



WEEK 4 || 1 CORINTHIANS 15

GOSPEL HOPE

It seems impossible to turn on the news without hearing a tragic story of injustice, violence or death. We're confronted with it on social media, the news and experience it personally in profound ways. And we might ask ourselves where is there hope in the world?

The Old Testament acknowledges our feelings of hopelessness about the brevity and meaninglessness of life:

"This is the evil in everything that happens under the sun: The same destiny overtakes all. The hearts of people are full of evil and there is madness in their hearts while they live, and afterward they join the dead."

Ecclesiastes 9:3

But the very good news of the gospel is that there's hope in the face of hopelessness. There's life in the face of death. The claim of the gospel is that the one who died for our sin is in fact risen and living and ruling as King.

Where does the world search for hope in the face of death?

THE PROBLEM THE GOSPEL ADDRESSES

Last week we saw Paul define the Gospel as ‘nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified’. But there’s more to the story. The king who died for sins is ALIVE!

Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-19

1. Does the summary of the gospel - 'the one who died for sin' - adequately deal with the problem of death?
2. What problem does Paul see if there is no resurrection from the dead? Why?

THE SOLUTION THE GOSPEL OFFERS

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-6

3. According to Paul what is the good news (gospel) he’s been preaching?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:20-28

“Firstfruits” means the first part harvested of a bigger crop, which gives hope that the rest of the harvest is coming and will presumably be of equal quality. It has interesting sacrificial overtones, because in the Old Testament these “firstfruits” were normally owed to God as a sacrifice expressing confidence in his provision (Exodus 23:19).

4. What does it mean that Jesus is the ‘*firstfruits* of those who have fallen asleep’?
5. After the dead are raised, what will happen and why? (24-28)
6. Quickly read ahead to verses 54-57. There are a number of different areas described that Jesus’ resurrection defeats in these verses. How does the resurrection defeat these things? Try and illustrate it.
7. Why is Jesus’ resurrection central to the Gospel? How is it good news for those who trust in him?

THE DIFFERENCE THE GOSPEL MAKES

As Jesus starts the new age of the resurrection, those who follow him will also participate in this new resurrected reality. Christians look forward to the day we'll also be raised physically and transformed from this earthly existence into a heavenly reality (1 Cor 15:23-28; 50-57). This is the sure and certain hope Christians can enjoy even in the face of suffering, decay and death.

Jesus' resurrection doesn't just point to a future reality, but also a present reality. Having defeated death and sin, Jesus has now been given power and authority over everything. That's why we can say "Jesus is King." And that has massive implications for how followers of Jesus view the world now. If the resurrection of Jesus isn't true, people who put their faith in Jesus are without hope. But if the resurrection is true, there's infinite hope and motivation to engage with the world around us. It certainly changed how Paul lived his life.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:30-34 & 58

8. What are the implications of the resurrection for Paul? How does that change what he does in this life?
9. Read the excerpt from *N.T. Wright's sermon* in the sidebar. How does the resurrection and confidence in the future change how you live in the present?

What's worth investing in?

10. What's one way you're not living as someone who will be raised from the dead? Share this with your group. What might help us to hope more certainly for the resurrection?

The first basic plank of Paul's gospel in 1 Corinthians was "Jesus Christ and him crucified." The second step is even better news. This crucified Christ has risen from the dead, and rules everything. That changes everything. **The one who died for sin ... is King!**

"The message of the resurrection is that the world matters. That the injustices and the pains of this present world must now be addressed with the news that healing, justice, and love have won... If Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead, Christianity becomes good news for the whole world – news which warms our hearts. Resurrection means that in a world where injustice, violence and degradation are endemic, God is not prepared to tolerate such things – and that we will work and plan with all the energy of God to implement the victory of Jesus over them all. Take away the resurrection and Karl Marx was probably right to accuse Christianity of ignoring problems of the material world. Take it away and Freud was probably right to say it was wish-fulfilment. Take it away and Nietzsche probably was right to say it was for wimps."

N.T. Wright, *For All God's Worth*