



Easter Sunday

Sermon Outline

2023

Theme: Hope revealed

Key scriptures:

Hebrews 1:1-3

Romans 8:18-25

1 Corinthians 15:20-27

Acts 10:34a, 37-43



To be read aloud to begin:

Luke 24:1-11

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?

He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'" Then they remembered his words.

When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense."

A note to the preacher:

Romans 5:5-8 'And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.'

Easter Sunday is a hinge-point in the Church calendar. Christian believers around the world gather today to celebrate and rejoice over the resurrection of Jesus Christ, signifying the triumphant victory of God over sin, death and separation. This is the Good News for all humanity!

The Salvation Army Australia adds our voices to the chorus. This year we are exploring the theme: 'hope revealed'. Jesus is our hope revealed in our past, present and our future.

- Jesus is our hope revealed for our past, *providing forgiveness of our sins*
- Jesus is our hope revealed for our present, *providing power through Holy Spirit's presence to know God's will*
- Jesus is our hope revealed for our future, *providing promises for our lifetime and our eternity.*



Theme #1: Jesus is our hope revealed for our past

Hebrews 1:1-3 'The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.'

With hindsight and having chanted a hundred choruses of 'He is risen: He is risen indeed' in our lifetimes, it may be easy to read the scripture from Luke 24 and think we would never doubt the testimony of the women rushing back from the grave! But we must remind ourselves that even the twelve disciples didn't believe at first.

Mary and the other women mentioned in Luke grew up in the same culture the male disciples did, but their experiences would have been vastly different. The path to faith would have been difficult. They needed to navigate cultural norms, the spiritual taboo of female-spirituality and the male-centric Rabbinical teaching of the day. It was only in the presence of Jesus that those differences melted away.

Have you ever wondered why there were only women at the cross and tomb that evening and morning?

Maybe this helps explain it. They'd seen him deliver on promises and show them true equality. Perhaps this increased their belief that he would deliver on the rest of his promises too.

Jesus revealed a deeper hope, greater than their past experiences of rejection and knowledge. They just had to know more. Quick! To the grave! For many of us, our past and our experiences inform our hope or expectation of the now and future. What past experiences do we need to place in the grave and leave behind, so we can see where Jesus is now?

Sin is not only the direct disobedience of God's orders, will and perfection – but a lack of faith that blinds us to what God is asking and saying.

In a message from 1855, Charles Spurgeon spoke about the unbelief of a man from the book of 2 Kings: 'His sin was unbelief. He doubted the promise of God. In this particular case unbelief took the form of a doubt of the divine veracity, or a mistrust of God's power. Either he doubted whether God really meant what he said, or whether it was within the range of possibility that God should fulfill his promise. Unbelief has more phases than the moon, and more colours than the chameleon.'



Jesus' words and sacrifice mean we have the pathway to peace right now. We can believe his promises to be true. The disciples doubted and couldn't believe the testimony right in front of them. Will we allow Jesus to bring revelation to past experience, and relief from sin and unbelief?

Hebrews 10:8-10 'First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them"—though they were offered in accordance with the law. Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.'

Jesus is our hope revealed for our past through providing forgiveness of our sins.

Jesus is hope revealed for sin and disbelief that keep us anchored in the past.

Through the sacrifice of the perfect lamb we see something that would never be possible without Jesus – a 'once for all' sacrifice that covers every sin, every blemish, every separation. Through Jesus' blood, our past is erased, our sin is removed, and our hope is revealed.

Expand: What does this mean for you?

Share a time when your past experience meant you hadn't expected something to happen or doubted that God could do it. What were the feelings, thoughts and scriptures that collided for attention?



Theme #2: Jesus is our hope revealed in our present

Hebrews 10:15 goes on to say, 'The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this.' Jesus provides power through Holy Spirit's presence to know God's will. For some of the disciples, Jesus' death signalled the end of a 'ministry of what might have been'. Perhaps he had been simply another impressive Rabbi. But for those who sat watching, waiting and willing for the power of God to do everything Jesus had said at the cross, the Resurrection morning held promise that this might not end here.

Here is the story of the morning of the resurrection from another angle, as country-singer legend Dolly Parton sings in her song 'He's Alive':

*'The gates and doors were barred
And all the windows fastened down
I spent the night in sleeplessness
And rose at every sound
Half in hope of sorrow
And half in fear the day
Would find the soldiers breakin' through
To drag us all away*

*And just before the sunrise
I heard something at the wall
The gate began to rattle
And a voice began to call
I hurried to the window
Looked down into the street
Expecting swords and torches
And the sound of soldiers' feet*

*But there was no one there but Mary
So I went down to let her in
John stood there beside me
As she told me where she'd been
She said they've moved Him in the night
And none of us know where
The stone's been rolled away
And now His body isn't there.'*



Dolly's song goes on – but can you imagine your feelings right then? Jesus had told his disciples to wait for him, he WOULD be resurrected. Even when they couldn't see him, they should have hoped for what he would do. The women who gathered at the tomb hoped to see Jesus revealed in the now – not just a warm fuzzy memory of what he'd done for them in the past.

When the women encountered the angelic presence at the tomb, they 'remembered his words'. If we allow Jesus to speak where we are, he will reveal where he has always been and where we should be joining him! This is the powerful work of Holy Spirit remembrance.

Ephesians 1:17-21 'I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.'

Expand further: Share about a situation where your imagination or actions put limits on what Jesus was capable of? How was your faith stretched? How were you proved wrong?

