

# Resurrection Hope

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[0:00] Amen. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our strength and Redeemer.

! In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Amen. I must first say it has been such a tremendous joy and blessing for Karen and I to have spent this weekend together with many of you and others who were not able to be part of the parish retreat.

We're thrilled that you're here this morning. So it's just Father Ife, again, I want to thank you and the Wardens and Vestry and this parish family for your tremendous, generous gift of hospitality and your faithfulness and all that you and this parish are doing in being faithful to our Lord and being faithful to his church.

Amen. Back in 2003, Dan Brown wrote a book that would become a bestseller.

It was called The Da Vinci Code. And about three years later, in 2006, it was made into a blockbuster movie. So probably many of you saw it or read the book.

[1:29] But if you didn't, the whole premise was that there was this secret religious society that had been operating for 2,000 plus years, closely guarding a secret that the church did not want to get out.

Supposedly, in some of Leonardo da Vinci's famous paintings, there were clues in the paintings pointing towards this society and where they could be located.

The bottom line in this secret that was to be kept at all cost was that Jesus didn't really die on the cross, that he was not resurrected.

They argued that, in fact, or tried to make the point that rather than dying, Jesus may have been greatly hurt, but he didn't die.

And in fact, he recovered and married Mary Magdalene and they went off and had a family. And then ultimately, he died sometime later. In other words, denying the resurrection.

[2:56] It made for a great movie, a great book. And for people that are not familiar with the gospel or perhaps even those who are but are not sure about it, it could raise a lot of questions as to whether or not, well, did Jesus really die?

First of all, was there a Jesus? And if he did, did he die? And what's the big deal about the resurrection? Why is it so important? It can create a lot of problems.

As we heard in this morning's gospel passage from Luke, Dan Brown wasn't the first one to question or to suggest that the resurrection didn't really happen or that there isn't, in fact, a resurrection.

Then in the gospel passage this morning, we're told that there were some Sadducees who came to Jesus and they wanted to pose a question to him. Now, we hear a lot about the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and they were some of the leaders within the Hebrew faith at this time, very much opposed to one another in terms of some of their doctrinal beliefs, but very much in line with one another in terms of seeing Jesus as a threat and wanting to destroy him.

And so they each, in their different ways, would try to come up with ways to try to discredit him, to destroy him. And this particular day was no different.

[4:37] The Sadducees decided to pose a hypothetical question to our Lord. And they said, Teacher, Moses taught us that if a man's brother dies and leaves no children, then his brother is to marry the widow and produce children for him so that it could continue.

They were actually referencing a passage that is found in the book of Deuteronomy, which states, If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family.

Her husband's brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her. The first son she bears will carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel.

This was one of the provisions that the Jewish people had because maintaining family lines was very important. Even to our day, I can remember being very relieved when Karen gave birth to our son Christopher, thinking that no longer is it my responsibility to carry on the family line, to carry on the family name of love.

It's up to him. And so there's that sense that continues on. But anyway, that was important to them. But that really wasn't what they were concerned about.

[6 : 19] They came up with this hypothetical situation that said there was not just one brother, but there was actually seven brothers. And the first brother married this person and he died before they had children.

And then in keeping with Moses' law, then the second brother married and he too died without having children. It doesn't say this in here, but I'm thinking that if I was the third or fourth brother, I'd start to be getting a little nervous, seeing how this seems to be playing out.

And if I was the fifth or sixth brother, I'd make sure my will was in place because it wasn't looking good. But anyway, back to this theoretical situation.

In the resurrection, Jesus, or they said, ultimately all seven brothers died without producing a child. In the resurrection, whose wife will she be?

It's important to remember that the Sadducees, one of the things that set them apart from the Pharisees, the Pharisees believed in the resurrection and believed in angels.

[7 : 34] The Sadducees did not. So they were trying by presenting this to make their case, given this hypothetical situation that was so preposterous that it would disprove the whole notion of resurrection.

And so they presented it to Jesus, not trying to really get an answer, but essentially to stump the dummy. Not that Jesus is dumb because we know he's not.

