

Further Up and Further In

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 January 2026

Preacher: John Hopkins

[0:00] So it's a little bit hard to believe, but this message today and then our message next Sunday ends our journey through the book of Mark.

! It's been over a year. I got to be part of it since early May, all the way to the present, and then we'll be on to new things. But I hope that you have learned as much from the book of Mark as I have.

That you've seen just how profound Jesus' life was and how rich Mark's gospel is. All that he included there.

I know that in my studies and preparing for messages week after week, I've come to an entirely new and deeper appreciation for what Mark wrote in his gospel. It really raised my level of respect for him as a biblical author, which probably says more about me than it does about Mark.

So last week, we talked about Jesus' crucifixion. And I hope you remember, there was just a simple phrase that I wanted you to remember.

[1:10] And that was that he chose to endure all that suffering for me. For you. He chose it. It was a deliberate act knowing that he was going to the cross.

Nothing says love more than that. To choose the hard path for somebody that you love. And that's what Jesus did. And we read through that list of things that he suffered. For us.

Culminating in his death on the cross, which was excruciating. And then his burial. But you know, if we leave him there, he just died the death of a martyr.

And it doesn't do us a whole lot of good. But the good news is that the story doesn't end there. It ends in the resurrection. Which we're going to look at this morning in the last chapter of Mark.

So open your Bibles to Mark chapter 16 and Philippians chapter 3. Those are going to be our two primary passages this morning. Mark chapter 16 and Philippians chapter 3.

[2:17] Now last week, as we were moving into an understanding of why Jesus died on the cross, I gave you the three basic premises that we were standing upon.

The assumptions that we brought to our consideration of what Jesus endured on the cross. The first of those assumptions was that God's wrath is justified.

He wasn't one of the Greek gods who was just a bigger, scarier version of a man. No, he is the God of all things. Perfect in justice. Perfect, morally perfect.

Holy. Like it says in the Old Testament, Holy, holy, holy. Repeated three times. To really emphasize the fact that he is transcendent. He is perfect. He is pure.

And his wrath at sin, and at us, as the perpetrators of sin, was entirely justified. Then the second premise that we looked at was that all have sinned.

[3:18] There's no exception. Paul wrote that in Philippians... Excuse me, he did write Philippians, but he said in Romans, Romans 3.23, For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Every one of us.

Nobody gets a pass. God is so pure that no sin is allowed in his presence. None. And so we're all under condemnation, without exception.

So God's wrath is justified. We have all sinned, so there's nobody safe. And to dig the hole a little bit deeper, there's nothing we can do to save ourselves.

Because our hands are dirty. We can't possibly make things right with a holy God in and of ourselves. We couldn't do that. But God, in his great love, while we were still sinners, sent his son.

While we were dead, actually. It says in Ephesians 2, God sent his son. Because Jesus is without sin.

[4 : 32] Fully God, fully man, Jesus lived a pure and holy life, and then took our place to die on the cross. We talked about a big word, a big theological word, substitutionary atonement.

substitutionary atonement. Substitutionary atonement is the idea that a substitute goes in our place to atone or to make right where we had sinned, where we were not acceptable to God.

So Jesus went and did what we could not do. He took the full measure of the wrath of God. And he atoned for our sin.

And we unpacked that with three words. And remember, all of this was for you and for me. We unpacked it in three words.

One was redemption. We sang about that in the first hymn this morning. that the price that we had to pay for our sin, which was a price we couldn't possibly afford, was paid for by Jesus Christ.

[5 : 47] That cost was paid. It's done. That's redemption. Another word that the Bible uses for Jesus is propitiation.

A propitiation is a sacrifice that satisfies the wrath of God. God's anger at us was justified. That wrath had to go somewhere.

And instead of going on us, it was visited on His Son. And how do we know that it was? In Jesus' phrase on the cross, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

For the only time in all of eternity, the Trinity was broken. God the Father turned His back on His Son because His Son had taken upon Himself all of our sin.

I can't even imagine what that must have been like for Jesus. So Jesus paid the price, redemption. He accepted the wrath of God and satisfied it, propitiation.

