

HOW THE RESURRECTION HELPS US FACE COVID-19

By Neil Smith 12 April 2020
Recorded for Church Online

(SCENE 1 - CLOSE UP)

INTRODUCTION

Hello everyone!

What a great time of worship!

Thank you to Sino and the team for leading us!

From me and my family - Happy Easter to all of you!!!

As you join us today from your homes... all around the valley... and all around the world... welcome! And today we come to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ!!! We celebrate... because our saviour is alive! Amen!

The resurrection of Jesus is such an important part of what we as Christians believe.

Billy Graham used to say, *"The entire plan for the future... has its key... in the resurrection."* I trust that you believe that.

I am praying and hoping that today - you will find strength and encouragement in what Jesus has achieved and done for you. And that you will know THE KEY to your future - is IN the RESURRECTION of Jesus. Amen!

(SCENE 2 - AUDITORIUM SCENE)

As you can see... Today I am preaching in a completely empty church auditorium here at King of Kings... one of the perks of having a house on the property.

The spread of COVID-19... and the Lockdown here in South Africa... and elsewhere in the world... means that we can't gather together physically this Easter... but we are so blessed that we can gather together online! So we are going to make the most of it.

I am glad.... that I am not totally alone here today though... I have my family with me... Shelley, Hannah and Nathan.

So I hope I can get some encouragement and Amen's from the Smiths!

I should also say - that although the church looks empty. It's not empty. The church is just not in the building! If you look with spiritual eyes, you will see that the church is actually full. It has been deployed into homes, communities, and social media platforms.

Friends - Although this Easter won't look like last year... there are still some things that won't change...

Our METHOD has changed - but the MESSAGE remains the same!

We still get to worship... and we still get to share the AMAZING story of our SAVIOUR'S LOVE and POWER through his RESURRECTION!

It is just an EASTER AT HOME! Amen.

Plus... I am sure.... we will all still eat way too much chocolate! I bet some of you... are even eating easter egg's right now as I speak! Not cool!

But yes, with COVID-19 - this is not a normal easter! Not an easy easter 😞

There are many people who are facing huge anxiety, fear, and uncertainty right now.

This virus is EXTREMELY CONTAGIOUS... but I would argue... the only thing... that is MORE CONTAGIOUS than this virus... is FEAR... which is impacting lives all over the world right now.

Last week Pastor Tristan spoke about BREAKING FEAR... and he brought such a great message to us about that.

Because there are a lot of things to be fearful of... at the moment.

There is so much uncertainty.

But please remember that fear is contagious... and it does not take a lot of fear... for it to spread all over the place.

But I also want to remind you today... that there is something far greater than fear my friend - and that is OUR GOD!

So before we get into Gods word today - please join me as we pray...

(SCENE 3 - CLOSE UP)

PRAYER

Father, some of us are finding it hard to trust in you right now.

*Some of us are really afraid.
Some of us are lonely.
Some of us are sick.
Some are facing financial hardship.*

Father, we need your help.

Father, help us to trust you.

This is a very real and scary storm.

So more than ever before - we need your help Lord.

Help us to trust you.

And I know it's easy to say that, when everything is going well... But it's not so easy... when we have been hit hard.

When it's our family, and not just the family down the road that's affected.

Please help all of us... to put all of our hope... and trust in you.

And thank you for your love - a love that will never let us go.

Jesus - When we say your name in the dark... it changes everything!

Jesus - you calm storms. You stop virus's. You change lives.

Jesus - Fear can not survive when we praise you!

Lord we thank you... that the God of breakthrough is on our side!

Help our unbelief - May faith rise in our hearts... and may you conquer the storms inside of some of us today!

We thank you today for your resurrection - which I pray will take on new meaning and influence in our lives today. In Jesus name!

And all God's people said amen! Or typed amen in the comments section online!

Let's get into the message today everyone...

I have called today's message;

[HOW THE RESURRECTION HELPS US FACE COVID-19](#)

Watchman Nee said; *“Our old history ends with the cross; and our new history begins with the resurrection.”*

Paul said it like this in 1 Corinthians -

**“If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.”
(1 Cor 15:17)**

If everything we preach about Jesus, all we teach about Jesus, is just fake news. Well then... we are in a real mess!

So the resurrection is really really important.

For those of you who may be unsure of what I mean by the resurrection... let me just make sure we are all on the same page...

WHAT IS THE RESURRECTION?

Jesus' resurrection was prophesied long before it happened in the Old Testament. About 700 years before the birth of Jesus the prophet Isaiah prophesied it!

Then Jesus himself predicted his resurrection. Many times in the New Testament Jesus plainly promised that he would die - and then rise - three days later.

