

## “Resurrection Hope”

How many of you have been **influenced by Jesus**? Me too. These last few weeks have helped me to see that almost everything, whether you believe in Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection or not...everything is **anchored to the life of this man Jesus**.

The date – 2019 is based on when he lived.

The names of places and hospitals and churches.

The work of hospitals, orphanages, and food pantries...helping others.

How we care for children and what they need to thrive.

Our respect for women, and minorities.

When we say that black lives matter, and all people have worth.

The importance of schools and universities and learning about our world.

The life of Jesus taught me that **truth matters** and that there is a **healing power in forgiveness**. **Jesus showed me** that community can be created out of a shared faith journey that invites people in and bonds people together – a **community that is covenanted** to do life together. The hospitality of welcoming everybody, began by a **very small group** of Jesus followers over 2000 year ago.

That movement of **committed following** can call 30 people to church on a Saturday morning to do spring house cleaning *inside and out*. That movement of faith calls **25** more people to **give their weekends and weekdays** to clean someone else’s church home. This way of Jesus (flows from - are loved, believe and follow) calls some to the **choir**, others to **teach**, and still others to step out of their comfortable place to **help those** not like them.

**Who is this man** who had such an impact on our world, that it not only is still felt this many years later, but it **continues to be a way of hope and life that we can’t live without**? There have been so many stories in this last week that I have just said...that needs Jesus:

The humanitarian crisis at the United States southern border.

The traumatic childhood stories that change the lives of the children.

A marriage that doesn’t see a way forward.

A **story of depression** that hangs on with the help of Jesus.

A **surgery** that couldn’t fix and a **procedure** that could.

A conflict with hurt that has wounds that still easily bleed.

One **story of alcoholism** and **another of cancer**.

The loneliness of a single man.

The **ongoing bullying** of a 5<sup>th</sup> grader and the perfectionism of a high school sophomore. Every week there are stories. Did you hear one this week?

**I listen.** And **I hurt with and for folks** – like you do, but the **truth I know is that their story needs Jesus**. Jesus this ordinary man, who left all that was God to come to earth, to **work a plan of hope and salvation for us**. The ultimate game plan was a three-day process.

All 4 of the gospels take about a 1/3 of their writing to tell about these 3 days. On **Friday**, Jesus was killed on a cross. This **gentle man of love** was so focused on us ... and loving us, that Jesus outmaneuvered, and out thought, and outlasted every group, and every power (Ortberg, pp 173) to use the 3-day plan to overcome death and evil. On the **Friday, he chose to die because he loved us**. There were some immediate people saved: Barabas, the young Roman soldiers that would have been killed in a battle, his disciples who wouldn't have lasted in an **'us' against 'them' war**. The cross wasn't something new, many people had already been killed by nailing them to a cross, 100's – no 1000's. **But Jesus' death... it changed the cross from a tool for killing to a symbol of love**. Jesus chose this sacrifice – because the world had gotten to the end of themselves and needed a Savior.

**Day 2. Saturday.** It is important to spend time thinking about what Saturday was like for Jesus' followers, because so many folks today are living in a Saturday fog. They have **hoped in faith** for the **work of the cross** to change their story...but life is still hard. They are waiting and tomorrow is so uncertain that they are **just holding on to today**.

Our Lenten Study reminds us that **Saturday**...the one after Good Friday is the only day in the last 2000 years when literally not one person in the world **believed Jesus was alive** (Ortberg, pp 81). **Saturday, can last forever when you don't know Sunday is coming**. But *we do know* that Sunday comes .... Easter is the ending. Our faith knows that Easter resurrection is the hope-filled ending. But we still get stuck in the **waiting of Saturday**. Saturday is quiet. Silent. It is the day that we sit with the pain of Friday. It's the day our prayers change to, "God can you hear me? Are you listening, God?"

Do you have people in your life that are **sitting in Saturday living?** **Waiting**. Not even keeping watch ... just still living the day after the loss. Loss of a love, loss of a dream, loss of health. That wait, not knowing what tomorrow will bring – can be **hell on earth**. Our **Apostles Creed**, that so many of you have

memorized over time, tells us that Jesus lived a Saturday too. “I believe in Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he **descended to the dead.**” Jesus **descended into hell.** This man, Jesus – holy and perfect – experienced hell on his Saturday. Why does it matter? **Jesus suffered too and took it all on** in order to **save us.** Oh...if it wasn't for Sunday!

I don't mean to offer **a spoiler here**, but on the **third day, Sunday came** and it was a **deal changer.** On this one day in history, an event happened that changed disciples forever. Jesus resurrection gives us a way to endure, to live through and into the Saturdays of our lives.

**Jesus' bodily resurrection** made it all become clear for his disciples. They began to get it. They began to re-hear what he had taught them about his 3-day plan. He **had told them.** (Matthew 16:21) “From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.” And **because that teaching** had come to be...well what about the other teachings? Jesus said that just like in farming, if you take a small seed that falls to the ground and dies – and plant it in the **dark, blind soil of hope...and wait in Saturday**, and **trust God** to bring new life where there was none ... planting it **deep into a dirt ice cream cone** (children's message) that is **God's love...**something happens. Something in you – something created in the image of God breaks open, is combined **with nutrients and water of hope** and through God's miracle – a sprout of new life begins to grow up to the light...the Son. It **becomes more.** It lives. But it needed **to die first, and if we wait, the life of God will grow something holy and beautiful in us. That is a promise!**

We will continue in our lives to have the **dreadful Good Friday losses** and the **wait to see Saturdays.** But *never again* will we wonder if the resurrection hope is coming. Jesus lives now and forever. We never have to wonder again.

This isn't going to be the only Easter message this year. And this isn't the last time we will **experience Good Friday.** Between now and holy week, I challenge you to think of the most recent story of resurrection hope that your life can tell. When were you living in Saturday? How did God enter into that story? What story did you tell yourself as you sat in Holy Saturday?

We are Easter people and we have resurrection stories to tell. Tell them. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen