

Recipe for Resurrection – The Secret Ingredient

1. Warm up: Share a favorite Easter memory from your past.
2. During the first part of Sunday's sermon, Jeff repeated the refrain, "Life has a way of beating us up and beating us down." He gave several examples, including a mother, Becky Greer, whose nine-year-old daughter died. The mother's world went completely dark. Jesus disciples experienced something quite similar. When Jesus was crucified, they lost Jesus and the Movement they had passionately devoted themselves to. Their world went completely dark.
 - a. Matthew 28:1 tells us that, "After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb." Try to project yourself into their situation. Drawing on your past experiences of grief, how what would you imagine the women were thinking and feeling as they made their way to the tomb that morning?
 - b. Tell us about a time when your world went dark?
 - c. In your life right now, what circumstances are trying to beat you up and beat you down?
3. Becky Greer tells about a Stargazer lily her daughter insisted on planting in the spring, six months before she died. When the weather turned in the fall, the lily also died, but then came back in the next year and produced 27 fragrant pink blossoms. To Becky, this was a sign from heaven that gave her a resurgence of hope. It felt like heaven (and her daughter) were reminding her that, "God can resurrect even those things which we believe can't be resurrected." Becky says, "I did not believe the lily could survive the darkness of winter, and I did not believe I could survive the darkness of my grief and suffering. God was working on the lily in the darkness of the earth, and God was working on me in the darkness of my grief."
 - a. There is incredible power in hope. Just a little hope can transform us. Without hope, we're in deep trouble. Ernest Gordon, who survived a brutal Japanese prisoner-of-war camp during World War II, said, "A person can experience an incredible amount of pain and suffering if he has hope. When he loses his hope, that's when he dies." Do you buy that? Have you ever seen someone survive the impossible because they had hope – or fade away because they didn't?
 - b. The Bible says, "Faith is the assurance of things **hoped** for, the conviction of things not seen." Hebrews 11:1. In other words, hope is a necessary precursor to taking steps of faith. What's the difference between "faith" and "hope" – and how do they interact?
 - c. Isaiah 40:31 says, "Those who **hope** in the Lord will renew their strength, they will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not faint." What does that verse say to you?

- d. Jeff said, “Hope is rocket fuel for the soul.” He told how he felt hope surging back into him a few weeks ago when we went to a masks-optional policy at church, the sanctuary had more people, and worship had so much more energy. He described an almost physical feeling of hope welling up inside him, restoring his confidence that our church can rise again and come back stronger than ever. How do you think COVID has impacted our church? How long do you think it will be before we soar again?
 - e. Tell us about a time when you were experiencing great discouragement, but then something happened that caused hope to surge within you. How did that feel? What happened?
 - f. Henry Ford once said, “Whether you think you can or whether you think you can’t, you’re right.” Do you buy that? Why or why not?
4. To be real, Jeff said, hope has to be reasonable. Hope is not wishful thinking. Hope happens when we find reasonable grounds for having hope. That’s why Easter is so critical. Easter is the ultimate demonstration that all things are possible with God. Read Matthew 28:1-10, as printed on p. 3.
- a. Describe how the mindset of the women likely changed once they encountered the angel and then later encountered Jesus himself. How do you think they saw life before? How do you think they saw it after?
 - b. Have you ever experienced God’s miraculous intervention in a situation? How did that change your perspective on life and life’s challenges?
 - c. In John 11:15, Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die.” This verse has several levels of meaning. What do you hear it saying?
 - d. Jeff reminded us of the story of the Survivor Tree in Oklahoma City. The tree was shattered by the bomb that destroyed the federal building there. The tree was left for dead, but made an amazing comeback. Tell us about a time in your life when you’ve experienced something similar, i.e., a time when you felt dead or defeated, but made an amazing comeback or recovery.
 - e. Think back to your response to Question 2.c. above about circumstances you’re facing right now that are threatening to beat you up and beat you down. How should the resurrection of Jesus affect how you think about the circumstances you’re currently facing?

Hallelujah, Christ has risen! And all who are in Christ shall rise like him!

Matthew 28:1-10

After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ²And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men.

⁵But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. ⁶He is not here; for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. ⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." ⁸So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."