

The Hope of the Resurrection

Introduction

Circling Back on Hope

- A. I want to spend some time thinking with you this morning about hope. It's an evergreen topic, but one that I think has never been more relevant, more necessary, than now—after the year we've all just been through.
1. Anyone feeling like your life's been on the rocks lately? Like the ship is going down? Like you're losing hope?
- B. If you were around with us at Christmas, I focused in on the same theme of hope—that time with reference particularly to the incarnation and the birth of Jesus.
1. But now, for Easter, I wanted to circle back on that same subject and consider it with reference to the resurrection of Jesus.
- C. Now, I usually teach through books of the Bible going verse by verse and things, but this morning, at the start, I simply wanted to fasten onto a little phrase the Apostle Paul uses in [Acts 23:6](#) and we'll just spin off from there.
1. He's here been arrested for his preaching of the gospel and he's being examined by the Jewish council and the Roman tribune there in Jerusalem. And, as he's giving his defense, he makes this striking statement (as the NIV puts it): ["I stand on trial because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead."](#)
 - a. In other words: "What's all this about? Why all the fuss? Why am I standing before you here today in chains? It's the hope of the resurrection."
 - i. As one commentator puts it: ["Although the issue is introduced in general terms, the real point is the possibility of the resurrection of Jesus"](#) (TNTC). And Paul has staked his whole life on that, he's willing to go to prison and death for that, he's attached all his hope to that.

Worthy of All Our Hope?

- A. And the whole point of this message, really, is to answer the question: Why?!
1. We're all experiencing the brokenness of this world. We're all desperately looking for some place to find hope, for some place to fix our hope. But perhaps many of us don't quite realize or understand why the resurrection of Jesus is that place. Why His resurrection is worthy of all our hope.

- B. I've got two reasons here, which we'll consider one at a time now: (1) Because It's Rationally Sound; and (2) Because It's Personally Satisfying.
1. You see for something to be worthy of our hope it has to be both. It can't just be true logically or historically or whatever it also has to speak to the deepest longings of the human soul. It can't just appeal to the head, it must also appeal to the heart. It can't just satisfy one's reason, it must also satisfy one's desire. It can't just be true, it must also be wonderful.
 - a. And the resurrection of Jesus, brothers and sisters, is both!

(1) Because It's Rationally Sound

- A. The first thing I must show you is that the resurrection of Jesus is worthy of all your hope because it is rationally sound.
1. If all we have in the Gospels is a beautiful story, a marvelous myth, if the resurrection of Jesus and His victory over sin and death and all this is a personally satisfying thing—it sounds nice, we want it to be true, it scratches the itch of our souls—but if it isn't historically true . . . well then it isn't worthy of all our hope.
 - a. For though it may lift our spirits momentarily it will let us down in the end.
- B. This is why Paul says in [1 Cor. 15](#): “¹⁷ [I]f Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. . . .¹⁹ If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied” (vv. 17, 19).
1. Sure it may fill us with hope now, and we feel all good inside or whatever, but if we are not living in accordance with reality, with truth, than we shall be left the more despairing because of it in the end.
- C. Haven't you experienced this with other things in your life?
1. You set your hope on something—perhaps a man finally tells you he loves you, and you believe it, you want it to be true, and you're hope is in that, and your spirits are lifted, momentarily, until weeks or months later you realize it's all been a lie, and he's just trying to get something from you for himself. It's not true.
 - a. It was personally satisfying you could say, but it wasn't rationally sound. And you're left the worse for it.
- D. So the resurrection of Jesus has to be both. And right now I want to show you that it is rationally sound—historically accurate and based, not in fantasy, but in truth.

Working Backwards

- A. When making a case for the resurrection of Jesus, it is most helpful, I think, to do so by working backwards.