[6 : 56] And then the last is reconciliation. reconciliation. reconciliation. We are restored back in a relationship with God. So this isn't just a one and done deal where we're just made clean and then we're left to go to our own devices.

No, it's way better than that. We're actually reconciled to God. While we were enemies, Christ died. And then the reconciliation took place.

That's in 2 Corinthians chapter 5. where the relationship between us and God is restored. Picture the scene in the Garden of Eden before Adam fell.

It says that God was in the habit of walking with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day in the garden. Adam and Eve had a job to do. They had to take care of that garden.

They had to cultivate it. They had to see that it would thrive. And I believe that what happened during that time was that Adam and Eve and God walked through the garden and problem solved and planned and talked about what can we do to make this garden everything that you, God, designed it to be.

[8 : 08] Now God knew the answers. But his pleasure was in walking with this son, Adam, that he had created in his own image to work together as partners to make this garden thrive.

It's not unlike many of us as dads have taken our kids fishing or taken a kid to work with us or done something to show this is what I do as a man. Let me teach you.

Or we teach them how to play sports. Now we could do it better than they could because we're adults. But the joy is in the relationship and watching our child grow and become all that they could become.

We are restored to that relationship with God through Jesus' death and the cross. We're reconciled to God. That is our greatest hope.

Not just in the future when we face a final judgment when we die and we learn heaven or hell. The gospel is good news for right now for today and the reason it's good news for today is because of that word reconciliation.

[9 : 16] We are brought back into relationship with God which opens the door for a fourth premise about why the gospel matters.

God's wrath is justified premise number one. We have all sinned premise number two. There's nothing we can do premise number three. That all has to do with sin.

Now premise number four ties up directly to the resurrection of Jesus. The fourth premise about us is that we're finite. We're not as smart as we think we are.

We're not as strong as we think we are. We're not adequate. We're not enough for all the demands of life. And I don't think that's something that has developed since the fall of man. Since Adam and Eve took the fruit from the tree.

That's always been a problem. That was Adam's problem before the fall. I don't know how to make these plants thrive. I don't know how to keep balance between the different needs of the plants and the animals in the garden.

[10 : 17] God I need your help because I'm not smart enough. I don't have the physical strength to do what needs to be done. And God says let me walk with you and together we'll figure it out. Because I love you Adam.

And now that's what God is saying to us. I know you're not adequate for the demands of your life. but we've been reconciled.

You and I have access to talk to God about the things that are difficult in life. I'm going to give you an example then we're going to turn to the resurrection because all of this hinges on the resurrection. So some of you know well many of us have had illness going through the house whether it's I don't know all kinds of stuff.

Flu, cold, respiratory stuff. That's certainly true in our house. Well my youngest grandson has displayed a tendency to get what are called febrile seizures where when his fever spikes he goes into a seizure and it's really scary.

So Friday night he had a febrile seizure and we got an ambulance to come to the house and Kayla and Jesse went to the hospital they're there now. And it's scary because you feel powerless.

[11 : 30] You're seeing this little boy who's shaking and you don't know how to stop it. You don't know if there's greater damage happening. You just don't know. And then I was at the hospital last night because it looked like he had another set of seizures when he went back home on Saturday and we're talking to a pediatrician.

This is a well-educated man. He's got all the credentials and yet the theme of our conversation was I really don't know. We'll keep him for observation.

We'll watch and see what he does overnight. We'll see what happens if he spikes a fever. We'll do brain scans. We'll look. But we really don't know. For all of the amazing wonders that we have here in the 21st century some things haven't changed.

Most things haven't changed. We just don't know. We're not enough. And so that leads us down one of two paths that could lead to despair.

What's going on with Jesse? All of us have got questions that are just like that in our lives. What the heck is going on? I don't understand. I don't have clear answers. I want clarity and I don't have it.

[12:47] That path leads to despair. Or it leads to hope. And that hope comes through the work of Jesus on the cross and then the resurrection which is a key piece.

So let's pray together and then we're going to go into Mark 16 and look at why the resurrection leads me with my grandson and the other questions in my life toward hope and not toward despair.

So let's pray together. God, thank you that our hope is built on nothing less than your love and righteousness. That we stand solidly on that rock.

