

# Resurrection implications: Alive with Christ

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[ 0 : 00 ] But first let's begin with a word of prayer and then let's hear from God. Father, you are indeed the God of life and we thank you that your very words bring life.

So I pray that this morning that your words will bring life to us once again to remind us and to refresh us and reinvigorate us as we consider the truth of the resurrection, the great truth that lies at the bedrock of our faith this morning.

We pray all this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. Former Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos, the world's second richest man, is clearly a man obsessed with death.

Between 2013 and 2018, he talked three times about the potential death of his company, Amazon, which is clearly something that a CEO will not typically do.

Even the biggest companies, he says, often survives for only a few decades and his job is to make sure that Amazon survives beyond that. In his 2021 letter to shareholders, he quotes the atheist scientist Richard Dawkins saying, warding off death is a thing you have to work at.

[ 1 : 20 ] And that philosophy is clearly personal. In the last couple of years, Bezos has invested substantially in scientific projects that look to halt or reverse ageing via biological reprogramming, hiring top scientists from the field of stem cell research.

Clearly, he sees death as an enemy. And that sounds right, doesn't it? Let me tell you about two of my friends. One of them is Peter.

In 2019, he welcomed his son Theodore into his family. Except that he knew that he would only have a short time with Theodore because Theodore had anencephaly, a birth defect that is not survivable.

God graciously gave him about four weeks with Theodore, more than expected. But then Theodore passed on. Another one of my friends is BJ.

Last year, BJ told his friends that his four-year-old daughter, Emily, had been diagnosed with terminal brain cancer. She is still with us as of now, but there is no cure.

[ 2 : 37 ] There's nothing that BJ, a doctor himself, and his wife can do, medically speaking. Death is the enemy.

But what can be done about it? One of the most remarkable achievements of the past century has been in healthcare, with life expectancy of human beings more or less doubling, or almost doubling, from previous centuries.

Indeed, someone insightfully observed that it is only in the past two generations that 40-year-olds go to the gym to exercise, rather than accepting that they have actually reached the stage of life where physical decline is inevitable, because of the general lengthening of our lifespans.

But though death is delayed, it isn't defeated. This week, I read a really harrowing story about a Ukrainian mother.

On her two-year-old daughter's body, she wrote her daughter's name, Vera, along with her birthday and her family phone numbers. Why?

[ 3 : 53 ] If my husband and I died, she said, at least my daughter could find out who she is. War had brought out into the open what has always been true.

Death is a reality. So how can we face death? It's a difficult question to ask. Whether we are caring for ageing parents, or wrestling with our own chronic health conditions.

But given that death is a reality, it's one we have to ask. How can we face the reality of death?

Well, Jeff Bezos gives us one way to do so. Throw every resource we have to fight against it. Seek to defy it. Rage against it. But my two friends, Peter and BJ, exemplify another way.

You see, both of them are Christians. They both believe in the Gospel. That means they believe Christ died for their sins, and they believe that on the third day, Christ rose again.

[ 5 : 13 ] They believe in the Gospel. They believe in the Gospel. They believe in the Gospel. They believe in the Gospel. They believe in the Gospel. And that changes everything. Does it feel that way for you?

If you're not a Christian here this morning, are you aware that the resurrection of Christ changes everything? Now, many of us gathered here today do call ourselves Christians.

We too believe that Christ died. We too believe that Christ rose again. But do you really, really believe that this is a game changer for you?

Does it change how you enter the hospital room? Does it change how you kneel beside the tombstone? Does it change how you evaluate and pursue certain ambitions?

And how you react when your dreams are disappointed? Is the resurrection of Christ something just to be ticked off on the doctrinal exam?

[ 6 : 15 ] Or is the resurrection of Christ something substantial? Something so considerable that when the reality of death hits home hard for you, it can bear the weight of that reality?

There were some in the Corinthian church who were beginning to dismiss the resurrection of Christ as something trivial, something insubstantial, something immaterial to their lives.

It probably wasn't that they denied the resurrection of Christ outright. That would be pretty odd for a group of people calling themselves Christians. But remember, these Corinthians were what Paul called worldly people earlier in this letter.

They were those who were so entrenched in their culture that their point of view was shaped more powerfully by those around them than by the word of God.

And some of them probably bought into certain assumptions that were commonplace amongst their friends and colleagues. In Greco-Roman culture, one common belief was that the body was something lowly, something that can be discarded at death.