1. What I mean is this. We have before us today the historical reality of Christianity and the church. We know that the Christian movement has taken off and become a global phenomenon. Billions of Christians gathering around the world to worship and celebrate today. It's the world's largest religion. That's a fact.
 - a. The historical question then is: How did all of this come to be? Where did it all come from? What was the initial spark that set this engine roaring back in the first century AD?
- B. Well, according to the Bible, it was the resurrection of Jesus.
1. There's your spark! There's your match! There's your thunderbolt! Here's the reason the church explodes onto the scene with a certain holy ferocity, so much so that is said the world was turned "upside down" because of it ([Acts 17:6](#)).
 - a. Jesus is not dead, but alive! He is not merely the fallen head of yet one more messianic movement—of which there were many in and around Palestine at the time. No! He is the firstborn from the dead, the firstfruits of an end-time harvest, the pioneer of God's new creation.
 - i. Christianity and the church explodes onto the scene because Christ exploded up from the grave. This all exists today because the resurrection happened back then.
- C. This is what fueled the early Christians. It's what they went about preaching. It was at the center of their messaging.
1. As Peter boldly declares there in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost: "[This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses](#)" ([Acts 2:32](#)). He would not be standing up if Jesus had not been raised up. He'd still be cowering in the shadows as he was on Good Friday.
 - a. And you and I would likely not have heard of this Jesus of Nazareth. He'd be a mere footnote in the history books if He even made it in at all.
- D. This is why notable historian Philip Schaff writes: "[The Christian church rests on the resurrection of its Founder. Without this fact the church could never have been born, or if born, it would soon have died a natural death](#)" ([History of the Christian Church, I.2.19](#)).
1. Or consider this from the pen of N.T. Wright, eminent NT scholar and ancient historian, who's work on the resurrection of Jesus in particular is at the front of the pack: "[Christianity is inexplicable apart from the assumption that virtually all early Christians . . . did indeed believe that Jesus of Nazareth had been raised bodily from the dead](#)" ([The Resurrection of the Son of God, 587](#)).
- E. That last quote from Wright introduces the historical ambiguity, and the big question in it all: So these early Christians "[did indeed believe that Jesus . . . had been raised bodily from the dead](#)"—

how do we know what they believed to be true was actually true? It's one thing for a group of people to believe it. And it's another thing for it to be rationally sound.

1. And, as we'll soon see, skeptics have been trying to poke holes in this belief of theirs for ages . . . to no avail!

Two Fundamental Pieces of Evidence

- A. But the case for the resurrection of Jesus, as far as these early Christians were concerned, rested on essentially two fundamental pieces of evidence: (1) The Empty Tomb; and (2) The Many Appearances.

Evidence #1: The Empty Tomb

- A. Concerning the empty tomb, you need to know that all four of our Gospel records recount the fact that though Jesus was laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea on Friday, and though that tomb was sealed with a stone at the opening of it, and though it was guarded with Roman soldiers posted round about it, come Sunday early morning . . . Jesus wasn't there! The grave clothes were there. But the body was gone!

1. As the angels say to the women who came at early dawn on that day: "^{5b} Why do you seek the living among the dead? ^{6a} He is not here, but has risen" (Luke 24:5b-6a).

Evidence #2: The Many Appearances

- A. Concerning the many appearances, Paul puts it most succinctly for us in 1 Cor. 15:3-8: "³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me."

1. Note Paul's passing mention that most of these witnesses are still alive. This was an invitation to go and speak with them and verify what's being claimed. This was a challenge to the skeptic: "I know it sounds crazy, but go and talk to them for yourself."

- a. Remember, if you wanted to prove something in these days, you didn't have video footage, people didn't have iPhones, they all whip them out and start streaming to Facebook or whatever, Jesus is back, get a photo! You didn't have all that. You had eyewitness testimony. That's it. And that's what Paul is invoking here.

- B. The Scriptures tell us of at least ten separate appearances. And we get the sense from Acts 1:3 that there were likely even more: "He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God."

You Need Them Both!