That none of it depends upon us. It doesn't depend upon our ability to clean ourselves up. It doesn't depend upon our ability to be strong enough or smart enough or wise enough or to be enough or anything.

But we stand on your shoulders. We stand secure because you love us. And God, as we look at the resurrection, as we see what the resurrection means for us, that God, we would be filled with hope.

[13:54] That we would turn away from despair and instead turn toward the absolute certainty that we are held firmly and safely in your hands.

Let that hope be our guiding light every minute of every day. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. So, Mark chapter 16, we're going to read the first 12 verses, excuse me, first 8 verses.

Before we do, there's a difficult topic, as if what I've talked about isn't difficult enough, that I want to address right out of the gate.

There is a problem with Mark chapter 16. The first 8 verses are clearly well-documented the words of Mark. book. But then as you go to verse 9, to the end of the chapter, verse 20, the manuscript evidence, so the number of manuscripts that have been written that carry those verses gets less and less and less.

Our confidence that those verses belong in the Bible drops. And then as you read them, just for the content, there's just some odd content in there. Like believers handling snakes.

[15:12] And doing these odd things that don't find support elsewhere in the Bible. And then verse 20, everything about verse 20 is different than Mark's writing style through the rest of the book.

The other 16 chapters and 19 verses, and so there's just this lack of confidence in those last verses. So, if you look at your Bibles, it's probably either italicized or it's got brackets around it as we're not sure about this passage.

Now what do we do with that as Christians? Should that be allowed to undermine our confidence in the entire book? Because these several verses don't have the support that the rest does?

No, it should not. And I'll tell you why. Why? First of all, is that the evidence for the scope of the Bible from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation is irrefutable.

From archaeology to science to history to even the unity within the book itself, we can be absolutely confident that this book has one author working through a whole multitude of people that he was working with, God, the Holy Spirit, was working through the human authors of the Bible to convey his word to us.

[16:38] We can absolutely depend upon this. This book is valid. It is our bedrock. It is what gives us an understanding of what life is, of how we can have a relationship with God, and how God expects us to live.

Our entire civilization rests on this book. We can have absolute confidence. Now these verses, 9 through 20, my caution would be take them with a grain of salt.

Where there's things that are isolated only to this passage, don't make that your practice. So for instance, these signs will accompany those who have believed in my name they will cast out demons, they will speak in new tongues, they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison it will not hurt them and they will lay hands on the sick and they will recover.

Don't make that the central part of your life. Focus on the things that we know are true about what it means to live in this new life in Christ which we're going to talk about today.

Does that make sense? There's that one section of the Bible that's kind of, we're not sure about that. But beyond that, what we have here?

[18:04] Absolute confidence. I'd stake my life on it. No matter of speaking, I have. And you can too. So let's look at verses 1 through 8, Mark chapter 16.

So if you remember, Jesus was crucified on Friday. He was pulled off the cross before the sunset because the Sabbath begins at sunset and they put him into the grave that Joseph of Arimathea had donated and they waited until the Sabbath was over.

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome bought spices so they might come and anoint him. So that's Saturday night. They went to the market, got the supplies that they would need.

Very early on the first day of the week, that's Sunday morning, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. They were saying to one another, who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?

Looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away although it was extremely large. Generally, those tombs were a cave or a hollowed out part of a hillside and there was a big flat rock that was in a groove that was propped up in such a way that if you removed the stone that was holding it in place, it would roll right into place blocking the tomb and sealing it.

[19:24] But to get it open, you'd be pushing that rock uphill and a group of women was not going to be equal to the task of rolling that stone away. Looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away already although it was extremely large.

Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right wearing a white robe and they were amazed. And he said to them, do not be amazed. You're looking for Jesus the Nazarene who has been crucified.

It doesn't stop there. He has risen. He is not here. Behold, here is the place where they laid him.

But go tell his disciples and Peter, he is going ahead of you to Galilee. There you will see him just as he told you. They went out and fled from the tomb for trembling and astonishment had gripped them and they said nothing to anyone for they were afraid.

Do not be amazed. You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene who has been crucified. He died. There's no question. Jesus died.

