

Hope Worth Chasing Easter Sunday 2017

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[0 : 0 0] It's the 5th of October 1974 in Guildford in England. Five people died, 65 were injured in two IRA bombings. The public was outraged and the British police were pretty desperate to get an arrest and they quickly arrested a small-time Belfast criminal by the name of Gerry Conlon.

He was one of four people arrested for the bombings and they became known as the Guildford Four. The police also arrested Gerry Conlon's father, a guy named Giuseppe, for conspiring in the bombings.

And with all the investigations, the police actually had no evidence to prove that Gerry Conlon and especially Giuseppe Conlon were guilty of the crimes.

In fact, the evidence was the exact opposite for Giuseppe. He was clearly innocent. And in spite of that, Giuseppe Conlon was sentenced to 12 years imprisonment, even though the authorities knew he was innocent.

His son Gerry was sentenced to life imprisonment. Gerry was released after 15 years and went on to write a book about his innocence and vindication.

[1 : 1 6] And Giuseppe, however, died in prison in an innocent man. It's another one of those stories of an innocent person being condemned for crimes that they didn't commit.

It's a miscarriage of justice, not unlike the innocent death of Jesus, as we saw a couple of days ago on Friday. Of course, there's some significant detailed differences, but the death of Jesus would be nothing more than that if it wasn't for his resurrection.

That is, without Jesus' Easter day, his Good Friday would be nothing more than one of those travesty of justice stories. Without the resurrection of Jesus, the death of Jesus would be not much more than a one-line mention in the history books.

Potentially a paragraph, but not much more. His resurrection is the thing that changes everything.

And so on this Easter day, there are three changes that I want us to see.

I want Easter to do for us as well. Firstly, for Easter day to change your mind and reshape your worldview. Secondly, if you allow that to happen, to change the way you respond to Jesus.

[2 : 3 2] And thirdly, if you allow that to happen, to change your future and give you hope. So firstly, change your mind, reshape your worldview.

Secondly, change the way you respond to Jesus. And thirdly, change your future and give you hope. So firstly, for Easter day changes our minds and reshapes our worldview. My hope today is the direction of Jesus will change us.

That is, we're to walk out of here, there'll be hearts that are filled with joy and hope and purpose and love. And to do that, we must, first of all, allow our minds to be changed.

We have to allow our minds to be challenged by truth and our worldview to be reshaped. Our social commentator, Hugh Mackay, he's my favourite social commentator in this country, captured how many people view the resurrection.

He wrote an article for the Sydney Morning Herald back in 2005 on Good Friday, and he wrote this. He said, Christians celebrate new life at Easter, but in the religious sense.

[3 : 3 8] The focus of the festival is the belief that tragedy and grief, which is symbolised by the crucifixion, can give way to life, which is symbolised by the resurrection, and that pain and loss are essential steps on the journey towards enlightenment.

His point is that the resurrection of Jesus is symbolic. Whether it happened or not is almost irrelevant to him. Not unlike a church service I went to a number of years ago where the minister stood up and said that.

He said, you know, people have all sorts of different religious experiences, and for some of us, it's looking at a great sunset. For some of us, it's looking at great artwork. And for the disciples, it was

to imagine that Jesus rose from the dead.

It doesn't matter what your religious experience is. Whatever you get out of it is the most important thing. So Easter Day is all about having a religious experience, whatever that might be for you. What that minister failed to understand and what Mackay failed to understand is, although his view is connecting with popular opinion, is that in the first century, it was never viewed symbolically.

[4 : 50] Resurrection was never viewed symbolically. And that's not the essence of it that we get from 1 Corinthians 15 that Sam just read out to us. I'll pick it up in verse 3. What I received, I passed on to you, is of first importance, that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures, that He appeared to Cephas, that's Peter, then to the 12, they're the disciples.

After that, He appeared to more than 500 of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. That's some are dead.

And then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all, He appeared to me also as one abnormally born. You see, Mackay failed to grasp the resurrection was never viewed symbolically in the first century.

This is the challenge to our minds. Jesus came back to life after His execution. And the fact that Jesus was executed, the fact that He was crucified, is not unusual.

Around Jesus' time, and around His place as well, there were dozens of these little movements where the leader would declare themselves to be the Messiah of the world, the Saviour of the world, and as Jesus Himself did.

[6 : 07] And in almost every case, the leader of those groups was killed. They were executed for this little thing, that little gathering that they had formed. And immediately upon the execution of the leader, the movement collapsed.

Everyone went home. That was it. When the leader's dead, except the one that was led by Jesus. Only one movement didn't collapse after the death of the leader.

