

Easter Sunday

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Date: 01 April 2018

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning. Fok Wai Ji Phi Lok. Is that sort of right? Okay, great. Happy Easter for those of you who like me, aren't very good at Cantonese.

And welcome, welcome to our Easter service. If you are a guest of ours this morning, please make yourself right at home. It's so wonderful to have you with us as we celebrate what is the most wonderful and significant day in the Christian calendar.

This morning, across the globe, from Tokyo to Texas, from Canberra to Canada, from the southernmost tip of Africa all the way to the northernmost tip of Asia, followers of Jesus from every culture, every background, every language, every socioeconomic group are celebrating not just that Jesus died and he took our sin upon himself, not just the fact that God came to earth for us, but the fact that Jesus rose again physically in bodily form.

This morning, we celebrate that the grave couldn't hold him. This morning, we celebrate that the tomb couldn't contain him. This morning, we join with the angels who say, why look for the living amongst the dead?

He is not here. He has risen. And so this morning, we celebrate the risen Lord Jesus Christ. But the question is, what does that mean for us?

[1 : 3 6] How does this historic and most important day affect our lives tomorrow or on Tuesdays, you go to work? How does this day affect us when you're sitting in the doctor's room and you have got a medical report in front of you?

How does the resurrection of Jesus affect not just your eternity, but your career, your approach to money, your marriage? How does it affect you when you get paid a nice bonus?

How does the resurrection of Jesus affect your successes and your failures, your ambitions and your disappointments? This morning, we're gonna just, for 15 minutes, we're gonna look at this passage of scripture that was read to us.

And the scripture tells us two profound implications of the resurrection of Jesus. Two implications that speak to our deepest existential need, but two implications that also speak to the nitty-gritty days of life, the days when we're in the trenches, the realities of life.

And so if you've got the bulletin, look at the bulletin scripture with me. In verse 15, Paul is writing, and the apostle Paul writes to these Christians in this very superstitious city of Ephesus.

[2 : 5 4] And he writes that he's praying for them. And he's praying this prayer, and this is the prayer that he prays. He says, I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, may be opened, that you may know, so not just theoretically know, not just know in your head.

I pray that deep down in your heart, you will know something. And what does he want them to know? He wants them to know two things. He wants them to know the hope to which God has called them, and he wants them to know the great power that is promised to those that are followers of Jesus.

Okay? So look at what he says, verse 18. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, in order that you may know what is the hope to which God has called you. Friends, the resurrection of Jesus gives hope to the hopeless.

All of us know that hope has the ability to both stir you up and to crush you, right? You know, the Proverbs writes that the hope deferred or hope unrealized makes the heart sick.

Can anyone recognize that feeling? You hope for something only for it not to happen, and your heart feels sick, right? But why is that? Why does hope have this ability to both encourage us and to crush us?

[4 : 1 3] Well, the reason is because when we talk about hope, we talk about hope as something like a desired outcome that we hope is going to happen, but the outcome is very uncertain, right?

You hope to have good grades to get into university. You hope that your mother's cancer will go into remission, right? You hope that you will be made MD this year.

You hope that your child will get into med school and become a doctor. It's these things that are, it's the desired outcome, but the outcome is not necessarily certain.

Every year, I hope that my football team will win the league, and in my case, it's very uncertain, right, that that's going to happen. But we're all familiar with the uncertainty of hope.

Hope has the ability to disappoint us. But you know, when the Bible speaks about hope, it actually uses it in a very different way. The Bible talks about hope as something which is, the outcome is guaranteed.

[5 : 12] It's absolutely rock solid certain, but the path towards that outcome is very uncertain. Or the route, or if you're American, the route towards that outcome is very uncertain, right?

So think about it in this way. In our culture, we think about hope as like driving a car without a GPS system. You hope that you're going to get to the destination, but whether you get there or not is not very certain.

Okay? But when the Bible talks about hope, it talks about hope as being like somebody that's blind, but taking the hand of somebody trustworthy. The path in front of you is unknown.