[20:33] He has risen. He is not here. That, those two phrases encapsulate all of the Christian life. He's not here.

He has risen. That's our hope. And that's what we're going to focus on this morning. So just briefly, I'm going to talk about the historical evidence for the resurrection.

If you want to dig into it deeper, recommend a couple of books for you. The Case for Christ by Lee Strobel is a tremendous resource. You should actually own several copies.

Usually you can get it online really cheap because the publisher wants to get it into as many hands as possible. The Case for Christ is the investigation of a Pulitzer Prize winning investigative reporter from the Chicago Tribune, Lee Strobel.

He was investigating the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus to convince his wife it was all a fairy tale so that she would turn away from her new faith in Christ and return to the atheism that was the bedrock of their marriage.

[21:40] So, The Case for Christ began as a tool of evangelism for an atheist to reach a Christian. Kind of backwards of what we normally think. And God, having a very rich sense of humor, led Lee Strobel to Christ.

Because in the course of his investigation into the claims of the Bible and the historical evidence and the proof that Jesus did in fact die, that he was raised again, he unpacks that in The Case for Christ and it's a powerful tool.

And the information that's in there, you would do well because it will build your faith and give you the tools you need to share credibly what you believe about the Lord Jesus with people. So, The Case for Christ and the other one is called More Than a Carpenter by Josh McDowell.

Interestingly, same story, different generation. Josh McDowell was a brilliant student, decided for some, I don't remember the reasons why, but he decided he wanted to refute the claims of Christianity.

And so he did this enormous amount of work that if you want something extraordinarily boring, he put in two books called Evidence Demands a Verdict. but he boiled it down into a thin book called More Than a Carpenter and Josh McDowell also came to Christ.

[23:01] Once he looked and took a deep dive into what the Bible has to say about Jesus, the only honest response he could have to his research was to embrace Jesus as Lord.

Lee Strobel, Josh McDowell, those two books, great resources for you. So let's talk about the importance of the resurrection in our lives. First of all, the resurrection proved Jesus' claims.

He said, I'm the king. I'm the savior. There was no doubt about that as he went forward. We looked at it a few weeks ago in Luke chapter 4. He read in the synagogue Isaiah 61 and said, today this has been fulfilled in your presence.

I'm the Messiah. And then he repeated it over and over and over again. He told the woman at the well, I'm the Messiah. He told the Pharisees, I'm the Messiah. He told the disciples over and over again, I'm the Messiah.

And then as he was dying on the cross, his final words were, it is finished. And he gave up the ghost. He died. His statement, it is finished, was a statement that the work, the redemptive, propitiating, reconciling work on the cross, that substitutionary atonement was done.

[24:22] Somebody said, I don't know who it was, somebody said that the resurrection was God's amen to Jesus' statement it is finished. The resurrection proves that the work was completed.

It proves what Jesus said. This is what Paul wrote in Romans chapter 4. Jesus Christ was delivered over because of our transgressions. In other words, he was sent to the cross because we're sinners.

And then was raised because of our justification. Justification is another theological word that means to be declared righteous. You're declared clean. When we're redeemed, the penalty's been paid.

The judge bangs the gavel and says, you're free to go. The fee has been paid. Jesus was raised because that work was done.

The resurrection proves it was accomplished. Jesus says, it is finished. God said, amen, my son. Come on up. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul wrote this, for if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised.

[25 : 29] And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless. You're still in your sins. Remember what I said earlier. if Jesus wasn't raised, Jesus just died a martyr's death. And that doesn't do us any good. It's an example. It's an example we can't even follow. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless. You are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep or died in Christ have perished. They're just gone. They're in hell. If we have hope in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. Why should we be most pitied if we've only believed Christ in this life? Well, because we're depriving ourselves of things that we would otherwise want if Jesus hasn't been raised. If Jesus hasn't been raised, we might as well eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die. We should live the life that is what the theory of evolution really encourages us to live, which is every man or woman for themselves.

