



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Easter Means Hope

1 Corinthians 15:3–10 | Tim Badal | April 16, 2017

We're going to spend some time in God's Word, and I want to share with you that I will leave the passage I am about to share with you until the end. It will be a place for us to finish up as to why Easter means hope. Our text is from the Apostle Paul to the church at Corinth, and this is what he says in chapter 15:3–10:

³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. ⁹For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain.

This last fall, the Pew Research Group conducted a very large survey, trying to get a pulse of the nation. They had sensed there was something happening in our country. It may have been because of the impending election, but they polled thousands of people and one of the main questions they asked was the following: Are you looking forward to tomorrow? And they had follow-up questions: Do you have hope about tomorrow? Are you more pessimistic about tomorrow than you were of yesterday? The overwhelming response blew them away. They thought maybe one-third of Americans would struggle with hope for tomorrow, but the vast majority of Americans who took the poll—80%, in fact—said that when they viewed the future, they were hopeless. Eight out ten people are hopeless! When asked if their kids had a greater future ahead of them than they did when they were growing up, the response was 92% that the children of today are going to have it harder, more violent and more difficult than their parents. America had said in one voice that we, in many ways, are hopeless.

The reason that they cited, according to the Pew research, was economic uncertainty. We know that jobs are being shipped off and there is mounting debt. The national debt was of great concern to those who filled out the survey. Global terrorism is an issue that people were deeply concerned about. But seemingly, while it's happening in other parts of the world, it's getting closer and closer to our doorsteps as well. It left people asking, "What is tomorrow really going to bring? Is my tomorrow going to be any better than my yesterday?" I wonder if the disciples and the followers of Jesus Christ might have been feeling some of that on Friday and Saturday of that first Easter weekend.

If you remember the story, Jesus had been working with them, walking and talking with them. He had been teaching His disciples for three years. Ever since around His thirtieth birthday, when Jesus had gone public with His ministry, He had taken on twelve disciples to follow Him and to learn His ways. That crowd would go from twelve into the thousands. The reason was that Jesus was a Teacher unlike any other. He had words that captured the hearts of His listeners. And Jesus would add to that by doing miracles, signs and wonders. He healed lame men, gave sight to the blind, exorcised demons, multiplied loaves and fishes, turned water into wine. He even raised the dead. Jesus was becoming very well-known in the area of Palestine around Jerusalem, and He was becoming what people thought was the answer to all of their dreams and all of their hopes. But everything changed that week of Easter.

It started out well. Palm Sunday was a time when Jesus entered the city for the Passover, and He was introduced and welcomed by a parade. People began to line the streets and wave palm branches at Him, announcing, "Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" But that crowd would turn into a mob. And by Friday, instead of announcing how great He is and how awesome He is, public opinion about Jesus had changed. They would ask that a criminal would be let go so that Jesus

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could be put to death. Instead of saying, “Hosanna,” they would cry out, “Crucify.” And then Jesus would be arrested. He would be flogged and tortured, and then He would be taken to Golgotha, where He would be hung on a cross—a violent way to die where you would be hung by your hands and your feet, and you would suffocate on. I wonder what the disciples must have been feeling. This One who seemingly was fulfilling every dream, this One who seemed to have all the answers, Who said He was the Son of God, now has been buried in a tomb. And with it, all of their hopes and dreams, all of the anticipation and expectation that because of Jesus things would be different.

There are many in our world—and even in this place today—who find themselves wondering if there is hope for tomorrow. I want to tell you by using three very quick points that hope is made available by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. I want you to know some things about hope.

1. Hope is critical to our lives.

We need hope; it's critical. We cannot live without hope. Hal Lindsay said that “man can live about forty days without food, about three days without water, about eight minutes without air, but only for one second without hope.” We need hope; we need hope each and every day. Hope is critical. Now, I don't mean a wishy-washy kind of hope that, gee whiz, I hope the Cubs win their baseball game today. I have no idea if they are going to, but I really hope they do. It isn't a wishy-washy thought based on positive vibes. The hope that the Bible talks about is a living hope. The hope that the Bible talks about is a secure hope—founded and established, something that we can put all of our faith and trust in. We need that kind of hope, because we live lives that, quite frankly, can feel hopeless. Let me give you three reasons that hope is important.

Hope allows us to dream.

Hope gives us the ability to dream. I want you to know that today, April 16, is a special day. It's a special day for our family. But I want you recognize, even before I tell you why it's special, that the Bible says that we need hope because it allows us to look forward to the future. Proverbs 10:28 says, “*The hope of the righteous brings joy.*” When we have hope for tomorrow, it brings us a sense of anticipation, a sense of joy that we can look forward to something. In Proverbs 13:12 it says, “*Hope deferred makes the heart sick.*” But when dreams come true at last, there is life and there is joy. Hope gives us the ability to look to our future and anticipate all kinds of great things.

