

Easter 2017: Awakening Hope, 1 Corinthians 15, 4/16/17

Pop artist John Mayer more than a decade ago wrote the hit song, "Waiting for the World to Change" as a then 20 something struggling with the reality living in a broken, chaotic world...But there is a hope in the song that John points to...that he's holding on to that he believes that can make everything different, that will fix the broken world, that will redeem it, what is his hope? *"One day our generation is going to rule the population so we keep on waiting, waiting on the world to change."*

Mayer is about to turn 40, I wonder if he is still holding on to the hope...I believe every generation in the history of man has at some point thought they could be the ones that fix all the problems that their parents and grandparents created... and in attempting the fix it often seems that we break it even more. Governments, nations, movements and whole generations have chased after the ideal of a utopian society to little to no avail... that doesn't mean that things can't change for the better, or that we shouldn't strive to make the world a better place. In fact deep down I believe God has placed hope in our souls, a longing that this world is not the way it's supposed to be and there has got to be something better than this... that's a good thing! The question is, what is the hope?

People are often looking for hope in self-help books, a better version of ourselves... new political movements, new philosophies, newly defined morality, new relationships, new technological advancements... for the Christian, we anchor our hope not in something new but rather something ancient. And the something is actually a someone- Jesus Christ, God wrapped in flesh, the savior of the world. We believe that *Jesus Christ is the ONLY hope of the world.*

If Christianity is new to you- let me give you the shortest summary of what we believe that you've ever heard. *1) God made the world in perfect harmony and good. 2) We believe that the world is broken and dysfunctional because mankind broke it,* we chose to rebel against our creator from the beginning, this fractured the rhythm and harmony that God designed in all creation, including our own souls, hearts and minds. But God is a loving God who wants a relationship with his creatures for eternity, he has made a way through the God-man, *3) Jesus Christ for every person to be restored to that rhythm and harmony with God forever and that ultimately He will restore that rhythm and harmony of all creation for eternity, and the harmony, the utopia that we long for will be a reality.* And the single event in history that is the crowning proof that this is true, the lynchpin for all of what we believe and the anchor for our hope is what happened on the first *4) Easter Sunday,* 2000 years ago in Jerusalem, the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Now some of you might be here and say, OK you know I'm a Christian but I'm not one of those literal people that take the Bible seriously... I believe in God and I believe in Jesus, but the whole resurrection thing, I think that was probably just a metaphor, you know like a symbol of the triumph of man over challenges... I mean he didn't REALLY rise from the dead, right?

This is the question that the Apostle Paul is answering in 1 Corinthians 15. And Paul emphatically defends the literal, actual resurrection of Jesus, which would have happened just 25 years ago at this time in history. In fact, he stakes his whole ministry on the resurrection. And what we are going to see is Paul logically argue the utter hopelessness for all of us if the resurrection was just some myth, or some metaphor and didn't actually happen.

1 Corinthians 15:12-20

But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.

And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised.

For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.

If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

Pretty hopeless huh? Wait for it...Verse 20-

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

And so because Christ has been raised from the dead it means that all of these things become untrue, in fact the reverse of each of these arguments becomes true. And so that's what we want to look at, we are going to reverse these arguments to so instead of killing hope, we will see **4 Ways the Resurrection Awakens Hope**

1) We have been forgiven!

v.17

And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins... but Christ has indeed been raised from the dead! So therefore the opposite is true...we are no longer in our sins.

I put this first because it is the basic need and longing of our hearts. If God holds our sins against us—and we all have sinned!—then there is no hope of anything else from God. The foundation for every other blessing from God is that God won't hold our sins against us. Everything hangs on forgiveness.

But the resurrection validates and justifies that EVERY sin was paid for by the death of Christ. So those of you who think you've gone too far, you've done too much,

you've hurt too many people, you've left too much carnage in your background, you carry too much shame, you've had too many chances, this can't be for you, this place couldn't welcome you and God could not have you as a son or daughter...I have good news for you. The resurrection is the evidence that all your sins have been paid in full. Are you ready to accept the free gift of forgiveness and full acceptance by the only one whose opinion ultimately matters?