[26 : 35] And if we deprive ourselves of that for this vain hope, we're fools. And that's what Paul is talking about. But remember what the angel said. He's not here. He has been raised. So first of all, the resurrection proves that Jesus claims we're true. Now just to belabor the point a little bit, the resurrection itself is one of the most well-attested to events of antiquity, period. There's more documentary and historical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus than anything else that we just accept as having happened in that time period in ancient history. We can be sure that Jesus was raised from the dead. It proved what he said was true. So the next, so it proves Jesus' claims, the resurrection also shows us what we will be like. It says in 1 John chapter 3 that we don't know. Let's actually turn there rather than me going from memory, which is always dangerous. 1 John chapter 3. Alright, here we go.

[28 : 02] 1 John chapter 3. See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us that we should be called children of God and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears we will be like Him because we will see Him just as He is. And Paul repeats that same idea in 1 Corinthians 15. That this old body, this broken down body that needs glasses and is slowly declining, not capable of doing what I used to be able to do, that this body which is corruptible will be raised again incorruptible and I will be like Jesus. And in the resurrection, even the accounts that we see at the ends of the Gospels, the things that Jesus did, those are a foretaste of what we will be like. But more important than physically, we will be like Him morally. We will be like Him spiritually. We will be in the presence of God, worthy to be in the presence of God because we have been made clean because of the work of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection.

[29 : 14] So the resurrection validates Jesus' claims, it shows us what we will be like, and then the resurrection shows us the pattern for our new life. And that new life doesn't begin when we die. That new life began the moment that you put your trust in Christ. For me, it was January 1980.

The new life began. Listen to what Jesus said in John 10, verses 9 and 10. I am the door. If anyone enters through me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

It's kind of a look back to Psalm 23. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lay down in green pastures. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.

I came, this is Jesus speaking, I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. And I believe that's not just someday in the future.

[30 : 20] Jesus' promise is for abundant life now. And we may have to redefine what we mean by abundant life. But even in that definition, we discover something more.

Because whenever we're comparing what we think to what God thinks, we're not thinking high enough. C.S. Lewis, I'm going to paraphrase what C.S. Lewis said in his sermon, The Weight of Glory, that we're content playing with mud pies in the backyard where what we're being offered is an all-expense-paid resort trip to the Caribbean.

And yet, all we want to do is play with mud. And so, when Jesus says that he has come that we may have life and have it more abundantly, that offer of life is all-encompassing.

And it's for now all the way through eternity. And it's only going to keep growing bigger and bigger. That's what we have to look forward to. Turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 6.

Don't lose Philippians 3. But flip over to Romans chapter 6. So, we've got Philippians 3.

[31 : 30] Your finger is there because that's where we're going to end. But let's talk about Romans 6 here for a second. This is a very important passage. We're starting at verse 3.

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into his death? Now, that is not saying that we have to be physically baptized in order to be saved.

Paul is speaking metaphorically there. And so, what he means is in January of 1980, when I realized that I was a sinner, that my situation was hopeless, and that I needed to turn my life over to Christ, I needed to follow him.

when I prayed the prayer and said, Lord, I see that I'm a sinner, I give myself to you, that was essentially the same as a physical act as when I was baptized and I was lowered under the water.

And then coming out was coming out into new life. So, this is a metaphorical picture. Just like the actual act of baptism doesn't save, but it's a picture of what goes on when we are saved.

[32 : 35] You with me? So, do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into his death? So, it's as if you and I died on the cross when Jesus was dying.

Therefore, we have been buried with him through baptism into death. Now, here's the cool part. So, that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

That newness of life is the abundant life that Jesus talked about in John chapter 10. For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection.

Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with him in order that our body of sin might be done away with so that we would no longer be slaves to sin. For he who has died is freed from sin.

Now, if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. A couple things there really quickly. Paul is not saying that we are sin-free when we accept Christ as Savior.

[33 : 44] My wife, my siblings, my extended family, people I've worked with, could all attest. We would have a line going back for a block.

People who could attest that I still have sin in my life. And that's only stuff that's known. So it doesn't mean that when I accepted Jesus as my Savior, or that when you accepted Jesus as your Savior, that you're made free of sin.

But what it does mean is that the power of sin over your life has been broken. You have a choice. And that's the central piece of this new life that we have in Christ.

is that this abundant life is a life where we're reconciled. Remember that word? We're reconciled. We're brought back into relationship with God.