But they were trying to prove once and for all that the resurrection is really, it's not true. It doesn't happen. Unlike some of Jesus' other encounters with the Sadducees as well as Pharisees, where he sometimes comes back and is quite critical of them, his response this time took a little bit different tone.

In fact, he was gentler than he might have been, rather than calling them a bunch of hypocrites, which they were, but rather he actually began to teach them, or attempt to teach them, about the resurrection and about marriage itself.

First, he started off by saying that people in this life, men and women in this life, they marry and procreate and have children, but in the resurrected life, those who are considered worthy of taking part in the age to come, keep in mind that qualifier, that those that God finds worthy, and later Jesus will make it apparent how it is that someone can be worthy, not because of anything that they do, but because of that which he will do, that which he did on the cross.

[9 : 44] But it is making the point that not everybody's going to make it into heaven. He goes on to say that in the resurrection from the dead, those who are found worthy to be resurrected and to share in God's eternal kingdom, that there is no need for marriage.

And some of us that are married and dearly love our husbands or wives, we may be thinking, well, wait just a minute. When I go to heaven, I want to be with them. Well, we will be with them, but our relationships will be different.

And there will not be the need for a marital relationship as there is in this world. And so he's teaching a little bit about that. And we will recognize one another and we will love one another and be in relation, but not in the same way that husbands and wives are in this world.

So he goes on to make that point. And one of the ways that he is trying to make the point is to actually take them back to the Pentateuch.

Now, one of the distinct things about the Sadducees is that they only saw the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, Deuteronomy, they only saw those five books as being authoritative.

[11 : 17] Anything after that didn't really have authority as far as they were concerned. And Jesus knew that. And because they had not been able to see anything in their reading of those first five books that made any reference to the resurrection, they said it can't possibly be true because they didn't see anything that would suggest that there was a resurrection.

But Jesus wanted to point their eyes, to open their eyes, to open their minds to something that was in fact there that while it may not have specifically said resurrection, it suggested that reality. And he brought them back to the Exodus, or before the Exodus actually, when Moses first encountered God on top of the mountain when he was taking care of his father-in-law's sheep. And you remember the story of the burning bush. And Moses saw this bush burning, but the miraculous thing was it wasn't being consumed. And so he went over to investigate it and to look at it, and then he heard God the Father speaking, take off your sandals, you're standing on holy ground.

And he said, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

[12:47] And Moses became terrified, fell on his face, realizing that he was in the midst of a holy, divine encounter. But Jesus was sharing this passage with them because he wanted them to see what they had failed to see up to this point.

He said, when God the Father spoke to Moses and identified himself, he said, I am the God, I am, meaning present tense, the God of Abraham, your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

But keep in mind that at this time, each of these three people, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had been dead for hundreds of years. So God wasn't saying, I was the God of them, but he was saying, I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

They are still alive. There is a resurrection. And so Jesus was trying to help them see that which they had missed, that he was not the God of the dead, but rather, he was the God of the living. There are other Old Testament references to the resurrection, not again using the word, but would suggest the possibility of the resurrection.

[14:33] One of which was in our Old Testament passage that we just heard a few moments ago from Job. Remember, Job had a pretty rough time. He had lost his family.

He had lost his home. His life had been turned upside down. It was not a good day for him. And yet, despite all of those things that could have turned him against God, and in fact, at this point, he still believed that God was the one that was responsible for all of his life being ripped apart from him. But his faith in God, his love for God, he proclaimed what we just heard a few moments ago. I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end, he will stand on the earth.

And after my skin has been destroyed, after I've died, yet in my flesh I will see God.

I will see him with my own eyes, and I, not another, how my heart yearns within me.

[15:47] Again, it doesn't use the word resurrection, but that's exactly what he's talking about. He recognizes that the day will come when he will die, and his body will decompose as the natural aspect of our human bodies once they cease living.

But he knows that in God's time, when the Lord comes to the earth, that he will, in fact, rise again, that his body will rise.