- A. So the tomb was empty. And Jesus was seen. When these two facts collide the effect is explosive. It is spark to tinder. “He’s not in here.” “He is out here!”
- B. But, it’s important to note: If you only have one of these two, there are other far more likely conclusions than resurrection:
 - 1. On the one hand, if you have the empty tomb but not the many appearances, then you’d likely conclude the body was just stolen or misplaced.
 - a. This seems to be the conclusion of the two on the road to Emmaus (cf. [Luke 24:22-24](#)).
 - b. And it certainly was what Mary Magdalene had concluded: “[They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him](#)” ([John 20:13](#)).
 - 2. But, on the other hand, if you have the appearances but not the empty tomb, well then you’d likely conclude at best you’d seen a ghost (like the disciples do in [Luke 24:37](#)) or at worst you’re losing your mind. I’m seeing things. I’m going crazy.
 - 3. But when you combine the empty tomb with the many appearances, things explode!
 - a. So the two on the road to Emmaus, though they’d known about the empty tomb, it’s only when they see the Lord for themselves that they say: “[Did not our hearts burn within us . . . ?!](#)” ([Luke 24:32](#)).
 - b. Or Mary Magdalene, she saw the empty tomb, but it’s only when she sees the Lord and puts the two together that she throws her arms around her Savior and then runs home with “[great joy](#)” ([Matt. 28:8](#)) in order to announce to the other disciples: “[I have seen the Lord](#)” ([John 20:18](#)).
- C. The empty tomb, the many appearances, the resurrection . . . and the explosion!

Three (But Two) Common Pushbacks

- A. Now, as I’ve said, plenty of skeptics have tried to put forward other options as to why the explosion, why the early church and the tidal wave of Christian influence unleashed on the world at this point.
 - 1. Most recognize you still have to reckon with the resurrection of Jesus in one way or another, but they try to show how the historical truth of it is questionable at best.
- B. Three of the most common pushbacks each summed up in a word: (1) Mischief; (2) Mistake; and (3) Myth. I wish I had time for all three, but can only quickly touch on those first two. I want to show you why they don’t hold up under scrutiny.

Pushback #1: Mischief

- A. This is the claim that the early disciples were actually disingenuous. They were not honestly promoting what they thought to be true. They had far more sinister intent. They didn’t actually believe Jesus had risen, they only claimed to believe it. They were knowingly deceiving. This was a

hoax of historic proportions. They stole the body, they spread the lies. (This is the sort of pushback we see the Jews and Romans are already trying leverage even at the start [Matt. 28:11–15].)

- B. But there is one massive problem with this hypothesis, and it's simply this: If these disciples were knowingly spreading lies about this Jesus as risen . . . why in the world would they be willing to die for it? If they knew that it all was a hoax, why would they hold onto it with such vehemence and conviction even at the threat of death, and brutal death at that (as tradition would indicate)?
1. All it would take is for one of them to crack and the whole early church movement would have been over. "Stop! Stay your blade. I know where the body is and I'll take you to it!" But we have no record of any of them ever doing such a thing.
 - a. Why not? If they were telling lies, what did they stand to gain? Perhaps they thought they could get power or prestige or something at first, but when they realized claiming such about Jesus would get them killed, why would they not simply recant? Why would they die for what they knew to be a lie—a lie of their own making?
 - i. Such a thing makes no sense and cuts against the grain of human nature as we know it. When we tell lies, we tell them to benefit ourselves, and we certainly don't hold onto them to our harm (unless, of course, there is some further and greater benefit in it).
- C. But you say, "Nick, there have been plenty of martyrs who have died for things we would say are untrue."
1. To which I would respond: That is right, but you see, these martyrs are willing to die for these things particularly because they believe them to be true. And, hence, it only proves my point. If they knew it was a lie, they may hold on for a bit, but only until it became obvious there was nothing left in it for them. To hold it all the way to death, you really have to believe that.
 - a. Now hear me: They may be mistaken in what they believe, but we can be sure of one thing: they do truly believe it. They must!
- D. Listen to John Stott on this: "We learn from the first part of the Acts that in their early preaching the apostles concentrated on the resurrection. 'You killed him, but God raised him, and we are witnesses,' they kept saying. Are we then to believe that they were proclaiming what they knew to be a deliberate lie? If they had themselves taken the body of Jesus, to preach his resurrection was to spread a known, planned falsehood. They not only preached it; they suffered for it. They were prepared to go to prison, to the flogging post and to death for a fairy tale.
This simply does not ring true. It is so unlikely as to be virtually impossible. If anything is clear from the Gospels and the Acts, it is that the apostles were sincere. They may have been deceived, if you like, but they were not deceivers. Hypocrites and martyrs are not made of the same stuff" (Basic Christianity, 62-3).
- E. Or hear now Greg Gilbert: "Because they believed these things, they rearranged their lives so that they could proclaim their beliefs—abandoning careers, leaving homes, and ultimately refusing to

