

Hope for Relationships

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everyone. Yeah, cool. Everybody is alive and well. That's great. As Alec just said, we are in a series right now titled Because He Lives.

We typically preach through books of the Bible, but every once in a while we come across a time in our lives where we feel like we need to push pause on that and just hit a subject matter that's really relevant to where we are as a body of believers.

And so we've been looking at the death and the resurrection of Jesus for the last few weeks, especially because, obviously, Good Friday and Easter just occurred. However, if you're new with us, we really make it a point to talk about this every week.

We really try to treat every Sunday and Friday like it's the Good Friday and Easter. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is paramount to what we are as a church, the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, if you will.

So what I mean is we want to take you and your questions seriously, and we want to make the gospel and the hope of Jesus really clear. However, because of the recent Easter weekend, we thought it would be helpful to explain how the resurrection changes everything, not just the hope we have after we die.

[1 : 15] This, to us, isn't just a nice thing to discuss. It's absolutely essential. Shelley and I have really needed a break for a long time, honestly.

Hurricane Florence really damaged our home. The nightmare of dealing with our insurance company over the last eight months has been fantastic. My son is in Little League.

I'm an assistant coach. Two others, two of my daughters are in dance, and we have an eight-month-old boy. We also lead a community group, so forth, so on, six, seven, p'ing, chow. There you go. That's what I'm talking about. We really need to be able to... That was Mandarin. Not really. I have no idea what I was just thinking. We really need to be able to push, pause, and rest. Oftentimes, we end up being very short with each other. The level of grace we have, at times, is honestly in the basement, and we are exhausted. But the absolute worst part is I see it on my kids' faces when we react out of anger.

[2 : 16] It just happens. So I hate that for so many reasons, and I actually am embarrassed to admit it, but one of the things it does is, and I hope it does, is it reminds you that I am human.

And I think it helps get at what we are going to talk about today. So we've just celebrated the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the eternal hope we have because of it, and yet time after time, I forget and respond to those most important to me in a hateful way.

How would life be different if we, if I, lived every day holding on to this hope we have through the resurrection of Jesus? How much different would everyday life be if we would live out our lives filtering every aspect of life through the hope we have because of Jesus' resurrection?

To me, so much of the frustrations that we face in relationships, we face because we don't connect the resurrection to our lives. The resurrection of Jesus should change everything.

Some of you may be asking, why? Why does it change everything? Our thing with the resurrection is, if he's alive, then he's God. That means that he's more than just a good man.

[3 : 30] That means that he beat death, and he's actually in control. That means that the things he said should and actually really do matter. If Jesus is alive, he's not just teaching, he's commanding.

These are not just ideas we can vote on, but commands we should and must follow. It means we treat what Jesus said like the Ten Commandments. We aren't meant to hear Jesus like we hear the great Martin Luther King or Gandhi or Mother Teresa or even Paul.

They were all fantastic, great people, but none of them conquered death. Listen to how Jesus lamented to being treated like a good guy. In Luke 6, 46, it says, Why do you call me Lord, Lord,

and not do what I tell you?

You're giving me some kind of surface respect, he's saying, but you don't obey. The fundamental to being a Christian is understanding that to us, Jesus is God because he came back from the dead. We don't think he's God because of his awesome teachings. We don't think he's God because of his kindness towards others, which he obviously was a fantastic teacher, phenomenal teacher, and he was super kind to all.

[4 : 44] There have been good teachers and kind people, but the fact of the matter is they're dead. We think Jesus is God exclusively because he conquered death.

So some of you may be thinking, All right, okay, we've got some commands going on here. Well, I'll give it a go. Let's try Jesus. Let's try this Jesus. But what you quickly find out is, especially for some of you that are relatively new Christians, is that Jesus' commands are radically countercultural.

Not just counter our culture, but counter every culture. Today we're talking about how the resurrection shapes the way we treat others because so much of what he taught was on this.

The way he said we were to treat people made Jesus sound like he was from another planet. Now, that would be easy to just write off and put in the weird category if he was just a teacher.

Now, he said plenty of things that were worth quoting, right? But remember, if he rose from the dead, these aren't just Jesus' thoughts on how we treat spouses, children, other ethnicities, enemies, the weak, and the powerful.