2) We have victory over death!

v.18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost...But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead.

v.42-44

So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

I want to stop there and let an uncomfortable truth set in. Here it is. You're easy to kill. You are incredibly fragile. No matter what precautions you take, no matter what safety things you build around your life, you are simple to kill. A car ride, an airplane ride, a jog around the park or one cell in your body going rogue is all it takes. It takes the right virus, the right bacteria, unseen substances in the air...You're easy to kill. Eat your greens and get your workout on. That is good stewardship. Get a juicer, get a food processor and only eat grass-fed meat. There is a level of stewardship around your body that is important, but don't think for a second that it's going to ultimately save you. As a pastor, I have a front row seat to tragedy and death. Death has 100% success rate.

This is what Paul is saying here, our bodies are weak. He's saying that we won't be like that at the resurrection. What is sown in weakness will be raised in strength. So the things that make me weak now will be gone. This body that needs a cup of coffee first thing in the morning, or pills for pain, or breathing apparatus... Ultimately we're not going to need things like that. But not just physically indestructible, morally indestructible... you and I will be purged of dysfunction, darkness, sin and despair, no longer constantly consumed with ourselves and what everyone thinks...

v.55 "Death has been swallowed up in victory." Instead of death might take a bite out of you...but because of the resurrection, we will eat death for breakfast!

3) We have good news to share!

v.14-15 And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead...but Christ has indeed been raised from the dead!

It's like when you just get your car washed and then it rains... man what a waste of time! That's what Paul's saying, man all this preaching and missions work, what a waste of time if the resurrection isn't true! In fact, even worse, propagating a big lie! But because it IS true- Paul was overjoyed to have the privilege to share the good news. Friends do we realize the treasure we have in the gospel? When we announce to all our friends the good news that we got the latest iPhone, when we share all the pics and videos of the good news that it's a boy! Or it's a girl! Why? Because we want others to share in the joy we are experiencing in our good news! Guess what we have the goodest of all good news... pull out Facebook...most important news I've ever shared- Jesus is Risen! This leads us to our last...

4) We have a life filled with purpose!

*v.14 And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless **and so is your faith...** but Christ has indeed been raised from the dead!*

Trip to Israel story, **Garden Tomb (Picture)** and Church of the Holy Sepulcher

Aren't you embarrassed that we are here? Don't you think we are a little crazy? This was Mary and Joseph's boy wasn't it? Wasn't he just a rabbi? It's really a pitiful, sad sight spending this time and money, shedding these tears if all these people coming to visit a tomb from all over the world if none of it is true.

v. 30-32 And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour? I face death every day—yes, just as surely as I boast about you in Christ Jesus our Lord. If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus with no more than human hopes, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

Let's just live it up if this is all there is. Unless of course the tomb was really empty that day and resurrection is true, then all of the pity, meaninglessness and sadness becomes undone...

v.58 Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Every single millisecond of our life that is lived IN CHRIST, is bursting with eternity. Eternal purpose and meaning. Every decision to trust Christ instead of ourselves, every dollar we give, every moment we pray, every person we serve, every hardship we endure is bursting with eternity. So open your hand to God.

Jim Elliot

He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.

Summary

1) We have been forgiven!

2) We have victory over death!

3) We have good news to share!

4) We have a life filled with purpose!

If you are here today, are you 4 for 4 in your hope? If you can't say you are 4 for 4, if you can't say you know for sure that you are forgiven... I want you to leave today sure. How?

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

For what I received I passed on to you as 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.

Pray.

Christianity 101

Christians are not a people that have some blissful hope with made up stories or tranquil philosophies... We have a unique book in the Bible, that has stood the test of time, that is anchored in historical events, verified through archaeology, we have a Savior in Jesus Christ whose life, death and resurrection is documented in time and space with many witnesses and proofs...