

# A living hope

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Preacher: Chris Lowe

[ 0 : 00 ] Adam, thank you. Do you know if Jesus was not raised from the dead, then you and I would! have no real hope for the future and life would be a complete dead end. I did something a little bit! strange this week. I found this and I put it in a bag. Does anybody know what it is? Put your hand up and tell me.

Anyone know what's in here? It's pretty hard to see it from over there. JJ, any thoughts? What's that? Dirt. It is kind of dirt. Yeah, it is. It's dust. It's what I found in our Hoover bag at home and I picked it all out, all this dust. And so this stuff that I hoovered up at home, I'm sorry to kind of show you this in a sense. Do you know what it's made of? Do you know what this comes from? Anybody know what this all is?

Thomas? Our skin. That's right. It's a little bit of our skin and there's pollen and sand and bits of insects and bits of material from your carpet and sofa and there's bits of human skin and hair in there. It's from my vacuum cleaner and it's dirt and it's really it's dying in dead little bits of the world around us. And I just want to show you that because in a sense it's obvious to us but this is because we live in a world that is decaying and dying. Not just true for our world, it's true for us as humans as well. And when we're young we have lots and lots of energy and lots of plans and all of life in front of us and very quickly that passes and we get older and more wrinkled and then we perish. I found some pictures from around the place. These are some school children from 1900 in Toft, not far from Cambridge. Just some little boys and girls with the whole of their life in front of them in 1900.

But none of them are alive anymore. And then this is, well you can't quite see it, it's quite faded. This is the Queen's College football team from 1881 and 82, or was it 1901 and 1902. And these are some very strong and fit young men with the whole of their lives in front of them. But I mention these two pictures because now those people and the children and the very strong football players, they are gone and they're forgotten, they're dead, they're dust and no one remembers them. A bit like these pictures really, faded. And that is the world that we live in, isn't it? We live in a world covered by the shadow of death, a world in which we perish and spoil and fade. And life like that in our world, it's not just the way it is.

[ 2 : 50 ] It is God's doing. Because in the Garden of Eden at the beginning, when Adam and Eve first turned away from God and first sinned, God cursed them and he said to them, dust you are and to dust you will return.

And it says in the New Testament in Romans chapter 6, the wages of sin is death. So we live in and we are part of a world that has turned away from the living God.

And death, in a sense, wonderfully is not just how things are. This is God having said, you will perish and spoil and fade, you will die. I just mentioned that briefly this morning. Think about that a bit too much. It'll make you really sad. It might even make you scared. And in fact, and adults know this, we live in a society almost so scared of this kind of thing that we do everything we can to ignore death. I was reading a book a while back. It was actually a book about depression. And the writer says about how fearing death shapes us. Quote, age defying lotions, why do we pay so much for them?

The worship of youth and the pushing aside of the aged. Why do we do that? Push the old to one side and try and dress young. Free floating anxiety, why so worried all the time? Panic attacks, type A personality, desperately trying to compete and achieve. Boredom, the obsession with health, death, the status of doctors, purposelessness, hopelessness and most fears, you will find death and the fear of death right below the surface. Do you recognise any of that? Can I ask this morning? I do. And in a sense, it's understandable because it's right to be petrified about returning to dust. Even more so when you realise you die under God's curse, being paid the wages of sin with a curse

that lasts for eternity. I have to mention that this morning because that is one reason why the resurrection of Jesus is so important and so wonderful for us. Because through the resurrection we are offered a living hope. Listen to this verse again, these couple of verses from 1 Peter. What does God give us? In his great mercy he 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. It says here we can have a living, we can have real alive hope for the future. Notice three things briefly from this verse. Notice firstly this hope comes through Jesus's resurrection.

[ 5 : 58 ] That is why we played at the beginning, say what you see. We played say what you see, I mean I like the game and it's a lot of fun but we played it because it is so important to know that he really did rise from the dead. In a survey not long ago a quarter of people who say that they're Christians say they don't believe in the resurrection of Jesus. And so along comes Reverend Dr Lorraine Cavanagh, the secretary for modern church. And she says well of course we're adults now and this isn't Sunday school. Quote, science but also intellectual and philosophical thought has progressed.

It has a trickle down effect on just about everybody's lives. So no resurrection. Which is so patronising and wrong because the eyewitness accounts are here for us and the Old Testament promised he would rise and Jesus himself spoke of it during his life and the first disciples were killed because they said what they saw publicly. Shockingly, Jesus rose from the dead physically and bodily. His body did not decay, he did not return to dust. And on the first Easter Sunday morning having died and paid the penalty for sin, he rose from the dead and he beat death. And the first eyewitnesses who went to the tomb and looked, they saw him and they touched him and they spread the message about him through the world.

