In the Hope of the Spirit

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[0:00] Hello, it is good to be with you today. Have you adjusted to self-isolation yet? Have you changed your routine? Are you now working at home, exercising on the floor of the lounge room in front of a workout video?

Have you started doing homeschooling and maybe spending more time gardening? Are you used to not being allowed to go outside yet?
And this past week I celebrated my 35th birthday. And it was a bit strange because I couldn't see anyone. And I kept speaking to people and people kept saying, I really look forward to when life goes back to normal.
And I can come give you a hug and say happy birthday. And I love that idea. But have you found yourself saying similar things? Similar things like when it goes back to normal.
When life goes back to how it was. I wonder if this is a problem for us. I wonder if we idolise how things were a couple of months ago.
[1:07] It's as if that time when we could go outside was perfect. Now it was definitely better. But there were still plenty of problems. Today we are coming to the end of our series, We Believe, as we look at what Christians believe from the Apostles' Creed.

And today we're looking at the last two lines. That we believe in the resurrection of the dead. And that we believe in everlasting life.
And today we're going to be challenged to not just look forward to life going back to normal. Back to how it was. Back to something better.
For some of us, I'm sure we're loving hanging out at home. But for many others, surviving each day of the week is really tough. But we have something to look forward to that is better than life going back to normal.
We're looking forward to something that won't break apart, that won't fade or be destroyed. We are looking forward to what God has prepared for us after death and for our life everlasting.
[2:19] So as we look at God's work today, let me pray. Dear Heavenly Father, as we hide at home to protect loved ones and those we don't know, Father, please be with us in isolation.

Help us to look forward to what you have prepared for us in the future. Amen. The first thing we're going to look at today is that we believe in the resurrection of the dead.
The New Testament shows that the hope that we have a full life after death. It is not a spiritual life or a life without a body.
It's not a metaphor. But there's a future hope of life with a body. Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 4 that Jesus died and rose.
And God will do the same for those who die. And Romans says that we have been united with him in his death. And we will certainly be raised with Jesus, just like he was.
[3:26] And Jesus says in John 11 that whoever believes in him, even though they die, will live. Jesus and the other New Testament writers fully believe that just as Jesus died and came back to life, so will those who believe in him die and come back to a physical life.

Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 shows how central believing in the resurrection of the dead is. He says in 1 Corinthians 15 verse 3 that it is of first importance that Jesus died for our sins, that he was buried and that he was raised.
Because if Jesus wasn't raised, there is no hope for us. Verse 18, Then those who have also fallen asleep in Christ are lost. And we are to be pitied for thinking that we will come back to life from the dead.
But, Paul says, But, that is not how it is, but, verse 20, But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead. The first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

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For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. Adam, along with Eve, sinned, and death was the result.
[4:49] Jesus did not sin. And he was placed on a cross instead of us. And his resurrection means that eternal life is the result.

We are going to celebrate this, this coming Sunday on Easter Day, where we remember that it is not just a story, but it is history. That God came himself and died for us on the cross.
And three days later was raised to life everlasting. He was raised. People, hundreds of people saw him before he ascended to the right hand of the Father.
He is the first fruit. He is the prototype of the resurrection for us. Because, as Paul says in Christ, all will be made alive.
I think 1 Corinthians 15 is a really helpful reflection for us on the resurrection. Now, I've only touched on it briefly. Let me encourage you to read the rest of 1 Corinthians 15 after church today.
[5:50] But it is good for us in all seasons because it enters into the drama of our lives. We live and start with families and go to work and spend time with friends under the dread of death.