Then Jesus died. And if you joined us on Good Friday you would have heard me teach about the cross. Jesus was crucified on the cross through asphyxiation and confirmed to be dead by a Roman executioner's spear through his heart.

He was buried in a tomb that was easy to find in that day, and easy to confirm. Yet no one finds there today - because all who later visited it - found it empty - and therefore it serves no purpose.

The witness of the New Testament is clear, that after three days of being dead, Jesus rose from the dead! This is known as the resurrection!

And the New Testament tells us that Jesus appeared physically, not just spiritually, but physically - alive - three days after his death. Many people touched him, clung to him, and saw him. Thomas the doubter even put his hand into the open spear hole in Jesus' side.

After the resurrection everything was different. Jesus' resurrection was celebrated by the early church. His family, and siblings, and even some enemies, like Paul, worshipped him as God - which is quite a thing to pull off if you are not legit!

So do I believe in the resurrection - you bet!

And does it change the way I view everything - absolutely.

The same way it changed everything for the disciples, it changed everything for me. The way we deal with struggles in this world, trials, persecution. COVID-19. And whatever COVID type challenges may be yet to come.

The resurrection is profoundly significant... because what we believe about it... affects our future.

So now that there is clarity on what I mean about the resurrection, let me now show you how the resurrection helps me to face COVID-19.

In 1 Peter, the Apostle Peter was writing to believers, who were fearful. They were in a situation that might be similar in some ways to ours today.

The believers in Asia Minor were facing all kinds of serious trials. The scariest of which... was a very violent form of persecution that was headed their way.

So let me take you to God's word in **1 Peter 1:3**. This is our main text for today.

3 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. (1 Pet 1:3)

Let me read that again so that it sinks in...

3 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. (1 Pet 1:3)

How does the resurrection change everything for us, and help us to face COVID-19? Well firstly...

(SCENE 4 - CLOSE UP)

1- WE FIND GREAT MERCY

I find GREAT MERCY.

Verse 3 days - Praise be to God - the Father of our Lord Jesus - for his GREAT MERCY.

As we face COVID-19 - I find so much peace and comfort, in the mercy and love of God.

On the cross - Jesus revealed to us the mercy of God. These should be very familiar scriptures for you...

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

“God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8)

On the cross - and through the resurrection of Jesus - we see that the great love, the great mercy of God. I like how Nehemiah puts it;

“But in your great mercy you did not put an end to them or abandon them, for you are a gracious and merciful God.” (Neh 9:31)

Through the cross, through the resurrection, God not only graciously takes away our sin, but he also mercifully extends himself toward us, knowing that we need him desperately.

He knows the circumstances you in in my friend.
He knows the circumstances we are all in.

Call... upon... his... mercy.

WE FIND GREAT MERCY... In the arms of Jesus.

2 - WE RECEIVE NEW BIRTH

Do you know why Christians have such peace during times like this? Because we have been born-again. We know that there is more to life, than this life.

Lee Strobel said; *“Jesus Christ did not come into this world to make bad people good; he came into this world to make dead people live.”*

In our verse in 1 Peter - we are taught that we are given NEW BIRTH through the resurrection.

What does that mean?

Further on in 1 Peter, it get's unpacked a little bit more in verse 23;

“For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.” (1 Pet 1:23)

You see friends, as we believe in Jesus, through the living and enduring word, the message of the gospel, and accept what Jesus did on the cross for us, the

punishment he bore in our place, God does a supernatural miracle - and we are spiritually born-again. New birth.

Jesus himself taught us;

“Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.” (John 3:3)

Friend, you might be listening in today, and, for the first time in your life you are beginning to understand the GREAT MERCY of God toward you through Jesus.

And today the Holy Spirit is calling you - drawing you back to God. Whispering - You must be born again! And if you are hearing him speak to you my friend. Don't run from him. Turn toward him.

Salvation comes from God alone. Jesus said;

“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this? (John 11:25-26)

If you want to believe that my friend... please pray with me.

Heavenly Father... Thank you for your great mercy which has given us new birth into a living hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Lord Jesus, I believe in my heart that you were raised from the dead, and that this guarantees that your death was sufficient to pay for all my sins, and therefore God, you are for me, and not against me, and I believe you are alive today, and with me, to help me, and to save me. In Jesus name.

Here is what I want you to do, if you prayed that prayer, you will find a little link on Church Online, that says “salvation.” Please click on it. Our team are standing by to help you take the next steps as a new Christian.

Don't put it off. There might not be another moment. The “right time” is now. Today is the day of salvation.

You can have NEW BIRTH through the resurrection of Jesus - and it will make all the difference in your life, as we know that the trials and hardships we face now, are nothing but a tiny spec, on what awaits God's people in eternity.

Through the resurrection;

I FIND GREAT MERCY
I RECEIVE NEW BIRTH

Finally...