back away from those beliefs even as (according to tradition) they were, one by one, beheaded, crucified, impaled with spears, flayed, and stoned.

Something happened to cause all that.

. . . [N]obody dies for a hoax. If you're just trying to pull one over on the world, when the jig is up and the axe is about to fall—or the nails are about to pierce your wrists, or they're about to drop you in the boiling oil or throw you off the top of the temple—you don't keep on saying, 'I tell you, the man is alive!' The only way you stick by the story under those circumstances is if you really believe it's true" (Why Trust the Bible?, 118-19).

F. So then, regarding these disciples of early Christianity, have no doubt: They were not mischievous or disingenuous. They honestly believed Christ had risen from the dead it.

1. But the question that now remains is: But were they mistaken?

Pushback #2: Mistake

A. Here is the claim that these disciples were genuine and honest about what they thought to be true, but they simply, and sadly, got it all wrong.

B. One version of this pushback focuses in on the empty tomb and says, well they thought the tomb was empty but maybe they went to the wrong one, or maybe the Romans really did have it or something like this. But such a thing is highly unlikely.

1. Consider John Stott's insightful commentary again now on this point: "[W]ithin a few weeks of Jesus' death the Christians were boldly proclaiming his resurrection. The news spread rapidly. The new Nazarene movement threatened to undermine the bulwarks of Judaism and to disturb the peace of Jerusalem. The Jews feared conversions; the Romans riots. The authorities had before them one obvious course of action. They could produce the remains of the body

Instead, they were silent and resorted to violence. They arrested the apostles, threatened them, flogged them, imprisoned them, vilified them, plotted against them and killed them. But all this was entirely unnecessary if they had in their own possession the dead body of Jesus. The church was founded on the resurrection. Disprove the resurrection, and the church would have collapsed. But they could not The authorities' silence is as eloquent a proof of the resurrection as the apostles' witness" (Basic Christianity, 63-4).

a. If both the Jews and the Romans so badly wanted to quench this new religious movement, and if all they had to do to stop it was put forward the dead body of Jesus, why didn't they do it?

i. Answer: they couldn't, because they didn't have it and, try as they may, they couldn't find it.

C. Another version of this second pushback focuses in on the many appearances and argues that the disciples were somehow given over to wishful thinking and in their broken-hearted, over-emotional

state, they somehow saw what they wanted to see, an hallucination, a bereavement vision as it's been called by some. In their desire to see Him again they conjured it up as it were.

