

Text: John 14.19

April 15/16, 2006

St Stephen's

Easter Weekend Sat PM/Sun AM

A Life Worth Living

DaVinci Code author Dan Brown says the death of Jesus and the resurrection of Jesus was a **hoax**. He says Jesus ran off with Mary Magdelene and founded a royal, secret family. Well, someone is spreading a hoax! You can find his book in the **fiction section** of any bookstore!

Take an **honest look** at the evidence and you will **think otherwise** than Dan Brown. The **Roman executioners** had done their jobs well. They were pros. A spear thrust into his heart made certain. His lifeless body had been placed in a **sealed and guarded grave**. Whatever else his disciples knew, they knew he was dead. And they knew dead people stay dead.

So the women came to **pay their respects** to a dead Jesus that morning...

They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. Luke 24:2-3

We are told that **an angel** talked to them, they were **amazed**, that they **fled** from the tomb, that they then **saw Jesus** himself, that they were **afraid**, that they **said nothing** at first to any one. They were astonished and stunned. They **ran**. And the men didn't believe either.

It would take something more to convince them all. Something more began to happen. Whatever else he was, Jesus did not seem to be dead anymore. On Easter day **he turned up** all over the place... **5** separate times **he appeared** on that Sunday to his disciples... in the garden, on the road, behind locked doors... the New Testament records **11 resurrection appearances** over a period of some 40 days. Hundreds of people saw him. Hundreds. And they told hundreds of their friends, and within weeks, thousands of people believed he was alive...

He **ate and drank** with them. He had **the scars** of his crucifixion on his hands and feet and side and invited them to touch him and put their fingers in his wounds. He **taught** them. He was certainly **no ghost**, no hoax, no wishful delusion of his broken-hearted followers! What was **unbelievable became undeniable**. The same Jesus who was dead and buried, was now risen and alive! Overwhelmed by the evidence, they were **utterly convinced**. **Are you?** This is important.

Once they knew he was raised, **these disciples were different**. These formerly half-hearted deserters who were cowering behind locked doors burst upon the Jewish and Roman worlds, met unbelief and opposition, hardship and deprivation, imprisonment and even brutal death with a peace and a conviction and a joy that people had never seen before. **Not even one of them broke down** under pressure. Dan Brown says the resurrection is a hoax. You gotta watch out for the hoaxes! **But would they do that for a hoax? Could they?**

But here is what troubles me. George Gallup's surveys tell us 85% - 90% of Americans are persuaded that Jesus was raised from the dead. But you **don't see a resurrection difference** in 85% - 90% of our lives. **Why? I think there are some more hoaxes going on, some real ones.** Let me explain, and let's start with the big idea...

The Resurrection Means Life

Jesus taught a great deal about life, about resurrection life. Actually he used the word to describe himself...

"I am... the life." John 14:6

"as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself." John 5:26

"I am the living one" Rev 1.18

If he had not been raised, no one would ever have remembered this kind of talk. But once he was raised, they began to think it through again. His life had always been **different** than any life they had ever known. He was **bursting with life**. (springtime).

- He was **always surprising people** with forgiveness and truth and grace and power and astounding miracles and healings and this uncanny sense of the presence of God
- And there was **the way he lived**. Simply. Joyfully. Father-focused. Servant hearted. Real freedom. And this immense peace, even in conflict. This enormous steadiness and strength.
- And his words! They had never heard anyone talk like him and teach like him. When he taught, God-things happened. He had talked about **rivers of living water** coming from him, and people who got near him **drank life!**

When the writers of the NT wrote of Jesus, their favorite word was **life**. John phrased it like this at the opening of his great Gospel...

“In him was life...” John 1.4

The author of Hebrews said Jesus had an *‘indestructible life’*...
The resurrection made this bluntly clear, as surprising as it was.

And here is the way he summed it all up in a great promise...

“Because I live, you also will live.” John 14:19

But **what does this mean?** Here’s the way we normally explain it. The resurrection proves the gospel is true. And the gospel means our **past can be forgiven** (because of his death) and our **future can be secured** (because of his resurrection). That is true. It is gospel. It is great news.

But **what about our ‘today’?** What about **my life** here and now? What does it mean for the weeks ahead? For my career, for my family, for my hopes and dreams and crises and challenges – for my normal day to day life on earth?

