

Hope because of Easter Sunday!

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[0 : 00] Can we all stand together please and just declare this that's on the screen just as we start.

! Jesus Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Hallelujah. Thank you. I once went to a church in mid-Wales! And the minister there stood up on Easter Sunday morning and said, Christ is risen. Hallelujah. And ever since then I've wanted to make sure that we declare the truth that Jesus Christ is risen and this is something that we can celebrate. What a privilege to preach on Easter Sunday morning. Next slide please, Josh. I want to preach about hope this morning and I'm going to read a number of little verses, different verses, but just to start with from Lamentations.

And this is something which I find really helpful when things are quite hard. And if you read chapter 3 of Lamentations, if you read Lamentations it's all about lamenting.

It's where they got the name from. But halfway through this chapter there's the wormwood and the gall and it's all going a bit wrong. And the writer says, but this I call to mind and therefore I have hope. The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end.

They're new every morning. Great is your faithfulness. And for the privilege of us living in such a beautiful part of the world, but wherever you live, wherever you've traveled from today, you woke up this morning with almighty God offering you new mercy.

[1 : 58] Every day you wake, there is new mercy awaiting for you in the death and the resurrection of Jesus. As the tide comes in and goes out and washes the beach clean each day, the mercies of God wash you clean every morning. What a wonderful, wonderful privilege of worshipping almighty God.

Okay, so next slide please. Easter Hope, you can just see that and then we can move on. Just a little reminder, and we know this, but the problem with Easter stories is so well known by us. I have to say that looking at some of the reports and newspapers and what have you, is really concerning how few people actually know who Jesus is and what happened and what Easter Sunday is all about morning and why we celebrate Easter. And was it Jesus that died or was it Noah that died or was it somebody else that died? I don't really know. Was there an ark in Easter? We need to be really clear that we have a responsibility of sharing the truth of Jesus. But the Easter Sunday story, just a few little bits from Luke chapter 24, the women who went to Jesus' tomb with spices found the stone rolled away and the tomb was empty. And they were perplexed. And then two men in dazzling clothes turned up and they were terrified. Not the men, the women were terrified because you would be, wouldn't you, if that happened to you. And they asked this really deep question that I want to come back to later. Why do you look for the living among the dead? He's not here. He is risen. Why do you look for the living amongst the dead? Then they remembered his words. And then later on in Luke chapter 24, the two men on the road to Emmaus who spoke with Jesus. And when Jesus broke bread with them and then went, they turned to each other and said, where are not our hearts strangely warmed within us? There's something there that we need to be mindful of. And again, I'll return to that.

Are our hearts warmed, strangely warmed, as we commune with Jesus, as we spend time with Jesus, as we are with and we worship Jesus? So there's a little bit of context for you just to start with.

So I'm going to read from 1 Peter chapter 1 and verses 3 to 9. A wonderful, wonderful celebration.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. By his great mercy, he's given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

[5 : 27] In this you rejoice, even if for now, for a little while, you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, being more precious than gold, that though perishable as tested by fire may be found to result in praise and glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Although you've not seen him, you love him. And even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

The blessings of Jesus, the blessings of the resurrected Christ. And as I wrote that title on the slide, or in my notes before I put them on a slide, I thought, what a ridiculous thing to try and list.

So I was reminded of that, of the bit at the end of John's Gospel, when he says, if everyone was written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

So let's just, that's just a bit of a disclaimer really, that's just a bit of a sort of, I'm not going to mention everything, because I haven't got time. What are the blessings of the resurrected Christ? There aren't books big enough, and the world, there aren't even bookshelves big enough, even in Ikea, to store the truth of the blessing of Jesus.

[7 : 00] But what can we read from this passage in 1 Peter 1? Mercy from God. I look at the world today, I look at my newspaper, or I listen to the news on the television or on the radio, and I just find myself all sorts of confused emotions, but mostly, where's mercy?

Where's kindness? Where's generosity of spirit? Why do we speak so unkindly about and to each other?

That's not to say that we shouldn't say that is wrong and that is right, by the way. But what an unmerciful bunch we corporately have become.

And God offers me mercy through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Through the meal that we've just celebrated in communion.

I am cleansed. I am free from sin. I am forgiven. And we must never, ever take that mercy for granted.

[8 : 13] We must never take it lightly and cheaply. It was bought at a cost. It was bought at the death, the cost of the death and the resurrection of Jesus.

