

This Sunday's texts:  
Acts 2:42-47  
1 Peter 2:19-25  
John 10:1-10

**Resurrection Community**  
**Pastor Joe Hill**  
**April 30, 2023**

The Gospel reading is from John, chapter 10, verses 1 through 10:

“Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice.” Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what He was telling them. Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through Me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.”

This Is the Word of our Lord. Today, we're continuing our series this Easter season that we're calling “Resurrection Power.” It's about how the very same power that raised Jesus back from the dead is alive and working in the lives of those whose faith is in Him, the One who conquered death.

Through Jesus's resurrection, the people of God are given new life and made into a new type of community. The resurrection doesn't just give individuals their golden ticket to heaven. It creates a new kind of community, like Anna-Marie said, “a community of people called the Church.” That's you and I. A community where the new life that comes from the resurrection of Jesus is on full display. It's lived in its fullness today, tomorrow, and for all of eternity, to the glory and praise of God.

Now, as I get started today, I want to share with you one of my favorite verses from the Bible, from the Old Testament actually. It's a verse that I love because it is simple and yet packed with so much wisdom. If I'm going to be honest, it sticks in my head because it kind of cuts like a knife. It shapes the way I think and live and the way I look at the world. It's Proverbs 16:25 and it says this, “There is a way that seems right, but in the end it leads to death.” Let that sink in

for a second. "There's a way that seems right, but in the end, it leads to death." I know that there are people among us here today who know this truth all too well. You followed the ways in this life that seemed right to you and you found out where they led.

We live in a world that makes so much of living the way that seems right to us, but doesn't think all that much about where it ultimately leads. We hear statements like this: "Follow your truth," "Do what makes you happy." Now I'm not going to speak for anyone else here right now, but I will say that, speaking on my own behalf, I am a horrible judge of what makes me happy. I am really good, perhaps even a professional, at instant gratification, but lasting contentment - not so much.

When I was in college, I took out my first car loan. Before that, I had a car that I loved, a 1996 Jeep Grand Cherokee, V8, 250-horsepower, 23-gallon tank of gas. I loved it ... until I started commuting to and from Scotts Valley for school and from Scotts Valley to Sunnyvale for work and then from Sunnyvale back to San Jose, 4 or 5 days a week. I started filling up that 23-gallon tank once every 5 or 6 days. I remember the first time I paid over \$100 for a tank of gas. I knew that my beloved Jeep needed to go. Made sense, right? So I bought a smaller, more economical car. I took out a loan for it and I loved that car ... for a bit. But long after the shine and excitement of a new car wore off and my wonderful, new car was just now my car, I was still left paying off the loan.

How many of us have had that experience in life? Not just with a car. We do what seems right, the thing that seems right in our own mind, the thing that seems like it's going to make us happy, and found out that long after the shine wore off, we were still left paying the price. "There's a way that seems right, but in the end it leads to death."

But Jesus flips the script. He says this. He says, "The thief comes to steal and kill and destroy; I came that you would have life and have it to the full." He says that there's a way of life; there's a worldview that takes and it takes and it takes; it never gives and it's never satisfied and all it does, in the end, is lead to death. But there is another way. "I came that you would have life and have it to the full."

I want you to think about this question for a second this morning. What if the life of obedience to Jesus really is the best way to live? What if the life of obedience to the way of Jesus really is the best way to live? Do you trust that when Jesus says something, it is a more blessed and fulfilling way to be obedient to it than disobedient?

I think that there are a lot of people in this world that think there is something deficient about the Christian life. That's the allure of sex, drugs, and rock and roll. Hell is a party and everyone's having a great time. And in heaven, everyone floats around on their cloud with their harp. I never thought playing harp was all that fun. I think that there are many Christians who aren't ready to say that aloud, but they kind of feel it. Maybe I'm missing out on something that might be better because I'm trying to be faithful to Christ. That you could enjoy your life more if you didn't have Jesus and the Bible looming over it. Wouldn't I be having more fun if I did whatever I felt like than saying no to some things? Wouldn't I be happier if I put myself first instead of others? Would my romantic life or my sex life be better if it didn't have the biblical sexual ethic looming over it? The questions that go through people's heads. There are so many ways that seem right.

But what if the teachings of Jesus, the way of life that Jesus lived and modeled for us and invites us into isn't just a list of rules and laws and commands, where he says "do this or else," but rather it was an invitation away from "a way that seems right, but leads to death" and towards the way of abundant life, "life to the full?" Jesus extends that invitation and that gift of true life to all, of new life, abundant life, and eternal life, that is life in all its fullness, to those who put their faith and trust in Him. This abundance, this life isn't something that we live on our own power, but rather, as we trust in Christ and surrender ourselves to Him, the very same power that raised Jesus from the dead works in our lives to bring those dead things back to life.