1. Now, there are quite a few glaring issues with this. I can only briefly touch on a couple for you now:
 - D. In the first case, here is where the sheer number of appearances and the great diversity of it all really comes into play once more. It is one thing to be sad and hallucinate on your own somewhere. It is quite another thing for this same experience to be had by various groups of people at various times across the space of forty days, with one of those instances including [“more than five hundred brothers at one time” \(1 Cor. 15:6\)](#).
 1. Do you have any idea what it would take to get that many people into the same worked up emotional state that they would all hallucinate from sorrow together at once and see the same thing? It seems to me it requires more faith to believe in this than it does to believe in the resurrection itself.
 - E. But the second significant issue with this idea of wishful thinking or seeing what they wanted to see is simply the fact that these disciples were not predisposed to wish for such a thing as the resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus didn't grow up and out of their worldview, it came in from outside like a stick of dynamite and blew up everything they thought they knew and believed.
 1. That's why the disciples are shown all over these accounts to be doubting and questioning what their eyes are seeing. Let me touch your wounds. Let me see you eat some food. Can this be real? (cf. [Matt. 28:17](#); [Mark 16:10-14](#); [Luke 24:10-11](#); [13-27](#); [36-43](#); [John 20:20](#), [24-29](#)).
 - a. It was not wishful thinking, you see, because they never wished for this. They're not just seeing what they wanted because they never really wanted this.
 - i. They didn't want a crucified messiah, that was a stumbling block.
 - ii. They didn't think God could be man or have a son, such a thing was blasphemy.
 - iii. And they didn't think an individual could rise again from the dead before the end of the age, it was unthinkable.
 - F. They didn't conjure up all these things in their sadness. They gave up on Him in their sadness.
 1. So, again, the two on the road to Emmaus:
 - a. There they are [“looking sad” \(Luke 24:17\)](#), saying: [“\[W\]e had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel” \(v. 21\)](#) . . . but He's dead! It's game over.
 - b. When Jesus shows up He doesn't rebuke them because in their sadness they've started seeing things, He rebukes them because in their sadness they've stopped seeing things. They couldn't believe their eyes.

- i. They were skeptical and incredulous just like you and I. But the sheer weight of the evidence convinced them, changed them.
- G. There was no mischief here. And this was not a mistake. The tomb was really empty. And the many appearances did really happen.
 - 1. And that's why Christianity and the church is here now a global phenomenon. The case for the resurrection of Jesus in all of this is rationally sound.
- H. So N.T. Wright concludes: "No other explanations have been offered, in two thousand years of sneering skepticism . . . that can satisfactorily account for how the tomb came to be empty, how the disciples came to see Jesus, and how their lives and worldviews were transformed" (Surprised by Scripture, 59).

(2) Because It's Personally Satisfying

- A. But now, that's only one side of all this. There are a lot of things that are rationally sound and historically true that are not worthy of all of my hope.
 - 1. Why? Because they are not personally satisfying and relevant to what I'm really dealing with and longing for.
- B. If I could put it bluntly: Who cares if Jesus rose from the dead if it has nothing personally to do with me. It may indeed be true, but it is no place to set my hope.
 - 1. If the resurrection is only some magnificent historical fact, well and good, but that only renders it something fit for the museum or the history books, it is not yet something fit for my heart.
- C. You see now we come to consider not just that Jesus rose, but why He rose and what it means for you and for me.
 - 1. So with the time that remains, let me give you three reasons why the resurrection of Jesus is personally satisfying, why it offers you this morning everything you ever wanted, why it is truly worthy of all your hope.

Reason #1: It Speaks to Our Struggle with Guilt and Shame

- A. If you catch us in an honest moment, we all would admit we have this sense that things aren't right with us, not just with our lives somewhere out there, but somewhere on the inside. We're off. And we know it.
 - 1. And because of this there's a certain low-grade guilt and shame that always humming in the background of every human heart. It's louder for some. Maybe it's louder right now for you.
- B. And we have all these creative techniques for dealing with it, none of which really get to the heart of the issue, all of which only end up making things worse in the end.