But mercy is real. The condemnation that I deserve for my behaviour, for my thoughts and my actions, and my deeds are forgiven.

And the mercy from God is one of those blessings that we celebrate on Easter Sunday morning. That mercy which is above all mercy. That whatever happens to me, whatever happens to my body, when I confess, when I surrender my soul to Jesus, he will say today, you'll be with me in paradise.

Wonderful, wonderful words. And this notion of new birth, this notion of new creation, of resurrected life, if you like, through Jesus, the idea that we have new birth in Jesus, we become new people, we become different people.

If I look over my life, and I'm looking around, I've not had as many years as many here, but I have had more than some. But however many years you've had on this earth, there are things which I wish I'd done differently.

[9 : 46] There are things that I wish I hadn't done at all. But this idea of new birth, of new creation, I'm a new creation in Christ.

I'm a new creation because God has chosen to make me new. And so are you. And so are you. However you feel this morning, whatever's going on in your life this morning, whatever regrets you have, doubts you have, God offers you this morning that wonderful idea of new birth, of starting again.

And that's why I wanted to have that passage at the beginning about the mercies are new every morning. New every morning are the mercies and the new birth that comes from being a follower of Jesus Christ.

Yesterday's gone. Tomorrow will come. Today is the day. Sufficient unto today are the worries of today.

But let's enjoy that notion of new birth. Living hope. This is all from this passage in 1 Peter. A living hope.

[11 : 04] Not a hope that is hopeless. I've said this before and I'll no doubt say it again. I support Stoke City Football Club. which is a hopeless hope. It really is.

They last won a cup in 1971 and they're not trying terribly hard at the moment to win anything else. And I hope each time they play that they might even, well I don't even hope that they'll score a goal, I just hope that they won't let too many in.

It's a hopeless hope. Some of you will have hopeless hopes like that. It doesn't really matter if Stoke win, lose or draw. Just as well because they lose. But the hope in Jesus is real.

The hope in Jesus is true. And when we feel hopeless we can turn to Jesus. When we feel hopeless we can say to Jesus I feel hopeless Jesus.

I am without hope. And he will say hope in me. Hope in me. Because the hope of the resurrected Christ is real and firm and true.

[12 : 22] And then we have an inheritance. Inheritance is a funny thing isn't it? Inheritance is something which happens after somebody's died. We if we have a relation that has died it might be that that we inherit something maybe some money or a clock or a picture or a plate or whatever it is that you inherit.

And you might be pleased about that inheritance or you might think why on earth do I want that plate? But you've inherited it anyway. So we understand inheritance.

inheritance. We understand that notion. But too often and this is the risk of Easter Sunday and this is the risk of living in the world we live in. We minimise and we reduce the inheritance that we have in Jesus Christ to something that's quite nice.

It is quite nice but it's much more than that. And I suppose that one of the things that I was as I was preparing this I found myself getting excited again and again and again because actually the inheritance we have in Jesus Christ is just phenomenal.

It is literally out of this world. When I die when my time on this earth is up I will spend eternity with God and I will cast my golden crowns around the glassy sea.

[13 : 57] I am not quite sure what that means but it sounds quite good fun doesn't it? Or whatever we will do. I was talking to somebody this morning and saying wouldn't it be fun in heaven we can meet all these people.

I want to meet Zacchaeus because Zacchaeus was a goof just like me. And I will be able to say me and you together fella we could cause all sorts of may I am up here but of course we won't.

But the inheritance that we have in Jesus is something which we need to remind ourselves and pinch ourselves and say goodness me but that's big.

Goodness me but that's life changing. A little tiny hallelujah there thank you. The inheritance of the risen Lord Jesus.

Eternal life with him because Jesus died and he rose again. And that inheritance is imperishable undefiled unfading.

[15 : 02] There's not a fat lot in this world that is undefiled imperishable and unfading is there? There's not a great deal.

I was I rewrote my slides this morning slightly to the Josh was very generous about it because I sent him the slides yesterday and I sent them some more this morning. But I thought I better take it just in case Josh didn't receive it.

Of course he did because he's immensely clever. And I took it on a memory stick. Remember those? But I actually thought it wasn't that long ago and I brought it on a floppy disk.

And before then I brought it on a piece of paper. Do you remember writing? It was great writing was. You used pens and all sorts. How things change.

Some of us writing notes. That's good. Pen and paper. But don't things change fast? Doesn't what we have change fast? And what was trendy and what was the cutting edge of technology even five years ago?