April 16 is an important day for our family. One of the reasons is that nine years ago we welcomed the third, and I believe (unless Amanda surprises me), the final member of our family, Luke. Today is Luke's ninth birthday. He came in this morning all excited, because the whole world revolves around you on your birthday. (Of course, when you're nine, the whole world revolves around you every day.) He bounded into our bed and said, “Hey, Dad, it's my birthday!”

And I said, “Hey, Son, didn't you get the memo? You cannot share your birthday on Easter with Jesus. You just can't do it. So we're going to have to postpone your birthday.”

He said, “Come on, Dad, that's not fair!”

I replied, “OK, that's fine, we'll celebrate your birthday today.”

Then he asked, “Dad, what did you get me?”

“Son, I've been busy. This is Easter week. Pastors are busy this time of year. I didn't get you anything.”

He said, “Dad, that's OK. It's alright. Just do what you always do. Sign your name on Mom's card and say the gift she gave me came from you, too.”

Do what you always do? Unbelievable!

But you know what? As I was watching this kid, I realized that these days of bounding into my bed are going faster than I want them to. I began to think of that day when I held Luke at one day old, when I held him in the hospital as a newborn, and I thought, “What's is he going to be like? What will his personality be? What will he accomplish? What occupation will he have? Who is he going to marry? What are his kids going to be like? What is this guy going to do? What kind of impact will he have on the world?” We do that as parents. We dream and we hope for our kids. And some of those things come true and still others don't. But any time we look to the future—whether it's in a business endeavor, in a relationship, whether it's in regard to a new job, a new move—hope allows us to look forward and dream of the good things to come. Without hope we would never dream. Hope is the mechanism that allows dreams to come true.

Hope encourages us in our despair.

As I said, April 16 is a day of great significance. And sadly, it's not always good. In fact, hope doesn't just give us the ability to dream, but it encourages us in our despair. You see, for the Badal family, April 16 is an important day because two years ago in March my wife was diagnosed with a rare form of breast cancer. And I remember that day going to what I thought was a routine medical doctor's visit. I can look at my calendar and see that I had appointments that day, and I had carved out about a half hour for the doctor's visit. Then I was going to come back to a staff meeting here; my day was filled with activities. I thought whatever it was, it would be taken care of and we would move on. That doctor's visit took two hours. The doctor said, "You have cancer, Amanda. We have to do surgery as soon as possible. We have no idea how far the cancer has spread. It's a rare, aggressive form of cancer, and we need to address it."

Two years ago today, April 16, Amanda endured nine hours of surgery. And, praise be to God, that surgery has taken care of her cancer. According to all of the tests she has had since, she is cancer-free and we thank God for that. But I remember sitting for those nine hours in the hospital waiting room filled with anxiety and concern and, quite frankly (I know pastors aren't supposed to be this way), filled with despair. What was I going to say about four hours into the surgery when the doctor would come out and tell me whether the cancer was contained? I sat watching the clock, and every time a doctor came out I thought, "*This could be the absolute worst news, or it could be the best news.*" And then I would have to wait for the pathology report to find out how aggressive the cancer was and whether it was found in other places. I remember sitting there, and even though family and friends were there, I didn't want to talk to anybody because my heart was filled with all kinds of questions: What am I going to tell my kids if it's terminal? What am I going to tell my wife, who has just endured a horrifically long procedure, who is exhausted, if it's terminal?

Well, praise God, the doctor came out and said the cancer was contained, the surgery was going to take care of it, and that hopefully she was going to live a long life, and we believe that with all of our hearts. Hope was what allowed me to say no to that despair. That's why Psalm 43:5 says, "*Why are you downcast, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God...*"

I remember my dad coming over to me. He could sense his son was in turmoil. He put his arm around me and he said, "Listen, Son, I know you're worried. I know you're anxious, and you have every right to be. But we've got a great God. We've got a God Who conquered the grave. We've got a God Who gives us hope. So trust in Him; put your faith in Him. Whether the good or bad takes place, God knows the beginning and the end, and He'll walk you through every step of the way." And He has. You see, hope gives us a bright light that looks beyond the storm clouds of the present to the sunshine of the future. Hope helps us dream and encourages us in our despair.

Hope allows us to believe things can be different.

