

## Be Alive

*“Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.”* (John 14:19)

Nowadays, there’s a lot of talk about death. The coronavirus has put the focus on death for more than three months now. This is Easter and we're going to be talking about Resurrection, about new life, but in order to have a resurrection... something has to happen first. What has to happen in order for resurrection to occur? That's right - death. There I go...I’m talking about death, too. Jerry Seinfeld once said, "According to most studies, people's No. 1 fear is public speaking. No. 2 is death. So, to the average person, if you have to go to a funeral, you're better off in the casket than doing the eulogy."

A lot of people may joke about death. But there comes a time when death is not a laughing matter. When death threatens someone you love, or when it threatens you... nobody laughs. That's because death can be a scary thing. In fact Hebrews 2:15 tells about people "... who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death."

You see, when God created us, he didn’t intend for us to die. To die is not normal. It's not the way things should be. But we will all die... and unless we have the hope of the resurrection, death can be devastating.

The problem is, unless Jesus comes first, you and I will ALL die. In fact, I read once that a study was made and the results found that 10 out of every 10 people will die.

Death is a reality. And death is scary. But it is scary only for those who don’t know what’s going to happen when they die. You see, when most people think of the grave, they think of it as a wall. They believe death is final and they'll never get beyond that wall.

Once they're in the grave they believe that is where they will stay. But Scripture declares that the grave has a back door, and when Jesus comes again... that door is gonna open, and Christians will rise from the grave to be with Jesus forever.

In fact, when Jesus comes back Christians will not be the only ones to rise from the dead. Everybody's going to rise. Revelation 20:13 and 15 talks about the final judgment: "And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done... and if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

That's pretty scary!!! And some people fear death because they know they've not lived a very nice life, and they're pretty sure the afterlife will not be a pleasant experience.

But Jesus says that death doesn't have the final say. We don't have to fear death because Jesus defeated death. In fact, this is what Paul says about what Jesus has done for us, "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Before Jesus went to the cross, he told his disciples, "Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live." (John 14:19) And that's why I've entitled this message, "Be Alive." We're concluding our 4-part series on "Standing Strong".

In this message, I want you to know that the life you live now is not what God purposed you to have when he created you. There's a better life ahead of you. There's a new life that God has prepared for you. This was God's design for mankind since the beginning. It's just that our first parents, Adam and Eve, messed up and all of us have messed since then.

Then God came as a human being, in the person of Jesus, to rescue us. The sinless one died for all of us sinners to forgive our sins. All we need to do is to recognize that we truly are sinners deserving of death and that Jesus died the death that we deserve.

Last Friday, we remembered the death of Jesus on the cross. And today, we are remembering his resurrection and his victory over sin and death.

So, Jesus is alive and we too can be alive. In this message, I'd like to show how this new life in Jesus looks like. And later on, you can decide whether you'd like to have this new life, too.

So, **how does this new life in Jesus look like?** Let me share with you three things about it.

### **1. IT'S A LIFE FILLED WITH MEANING.**

The greatest tragedy in life is not death. It's to go through your entire life without knowing your purpose. Unfortunately, most people go through life never knowing their purpose, never knowing why God put them on earth.

A lot of people confuse a busy life with a meaningful life. They are not the same. Having a full schedule is not the same thing as having a fulfilled life. You need meaning. So, we search for meaning in all kinds of different ways. We think, "If I just get more possessions then that will add meaning to my life." Or "If I accomplish certain things then my life will have meaning. So, we search for meaning through all kinds of things – through hobbies or sports or travel, through relationships, through food. These are all good things. There's nothing wrong with these things. It's just they don't last. And when the experience is over, where do you get your meaning in those down times? You need something that gives you constant meaning, real meaning.

Where do you get that? There's only one place. From the God who created you. You see, he made you for a purpose.

And until you understand you were made by God and for God, life's not going to make any sense. And until you understand the purpose He put you on earth for, you can't find true meaning in life. The Bible says, "Because Jesus was raised from the dead [that's what Easter is all about] we've been given a brand new life. We have everything to live for including a future in heaven and that future starts now." (1 Peter 1:3-4 CEV) This is a very, very important verse in the Bible. I want to point out a couple of things from this verse.

First notice that this new life is somehow connected to what Jesus Christ did at Easter. Somehow His coming back to life enables me to live a new life. The second thing to notice is this new life is better than your old life. It's a whole new deal. It's brand new. Have you heard of the word Mulligan? It's a golf term. It means when you take your first shot and it's such a stinking shot – it hits the tree and bounces off your partner's head – that they give you a second shot. This shot is free and they don't count the first one against you.

Jesus Christ wants to give you a Mulligan for your life. He says, "You know all those stupid things you've done in the past and you regret and wish you had done differently? Dumb decisions, bad mistakes, sins, faults, failures, whatever you want to call them. Let's just erase those and start over. I'll just say let's begin a brand new life for you." So, no more guilty conscience. Start over.