[16 : 10] it's not using that form. What have you got a memory stick for? Were you born in the 1300s or something? Well yeah, probably was. But the truth of Jesus, the inheritance that we have in Jesus, will never ever fade.

It will never spoil. It will never be defiled. It remains true despite the moving sands of truth.

It remains true despite the progress or otherwise of technology. It remains true whoever does what in politics or in business or even, may I say, our church leaders.

Jesus Christ, the resurrection of Jesus, the inheritance that he promises, remains true through the ages.

And we can be grateful and we can celebrate that because it's kept in heaven and because it's protected by the power of God.

[17 : 21] That power of God which is over all and through all and in all. The power of God which means that as we read in scripture, it's a wonderful concept to contemplate.

There are warehouses in heaven with snow in and lightning bolts in. All the things that we need God has and he holds all of that in heaven for us.

We can cry to God and he will come with power, with authority because he is almighty God. So the blessings of the resurrected Christ are real and they are important.

Next slide please, Josh. But there's a journey we're on. We're on a journey through life. And scripture is very clear, we'll suffer various trials to test the genuineness of our faith.

I don't want trials, by the way. I'd like it all to be very easy. I'd really like it just to be, I wake up, I breathe through the day, I go to sleep, I wake up and I breathe through another day.

[18 : 41] Well it's not quite like that is it? And today as we sit in our church here in Whitby, whether you're here as a regular, whether you're here as a visitor, this is your church today, because it's the church of Jesus Christ.

But as we sit here today there'll be all sorts of things going on for us. As we sit here today we remember Phil mourning the death of his father, yet celebrating his promotion to heaven.

But for each of us there'll be worries, there'll be considerations, there'll be things that we know we have to get sorted out because we need to square something with God, we need to square something with somebody else, or we just need to go and do something.

All of our brains will have that set of mixed emotions. And if you're going through trial, that's not because God hates you.

It's not because he has set his face against you. it's not because he's decided that today you're it and it's your turn to have a trial.

[19 : 58] It's because our life and our world is broken and because of that we need to cling to Christ. But the gospel of Christ is hope for the future.

It's hope for now as well, but it's hope for the future. But we mustn't pretend that as Christians, you give your life to Christ and everything suddenly becomes dead easy.

If that has happened to you, could I talk to you afterwards, please, to find out how you did it? And later on, in Philippians, Paul writes, I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death.

We need to understand that knowing Christ also means suffering. People will mock us. People won't take us seriously.

People will choose to say unkind things about me, about you, about this church. church. That's just what happens.

[21 : 17] But again, let's make sure that we don't lose sight of the hope of Christ. The hope of the resurrected Christ on Easter Sunday morning. Easter hope.

There will be suffering. There will be challenge. There will be trial. And then, of course, we have these wonderful few words.

Although we haven't seen Jesus, we love him, we believe in him, and then we rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy.

I find that verse quite challenging. Not the bit about love him and believe in him, because that's what I do. But what about the indescribable and glorious joy?

I can't even say it, let alone always feel it. How do we live a life of rejoicing? How do we choose to live a life of rejoicing?

[22 : 24] It's a discipline. It's a spiritual discipline. It's something we have to learn how to do. And there's a challenge in all of this. And there's a challenge to Easter Sunday morning hope is a challenge as well.

Because just as I wake each morning, as I woke this morning, and Jesus says, there's new mercies for you today, fella. And I think that's smashing.

The challenge that comes with it is to live your life knowing indescribable and glorious joy. Now, we have to be careful with this.

Because if I bang my head on a kitchen cupboard, it is counterintuitive and frankly stupid to say, oh, hallelujah, I just cut my head open. Marvellous, thank you for that blessing.

No, it hurts. You say, ow, and go and find the salve. you might even rub it and feel a little bit sorry for yourself. So this isn't a sort of counterintuitive joy, but this is living a life knowing that there's stuff that's bigger than what happens to me, what happens today with me.

[23 : 45] There's something bigger, and that is the salvation of my soul. And that's why Easter Sunday, we rejoice in the hope that we have before us.

Because whatever happens, we have this indescribable and glorious joy, and that is because of the salvation of our souls.

Last slide please, Josh. So, some challenges this morning for us on Easter Sunday morning. Go right back to the verses that I read at the very beginning.

Why do you look for the living among the dead? Our multimedia, multi-everything else, multi-platform world, means you can find anything you want, and you can find somebody to agree with anything that you want to say.