[ 7 : 32 ] And what matters now is that the soul can escape to some realm in the afterlife. And so, influenced by such beliefs, some Corinthians subscribe to the idea that whatever Paul meant by resurrection, he couldn't really mean bodily resurrection.

He couldn't be referring to real death and a real rising up from the dead. With a brand new life. That's a laughable idea.

But Paul now says this is no laughing matter. Because if you accept that as true, if there is no general resurrection from the dead, verse 13, then not even Christ has been raised.

And if Christ is not risen, we cannot face death. That's the first truth Paul wants to tell us today. If Christ is not risen, we cannot face death.

In verses 12 to 19, Paul wants to show us what impact it has on us if Christ is not risen. He wants to press home the logic.

[ 8 : 50 ] Take away Christ's resurrection, he says, and you take away just about everything. For what happens if Christ is not risen? Well, firstly, our witness is found to be false.

Verse 14. If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless. If Christ has not been raised, then the apostles have simply been talking nonsense.

Their words have no purpose. It has no effect. In fact, verse 15, the apostles, people like Paul and Peter and John, are not just gullible fools, but false witnesses who dare to attribute actions to God that he has not done.

And that means I'm wasting your time right now opening up the Bible since what they just wrote is just a pack of lies anyway. You would be thoroughly stupid to be building your life upon these very words because you may as well build your life upon Harry Potter, or A Song of Ice and Fire, or some other fantasy novel since they all belong in the same category.

There is no middle ground. If Christ has not been raised, the Bible can't just be regarded as some great piece of self-help literature.

[ 10 : 24 ] Rather, it should just be seen as the delusions, or worse, the deceptions of some people who lived centuries ago.

And if Christ has not been raised, then Christian evangelism is thoroughly unethical. We are telling people something is good news when it isn't.

Our witness is found to be false. Secondly, our faith is found to be futile.

If the Bible is indeed a delusion or a deception, then those who build their lives upon it are also similarly deluded or deceived.

Our faith is of no use. It is in vain. It is futile. After all, if it is true that Christ is not risen, then it's not just that we are believing nonsense.

[ 11 : 32 ] Worse than that, we discover that there might be no end to evil after all. For if Christ is alive today, that means a new age has truly dawned.

Evil cannot have the final say. But, if not, then perhaps it does after all. No reason to believe that anyone committing war crimes in Ukraine right now will necessarily be brought to justice.

No reason to believe that anyone pocketing taxpayers' money for their own benefit will ever be found out. And above all, there's no reason to believe death can be defeated.

Why believe someone who says that when he himself is dead? Or put another way, verse 17, if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, you are still in your sins.

death. If death had been defeated, that means sin must have been defeated as well because the wages of sin is death.

[ 12 : 49 ] And so, if Jesus was raised, that means Christ has been vindicated before the entire world. What he promises must be true. He is not a false Messiah.

And the resurrection itself becomes clear evidence that he has dealt with sin and death once and for all. But, if none of that is true, Paul says, Good Friday is completely misnamed.

There's nothing good about it at all. It would simply just be yet another tragic death of an innocent man. And the even greater tragedy is that we cannot take God at his word.

Contrary to what he says, the death of Jesus does not justify us, reconcile us, cleanse us. On the contrary, it does nothing for us.

and if Christ himself is still under the power of death, that means we too are still under the power of death.

[ 14 : 02 ] Sin remains our master and we are still very much his prisoners. The possibility that I could be a different kind of person to the person I currently am has vanished.

We are stuck for our faith is found to be futile. Thirdly, our hope is found to be fake.

For verse 18, those who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. Instead of saying a Christian who has passed away, has departed to be with Christ, in reality they are gone forever.

We are simply stuck in a cruel world where one day we are here, the next day we are not, and it doesn't matter at all. One of my friend's mother, a Christian, suffered a stroke years ago and she is now currently bedridden for life until she dies.

And if Christ is not risen, what future does she have to look forward to? Christianity simply becomes a cruel religious game, offering false comfort where there is none to be offered.

[ 15 : 33 ] No wonder Paul says in verse 19 that if Christ has not been raised, that we of all people are most to be pitied.

As a preacher once put it, if there were no resurrection, the whore of the faithful in Hebrews 11 would instead be the whore of the foolish.

Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Moses, Rahab, David, the prophets and all the others would have been faithful for nothing.