[5 : 56] These aren't just teachings. These are commands. Why did he say, what did he say about relationships? That was so crazy. Well, let's look at Luke 6, Luke chapter 6, starting verse 26.

It says, But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies. I'm sure that's really easy for a lot of the Marines in the room. Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you.

I really love that one. Bless those who curse you. I work at Cherry Point. You can find people that curse you all day long. No problem. Pray for those who abuse you.

To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also. Yeah, buddy, I'm going to do that one.

And from one who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. In other words, if a guy asks for your coat, give him your shirt too.

Right? No, no, no, no. We don't like that. There's a whole lot of nope in here. I ain't doing that mess. Right? I mean, who's going to do that? I've never done that. He continues on in verse 32.

[7 : 04] It says, If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you?

For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners to get back the same amount.

But love your enemies and do good and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great. And you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.

Now, earlier I read verse 46. In verse 46 it says, Why do you not do what I tell you to? There is so much of this kind of teaching that Jesus gave.

The only reason to follow anything like this is because he rose from the dead. And therefore, again, these are commands. They're not suggestions. They're not teachings. In my community group, we have three teachers.

[8 : 10] I assure you, in their classes, those students are not saying, These are commands. Miss Rochelle, Miss Nicole, Miss Brittany, they're not telling me, These are commands I must follow. They're saying, These girls are crazy.

I'm not listening to them. That's what I did. Because he's alive, he gets to call the shots. And we go to his teachings, now commands, on relationship, and say, Command us, God.

These commands are very different to our normal. What seems normal to us? I'm not saying you like all of the following when I'm getting ready to talk about, but I think we chalk it up as to just human nature.

Think about this. We are. We are. I am divisive. We gossip. We slander. We are racist. We covet. We want to take out vengeance. We want to murder people. Lie to get our way or get what we want. And we absolutely take advantage of the weak.

[9 : 08] We see it so much, we do it, and we have it done to us to the point that it feels normal to us, like a fish in water. There's no more shock factor. We are absolutely calloused.

Just think a few decades ago. At one point, we were all okay with segregation. Right? Now, what if today, what if today, we said that other races had to sit on the back of a bus or drink from a different

water fountain?

That seems crazy to us today, but that was the norm 40, 50 years ago. The thing about God is that he's never been okay with this.

He's never once thought, eh, segregation is no big deal. God is always outraged by evil, even when we are not.

I'm going to read a couple of statistics for you, and this is absolutely insane to me. But in 2017, so two years ago, in the United States of America, there were 17,284 people murdered in the United States.

[10:18] Now, think about that. Think about this. In the same year, 2017, there were approximately 879,000 abortions in the United States.

Now, I bring that statistic up not to condemn anybody in this room or anybody that's going to listen in the future. I'm just bringing it up in the context of we are calloused.

We don't think this is a big deal. 879,000 abortions took place in the U.S. I read another statistic that since abortions became legal in 1973, I believe, over 53 million abortions have taken place in the United States alone.

Right now, we are not outraged by the murder of innocent babies.

Man, I pray to God that we will be. It's unbelievable, but it's human nature. It's the fact of the matter. We are calloused. God hates all wickedness and wants the world rid of it.

[11:27] So when Jesus comes and teaches on relationships and says things that sound strange and countercultural, well, they are. Because he's coming from a heavenly culture where this is never and will never exist.

It's not tolerated. I assure you, angels aren't doing this to one another. And the Father says, well, angels will be angels. You know, boys will be boys.

Angels will be angels. No big deal, whatever. The only example we have in Scripture is when Satan thought for a moment he deserved what God alone deserved. And Jesus said in Luke 10, verse 18, he says, I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

That's what God thought of Satan's attitude. That's how long he tolerated it. It went so fast it was like lightning. We have our own teachings on how to treat others that are in stark opposition to Jesus' teachings.

Only one of us can be right. We can say, that's weird, Jesus. But are our teachings not weirder? Are we really the ones to be trusted?

[12:36] Look over our shoulders. Look at the human race. Look over our shoulders. So many thousands of years of abuse, murder, deception, betrayal, molestation, genocide, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

Should we get to call the shots on what's right and wrong? No. Truth is, you start off being startled, but over time you begin to appreciate.

Jesus' commands are profoundly beautiful. As you get into this life of following these commands, you find something that's not only different, it is so beautiful.