If I wanted to say, the moon is made of cheese, I will find somebody on the internet who agrees with me. Max Boyce, it's silly.

[25 : 09] You can find somebody who will agree with anything that you say. and the difficulty that we have as Christians is that we will find somebody who purports to be a Christian, who will agree with anything you want to say.

Who will say that injustice is justice? Who will say that pink is green? Who will say the gospel doesn't say that or it does say this?

Who will say that scripture shouldn't have this or it should have that? And we have to be careful. Because scripture talks about finding things that our itching ears will want to hear.

It's not me finding scripture and finding an interpretation of scripture which I agree with. It's me reading scripture and aligning myself to that.

Where do you look for Jesus? this morning, today, tomorrow, this week, this year? Where will you as an individual look for Jesus?

[26 : 25] And where will you find him? You'll find him in the truth. You'll find him in your relationship. Though we've never seen him, we love him. Though you've never seen him, you believe in him.

Though you've never seen him, you rejoice with indescribable and glorious joy. We need to steel ourselves and strengthen ourselves not to look to Jesus among the dead.

Whatever that means for you today. When you meet with Jesus, when you speak with Jesus, is your heart strangely warmed?

I love that phrase, I love that story. It's a wonderful story. Two guys wandering around on the road to Emmaus. Somebody joins them, it's Jesus, but they don't realise.

I wouldn't have realised either. I'm that dim. Oh, nice chap, nice chap to him. What does this mean? I'll explain to you, very kind of you, thank you very much indeed, very erudite, marvellous.

[27 : 28] But as Jesus speaks, their hearts were strangely warmed. Is your heart soft enough to be strangely warmed?

Is your heart soft enough to be excited, to be thrilled, to have something going on there that says, hey, this is good.

are we available today, this week? Are you available to Jesus warming your heart? In a way which we don't really realise until afterwards.

That's one of the wonderful things about that passage, they only realised afterwards that something significant was happening. Wherever you are in your faith walk, allow your heart to be strangely warmed this morning by the truth of Jesus resurrected and offering hope.

And we need to ask the Holy Spirit to help us, help us warm our heart as we communicate and as we have a relationship with Jesus.

[28 : 55] and we need to know the impact of our new birth. We need to know, gosh, that's changed. Goodness me, that's a big thing.

Look back on your life and think, I used to think that or feel frightened of that or do that or believe that and I haven't, I don't anymore. Why? Because Jesus has impacted you through new birth.

because the Holy Spirit has taught you, ingrained fears, ingrained phobias, ingrained hurt, ingrained unforgiveness, and yet Jesus will meet you and strangely warm your heart with his words of generosity.

That's the Holy Spirit to show you the impact of new birth. allow the Holy Spirit to warm your heart with the wonder of your inheritance, the wonder of the truth that when your life on earth is done, you will spend eternity in heaven.

And that's pretty good. Allow your heart to be strangely warmed by the protection of God. we read a lot about protection, don't we?

[30 : 23] We read a lot about protection. We've been through, goodness me, we've been through two years where we've been protecting ourselves from a virus, we've worn masks, we've not met in church, we've met on Zoom, we've got these little cups that spill all over your lap, because we can't quite get to the place where we can take communion together again, we will do soon.

we've taken precautions to protect ourselves. We hear about protective shields from various missiles and what have you.

We hear about all sorts of protection. And they're all good by the way, seatbelts are a good thing, I'm not pretending that seatbelts are a bad thing, they're never so clever. but we need to be mindful of the protection we have in God.

The protection of my soul, the protection of my future, the hope that I have because of the risen Lord Jesus.

Allow your heart to be strangely warmed because of that. And however you're feeling this morning and please remember, I'm not saying be counterintuitive, if things are hurting, things are hurting.

[31 : 41] But as we go through this Easter Sunday, as we spend time with whoever we're spending time with, on our own, with others, whether we're walking, looking at God's beauty, or whether we're sitting drinking a cup of tea being grateful that tea exists, allow yourself the privilege of relaxing into the indescribable and glorious joy of knowing him.

And for those of you who dance, maybe even have a little dance. As I've said before, the next time I dance, Jesus has returned, so I probably won't dance, but I might have a little chortle to myself, because the indescribable and glorious joy of knowing him is one of the first fruits of Easter Sunday morning, of the resurrected Christ, because whatever else, it'll be right, because Jesus is alive.

Amen. Amen.