Where we have the opportunity to talk to God about the things that we're facing in our lives. Months ago, I shared an illustration with you using the Garden of Eden.

[34 : 48] You get bonus points if you remember this. Like a million bonus points. But the picture was that just as Adam was entrusted with this garden, it had a wall around it, it was a finite space, each of us has been entrusted with a garden.

That's our life. God has given you a garden. My garden has four children, four, three daughters-in-law and a son-in-law, six and a half grandchildren, I'm doing the math in my head, all of you.

God has given me responsibility within this garden. But I'm not left on my own. Because I've been reconciled with God, part of the newness of life is for me to be able to walk with God and say, Lord, what do we do with Jesse and these seizures?

Lord, how do I prepare a sermon that delivers truth that I can't figure out how to put in words that is so magnificent that words utterly fail me?

How am I supposed to do that? How am I supposed to get through the day-to-day grind of life? Helping my daughter through the things that she's dealing with right now.

[36 : 04] You all know you have family. Life is not free of problems. But we are accompanied by a God.

The Holy Spirit resides in us. Now here's a stupid thing, and there's no word for it other than stupid. And I'm directing it at me. I don't pray enough.

I've got this partnership with God. I have been reconciled to God. And yet, more often than not, I get my marching orders or I see a problem and I go running off after that problem, and God just stands there waiting.

Come back. And I go, oh, sorry, and I've got to come back. We need to take advantage of this new life that we have in Christ. Jesus has been raised.

That was God's amen to Jesus' statement and it is finished. And in that resurrection, we have reconciliation to God. We are back in His presence. The penalty for our sin has been paid.

[37 : 14] It's gone. God's wrath has been appeased. He loves you. And our relationship with God has been restored.

Now you can turn to Philippians chapter three. Philippians. I submit to you that what God is inviting us into is a life of adventure.

A life of discovery. And like any adventure, it's hard. There are stretches that seem to be more taxing than anything we can handle.

There's other parts that are nice and easy, it's comfortable, there's a soft breeze, and then there's hard parts, the sun sets.

There's lions and tigers and bears, oh my. That's our life. We still have to deal with our own sin, our own fallenness, our own finiteness, but we're not alone anymore.

[38 : 18] And the ultimate goal as we go through this life is Jesus Christ Himself. Starting at the end of this month, we're going to go through a series, the centerpiece of which is that God's plan for your life is to make you like Jesus.

And all of this stuff that we go through in this adventure of life is that process. So Philippians chapter 3, But whatever things were gained to me, and Paul had a lot, those things I have counted as lost for the sake of Christ.

More than that, I count all things to be lost in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Knowing Him surpasses everything.

Because all your questions are answered in Him. All your doubts are answered in Him. All your inadequacy is answered in Him. I count all things to be lost in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things.

And count them but rubbish, so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him. Not having a righteousness of my own derived from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ.

[39 : 33] The righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Paul pressed on because he had the presence of God with him every step of the way.

That upward call of God in Christ, and that's what we're called to. And we go in the power of the resurrection. I just realized I skipped one line in my notes.

I'll end with this. Ephesians chapter 1 says that the other thing that we learn in the resurrection, is the power that's at work in us. The power that can take a dead man, and make no mistake, Jesus was dead, and reanimated His body, and brought it back to life, healed the scars, healed the wounds.

That kind of power is the power that is at work in us to face the challenges of life. This isn't a fairy tale.

[40 : 48] It's not something that we look forward to in the distant future. It is an abundant life today as we step into our relationship with God. And that's what I want to invite you into.

I haven't given you any answers as to what that looks like. My challenge for you this week is to look at before the Lord, God, what does this look like? How do I get that? I want that. And He'll show you because He wants it for you as well.

God, we have the fullness of life in you.

Everything we could ever need, everything we ever want, everything is satisfied in you. God, I pray that we would be so filled with you, with a picture of you in our minds, our Savior, our Father welcoming us home, and our companions through the journey of life.

That we would be so filled with that that everything else would fade from view. And we would live in your presence. Teach us how to do that, Lord, and let us be people who, like Paul, are pressing onward for the upward call of God in Christ.

[42 : 05] We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.