So that's one reference. Again, that was not in the Pentateuch, so they didn't have to worry about that as far as they were concerned. But there was another reference as well, found in Isaiah, the prophet Isaiah, where he said, But your dead will live.

Lord, their bodies will rise. Let those who dwell in the dust wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning.

The earth will give birth to her dead. their bodies will rise. Again, referencing, making, pointing towards the truth, the reality of the resurrection.

[17:06] So far, we've heard from the Old Testament passage. But it's not just the Old Testament where references are made to this possibility.

But in the New Testament, we hear that it is a reality. First and foremost, you remember that Jesus, on three separate occasions, as he was trying to prepare the apostles for what was to happen to him when they went to Jerusalem.

He said that the Son of Man, speaking about himself, the Son of Man is to be betrayed. He is to be arrested.

He is to be tortured. He is to be nailed to a cross. He is to die. But on the third day, he will rise again.

At least three separate times, Jesus spoke about that which was to happen to him. But ultimately, despite his death, he would rise to new life, having conquered the power of sin, conquering the

power of death.

[18:31] Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians, he is writing to some of them who had come to believe in Jesus and yet, like some of the Sadducees, they had not yet accepted the reality of Jesus' resurrection.

And so he, in his first letter to the Corinthians, the 15th chapter, beginning with the 12th verse, he writes, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. Your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

Then those also who have fallen in sleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

Again, that's 1 Corinthians 15, 12 and 16 to 20.

[19:51] He starts pointing out the importance and the necessity of the resurrection. not just for Jesus but through Jesus for all of us.

John MacArthur, a great biblical scholar, he wrote that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the single greatest event in the history of the world.

It is so foundational to Christianity that no one who denies it can be a true Christian. Christian.

There are a lot of folks, tragically, who identify themselves as Christians but don't really believe in the resurrection.

And even more horrifying is that there are some of our bishops, not our bishops, but some bishops in parts of the church and clergy who are supposed to be bringing people closer to God, closer to Christ.

they don't really believe in the resurrection. Fortunately, within the Anglican Church of North America, we have faithful bishops who do believe and stand up and hold firm in the faith.

[21:12] But John MacArthur goes on to say that a person who believes in a Christ who was not raised believes in a powerless Christ, a dead Christ.

If Christ did not rise from the dead, then no redemption was accomplished at the cross, and your faith is worthless.

Why is the resurrection so important? As he points out, it is essential to our Christian faith.

It is at the center of our Christian faith. And as Paul stated earlier in his letter to the Corinthians, if it didn't happen, then we of all people are most to be pitied.

It's important because the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is the center of the Christian faith.

Because Christ rose from the dead, as he promised, Christ, we know that what he said is true and that he is, in fact, God.

[22:30] The resurrection affirms the truthfulness of Jesus' life and words. The resurrection confirms Jesus' unique authority to say, I am the resurrection and the life.

The one who believes in me will live even though he die. It's John 11, 25. Because he rose, he lives and represents us before God.

Because he rose and defeated death, we know that we also will be raised. Christ's resurrection guaranteed both the promise to us and his authority to make that promise.

Many of the Bible scholars that were involved in the NIV affirm this truth that was just stated.

Billy Graham, I'm sure he throughout his many years of faithful ministry proclaiming the gospel around the world, I'm sure on numerous occasions he was asked, what proof do we have that the resurrection really occurred?

[23:59] And he said that there is more evidence that Jesus rose from the dead than there is that Julius Caesar ever lived or that Alexander the Great died at the age of 33.

Those are all facts that can be discovered, but he is saying that there's more evidence than these two facts that the world has come to agree upon that Jesus in fact did rise from the dead.

I don't have time to get into all of those. I came across another quote of someone speaking about the truthfulness of our Lord's resurrection and why he believes it to be true and this is someone that you've actually heard commented on the past couple of days by my wife Karen who is very much involved in the Colson Center and that ministry and this was Chuck Colson.

