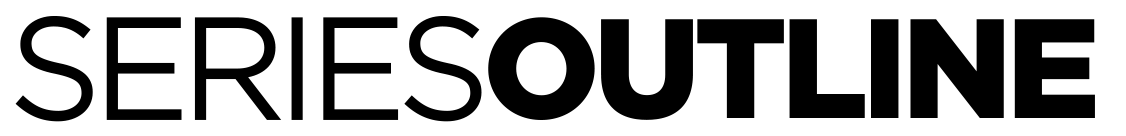
**Resurrecting Hope: Overcoming Life’s Greatest Challenges**

**SERIES OVERVIEW**

4 Weeks

**Write Up:** The Church throughout history has been instilled with hope in the face of life’s trials because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Easter is a reminder that the Christian lives day in and day out with power that can overcome any challenge. In our darkest days, it gives us light. In overwhelming discouragement, it gives us faith. In the midst of devastating loss, it gives us joy. In times of divisiveness, it gives us something that unifies us. The tomb is empty. Jesus is alive, and that gives us hope!

**Week 1:** Resurrection Hope

**Scripture:** John 20:11-18

**Write Up:** The days following Jesus’ crucifixion must have been some of the darkest times for His followers. They had placed all of their hope in Him and now He was dead. They believed that He truly was the Messiah and that through His life, He would change the world. It was not until a woman named Mary went to visit the tomb that hope was restored. The tomb was empty and Jesus had risen! All Mary wanted to do was to hold on to her Savior once she discovered the good news. However, Jesus was not done. He had to go to the Father in heaven and restore all that was broken by sin and make it right for good. Easter is the reminder that because Jesus is alive, we have hope.

**Think:** Death is the thing that defeats everyone. It does not, however, defeat Jesus. He overcomes to give the world hope.

**Feel:** There is nothing that our God cannot do. I have hope because anything is possible.

**Do:** Choose to embrace the hope that is offered to you in Jesus. Let hope lift your spirits.

**Week 2:** Do You Love Me?

**Scripture:** John 21:1-19

**Write Up:** We can only imagine how Peter must have felt as the final days of Jesus’ life unfolded: discouraged that his friend had been killed on a cross, disappointed that Judas had turned his back, heartbroken that Rome had seemingly won. But, perhaps Peter was most disappointed that he had denied Jesus three times when Jesus needed him most. We all know the pain of discouragement that comes from things outside our control, as well as discouragement that comes by our own foolish choices. The story of the resurrection shows that there is no disappointment that the resurrected Jesus cannot overcome.  Peter is given the chance to restore relationship with his savior with one simple question, “Do you love me?”. Jesus asks us the same question as well. Resurrection hope comes from knowing that Jesus is faithful even when we aren’t. Jesus loves us back to wholeness. Do we love him?

**Think:** There is no kind of disappointment and discouragement that can separate me from the love of God.

**Feel:** I am so valuable to God that he would forgive my most selfish sins.

**Do:** Reflect on the ways you have neglected to love and honor God. Confess these to God and believe that with Jesus’ help, you can love Him more.

**Week 3:** If You Would Have Been Here…

**Scripture:** John 11:1-44

**Write Up:** Lazarus was one of Jesus’ friends. He fell sick and died before Jesus could arrive to restore him. The loss was devastating to Lazarus’ sisters, Mary and Martha. It all looked like one big mistake. If Jesus would have been there, Lazarus would not have died. Jesus entered into the pain with Mary and Martha and He wept. If we want to know how God responds to loss, look no further than Jesus’ tears in John 11. Though Lazarus had been laying on the tomb for days, Jesus does a miracle and raises Him from the dead. It is a foreshadowing of what would happen to Jesus as well as what would happen for all who put their hope in Him.

**Think:** Even when I think it is the end, it may just be the beginning.

**Feel:** When my heart is broken, so is Jesus’. When I am grieving, so is Jesus.

**Do:** Allow yourself to hope that God is still working, even in the midst of your loss.

**Week 4:** Unity In Him

**Scripture:** John 17:20-23

**Write Up:** The final prayer that Jesus prays is not just for the disciples, it is for anyone who would believe in Him one day. His prayer is for people like you and me. The essence of his request is that His followers would be one, like He and the Father are one. The heartbeat of Jesus’ prayer reveals that He came to rescue the world. Resurrection hope comes from knowing that in the midst of a divided world, we can trust that the love of Jesus knows no bounds.

**Think:** Jesus’ love is for all people and it is the unifying truth behind His sacrificial work on the cross.

**Feel:** I can truly love others because of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

**Do:** Consider the people in your life that you have written off because of a divide. Pray for them and invite Jesus to give you a godly love for them.