3 - I EXPERIENCE LIVING HOPE

(SCENE 5 - CLOSE UP)

1 Peter 3 says this; **In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope.**

A living hope. I will be honest with you. I really don't know how people who don't know Jesus deal with things like the Coronavirus. They must be really positive people. Or, they they must be putting their hope in strange things!

Money, fame, power, relationships, and so on.

Yet to hope in things like this, is really to be hopeless. Because these things will one day come to an end. To have hope in them, is dead hope.

So what is a Living Hope?

To understand this, you need to understand the bible. You see, the New Testament idea of hope is very different from our normal thinking about hope.

If I got asked this question -

"Neil, do you think the Springboks win the next rugby world cup again? I would probably say: "I don't know... but I really *HOPE* so!

In other words, hope, as we typically tend to think about it, is a desire for some future thing... which we are actually *uncertain* of.

But this is not the way Peter, or the rest of the New Testament, thinks about hope.

Peter calls it a "living hope." What does that mean?

Well, I'm just a simple guy, so I see the opposite of a "living hope" as a "dead hope."

So friends, I am here today, to tell you, to remind you, that our hope is not dead! It's not barren. It's not fruitless and unproductive. Our hope friends, is alive! Amen!

Living hope, is REAL.

Living hope, is hope that has POWER.

It is hope that produces CHANGE in our lives.

It is a STRONG CONFIDENCE in God!

We can SET our hope on Him.

It is sure. It is certain.

He is Our LIVING HOPE.

CONCLUSION

So as I close.

Christian, Even when everybody else is afraid - When everyone around you is falling apart. You can be different! You can put your hope in God!

Through the resurrection,

YOU CAN FIND GREAT MERCY
YOU CAN RECEIVE NEW BIRTH... and
YOU CAN EXPERIENCE LIVING HOPE.

It is my prayer that in the days to come, they will find a way to treat COVID-19.

And when they do, can you imagine how fast that good news will spread around the world on social media, news channels and so on? It will sweep the world in a matter of minutes. Because good news is contagious.

Hope is contagious.

And as a Christ follower, you are a carrier of a different kind. Because you have a LIVING HOPE.

Fear is contagious, but so is hope.

My friends, I want you to know... that each of you are "carriers."

We are each "carrying" something, spreading something.

Some of us are carrying fear - and spreading it around
Some of us are carrying depression, anxiety, anger, unforgiveness.

But there are also some... who are carrying hope, and faith - and what you carry, whether you realise it or not, you pass on to those around you.

Craig Groeschel says; *"The bottom line... is that when people are around you... they tend to catch what you have."*

What is it that you have my friend?

WHAT ARE YOU CARRYING?

As crazy as it might sound - there are worse things to be carrying right now than the coronavirus. But God wants us to be carriers of a different kind.

Right now, the world is starving for hope, and the resurrection story is the greatest source of hope we have!

Imagine if believers around the world could be carriers of hope?

I heard the story this week, of one of our own church members... from our church and right here in the valley... who through a simple conversation with a neighbour, who asked them why they seemed so peaceful during this time, end up leading them in prayer to give their life to Jesus Christ! Isn't that great! I praise God for carriers of hope and peace.

That is contagious hope!
That is living hope!

Amen.

Let's pray together...

PRAYER

Father... thank you for your word. Thank you for your Spirit.

Thank you for reminding us of the importance of the resurrection, and how it changes everything.

Thank you that we can find great mercy, receive new birth, and experience living hope.

Please help us to be carriers of your hope - to a world that is broken and in darkness. Jesus you are the light in the darkness, you are the way to mercy, new birth, and real hope.

Please help my my friends as they listen to this message - to have a significant Easter moment with you. May the power of the risen Christ, and the Holy Spirit, fall afresh on each one listening.

Help us to truly experience your living hope deep in our lives right now.

In Jesus name. Amen!

Friends, I trust that was a blessing to you. I am so grateful that we can still be together in this way. Church is not closed - but more alive than ever!

I wanted to let you know that as a church... we are aiming to to the best of our ability to carry the HOPE of Jesus to our community right now. To have a greater influence. To influence our community.

We have offered our building to the City to be used as a venue to warehouse food should the food security crisis escalate. We are waiting to hear from them.

When you return, you might find big pallets in our hall packed with 1000 10kg packets of dry rations to be taken through to distribution points.

We are helping people through our blessing (or needy) fund with food vouchers. We can send these directly to people via SMS.

We are also very involved with Living Hope. The ministry OF OUR church that get's its name from this passage! I have the privilege of being one of the trustees, as are a couple of our leadership, so we know whats going on, and I thought it was important for you to hear a bit of what God is doing through LIVING HOPE, and our church at the moment!

I asked John, the Executive Director to give us an update...

JOHN UPDATE