It's going to require faith. It's going to require trust. It's going to require courage. But you can be guaranteed that the person is going to get you to your destination.

Okay? Does that make sense? Now, look at what Paul says here. He says, I pray that the eyes of your heart will be opened, that you may know, not just intellectually, that you may know in your heart what is the rock-solid hope to which God has called you because Jesus has risen from the dead.

[6 : 23] Now, why does Christ's resurrection give us this hope? Why can we bank our lives this rock-solid hope because Christ has risen from the dead?

How does Jesus rising from the dead give us this hope? In the book of 1 Corinthians, the apostle Paul writes, and he says this. He says, if Jesus didn't rise from the dead, well, our faith is actually in vain.

Our hope is worthless. We've got nothing to hope for because all we've got to live on is that which is around us, the circumstances, the situations. We hope that things will go well or maybe things won't go well.

Our faith is worthless and hopeless. It's all in vain. But then he says, but, says Paul, in fact, Christ did rise from the dead and is the first fruits of those who have died.

In other words, he's saying, Jesus died and he's gone to heaven, but he hasn't just gone to heaven. He's opened the way. He's paved the way for all those who trust in him and to hope in him that we will follow him to glory one day.

[7 : 31] In other words, Jesus didn't just die to save us from judgment from God one day. Jesus rose from the dead and his resurrection life is now available for you and I right here today, right now.

As you go to work this week, as you work on your marriage, as you worry about your children, something of Jesus' resurrection life and power is available to us today.

It's no secret that in Hong Kong there's a real sense of hopelessness. That right? People feel like the system is against them. The housing market, rental is so expensive, education, the pressures of work, these long hours that you have to work, the expectation of your bosses, the pressure to provide for your children everything that they need to succeed.

For many people in Hong Kong, the system, the sense that the system is against you renders so many people with a sense of hopelessness. Friends, I want to tell you this morning that the gospel gives us a hope.

It guarantees that there's an outcome. It guarantees that if you take the hand of the living God, you may have to trust Him. It doesn't guarantee that your life will be comfortable or easy.

[8 : 53] As you take His hand and He says, walk with me, there will be times where the route between here and glory is not comfortable or convenient. But there is a hope that the resurrected Jesus gives us that you can take His hand and He will not let you go.

There is a hope that in your heart of hearts, you can face the obstacles. You can face the storms in life. You may have storms around you. You can get up in the morning with hope in your heart because Jesus is alive and has risen from the grave.

And I want to ask us to think about the implications of this. Think about the implications in two ways. Firstly, think about the implications for hardship and trials, difficulty and suffering.

This week, I was listening to a podcast of a man called Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones. The podcast was about this man's life.

And Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones was a, he grew up in the United Kingdom and at 10 years old, his father had a shop front, right? So you know how in Hong Kong, the old shop front, there's a shop on the bottom and a house up on top.

[10:06] And so his father was a shopkeeper and they lived above the shop. And at 10 years old, one night, the family's all fast asleep in the house and something in the shop catches a light and the shop bursts into flame.

The flames engulf the shop and soon they engulf the whole house. And so the family realized what's going on and they escape. And they get out alive, but they've lost everything. Absolutely everything. This was in the early 1900s. They didn't have insurance, good policies in those days. And so the family loses completely everything. And they try and trade their way out, but things just get worse.

And so after a few years, the family is declared bankrupt. And the shame, they've got to sell everything and they've got nothing. But listen to what the podcaster wrote about this.

He said, these financial troubles, this frowning providence was actually hiding behind it all a smiling face because the financial losses would become the impetus to push Martin Lloyd-Jones into becoming the man that he had later become.

[11:17] You see what he's saying? Even in the midst of great hopelessness, in the midst of great despair, as this family lost everything, behind all that hardship was the smiling face of the sovereign God that knew what he was doing and was using that moment to forge this person to becoming one of the greatest leaders in the last century.