You find the kind of life we were made for, that we desire so deeply, but that we just can't seem to find here on earth. What do I mean? Well, consider this challenging teaching.

In Luke 14, verse 12, it says, He said also to the man who had invited him, when you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid.

[13:37] But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.

Doesn't that seem unreal? Who's actually ever done that? I've never done that. Jesus says, love and serve people who have no chance of ever doing anything in return and get repaid in the resurrection.

Through this, we become completely different people and it's all because of the resurrection. Listen to how Colossians says it. In chapter 3, verse 1, it says, If then you have been raised with Christ, if then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

Set your minds on the things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Put to death, therefore, what is earthly in you, sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil, desire, covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these, the wrath of God is coming.

[14 : 53] In these, you too once walked when you were living in them, but now you must put them all away. Anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed and knowledge after the image of its creator.

Here, there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised, uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free, but Christ is all and in all. Put on then as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another, and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other.

As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony, and let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body, and be thankful.

Whew. I love that rationale here. We've been raised with Christ. We are a new creation. Therefore, let's stop doing blank, whatever your blank is, and start doing blank.

I love how serious a couple of these commands sound. Do not lie to one another. You must forgive. Do we treat lying to each other as seriously as this?

[16 : 21] Do we feel forgiving one another is a command to be followed? If not, are we really living in the light of the resurrection? The Bible's analogy here is actually quite morbid.

You are dead to that. Don't crawl into your old dead bodies again. Put on your old dead clothes. Live this new, amazing life God has given you.

Because he lives, we fight for diversity. We fight for forgiveness, long-suffering, mercy, grace, generosity, etc.

We have moved from being enemies to being his family. We have been forgiven an insurmountable debt we owed. I owed. We all owed. We have received mercy and grace like we couldn't imagine.

We have a generous father who gives us breath and sent his son and is going to send him again to lead us into life everlasting. This is what Jesus kept trying to get his followers to see.

[17 : 22] Live like you're looking forward to that. So his commands are counter-cultural, beautiful, and even more than that.

His commands lead to a blessed life even though it often doesn't seem like it. I don't live in a bubble. I understand this. It doesn't seem like it.

Jesus said things like blessed are the persecuted. Really? Really? I don't feel blessed when I'm being persecuted. How about you? Let's just be honest.

It seems cruel. It's like Jesus is playing some kind of little joke on us. But Jesus knows what he's doing and where this is all leading. Oftentimes, we who follow him we're a bit in the dark.

Mark 10, verse 28, Peter, the great Peter, the rock, Peter began to say to him, see, we have left everything that followed you. Peter probably didn't know what he was getting into.

[18 : 22] But it seems he imagined that he was going to get something. He had, they had, all the disciples, they had given up a lot. They left everything. Now this movement didn't seem to be really getting off the ground in the way they would have imagined.

Jesus had crowds walking away from him, thousands of people leaving at once. People trying to kill him. And at the moment of this scripture verse, a rich young ruler had just said, not for me.

This, it's safe to say, is not what Peter had in mind. You and I would probably say the same thing. It continues on in verse 29. Jesus said, truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mothers or father or children or lands for my sake and for the gospel who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands with persecutions and in the age to come eternal life.

What on earth does Jesus mean? What in the world? A couple of things. We receive family, fellowship and friends through the church he puts us in. Also, we are looking forward to a day when we receive more than we could ever ask, think, or even imagine.

But, we may often feel like Peter when it seems we aren't getting what we imagine and we may not even see it in this life. I have really honestly been challenged so many times by Hebrews 11.

[19 : 57] Verse 13 it says, these people, the fathers of our faith back in the day, these all died in faith not having received the things promised.

but having seen them and greeted them from afar and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth for people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland.

If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is they desire a better country that is a heavenly one.

Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God for he has prepared for them a city. We are to be looking forward to the resurrection of our bodies for our hope not to the circumstances around us.

Our perspective has to change. We are not to treat people like they treat us. We are to treat them how Jesus has treated us. We are to look to that day.

[21 : 06] Look long for that day. But I have seen in my life and others this. Many of you in the room may be saying this. Well I tried Jesus.

You know that mentality I can assure you it will lead to it didn't work. And what we mean is my life didn't feel more enhanced. The problems weren't instantly solved.