In fact, it exploded. Within 200 years, it was the dominant religion in the Roman Empire and is today the largest and most widespread culturally and geographically of all the religious faiths.

So what made the difference there? The Bible says, the Christian churches maintained for 20 centuries, that after Jesus was killed, He came back to life and appeared to His followers.

And that is what changed everything. Changed everything. The Bible says, that is why Jesus' followers didn't go home, and that's the reason why Christianity exploded.

[7 : 18] But this is Chatswood in, you know, 2017. And we are one of the major centers in a secular city of Sydney, and most people around us don't believe that.

And I get it. I understand that. This is a challenge to our minds and our worldview after all. But it was for the first disciples too.

You see, the assumption that we make 20 centuries later is that these early people who said that they saw Jesus were just gullible fools. They just don't understand life like we understand life nowadays.

But as you read the account of Mark's, or Mark's account of Jesus' resurrection, as Sam just did at the beginning of the service, for us, you notice that Jesus tells His disciples quite clearly in Mark's Gospel that He's going to die and He's going to come back.

He does it in chapter 8. He does it again in chapter 10. And the weird thing is that on the third day, when Jesus said He was going to come back, it seems that no one's expecting it.

[8 : 24] His first disciples weren't expecting it. The blokes aren't around. The women had bought the spices for the dead body. That's what they were going to do when they were on the way to the tomb.

They, you know, Easter Saturday, you know, it's not a public holiday. And so they're wheeling their trolleys through Woolies and they come to the spice section and go, well, they're going to need, we're going to need them tomorrow. They purchased the spices.

You see, they were expecting to anoint His body for burial. And the disciples on the third day were sitting there eating their Weet-Bix and they thought, they didn't think, it's the third day, guys.

Maybe we should just wander on down and have a look. See if He's there or not. Didn't even think of it. And what's more, the women who did go, you know, all the blokes are eating their Weet-Bix, were wondering, who's going to open the tomb for us when we get there so we can oint His dead body?

They prepared for everything except who's going to roll the stone away. And their first thought upon seeing that the stone had been rolled away, their first thought was that someone's taken His body. [9 : 39] their very first thought was that someone has come in and stolen His body. Fair assumption back in those days because grave robbing was a pretty common practice. The point is, the resurrection took them by surprise.

It was just as impossible for them to believe in the first century as what it is for us now. And so if you have doubts about the resurrection, so did they. They're the ones who walked with Jesus for three years, so did they.

But, they let the evidence challenge their worldview. And so in challenging our minds and our thinking and our worldview, it's so important for us 20 centuries later not to be intellectually lazy. If you want to jettison the resurrection, you have to come up with an alternative explanation as to how this one little movement exploded like it did. That's not an easy explanation.

That's not an easy thing to come up with historically. Why it exploded when every other movement didn't. Easter is the celebration, the physical resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

[10 : 50] He's alive. You see, Christians believe that the 27 books of the New Testament, what they record about Jesus is true. And these books uniformly teach and assume at other points that Jesus lived in history, that He died as a substitute for the sins of the world and that He rose again on the third day that He ascended to heaven and He rules the world as the God of all the universe.

And these 27 books are riddled with references to the physical resurrection of Jesus from the dead such as the 1 Corinthians 15 passage that was read out.

These accounts of what happened in the life of Jesus are totally different than the way that myth was written in the first century like Greek or Roman mythology which is shrouded in distant past that doesn't connect with real history.

And the New Testament books are talking about real history. Pilate, Roman governor, Herod the king of Galilee, Caiaphas, the high priest, these are not mythical figures.

These people are known from history outside of the Bible. And both Roman scholars and historians and Jewish scholars and historians who don't believe in Jesus and want to see Jesus dead both record something happened with Jesus' body.

[12 : 21] The accounts of the New Testament, the 27 books are all written while our witnesses were still alive Paul's letters were written 15 to 30 years after the death of Jesus and as we just read he mentions the fact that 500 people had seen Jesus risen at one time and most of them were still alive when he put pen to paper.

Most of the books maybe all of them written were before AD 70 40 years after the death of Jesus. This is not mythology. This is history. This is eyewitness history.

And add to this all the enemies of Jesus the Jews and the Romans all they had to do to squash the whole thing was to get the body of Jesus stick it in a wheelbarrow and take it in the middle of Jerusalem and dump it and say there you go there's your God.