They would have been mocked, scourged, imprisoned, stoned, afflicted, ill-treated and put to death completely in vain. All believers of all ages would have believed for nothing, lived for nothing and died for nothing.

Now, if Christ has risen, then of course, what a huge and enormous hope we have. But if not, it would not be too strong to say we are some of the most stupid people on earth.

[ 16 : 54 ] So, my friends, the resurrection of Christ is no trivial matter. It makes a huge difference whether it is true or not.

And the entire gospel of Jesus Christ is anchored on the resurrection. About a century ago, a huge warehouse was constructed in Canada to store grain from the city of Winnipeg, which had one of the largest grain markets in the world.

But it didn't even last a day. On the day it was open, not long after the grain had been unloaded, the building sank one foot into the ground.

By the next day, the building tilted an entire 27 degrees to the west. Engineers ascertained that it had suffered what was called foundation failure.

It was not built properly on the clay surface on which it stood on. And without the resurrection of Christ, the entire Christian faith is like that warehouse.

[ 18 : 03 ] It wouldn't even last a day. It cannot bear the load of tragedies, of hardship, and ultimately death.

A gospel that does not have the bodily resurrection of Christ as part of its core will sink and topple over. But here's the good news.

That is not the gospel that Christians believe in. All the doom and gloom of verses 12 to 19, they are only true if Christ remains in the grave.

But the fact is, he isn't. And so our witness is not in vain. Our faith is not in vain. We are not dead in our sins.

Those who are asleep in Christ are not lost. For the gospel Christians believe in is no airy, fairy, mystical, mumbo-jumbo. No, the gospel begins with a report of certain historical events.

[ 19 : 11 ] And that's why Paul spent so much time in 1 Corinthians 15, verse 1 to 11. We heard it on Good Friday, showing us that Christ has indeed risen. Christianity does not begin with ethics, here is how you should live, but with history.

Here is what Jesus did for you in a particular place, at a particular time in this world. Paul himself reports the resurrection by showing it to be an actual event with an actual timestamp.

Back in verse 4, he tells us this happened on the third day. And so we can mark the day when for the first time someone rose again from the dead, never to die again.

we have good historical and sociological evidence to believe there was a day when the enemy of death was overcome. I wouldn't rehash those evidences now, but if you are someone who is perhaps doubting whether Jesus' resurrection indeed could happen or did happen, then pop by into our church library.

There will be a few books there that will help you, show you that it is rational to believe in. So yes, I believe with all my heart that Christ is indeed risen.

[ 20 : 43 ] And if Christ has risen, we can face death. That's our second truth for today. If Christ has risen, we can face death.

For in Christ, our future trajectory has completely altered. Because the resurrection is not just some show of power that God pulled off just to prove that Jesus is divine.

It is not just a supernatural magic trick that God thought would be funny to pull off. No, there is much more to it than that. Now, listen to what I'm about to say closely, because this really is a big deal.

And it's this. The reason we can face death is because Christ's resurrection secures ours. Christ's resurrection secures ours.

Look at verse 20. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. And the Christians who knew their Old Testament would immediately pick up on what Paul is talking about.

[ 21 : 55 ] In the Old Testament, on the third day after the Passover meal, God's people would offer to him the first fruits of their harvest.

It was dedicated to him. And the first fruits, of course, is representative of the quality of the harvest that follows. So imagine you're a farmer.

It's been a long, hard few months. But as you enter the fields, you see barley sheaves. You see the first fruits.

And that gets you excited. Because when you see first fruits, that also means you will see second fruits and third fruits and fourth fruits. Harvest time is coming.

And that, Paul says, is what Jesus' resurrection is. Passover is done. the Passover lamb has been sacrificed.

[ 23 : 01 ] The seed has fallen to the ground to die. But now, on the third day, Jesus has risen again as a representative of all those who will follow after him.

His seed produces many more seeds. His bodily resurrection is the first of many bodily resurrections to follow. My friends, the first Easter Sunday will be repeated.

It's gonna happen. And like Christ, we are going to get new bodies. Something our brother Benjamin Baru will help us see more clearly next week.

And Christ's resurrection is the guarantee. Those in Christ who sleep now will one day wake up. Not one will be forgotten.

For Christ's resurrection secures ours. That's the same point Paul makes in verses 21 and 22.

[ 24 : 10 ] You see verse 21, Adam was a kind of first fruit too. Except that his fruit was rotten. He only produced sin and death.

And ever since then, all who come from his root have been infected. He represented us before God and his failings provided us with a pattern of what was to come.