Explain what hope means to you in your present situation, even if it feels unresolved. Invite a reflection time here for people's 'present' needing hope to be revealed. Pray for outpouring of Holy Spirit revelation.



Theme #3: Jesus is our hope revealed for our future

Titus 1:1-3 '...to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness— in the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, and which now at his appointed season he has brought to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Saviour.'

Jesus is our hope for the future, providing promises for our lifetime and our eternity. This verse in Hebrews illustrates how futile the efforts of the priests and earthly sacrifices were at bridging the gap between humanity's sin and God's perfection. The presence of God would only fill the temple, never the people. The blood of the sacrifices worked only provisionally and temporarily, never eternally. The priests served by proxy and imperfectly, a caste apart, while the rest of the tribe carried on in the unordinary, unsanctified.

When Jesus came, it all changed.

Hope revealed itself by the perfect sacrifice of his blood. 'For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.' (Hebrews 10:14)

We are now the temple of God, and the presence of God fills us, corporately.

We are now his people, and his power commands us, daily.

The blood of Jesus covers us, eternally.

The High Priest presides once-for-all, and we serve alongside him, consecrated.

Holy Spirit's power seals us and assures us that God's mercy and grace is with us in our daily journey and our eternal destination.

Hebrews 8:3-6 'Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and so it was necessary for this one also to have something to offer. If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already priests who offer the gifts prescribed by the law. They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain." But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises (Hebrews 8:3-6).'



Conclusion

Arabella J. Valpy was a woman who lived in Dunedin, New Zealand in the early 19th Century. Racial discord, drunkenness, vice, poverty, neglect and crime were ravaging the early British colonies, as the two worlds of colonisers and Indigenous communities collided.

Arabella had followed the work of The Salvation Army amidst darkest England with interest, and in 1882 she (now famously) wrote,

'Dear Mr Booth, Can you see your way to send to the rescue of perishing souls in this highly respected and favoured city? Herewith please find draft of two hundred pounds. The Lord reward you and yours. Signed, A Wellwisher.'

This significant investment of money, faith and courage meant that almost exactly one year later, The Salvation Army opened fire in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Arabella saw the painful history, the potential in the present and the powerful future that Jesus would have if The Salvation Army were to take up God's mission on their shores. One woman's faith meant that hope revealed itself on a new nation's shores.

What would your 'Dear Mr. Booth' letter look like to The Salvation Army today? Perhaps you are to be the answer to someone's plea, as we become hope revealed today.

- Jesus is our hope revealed for our past, providing forgiveness of our sins
- Jesus is our hope revealed for our present, providing power through Holy Spirit's presence to know God's will
- Jesus is our hope revealed for our future, providing promises for our lifetime and our eternity.

What do these statements look like practically for you? What areas of your past, present and future need hope revealed within them?

Optional: Read the line of a significant song/poem of your choosing that fits the hope revealed past/present/future narrative.



Suggested: Songbook Song #86 (2015 version)

*JESUS, we look to Thee,
Thy promised presence claim;
Thou in the midst of us shalt be,
Assembled in Thy name.*

*Thy name salvation is,
Which here we come to prove;
Thy name is life and health and peace
And everlasting love.*

*We meet, the grace to take
Which Thou hast freely given;
We meet on earth for Thy dear sake
That we may meet in Heaven.*

*Present we know Thou art;
But, O Thyself reveal!
Now, Lord, let every waiting heart
Thy mighty comfort feel!*

*O may Thy quickening voice
The death of sin remove,
And bid our inmost souls rejoice
In hope of perfect love!*



As appropriate: Reflection, Song or Mercy Seat

Prayer

God, we thank you for your unending grace. We thank you for your glory revealed, your hope revealed and your plan revealed to us through your son Jesus. Thank you for offering the solution we needed, with relationship and an offering on both now and eternity with you. Please help us when our eyes fail, our knees grow weak and we feel too old, or too unworthy, or too far away to reach you.

We know even here you find us, your goodness and faithfulness will follow us all the days of our lives. We bless your name, and we choose to bless those who persecute us. We choose today to allow your revelation to illuminate the future.

Songs

- There is a mercy seat revealed - Arthur Robert Gibby - SASB 438; Tune 443 or 448
- Living Hope - Phil Wickham and Brian Johnson / Bethel songselect.ccli.com/Songs/7106807
- O Praise The Name (Anastasis) - Hillsong songselect.ccli.com/Songs/7037787
- Glorious Day - Kristian Stanfill songselect.ccli.com/Songs/7081388
- In Christ Alone - Keith Getty, Stuart Townend songselect.ccli.com/Songs/3350395
- Christ The Lord Is Risen Today
- Resurrecting - Elevation songselect.ccli.com/Songs/7051507
- Blessing, Honour and Glory - Geoff Bullock songselect.ccli.com/Songs/1001179
- King of Kings - Hillsong songselect.ccli.com/Songs/7127647
- This Is Amazing Grace - Jeremy Riddle, Josh Farro, Phil Wickham songselect.ccli.com/Songs/6333821
- Because He Lives (Amen) - Matt Maher songselect.ccli.com/Songs/7027887
- Because He Lives - Bill & Gloria Gaither - SASB 219; Tune 570
- And Can It Be - Charles Wesley - SASB 241; Tune 436 or 445
- Jesus is Alive - Ron Kenoly songselect.ccli.com/Songs/550652
- He Lives - Thomas Kelly - SASB 229; Tune 415