I'll tell you more about him in a second. Well, consider the apostle Paul. Paul is in prison and things aren't going well. He's getting beaten in jail.

And what does he do? He rejoices. He rejoices at the trials that he's facing because in the midst of the trials, he sees the fingerprints of God. He knows that God is in the trials and God is there with him even in the prison.

He says that the prison has allowed him to know God deeper, to find out something about the nature and the character of God. Even as he's being beaten and mocked, Paul finds reason to rejoice.

And he writes this. He says, even though my body is wasting away, my body is becoming frail, even in my old age, I'm not as strong as I used to be.

[12:27] He says, my inner self is being renewed, made new every day. These light and momentary troubles that I face are preparing for me an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

You see, others might have looked at Paul as this defeated preacher, this man who's in the misery of a Roman dungeon jail, being beaten, left for dead.

They could have thought, what a waste of a life. But Paul knew that because Jesus is alive and is on the throne, that even his dying in the dungeon is not the end of the story.

That Christ is preparing for him an eternal glorious home. And Paul knows that the route between here and there may not be easy. It may be challenging. There may be obstacles, but he knows that the dungeon is not the final word on his life.

He knows that there is a word that speaks a better word than even what the Roman prisoners and authorities can throw at him. There is a word that says, Jesus was dead and now he is alive and I'm preparing a home for you.

[13:30] Friends, I'm not sure what challenges you face. There might be some really tough situations. I'm not minimizing the pain of that. Friends, I want to tell you this morning that in spite of the challenges you face, in spite of the hardships, in spite of the trials, the final word in your life is not what is happening now.

If you are a Christ follower, if you are in Jesus and Jesus is in you, the final word of your life is that Christ has died and has risen again and he's pouring his resurrection life into you and therefore there is hope.

The resurrection promises us hope in the midst of trials and hardships. But think about how the resurrection also not only defines our trials and our hardships, the resurrection hope also redefines our successes and what's important in life.

In our city, success is measured or defined by accolades, by applause, by affirmation, and by financial reward.

But for the Christian, our hope is not found in the applause or the affirmation of people around us. For the Christian, our hope is found in the affirmation of the one true God for whom we were made and with whom we will live for all eternity.

[14:53] You know, Martin Lloyd-Jones, this man I was telling you about who at 10 years old, his family home was burnt down. When the family lost everything, he realized his parents couldn't afford to send him to school and so he studied extra hard and he won a scholarship to a very good school and at the school he did very well.

And so at 16 years old, he got admitted, which was a very young age, he got admitted to the top medical school in London, St. Bartholomew's Hospital. So at 16 years old, he goes to medical school and there he just excels.

He does exceptionally well and in fact, in his final years of study, the doctor by the name of Sir Thomas Horder, who was the king's physician, noticed Martin Lloyd-Jones and actually in his final exam, Martin Lloyd-Jones diagnosed a patient with something that this Dr. Horder had missed. And so Dr. Horder, before the results of his exams are out, Dr. Horder approaches him and says, I want you to be my clinical assistant. And so here at the age of 22, Martin Lloyd-Jones, is the clinical assistant to the king's physician.

And over the next few years, he wins some more research scholarships. And eventually at 25, Martin Lloyd-Jones opens his own practice on Harley Street.

[16:15] And Harley Street is in London where all the top physicians are, the cream of the crop. And so 25 years old, he is tipped to become the next physician to the king of England.

He's got a private practice on Harley Street. Dr. Horder has introduced him to the wealthiest and the most upper class of London society. He is being a doctor to members of the royal family, parliamentarians, the upper class of society.

He's made it, he's absolutely had it made. 25 years old, he's got everything that he wants in front of him. And 18 months later, the age of 26, he walks away from it all and he decides to become a minister in a small farming community in the south of Wales.

Here was a man who had it all. In the eyes of society, his hope and therefore, his life was completely set. He had the money, he had the career, he had the reputation, he had everything going for him.

But because of the hope of the gospel, because of the hope of the resurrection, he knew that his hope wasn't defined in the things that society said gave him hope. He knew that his success wasn't in the eyes of society.