And so verse 22, in Adam all die. But here's the good news. God is the gardener and he wants us back in the garden of Eden.

And Jesus is the ever fruitful vine. And what God does is cut us off from Adam's poisonous plant and grafts us into Jesus instead.

And as we remain in him, he pours out new life into us. And that new life, though not always immediately visible, will one day fully bloom and flower into a full-blown resurrection.

[ 25 : 18 ] resurrection. We will be like the first fruit of Christ, no longer like the first fruit of Adam. That's the future we have. That's the hope we have.

Just meditate on that for a second. What did Jesus do after he rose again? He chatted with his friends. He ate with his friends.

He shared good news with his friends. that's your future and mine too in Christ. There are reunions to look forward to.

And they won't be like some of those awkward 20-year high school reunions that some of us have to attend, where some people remember past feuds, others find that they have nothing in common, and some people are missing because of illness or even death.

No. This will be like those times when you find that the hours just fly by. And best of all, you get to eat and drink with the person who loves you most, Jesus.

[ 26 : 31 ] But that's not all there is to it. You see, what if we died and rose again, only to return to the same kind of world that we have ever known? What if we come back to a place where we still have conflict with one another, where corruption in all its various forms is inflicted on us, where contempt and cruelty still exist, whether big or small?

Well, no worries because Paul says Christ's resurrection restores his rule. Christ's resurrection restores his rule.

Now, verses 23 to 28 can be a little dense, but here is the basic gist. Come down with me first of all to verse 27. For he has put everything under his feet.

Now, Paul is quoting Psalm 8 here, and it's worth just reading a little bit of that psalm. So, let me read from Psalm 8 verse 4. Yes, it's on the screen, onwards.

Right? 8 verse 4. What is mankind that you are mindful of them? Human beings that you care for them? You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honour.

[ 27 : 50 ] You made them rulers over the works of your hands, and here's the bit that Paul quotes, you put everything under their feet. So, Psalm 8 is really a meditation on Genesis 1 and 2.

In Genesis chapters 1 and 2, we're told that God had given Adam, in partnership with Eve, the right to rule over creation, to work and to take care of it.

He's given a great privilege, granted much dignity, as he looks to fulfil this vocation under God. But the problem, of course, is that Genesis 3 happens after Genesis 2.

Adam's rule becomes Adam's rebellion, and in so doing, he throws the creation order into chaos.

Blessing becomes curse, fellowship becomes banishment, hand-holding becomes finger-pointing, and life becomes death.

And so, the entire world suffers the consequences of humanity's decision to shake their fist at God. Their rule becomes catastrophic.

[ 29 : 05 ] But now, Hosea, here comes the second Adam, and he does what Adam should do. He acts as the human king that Adam should have been like.

During his time on earth, he performs miracles that overcome disease and demonic possession, as demonstrations of what his new kingdom is going to be like, one in which such things will have no place.

He can multiply food and control the wind and the waves, showing that the created realm is under his hand. Jesus is retrieving what Adam lost.

But wait a minute, one might argue, didn't the second Adam die too? that surely he hasn't fixed the first Adam's mess after all, has he? Now that would be true, if not for the resurrection.

For the resurrection restores his rule. And now truly everything is put under Christ. Ah, wait, wait, wait, wait, one might protest.

[ 30 : 18 ] Death is still a reality today. We still don't see any bodily resurrections happening as of now. How can you say that everything is under Christ? Well, yes, Paul says, that's true.

But have patience. For, verse 23, each in turn, Christ the firstfruits, then, when he comes, those who belong to him.

There is an order to things, Paul says. First, the new Adam, our new representative, rises. And that has already happened in history.

But one day, there will be a future historical event when he returns. And that's when the harvest will happen. That's when his resurrection rule will be decisively revealed.

That's when all enemies, including death, the last enemy, will be defeated once and for all. God. And that is when everything is put under Christ's feet.

[ 31 : 24 ] And he presents the kingdom to the Father. And that's when Psalm 8 is ultimately fulfilled. As God rules over all creation through a human man.

man. My friends, the good news of resurrection is not just confined to personal circumstances. It is good news for all of creation as all of it will be renewed and regenerated.

Think of that line in the Christmas carol, Joy to the World. He comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found.

And that's what the resurrection of Jesus achieves. The curse that is over the entire earth is reversed. Jesus reigns. And that rule can be proclaimed even today.

whenever we tell people about the crucified and risen king. And that brings us to our final truth for today.