Proverbs 23:18 says, "*Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off.*" What the writer is saying there is that, as long as we have life and breath, there is an opportunity for our lives to be changed for the better. The final significance of April 16 is that today is Easter Sunday. The weekend started out on the Friday that seemed so bad and so desperate and such a dead-end experience—Jesus Christ going to the cross, dying, being buried in a tomb—that all hope was lost for the disciples. But Easter Sunday reminds us, because He rose from the grave, that life can be different. We don't have to feel like we are without hope.

In London, there is an art gallery that holds a painting. It shows a game of chess between the devil and a young man. The devil symbolizes that this match is for the young man's soul. One day a chess master came into that London art gallery and looked at that portrait. It caught his attention because, of course, it depicted a game of chess. He saw some things: he saw the devil; he saw that were far more of the young man's pieces off of the board. The devil's winning. If you could see even closer, you'd see that the devil has a smile on his face. He is about to win. He knows that in a couple of moves the man is going to be checkmated.

On the other side of the board is the young man. The young man is filled with dread. He has tears running down his cheek, his hand is up against his head. He's trying to figure out how to get himself out of that mess without having to sell his soul to the devil. In this gamble of a lifetime, he's about to lose.



The chess master went back to this picture and focused in on it. He was mesmerized by it. He knew that this young man was in trouble. He looked at all the pieces on the board; he looked at it from all angles and all vantage points. Right before it was to close, a loud shout was heard throughout the enormous gallery. The chess master said, "Hey! Young man, I know you can hear me. You haven't lost. There are still moves on the board. You see, your knight and your bishop still have two moves. If you move this way and if you move that way, it is not you who are checkmated. It is the devil." For some of us, life, and maybe the devil himself, have told you that you're without hope. Maybe it's told you that you've been checkmated by the circumstances of life already. Easter announces once and for all that it is not you who have lost the fight, but the devil. It is not you who have lost the fight, but sin.

Later on in the passage we just read, Paul will say, "*O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?*" (1 Corinthians 15:55). Victory has swallowed up death and the grave. Jesus conquered it by rising from the grave. Hope gives us the opportunity to know that life can be different.

2. Hope is a choice that each of us has.

Now, here's the problem: hope is critical to our lives. We need hope for the good, the bad, and the ugly of life. The question is, "Why are so many people without hope?" Here's the reason: hope is a choice that we each need to make. We need to choose whether we're going to have hope. We need to choose where we're going to place our hope. And then we have to make a decision every day whether we're going to rely on that hope.

I want you to notice on the weekend of that first Easter, people were making choices about where to place their hope. Jesus had given them every assurance that He was going to rise from the grave. Jesus told His disciples and His followers—a large number of people—that there was much to be hopeful for. He said, "*The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised*" (Luke 9:22). Jesus announced that numerous times while here on earth. He said, "Listen, I want you to grab a checklist and a clipboard, and I want you to remember this, because you're going to lose hope at some point. Jesus is going to be rejected. Check. Jesus is going to be condemned by the chief priest, and the rabbis, and the scribes. Check. Jesus is going to be handed over and crucified. Check." But then it stopped. When all that transpired, Jesus had seemingly already told them that victory was certain.

Not too long ago, my family (who are Cubs fans who rejoiced in the Cubs' World Series victory) watched game seven from last November. I have to be honest with you—when I watched it recently, I wasn't worried when that heathen Davis hit that eighth-inning home run. There was no fear. There was no dread. There was no concern. I remember how I felt the day it happened—I wanted to throw up. I thought, "*Not again! I'm a fool for liking this team.*" I remember feeling all kinds of anxiety. What's going to happen? Are they going to come around? Will they find victory? When I watched from a place where I knew the end, I rested secure.

I want you to know that Jesus gave the disciples hope. He said, "Yes, I'm going to suffer and be arrested. Yes, I'm going to be handed over to the chief priest and leaders of the day. Yes, they're going to beat me. Yes, I'm going to be hung on a cross. And yes, three days later I'm going to rise from the grave." They didn't believe Him. The reason is that they, just like you and I, chose things other than Christ upon which to place their hope. Let me explain three of them.

The crowd chose political hope instead of spiritual hope.

As I said earlier, the crowd had assembled because Jesus had a great reputation for all the things He had done. People were pinning their hopes on this Jesus, hoping He would change their lives. The problem was that they had an idea of what hopes were going to be met through the Person and work of Jesus. On Palm Sunday, the nation of Israel said, "This Jesus is going to take care of our political issues." Remember, during the time of Jesus, Israel was under the rule of the Romans. The Romans watched everything that the Jewish people did and, in many ways, they were captives in their own land under the oversight of the Roman Empire. Time after time, Jewish men had risen up and led rebellions, fighting and seeking their freedom from the Romans. On Palm Sunday the people said, "Jesus is the next guy. Jesus is the One who is finally going to take us from the grasp of the Roman Empire once and for all. Because of Jesus, we'll be independent. Because of Jesus, we'll become a great nation." And so when Jesus gets arrested and flogged, the hopes and dreams of a national liberty go to the grave with Him.

