his flesh being destroyed through physical pain, but that physical suffering doesn't have the last word! The Redeemer has the last word! Isn't that glorious? There's a resurrection to come.

Now, there have been people throughout the ages who have said that the Old Testament doesn't emphasize a resurrection. Even in Jesus' day, there was a religious group called the Sadducees who denied the resurrection from the dead. Jesus confronts the Sadducees and says, "³¹ **And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: ³² 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not God of the dead, but of the living.**"³ The mere fact that God IS the God of these men means they still exist. And so Job's words are real. And so are Daniel's words in Daniel 12:2 when he says, "**And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.**"⁴ There's a future resurrection where some will experience life and others will experience condemnation. And Isaiah 26:19 states, "**Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead.**"⁵

What do we see about the Bible's teaching? God doesn't ignore pain and suffering. He allows us to live in it and face it. But he also declares he's victorious over it. And this victory comes through the Redeemer. Because of him of his serpent-crushing, curse-reversing power, we can face this fallen world. So, my question for you today is, do you face reality? When I think of people saying that religion just keeps us from facing reality, I actually wonder if that's just a tactic to cause them to ignore the many ways they're not facing reality. There is an eternity. There is a God who will judge everyone – whether they have trusted him or rejected him. Some will raise to eternal life and others to eternal contempt. The resurrection forces you to face eternity. If you haven't trusted in the Redeemer Jesus, you're on the precipice of eternal contempt. That's reality. In this world, Jesus says, we will have trials. But he also says he's overcome the world. Will you turn to Jesus? This leads to the second point:

2. Jesus' resurrection frees Christians to face reality with steadfast hope.

I've already told stories about Joni Earekson Tada and Job, but practically for us today, how does Jesus' resurrection free those of us who follow Jesus to face reality with hope? I think of words that are found in Psalm 71:20 that says, "**You who have made me see many troubles and calamities will revive me**

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Job 42:5.

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Job 19:25–27.

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mt 22:31–32.

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Da 12:2.

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Is 26:19.

again; from the depths of the earth you will bring me up again. You will increase my greatness and comfort me again.”⁶ The revival here isn’t just talking about being revived in this life. He’s talking about resurrection. There’s a future eternal day of eternal comfort.

But how can these people have this kind of confidence? How, in the midst of all sorts of trials, when feeling tossed around by waves in a storm and crushed against the rocks, can these people have confident hope that the suffering doesn’t have the last word? Again, because of the prophesied serpent-crusher to come. And one of the most sobering and beautiful passages that prophecy the Messiah’s death and victory is found in the prophecy of Isaiah in chapter 53. In these words we hear prophecies of how he’s going to die, why he died and then also how he will live again! Listen carefully to the words as I read them to you: **Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.**⁷

How was the serpent-crusher going to bring victory and hope? Well, he died and was numbered with sinners. He made an offering for people’s guilt. This is what we focused on this past Friday night. God the Son did not run from pain or ignore reality. He faced it. And while he didn’t deserve punishment, he willingly took it on himself. And the Bible tells us that for the joy set before us he endured the cross! What was that joy? Well, Isaiah tells us some of it. He was numbered with sinners, and then he prays for them. How does a dead person pray? Well, Isaiah says that when he makes an offering for guilt, he will see his offspring. Wait a second, if you’ve been going through Genesis with us, you know this “offspring” is the seed of the woman. Jesus’ death, in taking the punishment in the place of sinners, will lead to his own resurrection. His days will be prolonged, and he will reign in such a way to give all the spoils of victory to anyone who trusts in him! Get this. Resurrection means nothing if Good Friday didn’t happen. But because of Jesus’ death, the resurrection means sin and death have been defeated! Jesus faced reality and grants victory and hope. Do you know this Savior? Have you seen your sinfulness and seen God’s love displayed in Jesus? Have you turned to Jesus for forgiveness of sins and eternal life and reconciliation with God? If so, then all the spoils of his victory are now yours, and he even prays for you right now! How amazing, amen?

What we see in the Scriptures is that the first Adam led all creation spiraling into brokenness and rebellion by *taking* from the tree of life and *gives* the curse. But, the second Adam, Jesus, *gives* himself on the tree and *receives* the curse. As a result, Jesus gives us back the fruit from the tree of life.

Even as I say all of this, some people might say, “This still sounds mythological or like a fairy tale.” And, I get it. But even the disciples wouldn’t have believed this if it weren’t true. The reality is that the Scriptures teach that there’s only ONE who could have done this. So, the fact that this is just an “odd” story makes sense. Only one is the Redeemer. Only one is the unique Savior. Only one is God in the flesh. There’s only one who conquers death.

⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 71:20–21.

⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Is 53:10–12.

As a result of Jesus, we are given immense hope in the New Testament to cling to. First Peter 1:3 says, **“³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you. . .”**⁸ Peter begins this letter with unfading, imperishable, living hope that’s given to us through Jesus’ resurrection. This is so powerful because if you read the book of 1 Peter, you realize he’s writing to people who are suffering in various ways, and he writes in such a way not to cause them to ignore the brokenness of the world they live in, but to give them hope and endurance in the midst of the suffering. Our Savior won and wins! Our Savior knows our suffering and has conquered it. Sin and death do not win. So, we can endure.

I think of Philippians 3:10-11, where the apostle Paul says, **“¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.”**⁹ In Paul’s daily living, he wants to know Jesus more and the resurrection power of Jesus so that he can endure suffering. Jesus’ resurrection gives us light in the midst of darkness. Hope in the midst of pain.

And then I think of 1 Corinthians 15, where Paul is writing about the blessings that come through Jesus’ resurrection. At the end of the chapter, we read this: **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. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.**¹⁰

If there is a God, and there is an eternity, and Jesus is the resurrected Savior, what is the point of life if you do not trust him and follow him? I think many people deal with that question of “What’s the point of life?” And in our day, where depression is on the rise, I think people have this gnawing realization that this world is broken, but they’re literally turning to drugs and other types of things to numb themselves. They know that their actions have lasting consequences, but they don’t know if they matter or not. And honestly, if you die and are without Christ, then your works really didn’t matter for eternity. But with Christ, when done in faith, all our actions (whether eating or drinking or suffering or enjoying) can be done for God’s glory – which matters for eternity. Why? Because Jesus died and took our sins on himself. Jesus rose from the dead – which confirmed that his sacrifice was accepted. And now, everyone who turns to Jesus has the same fate. We will die and rise! There is a steadfast hope. The spoils of victory are ours.

Do you believe? If you are a believer, do you have hope? Though our outer bodies are wasting away, our inner person is being renewed and someday, we’ll be home with the Lord. Because Jesus lived, died, and rose again, if you have faith in him, you can rejoice in these words from Revelation: **⁷ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.**¹¹

Jesus’ resurrection forces humanity to face reality and frees Christians to face reality with steadfast hope.

He is risen. He is risen indeed!

⁸ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Pe 1:3–4.

⁹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Php 3:10–11.

¹⁰ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Co 15:56–58.

¹¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Re 2:7.