Resurrection

Life instead of death, and why the author of life cannot stay dead

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, April 17, 2022
PASSAGES	Romans 6:3-11; Matthew 28:1-10; Acts 3:15; Hebrews 2:11-15; Genesis 3:22; Leviticus 17:11; 2 Peter 1:4; Romans 8:32
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:06:02 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Death is not an accident we can diet our way out of; it is what sin earns, and immortality belongs to God alone. At Easter the author of life gave us his own life, and though it cost him death, death could not hold him. A God who has given us himself is not going to run out of patience or generosity now.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Jesus rose bodily because being human means being embodied – and because the one who was killed was the author of life, and killing him does not stick.
- Since the garden, humanity has had only potential immortality. Cut off from the tree of life, death is inevitable no matter how many vitamins you take.
- The world lives under a fear of death, longing for glory, honour and immortality that only God possesses.
- Easter is not God waving away a legal error. Christ gave us his very own life, and in Christ Jesus we are joined to his death and to his resurrection.
- Because we share his life, his Father is our Father, and he is not ashamed to call us brothers.
- We impoverish God's reputation when we treat him like a stingy, impatient Scrooge who might quit just short of the finish line.

- He is coming back for a bride, not a girlfriend. If he gave us himself, how much more will he give us all things – so ask big.

▶ 1:06:02

Matt said he had "in fact chosen to speak on the resurrection" this Easter morning, with one motif running through it: life instead of death. The point for our lives now, he warned, would not be obvious until about the middle, "but I'm just going to pretend you don't know until the end."

The story: fear and great joy

▶ 1:06:30

> "But the angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead.'... So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy."
>
> MATTHEW 28:1–8 ↗

"With fear and great joy," Matt repeated – "how I experience Christianity often." Then Jesus meets them, they take hold of his feet and worship him, and he says, "Go and tell my brothers" (Matthew 28:9–10). Days before, he had called the disciples friends rather than servants (John 15:15); now he calls them brothers. That word, Matt said, would come back at the end.

1. Why did Jesus rise?

▶ 1:08:49

First, because to be human is to be embodied, and Jesus fully embraced humanity. He did not become "a departed spirit ghost thing ruling in the heavenlies"; he rose in his body, just as we will. But Peter gives a second reason in the temple:

▶ 1:09:26

> "You killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses."
>
> ACTS 3:15 ↗

"In other words, killing him doesn't stick." There is a direct line between Jesus being the author of life and our hope. But step one is a harder question: why do we deserve death in the first place? The go-to verse is Romans 6:23 – "the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Life instead of death.

2. How we came to deserve death

▶ 1:10:46

The backstory starts in the garden. After Adam and Eve took from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God says, "lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever" – and does not even finish the sentence (Genesis 3:22). "What a horrible thought: man, having incorporated the knowledge of evil into himself, living forever." God cut us off from life. Ultimately he wants no evil anywhere in his creation; even "the way of the wicked will perish" (Psalm 1:6). We had only potential immortality, which makes death, outside the garden, inevitable.

▶ 1:11:20

> "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery."
>
> HEBREWS 2:14–15 ↗

Two things from that. Jesus took on humanity completely, so the moment he became incarnate he embraced inevitable death. And the world is subject to a fear of death. Matt suspects that is one reason youth is glorified so much: "we're all planet-wide afraid of death."

▶ 1:13:22

We long for immortality, but it is not ours. God is the one "who alone has immortality" (1 Timothy 6:15–16) – not angels, not powers, not humans. People seek "glory and honor and immortality" (Romans 2:7), but it does not belong to us. Adam's genealogy repeats it like a drumbeat: and he died, and he died. Then the flood. Then Sodom and Gomorrah, turned to ashes as "an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly" (2 Peter 2:6), and the wicked of Psalm 73, swept away "like a dream when one awakes."

▶ 1:14:51

"You're like, this is too dark for Easter Sunday – can we turn a corner here? We will turn a corner in about a page." The reason for dwelling on it: the contrast between life and death magnifies God's gift. If we think immortality is ours by default and we are coasting toward glory because we are the right

crowd, or that God's main aim is to affirm us as we are, we undermine his gift. "As we are, we are doomed, mortal, and cut off from life."

▶ 1:16:37

"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death" (Proverbs 14:12). We do not lean on our own understanding or lived experience. And even if you were very good – with the greatest diet, supplements, cryogenics and exercise – "how many centuries can you add? Adam lived longer than that, and he died."

3. The corner: he gave his life

▶ 1:17:23

Here is the turn. In John 3:16, "so" does not mean "so much"; it means "in this way": God loved the world *like this* – he gave his only Son, that whoever believes should not perish but have eternal life. Jesus warns us to fear the one who can destroy body and soul (Matthew 10:28); "we are not expected to just waltz into glory, honour and immortality because we're just naturally awesome people." We live because he gave himself.

▶ 1:18:05

> "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life."
>
> LEVITICUS 17:11 ↗

▶ 1:18:41

Jesus the Messiah is God the Son. When he shed his blood, "he's not just shedding like a B positive or an A positive." The creature who died for us was not the best and brightest among us but God himself. And we have no life of our own to fall back on: the Father has life in himself and has granted the Son to have life in himself (John 5:26). We do not. So when he shed his blood, he gave us his life – and that is what caused him to die.