Although there is a two-thousand-year span between Jesus' day and ours, how true it is that people still hope that a political leader will rise. We've just finished up one of the most combative election cycles that we've had in American history. I remember hearing the pundits on both sides saying, "If So-and-so comes in, hope and change will be found. If So-and-so gets elected, he'll make America great again." We hear these slogans and speeches: if we elect this person, then things will be different. We will have reason to hope for tomorrow.

I remember the night of the election. We all know the plan was that one was going to win over the other. And then about 10:30, the results and the exit polling came in and the returns came in, and things started to shift. I remember watching the losing party at the campaign headquarters when word had gotten out that they had lost. I can still see the woman, who was heartbroken and had tears in her eyes, carrying a big sign on which she had scratched out the name of her candidate and instead had written this message: All hope is lost. You see, for many of us, we think if we elect the right person into office, then hope can be found. But I want you to know that no matter who we elect, no matter who resides in the Oval Office or in the Capitol, whatever good is done will last only for a short season. Whatever hope is found will be dashed at some point.

Many people feel hopeless at the moral decay around us. Chuck Colson, who was the special assistant to President Nixon, told us this: "Where is the hope? The hope that each of us have, is not in who governs us, or what laws are passed, or what great things we do as a nation. Our hope is in the power of God working through the hearts of people. And that's where our hope is in this country. And that's where our hope is in this life." Stop thinking that Washington is your hope, or Springfield is your hope, or the Republicans or Democrats are your hope. The only hope that we have is in the power of God.

Judas chose treasure over the truth.

Judas could have had hope. Judas was one of the twelve. He could have had hope—he walked and talked with Jesus. He interacted with Jesus. He saw Jesus in public and in private. He had every opportunity to see the hand of God on Jesus' life. But Judas was always focused in on something else, always looking another place. Judas found himself focused in on money. We learn in the Easter story that Judas would betray Jesus, his friend, for thirty pieces of silver.

Some of us today find ourselves in Judas's shoes. We have put our faith and hope in our possessions and our money. We say, "Hey, I feel good about tomorrow because there's money in the bank account. I feel good about tomorrow because my stock options are rising. I feel good about tomorrow because my house is appreciating in value."

But what Judas would learn very quickly—we are told just in a matter of hours he would go and hang himself because he was filled with despair—was that those thirty pieces of silver would do nothing for his soul. Likewise, some of us are learning that we put our hope in our money and it's letting us down. That's why Jesus said in Luke 12:15: "Protect yourself against all greed because life is not defined by what you have even when you have a lot of it." Don't place your hope in political things; don't put your hope in possessions.

The disciples chose fear instead of faith.

The disciples didn't betray Jesus for money. They weren't looking for a political leader, nor were they some fair-weather fans. They believed Jesus was who He said He was. In fact, they had told Jesus that they were willing to die with Him if that's what it came to. But that all changed when the guards came to capture and arrest Jesus. They all ran. Instead of putting their hope in Jesus' words—"I'm going to be captured, crucified, and buried, but on the third day I'm going to rise again"—they ran for their lives. They chose fear instead of faith. They collapsed amidst the dire circumstances of their lives. Instead of trusting the words of Jesus, they chose fear. Some of us find ourselves there. Instead of choosing the words of Jesus and living by faith, we are gripped by fear.

3. Hope is centered on the resurrection.

I want you to recognize that wherever you're placing your hope, none of it is going to reign supreme or rest secure unless you find your hope centered on the resurrection. It would seem that all hope was lost when Jesus went to the cross. All hope was taken when He entered the tomb. Those hours that He lay in the grave were hopes that were dashed. Dreams were lost; lives were shattered to pieces. On that Saturday between Good Friday and Easter, there were no hosannas or hallelujahs—only an agonizing void of the unknown. The question being asked was, "What now?"

Some of you find yourselves in circumstances where you're asking, "What now? What am I to do? Where am I to go? Will this sickness be cured? Will my marriage last? Will I ever love again? Will I make it through this? Will my child find a bright light at the end of this trial?" You came this morning to hear the message of Easter. Randy Alcorn says, "The message of Easter is hope." The reason is that our current circumstances are nothing in comparison to God's greatness over every crisis that we face. That's the hope that Easter brings: God, You are greater, stronger, and more powerful than anything that comes my way.