1. Some of us simply deny it. Act like the sin, the guilt and the shame, it's not there. People come to tell us they're worried about us, we're off in some way, and we bristle back, we can't hear it, we won't hear it. We deny it.
 2. Others of us try to blame the stuff that's wrong in us on someone else. I see it, I get it's not cool that I'm acting like this. But she made me do it. I wouldn't have to get so worked up if she didn't treat me that way. It ain't my fault.
 3. Still others are determined to fix things ourselves. We try to atone for what's off in us, we commit to action plans, make promises to change and things. And it makes us feel better.
 4. But when we don't make all the progress we want, when we still see the mess in our hearts and things, often all this leads to despair. Maybe some of you are there right now. "I can't get better. What's wrong with me. And you want to quit."
- C. Hold up with me for a moment. You see, there's another option. And you might call it: The Hope of the Resurrection.
- D. Do you remember some of the last words Jesus says to His disciples after He's died and risen and He's about to ascend to the Father? He's telling them how all the OT had been pointing to Him and He says: "⁴⁶ Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,⁴⁷ and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things" (Luke 24:46–48).
1. What were these apostles supposed to go and proclaim?
 - a. That Jesus has fulfilled the Scriptures? Sure.
 - b. That Jesus has died and risen? Absolutely.
 - c. But there's more: "Go and proclaim 'the forgiveness of sins' that's now available to any who would repent and believe in my name."
 - i. That's the point of the resurrection, do you see? To secure for you and for me the forgiveness of our sins—the removal of our guilt and covering of our shame. As Paul says in Rom. 4:25: He was "delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification"—to make us right before God . . . forever.
- E. Listen, every other approach to your guilt and shame will fail you.
1. You can only deny it for so long before reality hits you like semi on the freeway.
 2. Blaming relieves you momentarily but your conscience still swarms up to sting you in the night as you lay awake in your bed. You know you're guilty.
 3. And if you try to fix it on your own, you can make some improvements externally perhaps in your own strength but you can't maintain it. You slip up here or there. It's exhausting.
- F. Only Jesus secures forgiveness for us eternally. That's the point of the nail-pierced hands, the eternal scars on our risen Savior. "Thomas, feel the hole in My hand where the nails went through. Put your hand in my side where the spear was thrust" (cf. John 20:27).

1. Have you ever wondered: Why are those scars still there? Why not heal that up in His resurrection? The dude can now walk through walls, float up into the clouds and things, and you're telling me we could heal up His scars? Why keep them there on our Savior's body forever?
 - a. Well, it's God's way of preaching, in a manner more eloquent than any pastor ever could, that you are forgiven . . . forever. He has paid the debt you owed to God for your sin in full and it is finished.
 - i. Your sins won't have the last word over you. Christ will! That's the point.

Reason #2: It Speaks to Our Experience of Suffering and Loss

- A. Life is hard. In many ways it's just this litany of loss slowly slipping towards the grave. It sounds harsh, I know, but isn't that the truth of it?
 1. We're always trying to gain and hold onto stuff but we have this dreaded sense that we're just going to lose it in the end. We lose our jobs, we lose our money, we lose our home, we lose our health, we lose our hair, we lose our good looks, we lose our spouse, we lose our friends.
- B. I came across a quote the other day from Leo Tolstoy, that famous Russian writer, that really resonated with me and captures the dilemma I'm trying to draw our attention to here: "My question—that which at the age of fifty brought me to the verge of suicide—was the simplest of questions, lying in the soul of every man . . . a question without an answer to which one cannot live. It was: 'What will come of what I am doing today or tomorrow? What will come of my whole life? Why should I live, why wish for anything, or do anything?' It can also be expressed thus: Is there any meaning in my life that the inevitable death awaiting me does not destroy?" (as quoted by Tim Keller in *The Reason for God*, 209). Again, it sounds dramatic, but sometimes you really feel the weight of this don't you?
- C. I've been feeling it a bit more lately.
 1. You know I mentioned last week was my birthday and I turned 38. (I realize most people think I'm like 20. I was on a call with other Gospel Coalition pastors a few weeks ago and they called me Benjamin Button.) But I'm starting to feel it. I'm almost 40.
 2. I'm the type I realize that could be susceptible to a mid-life crisis, where you suddenly realize man to this point I've been living forward, always looking at what's coming next, so much of life was ahead, and then you suddenly realize, wow, there's a lot that's now behind me. Getting married, having babies, and you start to feel it. Wow, I might be halfway done here, maybe more, right?
 3. And as I was thinking about all this, just last week, I got another painful reminder of it all. I saw this post in my newsfeed for like a Classic Rock radio station or something and they were talking about how they're playing Nirvana on this station. And I'm thinking: Since when Nirvana become classic rock? There's no way. So I literally look this up. And it's true. Like, I'm so old now that the music of my youth is now considered classic rock. It feels like just yesterday I was jamming out to that cassette on my Walkman, man. Where's the time gone?