That's all they had to do and they couldn't do it. And they put their own soldiers at station in front of the tomb. and the thought that these scared little disciples who abandoned Jesus at his crucifixion for fear of their lives that they would suddenly the day after get together let's come up with a plan let's come up with a story and then somehow we're going to get in we're going to steal his body get rid of it somehow so it'll never be found again that they would come up with that sort of a hoax and then give their lives for that sort of a hoax that's idiotic it's crazy.

The point of all this is simply to say that when Christians speak about Jesus as risen from the dead we're not speaking mythologically it's not mythology we're not speaking blindly we're not speaking symbolically we're not even speaking merely spiritually we're not even speaking emotionally we're speaking historically and that challenges your world view but if you're allowed to challenge your world view then it will change the way you see Jesus Philippians 3 20, 21 if you've got one of the church Bibles in front of you then it's on page 1140 I'm going to kind of spend most of my time there so if you've got one of those page 1140 let me read it but our citizenship is in heaven and we eagerly await a savior from there the Lord Jesus Christ by the power that enabled him to bring everything under his control will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body now when when Paul writes that he's making an assumption in these verses and what is assumed is that Jesus was raised from the dead and that Jesus is extremely powerful that's the assumption and the reason he assumes it in Philippians 3 is because he clearly states it in Philippians 2 one page over so turn over to you know 1139 if you've got the church Bible but Philippians chapter 2

and let me tell you that you will never read anything anywhere in any literature more sweeping more important and true than this verse 6 chapter 2 this is talking about Jesus it says who being in very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but made himself nothing taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself and became obedient to death even death on a cross therefore [15:58] God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father that is Jesus was and is equal with God he is God he became a human being he obediently suffered he died and that means that the death that he died was not some sort of freak accident it was not just a mistake it was a plan of history for him to die and the point of that plan was that Christ would be a substitute for the sins of humanity that he would be a substitute for everyone who puts their trust in him and this was God's loving plan for the salvation of sinners like you and me and then it says therefore God exalted him to the highest place in other words because of his obedient life his successful life and his successful death

God raised him from the dead and gave him great glory as the Lord of the universe that's the assumption that's lying behind Philippians 3 when he says but our citizenship is in heaven and we eagerly await a save from there the Lord Jesus Christ who by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control will transform our lowly bodies so that they'll be like his glorious body so when you put Philippians 2 and 3 together we see that because of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus he has astonishing power to subject all things to himself he is in control that is the impact of Jesus' resurrection that is relevant for us now Jesus rules all things we see it in verse 21 by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control in one sense Jesus has the right to rule the universe as the creator of the universe because he's God you know he didn't have to die and rise again in order to be who he is what he is from all of eternity is God and this gives him the right to exercise his authority over all things but in another sense

God decreed that the one who would rule in power would be the one who redeemed he would be the one who suffered for us the one who died for us the one who gave himself for us so it's not just in power but rules in love the Lord and Judge and Saviour over all the universe was tested and found perfect through human suffering and so now he is doubly suited to be Lord of the universe he is the God with natural rights and he is the God and Saviour with purchased rights and the impact of Easter Sunday is that there is no higher authority there is no higher authority there is no place or sphere or reality or dimension of existence anywhere in the universe that is not under the absolute authority of the Lord Jesus and when the world doesn't look to us as if it's under the authority of a merciful Lord Jesus it would be wiser for us to marvel at the mystery of his ways than to question the scope of his power

Christ's power pervades the universe from the largest to the smallest elements of reality no galaxy no Adam would stay in being without the authority of Jesus that's big implication of how we see Jesus be astonished at his power to subject all things to himself Easter Sunday is no mere symbolism of how to endure hard things in life Easter Sunday means that Jesus rules the universe as the name that is above every other name and he calls all people to surrender to his loving authority to hand over control of your lives and put into his hands and so if we allow the Easter Day events of the resurrection of Jesus to firstly change our mind and reshape our worldview secondly to change the way we respond to Jesus and see who he is then thirdly it will change the whole course of our lives and give us hope notice that there are two incredible implications for us of the power of the resurrected

Lord Jesus they are staggering and they are filled with hope and joy and life verse 20 our citizenship is in heaven you see the power of the Lord Jesus guarantees our citizenship of heaven if you're a believer of the Lord Jesus you do not have to wait for him to come back again to know where your home is you see when you trust in Jesus your name is sealed on the citizen roles of heaven because your king is there your name is plastered all through heaven more than Donald Trump's got his names plastered on stuff where he is there you have the privilege to be and so you will be with him forever and your amazement will never cease it will only increase forever and ever which leads to the second implication Jesus will use his power to transform your body into a resurrected body alive like his