In today's text in Acts, we get a glimpse of what this abundant life looks like, as it takes hold and begins to spread on the day of Pentecost, as people turn away from their "ways that seem right," the ways that nailed Jesus to the cross, and embrace the Risen Christ.

On that day, Peter spoke powerfully about the resurrection of Jesus. Few things he said, "This man [Jesus] was handed over to you by God's deliberate foreknowledge; and you ... put Him to death by nailing Him to the cross. But God *raised him from the dead*" Or acts 2:32, "God raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses to it." Peter preached the resurrection of Christ, in the display of power of the Holy Spirit on that day in the proclamation of the Good News of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, took the number of followers of Jesus from about 120, as it says in Acts 1:15, to, it says in Acts 2:41, "three thousand were added to their number that day." Talk about explosive growth!

Rather than these new three thousand believers going out with their newfound faith to live their own personal spiritual life in privacy and isolation, something incredible happens. We have this text we read today, a description of what happened when those three thousand one hundred twenty believers began to live out their abundant life of faith in Christ ... together. They do it in community. You see, this was a diverse multicultural group of people from all around the Roman Empire, speaking different languages. In Acts, it actually says that they are from fifteen distinct cultures and geographical locations. Yet they have gathered together to celebrate the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem where they hear the preaching of the resurrection of Jesus. On that day, God takes this diverse group of people and begins to knit it together into a community that is made one in the Risen Christ.

Now I want to give you a disclaimer right now. I don't normally preach from movies or TV shows. I prefer to preach from the Bible, but today, I'm actually going to make an exception. So bear with me. Who is this? The Lone Ranger. For all you young whippersnappers here today who might not recognize this, *The Lone Ranger* is a classic TV show and for those of you who don't know, he's an old western-style hero, riding on his horse, Silver as he fought for justice in the Wild West. And who was the Lone Ranger's sidekick? Tonto. Listen to that. Even the Lone Ranger did not do it alone.



That preaches, doesn't it? You see we were created for community. Even in the rugged individualism of an idealized Western TV show, the truth of Genesis 2:18 rings true. "It is not good for man to be alone." We were created for community, for relationship with one another. Yet, ever since the Garden of Eden, and in the whole of the story of Scripture, we see it over and over again. Sin breaks and damages relationships. It sows animosity and division, and the wage of sin which is death reigned in our relationships with God and our relationships with one another.

Adam and Eve saw that "there was a way that seemed right, but it led to death" and from that first sin where Adam and Eve began to point the finger at one another - it was her fault; no, it was his fault - and in every story you see in the Scriptures until the coming of Christ, we see the fruit of sin in the relationships that we have with God and others. Yet in Jesus Christ, we have hope

because, while the wage of sin is death, Easter reminds us that we have a Lord and Savior who conquered death, that sin and death do not reign in the lives of those whose faith is in Christ. Because Jesus lives, so do we. Because Jesus rose from the dead, we have new life and victory through him.

That's why I have hope for today because we live in a world that ... I'm going to be honest. Sometimes I look at the world around me and it is easy to feel hopeless. It's easy to feel like things are so far gone. What could any of us ever do? I suspect that's a very similar feeling that the disciples felt as they stared at their lord hanging on a cross and thought at that moment that was the end. Yet I have hope because if Jesus is risen from the dead, then that means that sin and death do not have the last word. They do not have the last word in our relationships with one another and they do not have the last word in our relationship with God.

So in this world that we live in that is crying out for community, where we gather together in community groups around things like sports teams or politics, God offers us through Jesus Christ our relationship that is centered on something that truly matters, that truly lasts, and that truly gives life. The resurrection of Christ shows that sin does not need to reign in our relationships and as the resurrection power of Christ works in and through us, it unites us by the love of God and for his purpose. We have been freely forgiven, so freely we can forgive. We have been loved while we were still enemies of God, so we can love our enemies. We can take care of each other because we know that He takes care of us. We can live as a different kind of community in this world, shining like a light in the darkness, like a city on a hill, in a world that is desperate for a real and meaningful and lasting experience of community, a family of belonging.

The Resurrection life, the abundant life that is ours in Christ, it's lived together. There is no Lone Ranger spirituality in the Bible. We don't do it on our own and as our sins are forgiven and we are filled with the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, God doesn't just reconcile us with Him. He unites us together as a community that lives in the freedom of His grace and in the power of His resurrection.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, You are good. You are loving and You have conquered death. So Lord, may we be a people who cling in faith and trust to the resurrection of Jesus Christ and know that there is no challenge, no hardship, no evil in this world that you cannot conquer and are not conquering in and through us by Your power today. So, Lord, we trust You. Lead us and guide us with Your Word so that we might not just be hearers of the Word, but doers of it and see in

the obedience to Your Word a way of abundant life that isn't just about temporary pleasure and instant gratification, but about true and lasting contentment and new abundant and eternal life. In Jesus' name. Amen.