Resurrecting Hope

## Hebrews 6:19

Happy Easter to you all. He is risen. Jesus is alive!

As I was reflecting on what I should talk about following that awesome presentation by the youth, the Holy Spirit gave me one word, and this one word has been resonating in my soul for over a week now. That one word is “hope” and so the title for today’s message is “Resurrecting Hope.”

The apostle Paul said this to the church in Philippians chapter 3, verse 10,

“I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead” (Philippians 3:10-11).

In other words, even though Paul had seen Jesus and talked to Jesus, there was something more that he wanted to know. There was something beyond what his five senses could tell him, something more that he wanted to experience, because he recognized that there was so much more. He had come face-to-face with the resurrected Jesus, but he realized that what he had experienced was only a glimpse of hope.

You see, he heard the stories from the other apostles who had spent years with Jesus, and they had seen Jesus walking on water, they saw the miracles, the healings, raising the dead and casting out of demons because they were there with him, they were there. And so, Paul says, I want to know him even more, he’s like,

“Last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born” (1 Corinthians 15:8).

He says, I was the last to see him, and I want to know him, I want to be fully acquainted with his nature, his character, and his miracles. Paul wanted something deeper, he wanted to understand, experience, and appreciate the power of his resurrection. He wanted to be able to identify with Jesus, to be like Jesus, knowing the influence that immortality should have on the mind, and even participating in the same kind of sufferings that Jesus endured.

Paul said, “I want to know” because the other apostles walked with Jesus for three years, they were taught by him, and they ministered to the crowds alongside of him. The bravest among them even saw Jesus die on the cross, and on Sunday all of them saw Jesus in the upper room after he was raised from the dead. They ate with him, they saw his wounds, they heard his command to go preach the good news to all people, and they did.

“The disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it” (Mark 16:20).

But Paul wasn’t there, he didn’t really know Jesus, he’d only briefly seen Jesus, he’d just had a short conversation with Jesus on the road to Damascus, and so he longed to know him more. In fact, he said, “I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (Philippians 3:8). And it is because of Paul’s incredible passion to know Jesus and his zeal to share the good news about Jesus that we are here today.

The Bible tells us in the book of Acts, that it was Paul who traveled with his companions beyond the boundaries of Asia and who preached the gospel in several large cities in Europe. And so, it was Paul who was instrumental in making the first great advance in fulfilling Jesus’ commission to go and make disciples of all nations. But those who made their living from selling idols and serving in the pagan shrines were not happy about Paul’s message of hope. He was destroying their livelihood and so they did not sit idly by; the magistrates were sympathetic and soon Paul found himself in prison, isolated, and suffering for sharing the good news about Jesus. In fact, it wasn’t just Paul, each of the apostles were tried and tested, facing rejection, sorrow, and suffering for the name of Jesus; but they were strengthened and found comfort in Jesus because they had a resurrected hope.

Historians tell us that by the end of the first century, persecution of Christians had increased everywhere, all of the apostles had been martyred, with the exception of John who was by now an old man. In fact, tradition tells us that they actually tried to kill John by boiling him alive, but he survived, and so he was exiled like a criminal to an island prison where he was left to die. It was there on the island of Patmos that we find God resurrecting hope with the revelation of Jesus.

Today, you and I are given the privilege of eavesdropping on this conversation between the Lord Jesus and the apostle John as Jesus gives a word of encouragement to the churches in this difficult time. In Revelation chapter 1, verse 10, John describes his experience saying,

“On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches…" (Revelation 1:10-11).

John says he turned around to see the voice that was speaking to him and saw someone that he described as being,

"Like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, his voice was like the sound of rushing waters…and his face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance” (Revelation 1:13-16).

“When I saw him,” John said in verse 17, “I fell at his feet as though dead, but he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever!” (Revelation 1:17-18).

And so, John is in chains, in exile on the island of Patmos for preaching the good news about Jesus, when Jesus himself shows up. John knows Jesus, but he doesn’t recognize him in his glory, and so Jesus comes alongside of him and gives him the revelation of himself as our conquering King of Kings and Lord of lords who has stepped from death and the grave into life eternal.

I love this because this is the God that we worship, he will come alongside of you and help you hold it together when everything is falling apart. Jesus met John in his crisis, in his time of suffering, and in the same way, he will be there for you when everyone else has walked away, when you are waiting for that phone call, or sitting in the emergency room, or standing in the unemployment line.

