



## Life Group Sermon Notes

### "Imagine"

Ps. James Lowe - March 27, 2016

#### Warm Up (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. No right or wrong answers.

- Did your family have any Easter traditions when you grew up? If so, what were they? If you grew up with a different faith, what religious holiday was special for you?
- What is your favorite food to eat at Easter (or at another religious holiday)?
- If you could get a new article of clothing (a common Easter tradition) for free regardless of cost, what would you like to pick out?

#### Word (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at [www.bethelworld.org](http://www.bethelworld.org)

Shortly before Jesus entered Jerusalem and was crucified, he was contacted by his friends at Bethany with the request to come and heal his friend, Lazarus, who was very ill. Instead, Jesus delayed and Lazarus died. Jesus showed up a few days later and Lazarus' sister, Martha, complained to Jesus about his delay and appealed to him in hope that he would yet raise her brother from the dead. Jesus responded to her by revealing more about his identity and the purpose of his coming into the world. He had delayed his arrival at Bethany on purpose in order to reveal his power, purpose and glory.

John 11:25-27 (ESV) *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."*

Jesus went on to raise Lazarus from the dead as a sign confirming his own identity as the Son of God and his own impending resurrection. This would follow upon his crucifixion, to which he voluntarily submitted. He chose to serve as humanity's representative, standing in our place, taking our sins and being punished for them. Yet because of his sinless life, he was free from the legal power of death (which is the just punishment for sin) and hence was able to rise from the dead according to God the Father's decree.

The apostle Paul wrote about the importance of Jesus' resurrection as he addressed the convoluted beliefs of some members of the Corinthian church, who were influenced by Ancient Greek philosophy. Some of these members denied Jesus' physical, bodily resurrection. Instead, they likely only believed that Jesus had risen spiritually, meaning that his soul had gone to heaven. But Paul was adamant that Jesus had risen physically in a resurrected, glorified body, since he had been seen and interacted with in his resurrected body by many people over a period of many days before ascending to heaven. Furthermore, Paul argues, Jesus' resurrection is a forerunner, guaranteeing the resurrection to immortality of everyone who belongs to him. His death for our sins has made possible our forgiveness, since our sins do not need

to be punished twice. His resurrection is proof that God accepted his payment on our behalf. All of this belongs to everyone who calls on Jesus in faith and who turns to acknowledge him as Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:1-6 (ESV) *Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.*

1 Corinthians 15: 12-19 (ESV) *Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.*

1 Corinthians 15:20, 34 (ESV) *But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep... Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.*

1 Corinthians 15:51-58 (ESV) *Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*

When a person knows and trusts in Jesus's sinless life, his substitutionary death, and his resurrection, she or he can have confidence in God's forgiveness, hope for immortality beyond death, and courage to live boldly for God and do good in this present life in spite of troubles, opposition, and even suffering.

For further reading, see Dr. Rice Broocks' books: *God's Not Dead* and *Man, Myth, Messiah*.

### **Discussion (10-15 minutes)**

**Choose an item below to discuss, or introduce another related point for discussion.**

- Do you believe Jesus rose physically from the dead? Why, or why not?
- What are the implications for your life if the Gospels are true? What does God require of us?
- Think about and discuss the hope of God's promise to physically resurrect all who trust in Jesus and seek to live for God, and to grant them everlasting life with Jesus forever in a renewed creation.

### **Prayer (10-15 minutes)**

**Pray for any of the following, as well as any other requests you may have.**

- Pray and ask God to strengthen your confidence in Jesus' resurrection and your hope in your own future resurrection to immortal life.
- Pray that God will help you learn more about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. (Consider getting copies of Dr. Rice Broocks' books, *God's Not Dead* and *Man, Myth, Messiah*.)
- Pray that God's Spirit will help you talk effectively with others about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and his significance for their lives.