[ 32 : 38 ] Because Christ is risen, we live differently. Because Christ is risen, we live differently. My brothers and sisters, if what I said is all true, do you see the difference?

In verse 29, we have a perplexing verse which has long puzzled the scholars. But to keep it simple, you can ask me more later if you want, Paul seems to be saying this, if Christ has not risen, then what is gained by those who got baptised on account of hearing this good news of dead people one day resurrecting?

If the dead are not raised at all, what is the point of believing and getting baptised? And that would also fit with the context, especially verse 32. Paul is saying, do you see the difference this makes to people?

Do you see how this message of resurrection is so compelling? Otherwise, why would people keep putting their faith in Christ and getting baptised? Indeed, Paul goes on to say in verses 30 to 31, do you see the difference this makes to me?

it is why I keep putting my body on the line. Because if Christ is risen, here are two ways that changes our lives.

[ 34 : 01 ] The first is this, we can live as if hope is certain. Now, that word hope can have different meanings. One kind of hope is what we can call the hope-so hope.

Do you think the weather will be good today? I hope so. Do you think Manchester United will win tonight? I hope so. And hope-so hope is not certain at all.

But resurrection hope is different. It's anchored on something that is undeniable and unchangeable that on this earth there was a man who really died and rose again.

It's confirmed. And so it really is confirmed that one day also suffering is going to go away, evil is going to go away, disease and ageing is going to go away, and death is going to go away.

And it also means that it really is true that the God we trust in is good and powerful, that he is not distant but has intervened in our world, that he is patiently working out his plans for the good of this world.

[ 35 : 25 ] That's what Jesus' resurrection shows. And if all that is true, we can live for Jesus with confidence and boldness. We don't have to play it safe, but we can go all out to obey what he says.

And that's why Paul can withstand all the persecutions he faced. And it means that even when life doesn't go according to our plans, indeed even when God doesn't affirm your plan for your life, but instead he puts you in agonising situations, like Paul, you can still trust him.

For our hope is not vague and fuzzy, but sure and certain. And the second is this, we can live for what's most important.

The people in Corinth subscribe to a live for the here and now philosophy. Like the people in Isaiah's day, they said, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die, verse 32.

And they would be right if there is no resurrection. But if there is, accountability, then there is accountability. And so Paul says, verse 34, stop following the path of Adam, stop sinning.  
[ 36 : 50 ] Instead, reveal your life. Last week, I read an interview with Pastor Tim Keller who has been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

And he said this, the day after my diagnosis, one of the words I put down in my journal was, focus. What are the most important things for you to be spending your time doing?  
I had not been focused. I thought that was helpful. Are you focused? Well, let the resurrection refocus you today.

And when I say that we can live for what is most important, I don't mean that in the subjective sense, as if we decide what is most important.

I mean what's really important. and Paul has told us already what that is, all the way back in 15 verse 3.

[ 37 : 58 ] It's the gospel. That is of first importance. It's to live for Jesus. If Christ is not risen, he can't be the Lord of anything.

But if he is risen, he is the Lord of your everything. your money, your time, your ambitions, your gifts, even your death.

He is our Lord, and we now live as his resurrection people, acting as a sign to that first Easter day, and as a foretaste of the future Easter that is to come.

Easter So can we face that? Easter says we can. Death is an enemy, death is a reality, and it is something to be grieved, but it is no longer something to be feared.

For though death is a reality, so is the resurrection. Perhaps today you're not a Christian. Well, this is the good news we have.

[ 39 : 20 ] Christ is risen again, and that changes everything. So will you come to him? My friends Peter and BJ have.

And if you do, like them, you will have something that even the world's second richest man, Jeff Bezos, currently does not have.

You will have a sure and certain hope, and much more besides. Because Easter shows that every promise of God is true.

Isn't that amazing? Let's pray, and let's praise God.

Father, this is the most amazing news in the world. Sometimes we forget that, Lord. We forget that the gospel is just so incredible. How can we ever praise you enough and thank you enough for this gift of new life, for this gift of resurrection life?

[ 40 : 43 ] Thank you so much for the Lord Jesus. Thank you that when we were still dead in our sins, you saw it fit to make us alive in him. and now your resurrection, the resurrection of Christ secures our resurrection.

How can we ever thank you enough? How can we ever thank you enough? We just want to praise you with all our hearts. this we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.