

Over the last few weeks and months the world's had to adjust to a lot of changes, as restrictions are placed on us, the threat of a virus hangs over us, and the number of deaths increases all around us; and that's not to mention the economic crisis that's looming in front of us.

And so, as we try to get used to a new normal it's understandable that a lot more of us, according to a recent study, are feeling anxious, depressed, and fearful about the future.

So, in an uncertain world what hope can the message of Easter give us?

In answer to that question I want to briefly draw out 5 things to encourage.

So, listen again to the words of the Apostle Paul from 1 Corinthians 15 who says this:

Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters of the gospel that I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, and was raised on the third day.

So, number 1:

The resurrection shows that God accepts Jesus sacrifice as a full and final payment for all our guilt and brokenness.

Romans 4 says: He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

That means everyone who puts their trust in Jesus can be certain of God's forgiveness; because the resurrection proves that God's anger with sin is satisfied and we're declared innocent.

Or as the well-known hymn puts it:

Then bursting forth in glorious day
Up from the grave He rose again
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am His and He is mine
Bought with the precious blood of Christ

You see the resurrection shows us that God is for us.

Verse 17 says: "If Christ is not raised from the dead, your faith is futile, and you are still in your sins."

Number 2:

The resurrection proves that Jesus has power over death which gives us the assurance of eternal life.

Paul says in verse 20:

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

In fact, Jesus himself says, I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me shall live and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.

Without the resurrection none of that would be true.

And so, Christians have absolutely nothing to fear from death because Jesus has overcome it; and he promises a life beyond this one with him forever.

Or as the German Reformer Martin Luther put it:

"What is our death but a night's sleep?"

You see all it can do to a believer is place them into the eternal loving arms of Jesus.

Number 3:

The resurrection proves that Jesus is God's Son who has absolute rule over everything, which includes you and me.

So, for example in Matthew 28 Jesus says: All authority in heaven and on earth has been *given to me*.

Or to put it another way Jesus says my power and authority extends over the entire cosmos, over every person, government, and human structure that exists. He then proves it by being raised from the dead.

Well if that's true then we need to surrender every area of our lives to him.

So, I love the following quote:

The evidence for the resurrection of Jesus is so strong that nobody would question it except for two things:

First, it's a very unusual event. And second, if you believe it happened, you have to change the way you live.

Have you recognised Christ's Lordship over your own life?

Number 4:

We can be sure the resurrection happened because it's based on eyewitness accounts that are rooted and grounded in history

So, in verse 8 Paul says this:

"Last of all, as one untimely born, Jesus appeared to me also."

Which is a reference to the risen Christ appearing to Paul on the road to Damascus!

But why should we just take Paul's his word for it?

Well thankfully we don't have to, and Paul doesn't want us to either, so he points to other eyewitnesses who can testify to the truth of the resurrection.

So, in verse 4 it says:

“In accordance with the Scriptures, Jesus was raised on the third day and appeared to Peter, then the 12, then he appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.”

In other words, we have the testimony of the whole Bible, both Old and New Testaments.

We also have the testimony of Peter, one of Jesus closest friends; his 12 disciples, and 500 other independent eyewitnesses, who all saw the living, breathing, eating, physically raised from the dead Jesus.

And that's not to mention the women at the tomb!

And as a historian Luke says in his Gospel that after doing some very careful investigations, including interviews with some of these eyewitness, he takes great care to organise all his material into an orderly account so that an individual named Theophilus can be certain that everything written about Jesus is true.

You see the evidence for the resurrection is so strong that nobody would question it except for two things: it's a very unusual event, and if you believe it happened, you have to change the way you live.

And then lastly Number 5

Without the resurrection there'd be no Church.

“After Jesus's arrest and death, the disciples were lost, helpless, and afraid. Peter denied Jesus, while the rest ran away.”

“And so, it's hard to conceive of anything other than the resurrection that could've led to this frightened group of men to share the message of Christ in such a way that it grew into the largest religious movement ever known.”

You see without their unwavering confidence in the in the Risen Christ, would the disciples have risked everything, even their own lives for something they'd made up?

Now course it's true to say people die all the time for ideologies that they genuinely believe to be true.

But it's a bit of a stretch to believe that the disciples would die for something they knew to be a deliberate lie and deception

And so, the church didn't create the story of the resurrection; the resurrection created the church.

And it's this life changing message entrusted to the Church of the risen Lord Jesus who heals our brokenness, forgives our sin, and frees us from the fear of death, that can offer hope and certainty as we get used to a new normal in an uncertain an unpredictable world.

Paul says:

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, and was raised on the third day. Amen