[17:27] He knew that his hope was in something far deeper, something far more profound. And so he gave up this high-flying career with parliamentarians and royal family to go and minister to a bunch of farming folk in the south of Wales.

Friends, the good news of the gospel is that because Jesus is alive and he's real, he's making himself known to those who love and trust him, this redefines our success and what's important in life.

You know, in one of Paul's prison letters, Paul wrote lots of letters in prison. In one of his prison letters, he writes this. He says, as a young man, I had it all going for me.

I had the career, I had the money, I had society's approval, I had the wife and three kids, I had the car, I had everything going for me.

And then he writes this. He says, but what I had, I've now written off as rubbish. All these things are now considered rubbish compared to the surpassing worth of knowing the resurrected Jesus Christ in order that I may gain him and know him and know the power of his resurrection.

[18:36] Friends, what the resurrection of Jesus declares to us is that this life is not your final resting place and therefore the most important things in life are not gained or found by hard work.

They're not secured by being the brightest or the smartest. They're not given to you by opportunities or money or connections. What the resurrection tells us is that the most important things in life are found by following the path of Jesus, of dying to ourselves, of picking up our cross, following Christ

to Calgary and there we find resurrection life.

Friends, this is the hope of the gospel that Jesus has risen and if you trust him, Christ is in you and you are in him. Christ, your hope of glory. Second thing is this.

So two things the resurrection gives us. The resurrection gives us a hope. Friends, as you go to work this week, the resurrection gives you hope. Maybe your boss is moaning at you.

Maybe you make a mistake. Maybe you think you're about to get fired. Maybe your marriage is difficult. Maybe parenting is difficult. Maybe you've hit a roadblock in your career and you don't know which way to turn.

[19 : 48] Friends, this world does not have the final word in your life. The resurrected Lord Jesus Christ has the final word in your life and you can hope in him. You can bank your life in him. Second thing is this.

The resurrection gives us a power. Look at what Paul writes here. He says, I pray that the eyes of your heart will be opened that you may know what is the hope to which he's called you.

Okay, we spoke about that. Verse 19, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power towards those who believe. The same power that God worked in Christ Jesus when he raised him from the dead and seated him in the right hand in the heavenly places.

One of the reasons why in Hong Kong people feel so hopeless is because we feel powerless, right? We feel like the system is against us.

We feel like the rent is just so high. We feel like things are so expensive and you just can't beat the system. But some of us also feel powerless because we can't change our own lives.

[20 : 51] The patterns of behavior, the addictions that we feel, it's like we try everything to become the people we so desperately want to become and we just can't change our lives. But here in this passage, Paul tells us that the Christian, the life that God calls us to is not by summoning up or working extra hard or trying extra hard.

That actually, there's a power in the resurrection of Jesus that changes your life beyond what you are able to do through the power of the Holy Spirit. I don't know if you're hearing anything but I'm trying my best, right?

We're almost done, okay? We're almost done. You know, Martin Lloyd-Jones, that medical doctor, right? He becomes a medical doctor. He's tipped to become the next king's physician.

At 26 years old, he packs it all up to become a minister to a farming community in the south of Wales. Do you know why he did that? The reason he did it was because as a medical student, he had to often work with the poorest and the most uneducated in London society.

And he found out that there was this powerlessness to overcome the patterns of behavior in their life. These people that as a med student he had to work with, they just couldn't break the patterns of behavior in their life.

[22 : 20] And he assumed that the reason was because they were uneducated, they didn't have access to opportunities, their poverty had trapped them in a lifestyle and they were powerless to overcome it.

But then a few years later, he becomes doctor to members of the royal family, to parliamentarians, to the most powerful, wealthy, and the elites of London society.

And he finds out that the elites of London society struggle with the exact same thing that the very uneducated and the poor did. He realized that if you have nothing or if you have everything, both people are powerless to change the patterns of behavior in their life.