**SERMON**WEEK1

**Resurrecting Hope**: Week 1 Easter Sunday

Resurrection Hope

**Scripture:** John 20:11-18 // Genesis 3:8-10 // John 11:25

**Write Up:** The days following Jesus’ crucifixion must have been some of the darkest times for His followers. They had placed all of their hope in Him, and now He was dead. They believed that He truly was the Messiah and that through His life, He would change the world. It was not until a woman named Mary went to visit the tomb that hope was restored. The tomb was empty and Jesus had risen! All Mary wanted to do was to hold onto her Savior once she discovered the good news. However, Jesus was not done. He had to go to the Father in heaven and restore all that was broken by sin and make it right for good. Easter is the reminder that because Jesus is alive, we have hope.

**Think:** Death is the thing that defeats everyone. It does not, however, defeat Jesus. He overcomes to give the world hope.

**Feel:** There is nothing that our God cannot do. I have hope because anything is possible.

**Do:** Choose to embrace the hope that is offered to you in Jesus. Let hope lift your spirits.

**Sermon:**

Good morning, Church! I am so thankful you have chosen to worship with us this Easter. Today we are filled with a renewed hope because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He is risen! (He is risen indeed.)

Have you ever thought about the fact that before Easter was a celebration of life, it was a time of mourning for Jesus’death? It would have been only a few days before that that the disciples watched their friend, the one they believed to be the long-awaited Messiah, be crucified on a Roman cross.

They had placed all their hopes and dreams in the coming Kingdom that Jesus was going to bring into the world. But on that Friday, they were crushed as Jesus was brought down from the cross and laid inside of a tomb.

It was the finality of Jesus’ death that would have been the knockout blow to any hope that the disciples had for a world where God would finally rule and reign. Where He would free them from the sin that had corrupted everything.

**Illustration**: Unrealized hope may be one of the most painful things that we go through in life. Sometimes that disappointment comes from things that are rather insignificant, while other times it comes from life-altering trials. I want to show you what disappointment looks like and the different places in life where we encounter it.

*(Show pictures on the screen that are relatable situations that crush our hope. You may choose to start with something lighthearted and move gradually more serious. Consider starting with a picture of an empty box of cookies and then segue to pictures of sporting events where a team lost in dramatic style, someone at the base of the crumbled twin towers or someone standing by a gravestone.)*

Each one of these pictures carries with it all kinds of emotions. If you have ever found yourself in one of these situations, perhaps you can relate to how the followers of Jesus felt on that Easter morning. After three days of deep sorrow, they were in need of a resurrected hope.

If we are honest this morning, some of us came here today in need of renewed hope as well. Life has not been easy, and some of us have faced great challenges. Perhaps you have experienced a devastating loss this year. Maybe your closest relationships have suffered recently. Some of us have had to come to terms with a diagnosis that makes our future uncertain. And all of this with the backdrop of a pandemic that continues to threaten many parts of our lives. These things and more can be so heavy that it may make us question if God still cares about us and is still working in the world.

But the Gospels tell us that right in the middle of the disciples’ darkest hour comes the light of hope.

**POINT #1 – HOPE APPEARS WHEN WE LEAST EXPECT IT**

Early in the morning on the third day after Jesus’ death, a woman named Mary Magdalene made her way to the tomb. Other places in the scriptures tell us that she has come to anoint his body for burial. When she arrives, she finds the tomb is empty. What must have been adding insult to injury, Mary concludes that someone must have come and taken Him away. She is devastated.

**READ John 20:11-14**

As Mary looks into the tomb where Jesus had been laid, all she can see is what is missing, and she fails to see what IS there. She is so focused on the fact that Jesus’ body is nowhere to be seen, that she misses the two angelic beings who are seated where Jesus was. Through her tears, she tells the angels that she is heartbroken because not only is Jesus dead, but now His body has disappeared.

This is what can happen to us when we lose hope. When our dreams are shattered and our future becomes unclear, it becomes all too easy to fixate on what has NOT happened, what we DON’T have, what THEY did not do, and what is MISSING.

After Mary speaks to the angels, she turns to leave and comes face-to-face with the resurrected Jesus. But listen to what verse 14 says: “She did not realize it was Jesus.” Resurrection hope was standing right in front of her, and she was unable to see it because of the fog of despair. After all, Mary had not come to the tomb expecting Jesus alive, she came expecting to find His lifeless body.

***Download the* Resurrecting Hope *Church Kit to access the entire sermon and four week series!***