

**Empire Church of the Brethren**  
*Sunday Service Sermons*

**08 March 2026**

A Theology of the Resurrection

Text: "And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith." *1 Cor. 15:14*

I have mentioned here before that in a Seminary class we students were asked this question: "If the bones of Jesus were found what would it do to your belief system."

The professor was assuming that some of us, and I was one, believed that the resurrection of Christ was pivotal to our belief system.

And it is!

For me it makes Jesus who he claimed to be.

The Messiah, the Son of God, the one who redeemed me.

In Christianity there is one Lord, Jesus, the crucified and risen Lord of all creation.

This is what the Christian church knows, believes, and preaches, and it is based on Jesus being raised from the dead and sitting at the right hand of the Lord God Almighty.

Paul agrees with this for he states, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins."

And, I would add, we have no hope.

The cross is our hope.

The disciples believed Jesus was the Messiah, but his death on the cross confused them.

As we saw last week, the Jews had been taught all of their life that anyone hung on a cross was cursed of God.

After the crucifixion the disciples were coming apart.

Their Theology of God did not allow for Him to be killed on a cross.

So without Easter there is no message from or for the Christian church.

It was the risen Lord, who rescued the disciples from their aimless wanderings, who restored their crushed faith and who rejuvenated their hopeless spirits.

A faith with a future.

The resurrection of Christ means that we have a faith that is not futile, but rather a faith with a future.

Remember Friday: it seemed then that all was lost.

Consider the specifics of that day.

We hear crowds crying out, "Crucify!" and soldiers mocking, "He saved others but he can't save himself."

We hear a prisoner jeering, "Save yourself and us!" and an innocent, loving man saying that he is thirsty.

He questions why God has forsaken him at a time like this, and then he finally declares that his work is finished.

A couple of friends bury the lifeless body of the one who had taught about life, love, truth, and goodness.

It did, in fact, seem finished.

Life had no meaning or justice.

Death had overcome life, darkness had overwhelmed the light, the lie had eclipsed the truth, hate had overthrown love, evil had vanquished goodness.

There was no hope in that kind of world.

But Christian faith proclaims that this was not the final reality.

Hear the lyrics of a song written by Darrell Adams:

It once was an age of sin and death, And the hissing snake of pride was wrapped around the world so tight, it seemed all good had died. And when they strung up Jesus, the venom killed Him dead. But come next Sunday morning he crushed the serpent's head. That is the truth; that is the gospel proclamation; that is the difference Easter makes. We have a faith with a future. We have a faith with a future because life has overcome death. The apostle Paul quotes from the Old Testament: "Death had been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ". Thus the resurrection vindicates Jesus' message. Death cannot defeat life. The serpent had struck the Son's heel, but the Son had crushed its head. We need no longer fear the serpent's venom, for it is powerless and impotent to hurt those who are in Christ Jesus. He lives! Thanks be to God! We have a faith with a future because the Light shines in the darkness. The Light came into the world, and the powers of darkness neither understood nor appreciated the Light, and they tried to extinguish the Light. Religious zealots tried to keep Jesus from teaching and loving, and they tried to keep the people from listening and responding. But they could not. So they played their trump and got the Light nailed to a tree, and darkness covered the earth for three hours. For three hours the world was left to itself. Evil, hate, death, and the lies held sway. But now the Light shines brighter than ever. The powers of darkness cannot keep the witnesses from shouting, "He lives! He lives!" Nor will they be able to keep every knee from bowing and every tongue from confessing that "Jesus is Lord" to the glory of God the Father. The Light shines! Thanks be to God! We have a faith with a future because love has overcome hate. The Evil One tries to make light of a loving lifestyle. Love is portrayed as sissyish and weak. To open yourself up to love is to make your self vulnerable. You might get hurt if you live the risky way love calls you to live. Isn't turning the other cheek and loving your enemies silly and dangerous in the real world? Yes and no. Yes, if we see things before the resurrection. Yes, if we see things through our physical eyes only. But no, if we see the reality of the empty tomb; no, if we look at life through the eyes of faith. God had vindicated his Son. In the resurrection God is saying that we all should live like Jesus. Yes, his loving put him on a Roman cross, but God who is life and love raised him on the third day. In the end, love is the final reality. Thanks be to God! We have a faith with a future because the Truth has conquered the lie. The liars of the world could not be bothered with truth in their quest to get rid of Jesus. They promised what they could not deliver; they corrupted the facts when the facts proved him innocent; they blasphemed their God to crush his Son. But the resurrection vindicated Jesus and affirms that the way he lived is the way we should live also. His integrity and honesty can be ours. The Truth has defeated the lie. Thanks be to God! We have a faith with a future because goodness has vanquished evil. Leo Durocher made "good guys finish last" a national maxim.

Mark Twain lulled us into believing that “the Lord helps those who help themselves.”

But a resurrection faith says that at the center of existence is goodness: God himself.

Goodness has vanquished evil.

Resurrected living means a commitment to goodness in relationships, even when nice guys seem to finish last.

We are not crazy when we commit ourselves to ultimate realities such as life, light, love, truth, and goodness.

When you are drowning in a sea of despair, pick up your spirits because Jesus lives!

That is the basis of hope. Thanks be to God!

We have a future.

The resurrection of Christ means, first, that we possess a faith with a future; and second, it guarantees that we have a future.

Christ’s resurrection is the first fruits of the believer’s resurrection.

Here Paul provides the Christian with a sense of hope in his or her salvation.

The first fruits from a harvest are a promise of more harvest yet to come, and the resurrection of Christ is the assurance that we too shall rise at the sound of the trumpet.

Christ inaugurates a new covenant in which the cycle of sin and death, begun in the old Adam, is broken.

In the old Adam all seemed desolate and hopeless, but in the new Adam there is redemption and hope.

Jesus defeated sin and death, thereby liberating those who believe in him.

Our hope is not just that Jesus has overcome our ultimate foes.

Our hope is also the assurance that in Jesus we too shall overcome our foes and that we will participate in the harvest of the resurrection.

When you read the newspaper and hear the news on TV, do you ever want to give up?

Does it seem that the bad guys are winning?

Do vice and murder and crime and indecency seem to know no boundaries?

Remember, greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

The resurrection means that.

Remember: Christ in you; the hope of glory.

He is our hope.

We will overcome because he lives.

And he lives for us!

And we will live with Him forever!