And so one day he wakes up with a sense of hopelessness. He says, God, what is the point? If you've got everything in the world, you still are powerless to change your life. If you've got nothing, you are powerless to change your life.

Where is the hope for these people? And he realized that there was a power. There is a power that's not found in them. There's a power that's found outside of them. And so he decides to become a doctor, not of medicine, but a doctor of souls.

[23 : 28] And he leaves it all and he packs it up to go to the south of Wales. And on the south of Wales, there are people there that thought they could never change. There was one man that was so angry, it's such an anger problem, that one day his dog irritates him.

He brings out a knife and he hacks his dog to pieces out of anger. He walks into Martin Lloyd-Jones preaching one day and he's a changed man. The power of the gospel changed him.

One day a lady comes into his services, she's a median, a spiritist, she helps people speak to spirits, and she comes into his meetings and she says, I know power, I work with power. There's a power in that meeting that I've never encountered before, but it's a different kind of power. It's a clean power. I want that power. And her life changes around.

After 12 years, Martin Lloyd-Jones leaves Wales and he goes back to London to work with the high elites of society. And there, men and women that were trapped in the power of sin that they couldn't break free, their lives are turned around as they encounter the power of the gospel.

[24 : 32] Friends, as I look at the holiness and the beauty and the majesty of Jesus, and I look at my own life, I'm tempted to become overawed with a sense of hopelessness.

How is it that someone like me, someone as rotten as me, could ever please my God, my maker, how is it that I can ever live up to what he did on the cross for me?

Friends, apart from the power of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, what hope is there? But I have hope when I look at the power of the gospel because if Jesus can change people like me, if Jesus can change people like Saul of Tarsus, if Jesus can change millions of people around the world, friends, there is a hope in the midst of the most hopelessness because Christ is powerful. Friends, when I get overwhelmed by the expectations and the pressures of life and what people expect, it can be exhausting until I recognize that my identity and my hope and my security is not what people think of me.

It's not what I can do or what I can achieve. My hope and my identity is in the power of the living God who was once contained in the grave but is no longer there. Who was once nailed to the cross but he's no longer there.

[25 : 57] My hope is in the power of the risen, resurrected Christ who is seated in the heavens. Friends, this Easter, I pray, I pray that we will lift our eyes off of ourselves.

I pray that this Easter we will lift our eyes to the heavens where Christ is seated. We'll find our hope there. I pray that this Easter we will know that if you're in Christ, Christ is in you by the power of the Spirit and the power of God that raised Jesus from the dead is alive and is in you.

Friends, if you've come to place your hope and your faith in Christ, Christ's death and resurrection is not just a fact of history. It's not just a story from the Bible. It's a power that gives you hope in the midst of the most hopeless of situations because Christ's word speaks a better word than everything else around you.

Romans 15, 13 says this, May the God of all hope fill you with joy and peace in believing so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

Let's pray together. Jesus Christ, this morning we celebrate the most glorious good news that has come to mankind.

[27 : 16] Not only did you die in the cross for us, not only did you take our shame and our guilt, not only did you take our sin that separates us from you, but Jesus, you rose again.

Jesus, today you are seated in the heavens above all rule and all authority. Jesus, today your power is at work in those that have come to know you by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Oh God, I pray, won't you infuse our hearts with a hope in the midst of great hopelessness? God, I pray, today may the power of the Holy Spirit come upon us, God.

may you change us, may you give us fresh hope, God. God, I pray for those of us that feel hopeless. Jesus, won't you open the eyes of our hearts to see you and to know the hope to which you've called us.

God, may you give us a new identity this morning. And God, I pray that your Holy Spirit will be at work in us. God, I pray this morning, may we take your hand knowing that for certain you'll get us to our destiny.

[28 : 19] knowing that we can bank our lives on you. God, we know it'll require trust, it'll require great faith, may require some courage.

Jesus, this morning we take your hand and we walk with you banking our lives on you, our resurrected and living King. We pray these things in your wonderful and powerful name.

Amen.