- a. But you feel it, right? I don't get to go back. Time keeps marching. And you experience this litany of loss, the reality of death. For some of you guys it's not so funny. It's been incredibly painful.
- D. But here's the thing. Jesus' resurrection speaks to this as well. Here too we see the Hope of the Resurrection.
 - 1. You see Jesus' resurrection tells us in one and the same glance both that He is no stranger to suffering and that He's overcome it.
 - a. Don't you see? Jesus doesn't resurrect if he doesn't first die. The only reason there is resurrection is because there is first crucifixion. He enters in and experiences all the loss and pain. And then lives to tell the tale. Or perhaps better put: lives to help us in our struggle with it now.
- E. What does Jesus do after His resurrection?
 - 1. High-tail it out of here? No!
 - 2. He draws near to His disciples in their sorrow. And go back, read the stories at the end of each Gospel. Everywhere He shows up He's always turning sorrow for joy (e.g. [John 20:19-20](#)). Because they get it. They get what His resurrection means.
 - a. It's not just our sin that won't have the last word. Even death itself won't have the last word over us. Again, Christ will.
- F. I love what the poet George Herbert once wrote: "Death used to be an executioner, but the gospel has made him just a gardner."
 - 1. In death you go into the ground, not like a corpse ready to rot, but like a seed ready to sprout up into something even more glorious, even more alive! It's not loss. It's gain! That's what Christ's resurrection means.
 - a. And this leads to the last reason I wish to share . . .

Reason #3: It Speaks to Our Heart's Ache for a Happy Ending

- A. We long for a happy ending, don't we? This is why all of our beloved stories take the shape that they do. They move from setting to conflict to climax to resolution—to things being made right . . . to a happy ending.
 - 1. The girl marries her prince. The underdog wins the game. The hero saves the day.
 - a. We go to the theaters and watch repackaged versions of this same basic story again and again not because we're unwitting victims of some uninspired movie industry but because we long for this with all our hearts.

- i. The happy ending. We never get tired of it. We don't just want it to be a story on a screen. We want it to be our lives.
- B. And that brothers and sisters is also part of the Hope of the Resurrection.
 - 1. As I said back up near the beginning, Jesus is the Firstborn from the dead, the Firstfruits of an end-time harvest, the Pioneer of God's new creation. His resurrection is the down payment and guarantee of our happy ending. Where He goes, His people go.
- C. That's the meaning of Eph. 2:4-7: "⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

 - 1. Here we see the connection between Jesus' resurrection and our own. God has "raised us up with him and seated us with him" (v. 6).
 - 2. And more than this, we see the connection between all of this and our future. We get window here into what the future holds for the child of God: "so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (v. 7).
 - a. Brother, sister, here is your happy ending! This is what the resurrection of Jesus secures for you. Here is why Paul, even there in chains, is able to speak of the hope of the resurrection. It is an eternal, an invincible hope. It will end well.

- D. Dane Ortlund, commenting on this passage, writes the following: "Those in union with him [Christ] are promised that all the haunted brokenness that infects everything—every relationship, every conversation, every family, every email, . . . every job, every vacation—everything—will one day be rewound and reversed. The more darkness and pain we experience in this life, the more resplendence and relief in the next. As a character says in C.S. Lewis' *The Great Divorce*, reflecting biblical teaching: 'That is what mortals misunderstand. They say of some temporal suffering, 'No future bliss can make up for it,' not knowing that Heaven, once attained, will work backwards and turn even that agony into a glory.' If you are in Christ, you have been eternally invincibilized" (Gentle and Lowly, 211).

Worthy of All Our Hope!

- A. So, don't you see, the gospel of Jesus Christ, the news of His resurrection from the dead, it's so good, it's so personally satisfying, it feels like a fairy tale.
 - 1. But it's not just personally satisfying it is also rationally sound, it is also true.
- B. So the only thing that's left to ask is: Have you repented and received this Jesus and all He's done by faith? If not, let today be the day.
 - 1. Set all of your hope on Jesus and His resurrection. He alone is worthy of it!