Well, to be honest, **we’re not sure**. **Here’s what most of us do**. We think, ‘I am **grateful** for my past forgiveness and my future hope, and I need to live my today’s by **staying inside his boundaries** for my life and **waiting** for the real life to come after I die.’ And so we just **drift along** in our today’s, often, to be honest, drifting **downstream** with the culture (did you notice which way our culture is drifting?), until we find that all of a sudden things are picking up speed and getting **dangerous** – and we find ourselves swept over a waterfall, crashed on the rocks below. And we look at the wreckage and we ask, **‘What happened?’**

Well - It has to do with **thinking the gospel is about our past and our future, but not our ‘today’**. Not about ‘my life’ the way I normally live it. Every day. Who I am and what I do and where I go. Satan would love to swap your forgiveness for your past and hope for your future, if you will let him run your today’s. **Watch out for the hoaxes!** The resurrection is certainly about life, real life, your life - today.

Two quick Easter thoughts to guide you...

Eternal Life Starts Today

The idea that God has you on a storage shelf, forgiven and frozen, saved and stored, waiting for real life to start after you die - is not going to be found in the Bible. Satan would love you to believe that, but it is **not true**.

Listen to Jesus...

“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”

John 5:24

Did you get a good look at the **tense** of those verbs??? Eternal life starts at the moment you give your life to Jesus. Right here. Right now. In your present life. Your today. And it goes on forever.

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

1 Jn 5:13

Get a good look at the **tense** of that verb. This life is the **opening chapter** of your eternal life, with many, many chapters to come.

The **first chapter** is **essential**. **It is your todays**. In it, eternal life starts, and basic training is completed. The resurrection life he starts in your today won't stop, can't be broken and never ends. Old age, sickness and physical death are just a special part of our basic training. **It can not start in a chapter called tomorrow**. Only in the first chapter, called 'today'.

If you have come to Jesus for forgiveness for your past and hope for your future but you **haven't given him your todays**, you haven't come to Jesus yet. You have no other life but the one you have today. To withhold our todays from Jesus is to exclude Jesus from our life.

Watch out for the hoaxes! Give him your todays!

Eternal Life Involves My Body

Sometimes we think our body has nothing to do with our faith. We don't know if our body is a **friend or a foe of our relationship with Jesus**. It can become so **confusing** that we figure that we just have to live with our twisted instincts and overpowering impulses and the wild ride our emotions will take us on - and we **just do whatever our bodies tell us to do**. While we say we are believers in Jesus. But that won't work! St Paul says it like this...

“The body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

1 Cor 6:13

Would you **say the words, ‘meant for the Lord’?** Your body has a God-given **meaning and purpose and destiny.** It is **‘meant’.** It is **created** by God for you as the **means by which you can act** for him and glorify him in his great universe.

When Jesus appeared to his disciples and invited them to look at his wounds and touch him...

Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.”

Luke 24:39-40

...he was showing them **the shape of eternity.** He was making it plain that his resurrected body was the **same body** that died. And that our bodies, our same bodies, are meant for eternity with Jesus. **You think, ‘Rats – I was hoping for an upgrade!!! Well, an upgrade is coming.** Graduation Day is just ahead. But it is **your body** that will be upgraded, healed, raised, transformed... And your existence in eternity will be a **bodily existence.** You have no other existence. And today is chapter one of that long, remarkable life. Do you want to see the shape of eternity in front of you? Look at the resurrected Jesus. Look at his life. Look at his body.

God wants your body. Forever. Would you give it to him?

Bill Burnett was the Archbishop of Capetown. He was a religious man who loved to do good works, but who didn't have a personal relationship with Jesus, and had **never given him his life, and his today's, and his body.** He once preached on Romans 5.5 *“for the love of God has been poured into us by his Holy Spirit.”* After services he went home and poured himself a drink and began to relax. But he couldn't relax. It seemed as though God was asking him to pray. So he started to pray, and he heard God say something to him... (tall and weak man) *“I want your body”* “I'm not exactly Mr. Universe... why do you want my body?” But he said to God, “You can have everything.” Then he fell to the floor and said he felt “electric shocks of love” coursing through his body. “What I had preached about in the morning happened to me.” The Lord said to him, *“You are my son, my adopted son.”* He used to be full of anger, but now he was full of love. People came from all over the world to hear him.

If you have come to Jesus for forgiveness for your past and hope for your future but you **haven't given him your body**, you haven't come to Jesus yet. You have no other life but a bodily life. You never will. Don't let your body **lie to you** or take over your life or run your life. **Watch out for the hoaxes!**

Your body is meant to be a servant of the Lord, into ages to come. Basic training happens in Chapter one, titled 'Today'.

Your body can be a **friend of your faith in Jesus**. But you must give it to him, as **the place of his dwelling**. And he will dwell within you with his resurrected life. The Archbp found that out. Got a taste of graduation day!