You say, "That sounds pretty good. How do I get it?" You don't earn it. You can't work for the new life. In fact, it says in that verse, "We've been GIVEN a brand new life." It's a gift. You don't earn it.

I read in the papers about a wealthy businessman who committed suicide. That's always tragic when somebody takes their life. We ask, "Why? Why did they do that?" I'm sure the loved ones of this man were saying, "He had so much to live for!" Evidently not.

There's a big difference between having something to live for and having something to live on. He had a lot to live on. He was quite wealthy. But he had nothing to live for. It doesn't matter how much you have to live on if you don't have anything to live for.

You see, you were not made to live for you. You were made to live for God. When you start living for God that's when you discover real happiness, real meaning, real significance, real purpose, real value to your life.

The Bible says this, "And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again." (2 Cor. 5:15)

Ken and C. J. are a wonderful Christian couple. They live in Bodega Bay, a little town north of San Francisco. They run a deli in a store up there. Bodega Bay has one homeless man, a town tramp named Garland. Garland dressed poorly and acted a little strange and slept in the city park. But being Christians, Ken and C.J. befriended Garland and offered him food and kind words. When their store was broken into everyone in town accused Garland. But Ken and C.J. knew it couldn't have been their friend. In fact, they prepared a very expensive gift basket for Garland and gave it to him. The next morning the police showed up with Garland, the expensive gift basket and certain they had caught the burglar of their store. Ken and C.J., to protect Garland from embarrassment said, "Oh, Garland! Thank you for bringing your basket back. We forgot to put some stuff in it we wanted to put in it. And by the way, here's the change I forgot to give you." And Ken made up a number \$38.67. In front of the police he opened the cash register and gave \$38.67 to this homeless guy. The police let Garland go without saying a word. A few mornings later, Garland died in the park in his sleep. Ken and C.J. were called to the attorney's office. They were told that Garland had made them the sole heir in his will. He wrote "The entire contents of my travel bag are entirely yours."

Inside the bag was a bag of birdseed, a Bible and a bankbook. The names on the savings account were Garland and Ken and C.J. The last entry in the savings account was the day before for \$38.67 bringing the balance to well over three million dollars. The bankbook had been used as a bookmark in the Bible. Garland had put it in the Bible in a unique place and the Bible lay open to Matthew 25:35 and the verse was underlined. "I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was alone and away from home and you invited me into your house. Jesus said, 'When you did it for the least of these My people, you also did it for Me.'" Garland had hidden wealth that nobody knew about.

When Jesus Christ hung on the cross with His arms outstretched almost nobody standing there at the base of that cross knew how wealthy He was. He was God. He was the creator of the universe and He owned everything. He owned the universe. He owned the world. He owned the people standing around the cross who were crucifying Him because He had made them. He owned the hill He was on. He even owned the wood and the nails they used to crucify Him.

Why did He do that? Jesus left heaven and gave up His eternal wealth to come to earth so we could live the new life. We become rich by His death. That's what the Bible says. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich." (2 Cor. 8:9) Paul was not talking here about money. He's talking about true wealth, not money. Jesus Christ could have saved Himself from the cross but then He could not have saved you. He gave up everything so you could have everything. He died so you could live forever. He said when you plug into Me I'll teach you your purpose and then your life will start to have real meaning.

This new life is not just a life filled with meaning...

## 2. It is a life freed by grace.

What does that mean? The Bible says, "...we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit." (Romans 7:6) It is saying that we are no longer under the law. Instead we're now under the grace of God. We're freed to live a new life but it comes by grace.

What is grace? Grace is when God gives you what you need, not what you deserve. Everything you have in your life is because of God's grace. Grace is God saying, I'm going to give you a second chance and a third and fifth and a hundredth chance. Grace is the road to freedom.

Does God love you? You may be unsure about that if you don't understand grace. Some of you were raised in a religious home. Some of you were raised in a very strict religion. Every religion in the world can be summarized in one of two words – "do" or "done". All the religions in the world basically say this, "Here's what you must do to get God to love you." Then they have their own different lists. One will say these things, another will say these things, a third will say it's a little bit of this and a little bit of that. If you do all these things then God will smile and say you're cool!

Jesus Christ came to earth to say "That's all wrong. That's not it. I'm not into religion. I want you to have a relationship with Me. And I've already done it all for you. You don't have to do anything. You just have to accept what I've already done on the cross." That's called grace.

There are two paths you can choose in life. One is to spend the rest of your life trying to earn God's approval by your effort, doing certain things. The other is to enjoy God's approval by accepting what Jesus Christ has already done for you. You just accept that gift.