4. United with him in death and in life

▶ 1:19:46

> "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his."
>
> ROMANS 6:3–5 ↗

▶ 1:20:52

He opened up his humanity so that we could share in his death – and not only his death but his resurrection. Draining himself of life for us did not bring the author of life to a stop. "It would be like trying to stop up a geyser with a dry towel." Our old self was crucified with him so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin (Romans 6:6–7). That is larger than "just" being forgiven, Matt said, choosing the word to get our attention: it is liberty to captives, real freedom from the power of sin and death.

▶ 1:22:10

> "We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus."
>
> ROMANS 6:8–11 ↗

▶ 1:22:41

Everything rests on those last three words, *in Christ Jesus*. "We are not talking about a wave of a hand and some legal error being erased. This is not just God in his storehouses saying, yeah, help yourself." Our lives are joined to his; we are plugged into the source of life. Which is why Peter can say, "confusingly but accurately," that we become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). If only God has immortality and we now have everlasting life, it is because he gave us his very self.

▶ 1:24:05

And that brings back the word from the garden tomb – "go tell my brothers." "For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers" (Hebrews 2:11). If we share Christ's life and his Father is his Father, then his Father is ours.

▶ 1:25:27

Matt summed it up: we deserve death and cannot escape it; we do not possess immortality; Christ had to give us his own life because there is no other source; giving it did not destroy him; and because we share his Father, we are his brothers. "He wanted a family. He did not want merely some decor for his

palace or a pet." There was no cosmic eraser or whiteout. He disarmed the powers and nailed the record against us to the cross in his own body (Colossians 2:14–15).

5. So stop treating him like Scrooge

▶ 1:26:37

Here was the point he had promised. Very nice, agreeable Christians can treat God the way you feel when you have stayed with family too long: I don't want to be a bother. "I bet half the room feels like, oh man, I don't even have a prayer life," or I haven't lived up to my own spiritual expectations. And then we treat God "like some kind of stingy, impatient, grouchy Scrooge," as if, after running most of a marathon, he might stop just short of the finish line. "The author of life was murdered brutally and it didn't stick, but somehow we feel like we can slow him down by annoying him."

▶ 1:27:57

> *"Christ is coming back, and he's not coming back for a girlfriend. He's coming back for a bride, to whom he is committed beyond our comprehension."*

After everything Israel and the church have put him through, Matt said fairly confidently, "he knows how to cope with being around incompetent believers."

▶ 1:28:43

Picture a gaunt, sickly woman married to a rich man with a full pantry, who says she does not want to eat because it is his food. "You would say, girl, that is your husband, and that means that is your food." This is what he was circling: "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:32). A second chance, forgiveness, new mercies every morning – and more. "We impoverish his reputation" among ourselves and before the world when we act forgiven but afraid to ask, "in the corner eating the crackers."

▶ 1:30:02

He drained himself of life, fought for us and died for us while we were his enemies – and now that we are his bride, it is too much to ask for a healing, or encouragement in our faith, or a gift of the Spirit? He is not the foolish builder who failed to count the cost, nor the king who marched to war without counting his troops (Luke 14:28–32). "He told a whole parable about how we shouldn't be that guy. Why would we think he is that guy?"

▶ 1:32:12

So, personally: do you feel he started something in you he cannot finish? Do you think he is surprised you need encouragement this often – "are we the first generation of believers that ever walked the

earth?" And as a church, Matt urged us to push toward asking and believing for more, not less, because that magnifies our confidence in his goodness. A family left scrawny because they do not believe their father would feed them would be embarrassing to him. Big asks will not annoy him: "He's going to be like, oh wow, they believe me."

▶ 1:33:15

He closed with a ten-second thought experiment: imagine Christ appeared in front of you and asked what you would like – the most ridiculous, over-the-top things. "Those things broke the bank? You're like, what bank? When did he run out of energy?" He gave life instead of death; he gave us his very self instead of leaving us cut off. How much more will he give us all things – even today. Matt prayed that God would expand our faith and our confidence in his goodness, invited anyone to come forward for prayer, and pointed ahead to next Sunday's miracle testimonies for anyone needing inspiration on what to ask for.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE

- Matthew 28:1–8
- Matthew 28:9–10
- John 15:15
- Acts 3:15
- Romans 6:23
- Genesis 3:22
- Psalm 1:6
- Hebrews 2:14–15
- 1 Timothy 6:15–16
- Romans 2:7
- 2 Peter 2:6
- Psalm 73:19–20
- Proverbs 14:12
- John 3:16
- Matthew 10:28
- Leviticus 17:11
- John 5:26
- Romans 6:3–5
- Romans 6:6–7
- Romans 6:8–11
- 2 Peter 1:4
- Hebrews 2:11
- Colossians 2:14–15
- Romans 8:32
- Luke 14:28–32

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. The women left the tomb “with fear and great joy.” When has following Jesus felt like both at once for you?
2. Matt spent a long time on why we deserve death before turning the corner. How does taking that seriously change the way you hear the gift of eternal life?
3. What is the difference between God erasing a legal debt and Christ giving us his very own life? Why do the words “in Christ Jesus” matter so much?
4. Where do you treat God like a stingy, impatient Scrooge – afraid to be a bother, eating crackers in the corner?
5. Repeat Matt’s thought experiment: what would you ask of Christ if nothing were too much, and what will you actually ask him for this week?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel’s senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church’s governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope’s own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=znzzC4QtlpQ&t=3962s

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.