[21 : 37] Philippians 3 21 have a look at it with me the Lord Jesus Christ who by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body all the power that Jesus has will be used to take our dead bodies and raise them from the dead and fit them out for eternity in his presence the resurrection is the answer to the deepest longing that we have in our hearts and that is to live forever last night I was sitting on the bed of one of my girls my youngest girl reading Bible story about resurrection of Jesus talked about Good Friday death of Jesus and she said Daddy I don't want to die she said I want to live for a thousand years and I'm not sure the world could cope with that actually let alone her superannuation plan and I said trusting in Jesus you don't ever have to die see that's even as a even as a as a how old was she five even as even as a five year old the longing is to live forever I don't ever want to die she's happy for me too she said when you die I want your car and that is why the beauty industry booms that's why baby boomers still wear jeans because you still want to be a teenager that's you know want to be back in the days when we're young and we're vibrant and we're healthy because those were the days before crippling emotional pain and burden of responsibility and frailty we want to live and we want to live forever one of the reasons why it's so hard for us to suffer is that we think that this physical world is it and when you lose it you lose the best and the most precious thing and the resurrection means this is not it there's so much more there is so much more to come the resurrection means that God is going to perfectly remake this world you see right now a headache just totally messes with my day but with a resurrected body not even holes in the hands or holes in the feet or holes in the side like Jesus messed with the quality of his day resurrection changes everything there is hope for the wheelchair bound of the person with crippling emotional pain no religion in the world except biblical Christianity promises us new minds new and perfect minds new and perfect hearts and new and perfect bodies forever only in the gospel of the Lord Jesus do people find such a magnificent hope and so when people in an attempt to try and be helpful and maybe win people over and when they turn the resurrection of Jesus into a metaphor a symbol for new life and growth through suffering you rip the guts at Easter you rip the guts out of all the hope of Easter can you imagine the first you know like the apostle Paul first priest of the resurrection going the poor and the slaves and the outcasts of society in the first century and saying let me tell you about the resurrection of Jesus you know it didn't actually happen but it's a great symbol of how good triumphs over evil so go and be nice to one another and can you imagine the crippled there and the poverty stricken the tormented and the outcast that's just what I needed to hear that's just you know that is what I need day by day in my crippling pain and my loneliness and my starvation a symbol of something the resurrection is a nice symbol has no power to change anything doesn't offer any hope at all but the actual historical physical resurrection of Jesus changes everything if you know that this is not the openly tangible concrete life and in fact the next one is going to be better who cares what people do to you the resurrection makes you free from this life enough to be brave and courageous and joyful and sacrificial and patient resurrection means you can face the worst things in this life with joy and with hope there's a great clip circulating around at the moment about the bombings which happened in Egypt you know the security guard who turned the bomber away and the security guard at the church in Egypt got blown up his wife is being interviewed and she's distraught but she talks about hope and she talks about the resurrection hope of her husband and she talks about forgiveness for those who perpetrated such an evil against her husband and against all those people who were killed and the face on the Muslim interviewer he says we have persecuted these Christians in this country for centuries and they're made of steel they're made of steel to offer forgiveness to someone who did that you see that's what the resurrection does for you gives you hope beyond the resurrection means you can give yourself to serving God in this world that he loves and that he is redeeming and remaking through the Lord Jesus so if you allow the resurrection of Jesus the Easter day event to change your world view and change the way you see Jesus then in turn it will allow you to embrace the hope of Easter now I don't want you to leave here for this to be a mere take it or leave it symbolism where you respond well thanks Steve stimulating sermon let's get off to the Easter egg hunt this is news it's meant to rally you to your core the difference is this suppose you hear that last year ten kids you read it in the [27 : 55] North Shore Times ten kids in Chatswood were hit by cars while they were playing and you read that news and you're whinge and you say what a tragedy it must be awful for those

parents then you turn over the next news item on the page then suddenly as you're reading the next page your front door bursts open and your 12 year old daughter comes screaming into the house with the news that your 9 year old son has just been hit by a car in the front yard now that piece of news is different the first piece of news was true you didn't doubt it there was a good evidence for it but now there's a piece of news that goes to the core of your being it shakes you it changes everything for you everything in you comes alive to this reality that it's your son touches your existence it will change everything in your life it will break your heart it will shatter things in you more deeply than has ever been touched before that's the impact of the resurrection here again the impact

Jesus died in your place for your sins against God he Jesus is risen from the dead Jesus will never die again he has been appointed as the ruler of the universe and all who put their trust in him will be raised with him and live forever with him I long for you to hear that news today not just to hear it as merely provable reports of some religious claims but as the cry of your child bursting through the door this has to do with you Easter is your death it is your life it is your hope father