You might remember that Chuck Colson was one of the aides to President Nixon and he got caught up in Watergate and ended up going to prison as a result of that.

But in talking about the resurrection it was in prison that he came to believe in Christ and it turned his life around and he dedicated the rest of his life to trying to preach the truth of the gospel and to bring other people into that truth.

[25 : 33] But he commented, he said, I know that the resurrection is in fact, is a fact and Watergate proved it to me. How?

Because 12 men testified that they had seen Jesus raised from the dead then they proclaimed that truth for 40 years, never once denying it.

Everyone was beaten, tortured, stoned, and put in prison. They would not have endured that if it weren't true.

Watergate embroiled 12 of the most powerful men in the world. and they couldn't keep a lie for three weeks. You're telling me 12 apostles could keep a lie for 40 years?

Absolutely impossible. Actually, he points to something that really is one of the greatest evidences of the reality of the resurrection.

[26 : 47] resurrection. Each one of them were there. Each one of them walked side by side with our Lord Jesus Christ for over three years.

Each one of them followed him to Jerusalem. Each one of them witnessed his brutal execution on the cross. Each one of them saw the spear thrust into his side as evidence that he was really dead. Each one of them at one time or another in fear up to this point had run away.

in fact, all of this they were watching from a distance. You might remember Peter who had proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah and said that, Lord, others may betray you, but I will never betray you.

But when push came to shove and Jesus had been arrested and was being tortured, then Peter in a moment of weakness actually did betray our Lord.

[28 : 03] despite his promise not to betray him, that he was willing to die for him, Jesus told him, Peter, before the cock crows three times, you will have denied me.

Before the cock crows twice, you will have denied me three times. And that in fact happened. So, prior to the resurrection, despite what they said, they, in their weakness, were afraid and in Peter's case, betrayed our Lord and the others in different ways, they too.

But after the resurrection, after Jesus appeared to them on that first Easter, and they saw him, they saw the wounds in his hands, and the wound in his side, God.

And Thomas, you might remember, he wanted evidence, and Jesus said, Thomas, when they met up, he said, Thomas, put your fingers in the wounds in my hand, put your hand in the wound in my side, it is I.

Now, believe. And they did. And they Ultimately, after encountering the risen Lord Jesus Christ, and being filled with the power of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, their lives were never the same.

[29 : 36] No longer would they walk away in fear, even when confronted by those who didn't want to hear the gospel, even when arrested, beaten, tortured, as Chuck Coulson said, despite all of what happened to them, they did not deny the resurrection.

And every one of them, with the exception of John, who was sent off to an island, all the others died martyrs deaths. They didn't even unto death, they didn't deny it.

They knew the truth, they knew the reality. Lee Strobel, he was a devout atheist.

He was a lawyer, he was a journalist, and he took it upon himself to prove that Jesus and the resurrection were all a fake.

And he went to great lengths to try to disprove this, only to discover in his attempts to prove that it was a lie, he discovered the reality of the truth.

[30 : 59] One of the interviews that he did as he went about, he interviewed an individual, he interviewed J.P.

Moreland, he was the author of scaling the secular city, and J.P. Morgan said something similar to what I just referenced, he said that the disciples were in a unique position to know whether the resurrection happened, and they went to their deaths proclaiming it was true.

Nobody knowingly and willingly dies for a lie. But Lee Strobel, in his book, The Case for Christ, he made the comment that he said that in the light of the convincing facts I had learned during my investigations in the face of this overwhelming evidence, avalanche of evidence in the case of Christ, the great irony was this, it would require much more faith for me to maintain my atheism than to trust in Jesus of Nazareth.

He went from a non-believer to one of the great believers of our generation and one of the great proclaimers of the gospel. He encountered the risen Lord Jesus Christ, and through these investigations, and the Lord made it apparent to him that what he was trying to disprove was in fact true.

Tim Keller, again one of the great theologians of our time and popular author, he said in regard to the resurrection, he said, if Jesus rose from the dead, then you have to accept all that he said.