The first way doesn't work. The Bible says you can't earn God's approval by things you do. In Hebrews it says, "The former regulation is set aside because it

was weak and useless (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.” (Hebrews 7:18-19)

When a TV series doesn't work what do they do with it? They cancel it. When a product doesn't work, what do they do? They recall it. They take it off the shelf. God canceled the idea of you trying to earn your own way into heaven because it doesn't work. Heaven is perfect and you're not. There's no way you're ever going to earn your way into heaven. You may as well forget that one. It doesn't work. There's only one way to get into heaven and there's only one way to get the new life.

The new life is a gift and it's a free gift. It's certainly not cheap. It's free but it's not cheap. Somebody had to pay for it. It was a very expensive gift. You know who paid for it? Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ paid for your salvation. He paid so you could live the new life. He paid for your freedom. The Bible says, “He gave His life to purchase freedom for everyone.” (1 Tim. 2:6 NLT)

That is exactly what Jesus Christ wants to do for you. He on the cross paid to buy your freedom so you're no longer a slave to guilt, to worry, to fear, to bitterness, to the pressures of the past, to the expectations of the future and all those other things. He paid to set you free.

There's a word for this that we don't hear about much any more. It's the word called “redemption”. To be redeemed means to have your freedom paid for. The reason we don't use this word is because it's a word that came out of the slave-trading years. In the slave-trading years people would intentionally buy slaves in order to set them free. Those people were called redeemers. They would redeem a slave. Someone would say, “Slavery is wrong. It's evil. This person deserves to be set free.” So they would buy that person's freedom and then let them go. They were redeemed.

Jesus Christ came to redeem you, to set you free from all things that keep you hung up, all the things that entrap you. He says, “I want to set you free from it and I want to give you a new life of real freedom.”

This new life is filled with meaning and it's freed by grace but it's also...

### 3. A Life Full of energy.

Do you ever get tired just thinking about all the stuff you have to do? Have you noticed that when you are low on energy little problems become big problems? Have you noticed that when you don't have a whole lot of patience because your energy level is low, the tiniest things just ticks you off?

You get this feeling because you're running on your own energy and your battery is about to go out. You were never meant to live on your own power. It's no wonder you're tired all the time. God meant for you to be plugged into His power, not go through life just living on your own energy.

God says “I will refresh the weary and satisfy the faint.” (Jer. 31:25) And then in Zechariah 4:6, he also says, “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit”. So, God wants you to plug into His power.

Here's the good news. The same power that He demonstrated when He raised Jesus Christ from the dead when He came back to life to prove He was God, that same power is available to you on a day by day basis.

You've got a choice. You can go through the rest of your life living the old life, disconnected from God's power or you can live the new life plugged into God's power. It's your choice.

Whichever one you choose you're still going to have problems. Because life is a series of problems. The difference is with God in your life, with Christ in your life you have energy that you didn't have on your own power.

He gives it to you on a day by day basis. The Bible says, “Even though on the outside it often looks like things are falling apart on us, on the inside, where

God is making new life, not a day goes by without His unfolding grace.” (2 Cor. 4:16 LB)

You may have come to Easter service today a little tired, a little worn out. You may be on the edge. You may have felt like giving up. Your marriage is broken. You lost your job or it’s on the line. Your health is failing. You feel alone and terrified. Or maybe you feel like giving up on your goals, your dreams, your ambitions.

Don’t do it. Don’t give up. Look up. Look up to God. Don’t give up, give in. Give in to Christ and say, “Christ, I’m going to start living for You and not for me.” He’ll give you new power and new energy to do the things that He put you on this earth to do. He’ll give it to you on a daily basis. Not a day goes by without His unfolding grace.

Has God been trying to get your attention? I think so. I think that’s why He brought you here to Fil-Am on Easter Sunday, 2020, so He could say to you, “The good life is not good enough. I want you to step up to the new life. The life you were intended to live from the beginning.”

You say, “It sounds good. How do I get it? How do I get this life of meaning and energy and purpose and freedom?” Again, you can’t earn it. You just accept it. It’s a gift. You have faith and you believe and you receive.

The Bible says “Everybody comes alive in Christ.” It’s in a relationship to Jesus that you get this new life. You don’t get it through religion or going to church. You get it through a relationship with God. In fact, Jesus said this in the book of John “I came so you can have real and eternal life, a better life than you ever dreamed of.” That’s why He came. Instead of feeling empty and enslaved and exhausted He says I want you to have meaning and freedom and energy.

This is what Easter is about. It’s not about crowds. It’s about personally getting to know God.

I'm going to close today with a prayer you can pray to begin the new and better life. It's like the prayer I prayed many years ago. I haven't always been a believer. Then, there was a day in my life when I said, The good life is not good enough. I want to start living the way God intended for me to live. I stepped across the line.

Please bow your heads and close your eyes. You don't have to pray this prayer aloud. God knows your heart. He knows the very thoughts you're thinking right now. In fact, He's seen every thought you've ever had. So you don't have to pray out loud. In fact, these words aren't magical or mystical or anything. It's really the attitude of your heart.

I would also like to pray for those who...