It steadily walks towards us and to our loved ones. At the moment, our whole world is either in lockdown or heading to lockdown because we fear death.
We are weak to it. Whilst not all who get coronavirus will die, it's spread, spreads fear, fear of death. Because we are weak, fleshly bodies, fearful of taking our last breath.
And we've seen the response of plenty of people to go on a horde, trying to protect themselves for another day. But even when life does go back to normal, whether it's in a day or six months, we will still all fear and face death.
Our hope for the future has to be bigger than death. The Apostle Peter wrote a letter to a church who was in a somewhat similar position.
[7:08] They were facing persecution and death and they were fearful of what was to come. And he encouraged them in this time of uncertainty. From 1 Peter 1, verse 3, it says, Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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.
This inheritance is kept in heaven for you. God, in his great mercy, has given us hope in uncertain times. Resurrection from the dead like Jesus.
And we have an inheritance that can never spoil like too much stocked food. It can't fade like our patients with our family and friends and housemates.
It can't be stolen like toilet paper from an unguarded shopping trot. This is what Christians put their hope in. A resurrection that cannot spoil or fade or perish.
[8:17] after we die we will all be raised to the life of a physical body just like Jesus's. This is the hope that we have.

We don't wait for a spiritual future but we are waiting for future bodies to be raised. But other than just having a body in this everlasting future, what does it actually look like to be in this future that God has prepared for us?
Well, we come to the final part of the creed. The final line of the creed says that we believe in the everlasting life. And the New Testament paints a picture for us of what this everlasting life looks like.
Jesus in John chapter 14 tells his disciples that he's going to God to prepare a house, to prepare a place for us. Jesus is preparing God's house for us for eternity.
And in this chapter Jesus is potentially alluding to the types of houses that rich Roman rulers would have. They would have houses that had a central atrium and all around the atrium would be rooms.
[9:32] You know, a central space and then around the atrium would be different rooms. And so all of the bedrooms would connect into a central gathering area. So you could connect and gather with people very easily.

And this is a picture of God that he doesn't just have a place for us but it's a place that is connected to everyone else. A place where there is community forever.
A place where God is with us. And I am yearning for that. It is good to be standing with you today looking down a camera into your living room starting to wherever you are right now.
It is good to be with you but I am yearning to be gathering with you in church together. This building is empty and I miss you. I miss gathering and singing loudly as a church and I am looking forward to

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that day again.
But how much greater will it be when there will be nothing that can stop us from gathering together and praising God. Two passages from Revelation continue to paint what this everlasting life will look like.
[10:46] Revelation 21 shows us John's vision of heaven and God shows him and from verse 3 it says I heard a loud voice from the throne saying look God's dwelling place is now among the people and he will dwell with them they will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God.

He will wipe every tear from their lives for there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain. The old order of things has passed away.
God himself will dwell with us in heaven. God has destroyed the old order of things. There will be no more pain or tears but God himself will be with us.
John continues painting his picture of heaven in verse 18 the wall was made of jasper and the city of pure gold as pure as glass.
The foundation of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper the second sapphire the third agate the fourth emerald the fifth onyx the sixth ruby the seventh chrysolite the eighth beryl the ninth topaz the tenth turquoise the eleventh jesson and the twelfth amethyst.
[12:08] The twelve gates the twelve pearls each gate made of a single pearl. The great streak of the city was of pure gold as pure as translucent glass.

This is just an amazing picture of luxury and decadence of what the city of God is going to look like. I love the picture of the street of gold it's like it's polished so much that it's translucent and see-through.
This is a picture of the greatest city ever where you can even put precious stones in the wall without fear of them being stolen. It's a wonderful picture of our everlasting future.
God has spared no expense to prepare it for us by sacrificing his own son so that we can go to a city covered in jewels and riches that is not filled with fear and uncertainty and tiredness and fatigue from trying to figure out how to work from home, how to do homeschool, how to try and get enough food that you need with restrictions on food all at the same time.
Revelation lifts our eyes to a picture of a better city. A city that is better than Sydney, better than any in the world. Hebrews 13 calls us to look to this city because it is better than the one living in.
[13:36] I don't think we do this nearly enough. I don't think we look to our future hope, to this city that we will be in enough. We don't look to this heavenly city and spend enough time thinking about what everlasting life will look like.

Colossians chapter 3 that was read for us says since then you have been raised with Christ. Set your hearts on things above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.
Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things. for you died and your life is now hidden with Christ your God. That is where our life is.
We have been raised with Christ and now our life is hidden with God. It is not this temporary life. We are here but for a moment.
We will be there with God for eternity. And so we should fix our minds on it. as Paul has said. Fix our minds on it. We should get excited for it.
[14:40] We should long for it and not hold too tightly to this life here. The Barnett family, we have been here in St. Paul's for nearly two years.