So much of this honestly this is very tragic as a result of bad expectations. Jesus promised that those who followed him would have trouble.

But somehow in our little finite minds we have convinced ourselves it is another weird teaching. What we have done is missed what this actually feels like.

We follow him down and he in his timing brings us up. That is the fun part. in his timing. I have some friends sorry.

[22 : 16] The Bible is profoundly clear that following Jesus looks like and feels like and may even lead to suffering and death. But that as we spur one another along Jesus is at work remembering he has a plan to work all of this out for good.

Peter was so confused until he encountered the resurrection. He is a totally different guy. He is not keeping tabs anymore. Peter writes entrust our souls to a faithful creator.

Cast all your cares on him because he cares for you. Humble yourselves and he will exalt you at the proper time. He is a guy who has been changed by the resurrected Jesus. Peter sees that there is a pattern that informs expectations.

The Christian pattern is death followed by resurrection. Once you get that once that goes from here to here everything else starts to make more sense.

That wasn't just Jesus' pattern that is our pattern too. Philippians 3 711 says but whatever gain I had I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

[23 : 26] for his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law but that which comes through faith in Christ the righteousness from God that depends on faith that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and may share his sufferings becoming like him in his death that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

what Paul is saying here is so powerful yet easy to miss we follow Jesus down into all kinds of deaths and Jesus brings us up he resurrects us as we depend on him to deliver us we're not going to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps we're not going to work it out we're not going to just put our head down and work it out we have to depend on him we want Jesus to rescue us from all trouble or hardship we want following him to mean an easier life but that's not how the Christian life works or even looks the Christian life is often one of suffering and death while looking forward to the resurrection we just read about that in Hebrews 11 this way of living the way of being a Christian Paul says depends on faith and it leads us to want to share in his sufferings becoming like him in his death how do you forgive your enemies how do you love when you are persecuted how do you trust

God when you're at your wits end well we do it through the hope that we get in the resurrection of Jesus Christ okay some more questions so these are commands from the risen Jesus alright what now we got commands what do we do now we embrace them for our own lives like Jesus we come to see that there is a kind of dying that is required of us when Christ calls a man he bids him come and die what does that even mean following Jesus has applications as Christians we should apply these commands to our lives medical school students don't just read books they have to actually touch people they move from theory to reality you can as Christians you can read all of this you can memorize the Bible front to back you can study it and all those are great things they're wonderful

things but it's all theory until you actually have to love someone so many Christians stop short of applying Jesus' commands they call him

Lord but they do not obey him because it's like death Jesus' Jesus' commands are not to remain theory they should inform and empower us to be different as we encounter others that seems like a theme we've been talking about over the last couple of months 1 Peter exiles different aliens in our own culture how is it that God is calling you to embrace these commands well let's get to being a little practical right now how about that we experience this in a church family honestly Jesse and I and the rest of the team we hope that this whole experience is enjoyable and helpful but is that what church is when we think it is a place that exists to make us you and I happy as individuals we make it something that's not what if your church community is actually a place not primarily for you to be fulfilled but a place to lay your life down a place for you to lay down your life so others can be blessed listen to how Paul describes it 2 Corinthians 4 starting in verse 8 we are afflicted in every way but not crushed perplexed but not driven to despair persecuted but not forsaken struck down but not destroyed always carrying in the body the death of

Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies for we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus sake so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh so death is at work in us but life in you since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written I believed and so I spoke he's quoting Psalms right there we also we also we also speak knowing that he who raised this Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring with you into his presence for it is all for your sake so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving to the glory of God isn't that amazing for Paul every church every relationship every day was an opportunity to be given over to death to die to self He wasn't in it for him.

[28 : 17] He was in it to see them advance and was humbling himself and trusting that one day Jesus would raise him. Along the way, those who don't yet know Jesus see this.

John 13, 35, it says, By this all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another. Out of our lives laid down for each other and for Jesus' sake, God's love gets put on display and people's lives are changed.

When we give our time, when we give our finances, our energy to our church community, there are moments that might really hurt, but it's also where we see resurrection begin to take place. Lonely people are welcomed into family. Salvation and forgiveness comes from people who thought they'd never experienced it, but it often is preceded by a kind of dying to what we want. We experience this in any marriage. Now, I recognize that not all of us are married, but a lot of us are.