And it's because he really rose that we can have hope. Why is that? It is because Jesus is like, he's like the first fruits of a full harvest. Or in the words of 1 Peter, having beaten death, he's the beginning of a new creation.

That is what happened for Jesus in history, in him, is what will happen for the whole of this world one day. That's what verse 4 is talking about.

A living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. Peter is talking here about a new creation, about a new heaven and a new earth. This created physical world, but this world restored.

[ 8 : 36 ] The words are really important here. Look, an inheritance that can never perish. That means a world free from death and decay, death proof.

Can you imagine that? Look, no more hoovering, no more dust, no more dying ever in this new world that Jesus brings in. Never perish, never spoil.

It's talking about a world free from impurity and hurt, that is, sin proof. No more messing life up. No more sinning and being ashamed and saying sorry, but failing and falling again and again.

No more of that ever. A world that will never fade. A world free from the ravages of time, that is time proof.

No more fading away like these pictures and these people. I don't know if you can imagine that, this future inheritance that is promised.

[ 9 : 46 ] We're not talking about heaven, by the way, a kind of wispy, thin, cloudy place up there somewhere. We're talking about a solid, real, new creation, just like here and now, but thicker and more real.

Place of land and rocks and trees where the dead come back to life. In the words of C.S. Lewis, not as floating spirits, but as solid men and women who cast shadows in the sunlight and make a noise when they tramp the floors, just like Jesus did.

A new world, utterly restored, with no more death or mourning or crying or pain. That is the living hope that the resurrection opens up.

A brilliant hope for the future. A new creation, which is, final thing to say, for a new you.

Because this living hope is open to people like us. Just look at verse 3 one more time, it's on the screen and in our Bibles. Peter is writing here to Christian believers, From one angle, a Christian is someone who decides to trust and follow Jesus.

[ 11 : 15 ] I recognise I've turned away from God in my life. I know that death is coming to me. I see that Jesus came and died for sins and rose from the dead. He is my only hope for forgiveness and life.

I turn to him and trust in him. Jesus, you're my Lord and my Saviour. From another angle, though, a Christian is someone to whom God gives new birth.

To someone who deserves so little, like you and me. To someone who deserves death. In his stunning mercy, he causes you to be born again.

The living God breaks into your heart and your life and works powerfully in you and gives you new life. Makes you a new creation. Makes you part of his new creation.

He washes your sins away, regenerates you inside and with great power turns you towards the risen Jesus.

[ 12 : 17 ] So you trust him and love him. That is God's real personal work in people today. Such a stunning thing to witness. When you see this happen to someone you know or when you experience it yourself.

I've become alive to God. I listen to his word. I want to pray to him. I want to please him. A new you. God connects you by faith with Jesus.

So that you belong to this risen Lord forever. And the point is when you belong to Jesus today. When you're given new birth, you are guaranteed a place in God's new creation because you belong there now.

It's your home. It's your destination. He has given us new birth into a living hope and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.

This inheritance is kept in heaven for you who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that's ready to be revealed in the last time.

[ 13 : 28 ] A Christian believer, any person today who says I put my trust in Christ has a rock solid, beyond death, living hope.

And that's what we're talking about this morning. From dead end life to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Before we sing again, I just want to say this Easter morning, that is life changing. It's life changing for people like us who without the resurrection of Jesus would just perish and spoil and fade.

What does it mean for me and for you? Here's my life mapped out because I know what it's going to be like. Not just me, but you too. I'm born, 1975.

I grow and I live and I fail and I screw up and I sin. And yet now with faith in Jesus, I've been born again. And I'm alive to God.

[ 14 : 33 ] And I want to live for him. And yet I suffer and I sin and I grieve. But I have a future hope. And so do we all who trust in Christ. And so we keep going and get older.

And maybe die suddenly or we decay. And even as I hold on to faith in Jesus, the day comes when my heart stops. I die. That's the trajectory of my life.

And then I hear a voice calling me. It's my Lord Jesus waking me from the dust. And on that day, the day of salvation in the last time, I will rise and I will stretch.

My mind and my body whole and new and pure. And I will receive the inheritance, it says here. I will take my place in this restored creation where dust and death are no more.

And there'll be no more perishing, no more spoiling, no more fading. And I will look round at millions upon millions of brothers and sisters. And together, we will gaze on our risen saviour.

[ 15 : 40 ] And we'll walk the earth and we'll smell the breeze and we'll eat the fruit and we'll live purely. And we will shout for joy to our God. That's my life mapped up.

Do you know? Like this, like this, like this, down here and then like this. That is my life. And it's the life for every person who belongs to the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

It's not a pipe dream. It's not fairy tale for weak people. It's reality. And it's certain from dead end life to a real living hope.

Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.