[33:03] If he didn't rise from the dead, then why worry about anything of what he said. The issue on which everything hangs is not whether or not you like his teaching, that being Jesus' teaching, but whether or not he rose from the dead.

you could carry that further to say that there's much in the holy scriptures and we like to cherry pick the parts that we like and sort of disregard the parts that we don't.

But he's challenging us here. We talk about the Bible as being the word of God, the living word of God. In fact, in John's opening passage, he refers to Jesus as being the word of God.

So in essence, all that we read in holy scripture is the word of God. And we have to decide whether it's true or not.

And as he points out, if in fact, Jesus rose from the dead as we proclaim, then we have no choice to accept the reality of that which he speaks to us through the holy scriptures.

[34:30] There may be parts that we don't like, but we can't ignore it. The chief priest, at the time of Jesus' resurrection, resurrection, they knew how powerful it would be and how damning to them it would be if Jesus, in fact, rose.

And they went after his death. The chief priest went to Pilate and said, I remember that he spoke about his pending death and that on the third day he would rise again.

And I'm concerned that some of his followers will come and steal his body away and then try to proclaim that he rose from the dead.

There are a lot of people that believe that even to this day. But Pilate said, seal the tomb.

And put a guard in front of it to protect it. And we know the Easter story. We know that despite their attempts to keep Jesus from rising, to keep anyone from taking his body, to suggest that he rose, they did put guards in front, they did seal the tomb, and yet God could not be stopped.

[36:08] Our Lord Jesus Christ on the third day, just as he promised, just as the prophets of old had prophesied, he did, in fact, rise from the dead.

And in rising, he conquered the power of sin and death. And he invites us into that resurrected life, no longer enslaved, by the power of sin and death in our lives, but set free to be the people of God that he created us to be.

Is the resurrection important? You bet it is. Is it true? You bet it is. As Billy Graham pointed out, there's more evidence to point to the truth and the reality of the resurrection than there is to deny it. Brothers and sisters in Christ, we have been blessed by God to be called his children, to be called into communion with him, to receive the promise of his death, the promise of a resurrected life, sharing in his heavenly kingdom.

Even though we will die in this world, we will rise to new life when our Lord returns. We know that good news.

[37:32] The tragedy is much in the world, many in the world don't know it or have forgotten or refuse to believe. As we have spent these last several days or a couple of days talking about the great commission and the great commandment and the great commission to love God first and foremost, to love our neighbor as ourselves, and then to go forth into the world, taking that love out in response to our Lord's command.

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing in the name of the Father and to the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them all that I have taught you, remembering that I am with you even to the end of the age.

Whether lay or ordained, the marching orders that Jesus gave to the apostles, he gives to us. We have news, good news, the greatest news that the world could ever hear, that people are in desperate need of hearing.

The Lord has entrusted us, he has invited us to share in his ministry. What an awesome privilege. And yet, so oftentimes, we fail to recognize it for what it is.

We sometimes, as was pointed out yesterday in some of the conversation, we get so caught up in our individual lives that we can't really see beyond ourselves. The Lord promised that he would

return at the end of time.

[39:09] And there is more and more and more evidence every day that the end of time, his return is growing ever closer. And perhaps our generation may in fact be the generation in which he returns.

Whether we are in that generation or not, the reality is he is coming back. And the reality is that if people don't come to know him as Lord and Savior, then they will not be able to be set free of their sin.

They will in fact be destined to a life of destruction. salvation. Jesus said, if you love me, you'll keep my commandments.

His last commandment to you and me, to all people, was go tell the world what you've seen, what you have experienced.

Tell the world the reality that there is a God, an almighty, all-powerful, all-loving God that loves us beyond our wildest imaginations, that wants only the very best for us.

[40:24] But the only way we can receive that is to be open to his presence. I pray that the Lord will bless each of you as you go forth into the world sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, sharing the reality of the resurrection.

While Dan Brown and others may suggest that it didn't really happen, we know it did, and it makes all the difference. The Lord bless you richly as you help bring that reality into the world.

[illegible]