I’ve got to speak up for Jesus, because people will say a lot of things about Jesus, but they don’t know him. Jesus will never leave you nor forsake you, he will be there for you, and he will stand by your side in your hour of suffering. When they throw you in the furnace, he will get in the fire with you, he will walk right there beside you, because not only is he familiar with suffering, but there is a unique fellowship of sharing in his sufferings.

Jesus meets with John in the midst of great difficulty and suffering and gives him a message of hope. He talks to John about the churches that he has started and has him write letters to the churches, sharing them with us, so that we too may have resurrection hope.

Jesus wants to make sure that we know that he is the way, the truth, and the life, and that we have a living hope. John knows that, but Jesus wants to make sure that we know that, and so he had John write these things saying,

“These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31).

You see, John knows because he was there, he did life with Jesus, he drove out demons and performed many miracles. John saw Jesus suffer and die on the cross, he saw him many times after the resurrection, and he saw him ascend back into heaven. John was there and now he has seen the other apostles martyred, put to death for the name of Jesus, he has outlived them all and he himself is exiled on this barren island.

Now he gives us this revelation of Jesus, to give us resurrection hope, because the Bible says,

“Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17).

And so, it’s important that we hear the word of God, being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see, because we all need something in life to hold onto.

Jesus gives us a vision of resurrection hope, the hope of future glory, because it’s the resurrection that gives us hope when we are struggling, helping us to overcome life’s greatest challenges. He puts it out before us, giving us something to look forward to, as the Bible tells us,

“We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure” (Hebrews 6:19).

In other words, the hope of the resurrection is an anchor for your soul, helping you to hold on to your conviction that your best days are in front of you. This hope is an anchor you put your trust in, you’ve got to be sure of it, certain of what you don’t see, because that hope will keep your soul firm and secure.

You see, when you have hope, you have an anchor secured so that you can ride out the storms of life with confidence even though you are being buffeted by the wind and the waves. The turbulence of life can be like a dangerous sea, but the resurrection is hope, it’s an anchor for your soul. That’s why the prophet Isaiah said,

“Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come” (Isaiah 35:3-4).

“He will come to save you." Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert” (Isaiah 35:4-6).

“But only the redeemed will walk there, and the ransomed of the Lord will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away” (Isaiah 35:9-10).

You see, resurrection hope meets you where you are, keeping you firm and secure in whatever you are going through right now, because it is anchored in your future. And so, you’re able to have hope in your situation right now, hope for your problems right now, because everything God has prepared for you is ahead, it’s anchored in your future.

Some of you need resurrection hope right now, you need that hope anchored right now, because you are tired right now, distressed right now, discouraged right now, and you need to know that your best days are in front of you. You may not be able to see it yet, but there is a day coming when you will laugh again, you will dance and skip again, because there is hope ahead and it’s an anchor for your soul. You may have grown accustomed to thinking about what is or dwelling on your past, considering the mistakes that you’ve made, but God wants you to dream again, because he is resurrecting hope.

That’s why the Bible says,

"At least there is hope for a tree: If it is cut down, it will sprout again, and its new shoots will not fail… at the scent of water it will bud and put forth shoots like a plant” (Job 14:7-9).

And so, if God says there is hope for a tree, there is hope for you too.

I know that life can be difficult, but don’t let the devil take your hope, because God gives you hope to be the anchor for your soul. You see, hope will keep you alive, hope keeps you fighting, it keeps you going back, hope keeps you praying, it keeps you pushing ahead, because the only way you’re going to get through this is if you keep looking forward. There is no hope in the past, that’s why you’ve got to throw your anchor forward, you’ve got to get a vision for what God wants to do, you’ve got to get a strategy for your future, because resurrection hope is an anchor for your soul, firm and secure.

There are some of you here this morning and right now the winds may be blowing, the winds may be beating against your house, the storm may be raging in your family or in your workplace or in a relationship, and the Holy Spirit wants you to throw out your anchor, throw it forward and hold on. If you’ve got resurrection hope, you will no longer be tossed back and forth by the waves, because you’ve got an anchor that is immovable. The Bible says,

“In his great mercy God has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:3-4).

I pray that truth would settle down deep in your soul, because an inheritance is something which is passed down to you from your father. It’s a gift that you receive, a legacy that is given, it’s something you receive as a gift because of the family you were born into. In other words, your heavenly father has given you a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus. Our hope is planted securely in an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade.

“This hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure” (Hebrews 6:19).

Because of our resurrection hope we can overcome life’s greatest challenges.

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