

Easter 2017 – Jesus has destroyed death

2 Timothy 1:10

“but [this grace] has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”

3-0 defeat of Arsenal by Crystal Palace

Telegraph article

“How Arsenal were **destroyed** by Crystal Palace and why Danny Welbeck should not play up front”

A strong word. Destroyed.

Beyoncé **destroyed** the show (VMAs 2016)

Used quite flexibly these days

You may say after hearing this message today...

“He destroyed that sermon...”

And you may mean one of two things!

Paul writing to Timothy, a young leader he loves like a son.

Sees huge potential in the young man – there is just one problem – he is susceptible to fear and timidity.

When trouble comes along and he faces doubts and fears – he finds himself spiralling down into a spiritual slump.

Timidity is Timothy's Achilles heel...

2 Tim 1:7

God did not give us a spirit of timidity – but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

Faltering faith and fear is a reality for many....

How many of us live with inordinate levels of fear and timidity in our lives?

Paul loves Timothy and writes one of the most impactful verses just a couple of verses after this one...

2 Tim 1:10

Jesus Christ “has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel”

Think about the most intimidating enemy our world has ever known.

What enemy ultimately wins every time?

The answer is Death

Death defeats everyone sooner or later – the rich and the powerful, the poor and the marginalised

Paul writes to Timothy – and the message comes to us...

“The one you follow - the One who knows and loves you - the One whose strong hand is holding your hand

Jesus Christ, God's son

...destroyed death...broke its back...He abolished its power

On resurrection day – he demonstrated sovereign transcendent power – the risen Christ is holding your hand now

Enough timidity

Jesus has destroyed a far bigger foe than whatever you are facing today

The one I follow has destroyed death!

Death of neighbour Pat

Snow - White - Black coroner's van

But we know, when that day comes for us - that death is not the end for us.

The Bible says that what awaits us is beyond the human capability to describe or grasp or understand...

A reality so stunning that...

“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” (1 Cor 2:9)

The one I follow has destroyed a far larger foe than any opposition I face today. Whenever I am on the edge of timidity - I hold the hand of one who has defeated a far larger foe...

Jesus not only destroyed death...

“he brought life and immortality to light...”

Life...

Does the Christian faith offer anything for our daily life this side of heaven?

Does it offer anything beyond death benefits?

Christian philosopher Dallas Willard once said that we often focus on the cost of discipleship...but there are also great benefits.

Theologian and mentor to Pastor Bill Hybels, Gilbert Bilezekian, states:

He would choose the teaching and life of the Christian faith even without the death benefits – actual way of life superior to any alternative.

Bill Hybels

“Christianity is not simply the best way to die, it is the best way to live”

Based on three words:

Relationship

Community

Purpose

1) Relationship

Not a religion, not rules or rituals

In its absolute essence – Christianity is a personal ongoing connection with the living God. A relationship in real time - with dialogue between you and the living God

Not the worship of inanimate objects – idols

Will they love you, encourage you....?

In its essence – an unfolding relationship with the God whose love for you knows no limits

You don't have to wait for heaven

2) Community

Not a solo sport. Not individualistic in its practice

Community

Knowing and being known

Loving and being loved

Serving and being served

Celebrating and being celebrated

3) Purpose

Purpose. Not money. Not work. Money never a grand enough purpose for your one and only life.

Pleasure and power, fame and achievement not grand enough purposes...

The reason for which God gave me life in the first place.

FILM:ALPHA STORY OF DANNY

The feeling that you are in step with God's purpose for your life is one of life's greatest thrills...

Simply the best way to live your one and only life...

But there is a death benefit

He brought immortality

Everyone senses how absurd and meaningless our lives would be if our candles simply went out after we died.

Without life after the grave, life before the grave makes no sense.

No reward for good, no punishment for evil.

Everyone will experience a conscious life beyond the grave

Heaven and hell

Through the gospel

Good news

There is an open invitation to any and all who would like to enter into a relationship with the living God

The entrance requirement is mercy-based not merit-based

Utterly unique to Christianity

Not merit badges for a pay-off

Christianity teaches that no-one can earn enough merit badges

God sent Christ to atone for our wrongdoings

Entrance is free of charge because of his great mercy

One verse [Titus 3:5](#)

“he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy”

Not by works of righteousness

Not by striving

Not by merit badges

But according to God's mercy

Mercy

Jesus story of two men

God I thank you I am not like other men

(merit badges – earned his way)

Second guy

Will you have mercy on me – I know I am a wrongdoer, a sinner
Throws himself on the mercy of God

The second guy was reconciled and justified before God
Obvious question:

Are you aligned with God's mercy-based programme or are you
still on the merit badge programme?

Have you abandoned your merit badge programme?

When did you put your life onto the mercy of God

A very personal thing – personally ask him, personally receive his
mercy – have his work applied to your sin

May I never lose the wonder of your mercy

His mercies are new every morning

Surely goodness and mercy will follow me every day of my life

VIDEO:ALPHA INVITATION

Because he lives

I am alive I am alive because he lives

Because he lives

I was dead in the grave

I was covered in sin and shame

I heard mercy call my name

Community group questions and discussion points

1. Paul was encouraging Timothy – reminding him that we do not have a spirit of fear/timidity. We serve the risen Jesus who has destroyed death. How might a fresh vision of the risen Jesus and his power over death help you in your fight against fear and timidity? (If Jesus can overcome death he can overcome anything)
2. Beyond the “death benefits” of Jesus saving us, there are also “life benefits”. (Bill Hybels “Christianity is not simply the best way to die, it is the best way to live”) The first is a relationship in real time with the living God. How can we renew and refresh our relationship with Jesus? Where are we stuck on religion and ritual? How can we experience afresh the resurrection life of Jesus?
3. The second “life benefit” is community. What are some of the benefits and positive things that you experience in community group? What are some of the “community” benefits of being a Christ-follower?
4. The third “life benefit” is a sense of purpose. Money, fame or power are not grand enough purposes for living your one and only life on earth. Why has Jesus saved us? What is our purpose on earth? How might we renew this sense of purpose and vision for our personal life and following after Jesus?
5. Consider together Titus 3:5. Jesus saved us not because of righteous things we have done, but because of his mercy. How can you make sure you are like the man that called out for mercy, rather than the one that thanked God he was better than others. In what areas of our life are we relying on our merit badges and where do we need to experience afresh the mercy of God?
6. As we look back at the Easter weekend, the Bible reminds us that the same power that raised Christ from the dead is at work in us. Where do you need to experience resurrection power in your life? Maybe share as a group specific areas for prayer – prayer that Christ's renewal and resurrection will come to you in your areas of struggle and need and failure.