[29 : 24] I started off by telling you about how Shelly and I have had such a really busy and long season. All marriage fights, discussions, struggles seem to come down to a struggle to die to something.

Sometimes that's really hard. It might mean dying to a dream. When the expectations aren't nonstop bliss, when you expect the kind of dying to yourself that requires you to fully trust in Him, the chances that you'll actually make it go way up.

When we die to ourself, when we fully trust God, our marriages are going to be way better. Some of you are in a hard place in your marriage. How much of that would change if you changed your expectations?

What if you said, Jesus, Jesus, you were willing to die for me. Help me die to my view of what happiness looks like in this season and cause me to endure, to hope for the resurrection you'll bring.

Man, what if that was our prayer? One more possible area. Jesus may be calling us into death and sacrificial love. How about those wonderful neighbors and even strangers? Human nature is to stick with our own kind.

[30 : 44] Stay away from those kinds of people. Even in churches, we have our own kind. Church shootings keep happening and they're actually, they're very much race-driven.

Now I hope and pray none of us aren't going to shoot someone. But how many of us live trying to avoid certain kinds of people? Because to actually do the opposite and build relationships with people who are different from you can be hard.

It can be like death. But that's exactly what Jesus did. He reached across racial lines, across socioeconomic lines, against lines of status and social privilege.

And he encourages us to do the same. In that day, in Jesus' day, people with those kinds of physical disabilities were not only poor, but they were also considered ritually unclean. They were complete social outcasts. To invite them into your home was to make your own home unclean. And the right kind of people wouldn't want to associate with you.

[31 : 57] It would be kind of like a social death. But Jesus says, you should do it anyways. Because after that death is resurrection. Look around you.

I notice people popping up in your minds right now as we're talking. Look around you. Think about your neighbors, your co-workers. Here's a good one. Think about the kids and adults that are social outcasts.

How do you think foster care kids are treated at school? What about addicts? Those of another race.

Who's God calling you to lay down your life to serve? How should we respond to this? And if you're here and you're not yet a Christian, I recognize that so much of this can sound crazy.

Honestly, it is. But again, what keeps us still, what keeps us still in times of trouble is knowing that he rose from the dead.

[33 : 01] He is alive. He is risen. He is God. If you're here and you're already a Christian, if you're a Christian, death is real.

But it does not have the final say in your life. death will always give way to resurrection. Death will always give way to resurrection.

Think about God's greatest beauties. They come out of the ashes. But so much comes down to our unrealistic and unmet expectations.

that is, when we expect something that's not what Jesus said would happen and when that doesn't happen, how do you react? I think for so many of us, the call of Jesus is to reset our expectations for what following him feels like when it comes to how we treat others.

who do we need to forgive? Who do you, who do I need to love, to serve, to pray for?

[34 : 11] Every week, we come and we take communion. We take this meal. And by today, I hope and I pray that this is a reset button on how our relationships are formed with our neighbors, our family, our co-workers, even our Christian friends.

How do we, how do we think about them? The call of Jesus to come and die is only after we see that he first came and died for us.

He led the way. He's not saying go and do something I never did. He did it. In fact, as we prepare to go out and live like this, we want to first come and behold the death of Jesus for us.

Where love and forgiveness actually lead, not to a figurative death, but a literal death. Jesus Christ literally died for you and I.

So much of this, so much of this just feels like dying, but Jesus actually died. In love, he was willing to die for us, for you, for me, to lead us to resurrection.

[35 : 24] When we come eat this meal, we are to behold the reality of his death in a way that makes us not just remember, but be different.

Take time to reflect on how you have been looking at relationships in your lives, all different aspects of relationships, whether you're married, single, coworkers, family, friends, doesn't matter.

Think about those things. Ask for forgiveness. If a person's in your room and you need to ask for forgiveness, go and do it before you come and take communion. If they're not here, make it a point to go and ask for forgiveness.

Reconciliation is a super powerful tool that is so weird to our culture. It is so easy in our world to de-friend somebody on Facebook, never follow them again or whatever.

That is not the Christian way. We are called to be different. We are called to be aliens in this world. Let your life be that light that we were talking about.

[36 : 27] Be different. Thank you.