We are coming up to our second anniversary. And I remember once it was announced that we were rejoining St. Paul's family and leaving our family. I remember getting very excited.
I was looking forward to working with the team here of St. Paul's, looking forward to rejoining family. I was looking forward to working with Steve again. And I remember doing so much planning and preparation.
One of the things I really love to do is I would draw the shape of the house and then I would draw where the furniture is going to fit in and I would plan how the house is going to look. When we had a day off we'd measure up things in the house we'd call in on the team and see how everything was going.
My future was never far from my mind. I was living and planning for that future day to come when we would come to our new home.

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[15:50] This is what we are meant to be doing. To be looking forward to the day when we come to our home. For us we need to be setting our mind on what is to come.

What is above. I can't wait to see my grandmother again. To see many loved ones. To never be in pain. To be in a city of such wonder and security that God has placed precious stones in the walls. I am excited to see all that God has prepared for us. Because our everlasting life, our future will be a place of more.
It is more than we can imagine. It is more joy, more goodness, more purity. Everything we think is good will either be amplified or it will be replaced with something even better, something transcendent.
It will be a place of the highest joys and the deepest and most satisfying pleasures. so we should set our minds on.
[17:01] And then there is our God. We will know God for eternity. We will get to speak with him and ask him our questions. We will get to praise him for his grace and kindness and love to us.

We will be there with our brother and saviour Jesus and we can thank him and praise him for all that he has done for us. As I mentioned, it was my birthday on Wednesday.
Today, April 5th, is Micah's birthday. He turned three today. And one of his grandmothers sent him some birthday presents in the mail.
And he was really excited to open those up. He opened those up while his grandmother was on FaceTime. So she could see his excitement for those presents. And those presents were great.
But how much better will it be when Micah and his grandmother are reunited? And they can hug. He can hug his grandmother and say, thank you. God has so many good things waiting for us in heaven.
[18:05] But how much better will it be that we get God himself? As we come to the end of the Apostles Creed, it ends with an absolute bang.

We have declared what we have believed, what we continue to believe about God, our Father, that he is almighty and he created the heavens and the earth. We declare what we believe about Jesus, his son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, that he suffered even though he was innocent and was crucified, died and was buried.
He suffered hell for us. Yet he was raised from the dead, he ascended into heaven and now he sits at the right hand of God on the throne above all thrones with the name of all names.
And we believe that he is coming back to judge the living and the dead. And we believe in the Holy Spirit who has made us a church, who has united us together, even though we are divided, united us together to treasure Jesus together.
He has brought forgiveness from our sins and he will one day raise us from the dead, just like Jesus. And we will live our life with God for eternity.
[19:31] This creed doesn't exhaust all that there is to say about the Christian faith. But Christians have declared this boldly for centuries, in the face of opposition, in the face of death and plague.

We take our place with all of our brothers and sisters declaring what we believe about our God as we follow him. The creed starts with our God who has created and ends with the hope that we have in what God has created for us, the new heavens.
So right now, it is easy for us to have our eyes set on when the lockdown ends, whether that's July 1st or some other time, when this is all over and life can feel like it goes back to normal, we can go back to work and school and go outside and go to shops and restaurants again, but it won't be satisfied.
It will be better, but a normal life here is not all that God has for us. And if we are just yearning for life to go back to normal, we will be let down.
God has something far better in store for us that we can be setting our eyes on. A day that is worth yearning for and looking to.
[20:57] A day that will satisfy. A life lived for eternity, in God. Let me pray for us. Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for the Apostles' Creed that we can declare what we believe about what you have done for us and who you are.

Heavenly Father, help us to set our eyes on things above. Help us to set our eyes on the resurrection hope that we have, that we get to be with you forever.
Lord, as we live our lives waiting for that day, unsure of what tomorrow will look like, Father, help us to place our anxieties and worries before you and help grow our trust in you as the God who is

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sovereign over all things, all plagues and disease.
And help us to know and to long for the day that we will see you face to face and be with you for eternity. And we pray this in your Son's name, for your glory.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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