That brings us to 1 Corinthians 15. I want you to recognize a couple of things about the resurrection.

The resurrection answers our problem (v. 3).

Paul says of Jesus that Christ died for our sins. He died for our sins. The Apostle Paul says that the reason you and I lack hope is that we have offended a holy God. How have we done that? God has called us to live according to Him. God has called us to order our lives according to His Word. Instead of doing that, we have chosen to go our own way. Because of that, we find ourselves in dead ends. We find ourselves in booby traps of our own making. We find ourselves in all kinds of peril because, instead of trusting God and His ways, we turn to our own ways. The Bible says that Jesus went to the cross and died our death so that we might have hope. The resurrection answers our biggest problem: death and sin. By His being resurrected from the grave, that God, just as He raised His Son from the dead, will raise us one day from the dead. He will give us a hope and a future—a hope that lives life with God, not apart from God.

The resurrection affirms the prophecies.

Paul goes on in verse four to say that all of this was done in accordance with the Scriptures. You see, the resurrection not only answers our problem, it affirms the prophecies, or predictions. The Bible tells us over and over again in the Old Testament that there was One coming—they didn't know His name or what He would look like, but sixty-one different times the Old Testament prophesies of the One Who is coming. Each of those sixty-one prophecies is fulfilled in Jesus—how He would die, when He would die, what type of death He would die, what would happen around His death, what the people surrounding Him might do, the way that He would be beaten, the way that a spear would pierce His body, the idea that none of His bones would be broken, that He would be buried in a rich man's tomb. Each of those—and I could go on and on—is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Of those sixty-one prophecies, twenty-five are fulfilled between Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

I wondered what the probability is of that taking place. Mathematicians have done some research and calculated that for one person to have those twenty-five specific prophecies be fulfilled hundreds of years after they had been prophesied, would be 1 in 10^{21} . Now, I barely made it through algebra, so I have no idea what that means. So I did some study, and I found this illustration from a Yale mathematician. He said the following: For that to be illustrated, you would need to blanket the entire land mass of the earth with silver dollars 120 feet high. Then you would need to specifically mark one of those silver dollars with an X and randomly bury it. Third, you would need to ask a person to travel the entirety of the earth and select that singular X-marked dollar, while blindfolded, from the trillions of silver dollars that were laid out.

I want you to know that countless skeptics have argued against the veracity or the validity that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. Nobody questions that He died; nobody questions that He lived. Many will question, though, whether He rose from the grave. I want you to know that is it affirmed by the prophecies. Jesus is the risen One, and you can put your faith and hope in Him.

The resurrection addresses all kinds of people.

First Corinthians 15:5–8:

⁵ ...He appeared to Cephas [Peter], then to the twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive [at the time of this writing], 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.

These people saw the risen Lord. They write very honestly, "We didn't believe at first but now we do, because Jesus showed Himself to us." And these people would go to great lengths to dedicate their lives to proclaiming the message that Jesus isn't in a grave, but that He is risen from the grave.

Now, here's the thing—you may say that's the greatest lie that's been propagated on human society. I want you to know that most of the disciples would lose their lives in torturous deaths, all the while to their dying breath saying that Jesus is the risen One. Listen, you don't lose your life over a lie, but you would if you've seen the risen Lord and Savior. We need to understand that it addressed not only five hundred at one time, but now think, two thousand years later, hundreds of millions of people are now worshiping and praising the Name of this risen God Who has changed our lives. And I want you to know this God, this Savior, has changed my life. And He's changed the lives of many people here today.

The resurrection is available because He paid the price.

Paul says, "I persecuted the church. I did all kinds of evil things against the church before I met Jesus." *"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain"* (verse 10). "Grace" literally means unmerited favor. God has shown His love and mercy by being willing to save you and me, no matter what we've done or where we've been or who we are. God says if we will

come to Him by faith and put our hope and trust in Him, He will in no wise cast us out (John 6:37). The Bible says that to all who believe on Him and trust in His name, to them He gives the right to become children of God (John 1:12). But you've got to believe, to hope, to use faith.

One final quote from Basil Hume says this: "The great gift of Easter is hope—Christian hope which makes us have that confidence in God, in his ultimate triumph, and in his goodness and love, which nothing can shake." I am here to tell you that if you find yourself hopeless, if you find yourself without an optimism of the future, then you have put your faith and trust in the wrong things. Today is the day you can find hope in Christ Jesus. If you've never done that, if you've never trusted Christ as your Savior, talk to me or the person who invited you here and ask them to show you the way. Jesus said He came into the world to give us life in all abundance (John 10:10), and it begins by trusting and believing and hoping that He is the risen One.