

“Coming Alive - But God”

Scripture: Jeremiah 23:5-8; Romans 8:10-11; Romans 5:1-11

Graphics: new life

Big Truth: The Good News is that we are alive in Christ forevermore. Faith in the death and resurrection of Christ gives us everlasting life. Yet, our experience now is sometimes less than. The past few months have felt more like death than life. Yet, Jesus is still alive and calls us again to come alive in Him every day. Coming Alive by the Spirit in us is the call of the disciple of Jesus.

Focus phrase: We were dead in our sin, **but God** makes us alive in Christ today and everyday!

1. Introduction

- A. Let's PRAY!
- B. This morning, we're beginning a brand new sermon series called **Coming Alive**.
- C. In many ways, it feels like we, as individuals, as a nation, a community, a church, are **beginning to come alive again**. Can you feel it?
- D. The truth is that we were never actually NOT alive, but sometimes when things are difficult or we're forced to self-isolate, or we feel lost, we may FEEL like we're not alive.
- E. And, to be completely honest, we've heard more about death in the last 3 months because of COVID-19, and in last 2 weeks with the news of protests and riots, than we've ever in our lives.
- F. My heart breaks for those who have lost loved ones to the Coronavirus. My heart breaks for those who have lost their lives unjustly in our nation due to the sin of racism, especially men of color, police officers, and anyone caught in the middle of the fight.
- G. In danger of being too morbid, death has been a theme for us. And to be even MORE honest, I think I speak for all of us that we've had to come a little more face-to-face with our own mortality recently.
- H. Add to that the self-isolation, the frustration around closed businesses and shuttered church buildings, and the ever-changing guidance of those in charge of making decisions for a nation and world, and the fact that we can't fathom a world like this much longer, and we're all about ready to lie down and wait for Jesus to come back.
- I. **But, church, that is NOT the way of Jesus! That is NOT the church!**
- J. The church is a living body because our head, Jesus, is ALIVE! And because HE is alive, WE are called to new life...new life in spite of COVID-19...new life in spite of racial injustice and reform...new life in ministry and mission for

a world in need of Jesus...and NEW life every day as you and I seek to leave behind EVERY sin and walk in the footsteps of Jesus together.

- K. This series will keep reminding us of Romans 8:10-11, which tells us this, “But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.”
- L. It’s all about life, now and forever...Coming Alive in the Holy Spirit.
- M. This first message is entitled **But God**. And we’ll start in Romans 5:1-11.

2. Scripture

- A. We’ll spend a few weeks in the middle of the book of Romans, which is the Apostle Paul’s letter to the newish Christians in Rome. This letter was written somewhere around the middle of the first century, and was addressed to ALL the believers in Rome, whether they were Jewish by birth and religion, or whether they were former pagan Gentiles who had no previous faith.
- B. Paul said in Galatians 3:28, “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”
- C. So for Paul, faith in Christ is the main thing! And ALL are welcome to come to Christ, be changed by Christ, be forgiven through Christ, and receive salvation in Christ. To COME ALIVE in Christ!
- D. But as we’ll see in today’s first scripture passage from Romans, Paul lays out the foundation for the change from death to life...from sin to righteousness.
- E. Basically, we’ll hear him say, “we were dead...BUT GOD!”
- F. Grab your bibles from the coffee table or dash and get it...for this series, we’ll be reading word-for-word from Paul’s letter...follow along with me...Romans 5, starting in verse 1 (screen) I’m reading from the New Revised Standard Version.

G. READ ROMANS 5:1-5

- i. We could spend weeks just unpacking those first 5 verses of scripture. We’re not going to DO that...but before we dive in, you’ll note that Paul starts with “Therefore”. And whenever you see a THEREFORE in scripture, you need to ask yourself what it’s (what?) what it’s THERE FOR.
- ii. It always points to what comes BEFORE it. In THIS case, chapter 4 of Romans is all about the Faith of Abraham. A few weeks ago in our Long Story Short message about the nation of Israel, we spent time on the story of the faithfulness of Abraham and Sarah...to hear God’s plan, to leave

their home, to travel into the unknown, and to keep following God's plan to create a people who God would love and who would love God.

- iii. Because of Abraham's faith, God's promise was realized!
- iv. Paul, writing to the Christians in Rome, said, "Therefore...since we are justified (made right in relationship with God) through faith (like Abraham's), we have PEACE with God through Jesus...and we have access to God's grace (God's undeserved favor...like Abraham and Sarah had).
- v. But the last four words are critical... "in which we stand."
- vi. Faith in Jesus brings peace...and in Jesus we STAND in grace.
- vii. Standing is a conscious deliberate act. Standing is not sitting or lying down or sleeping. If you're not alive, you can't stand unless you've been immortalized in bronze or something.
- viii. Standing is critical to knowing that you're alive. And so Paul is reminding the Roman Christians that they are called to stand in grace, with peace.
- ix. And not only THAT, but he was inviting them to boast in their suffering because suffering produces endurance (or patience), endurance produces character, and character produces HOPE, and hope does not disappoint us because of God's LOVE poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.
- x. Let's unpack that a bit:
 - a. Again, suffering is something that the Christians in Rome had been experiencing - persecution, ridicule, even violence against them, death in some cases.
 - b. Suffering stinks...no one likes to suffer. Suffering makes people want to roll over and wish for Jesus to return. Suffering, at times, also causes people to want to die. Stacy grandmother recently died at the age of 105. While it's a little sad, we've also been rejoicing because she told us regularly that she didn't know why she was still alive and that she was ready to go. Thankfully, she didn't suffer physically very much, but emotionally she did. Yet, spiritually, she was more ready than any person I've known. She's with Jesus, praise God!
 - c. Yet, in ALL of that for her, for the Roman Christians, and for us, **suffering is a grand reminder that we are still physically alive.** Florence Merle is not suffering in ANY WAY right now! She is alive in a brand new way...and she KNEW that when she died, she wasn't going to DIE. Her suffering led to patience (man, was she patient...living without her husband for 25 years)...her patience led to character...and her character, hope, because she was filled with the Holy Spirit and knew God's love.

- d. Suffering is characteristics of everyone who is alive. But peace, patience, character, and hope are characteristics of people who are physically alive AND spiritually alive because of faith.
- e. We are all physically alive and suffering. BUT GOD, through faith in Him, gives us a new way of living...with peace, endurance, character, and hope for what's coming! Being alive is one thing...being alive in Christ is SO MUCH MORE!
- f. Paul expands on his proclamation of God's promise to the church in verse 6...

H. READ ROMANS 5:6-11

- i. Here it is: people may be alive, physically, but are dead spiritually because of sin. Spiritual death leads to physical death. BUT GOD.
- ii. That's one of my all time favorite phases in ALL of scripture! BUT GOD.
- iii. Hopeless people are hopeless...BUT GOD.
- iv. Sinful people are sinful...BUT GOD.
- v. Lost people are lost...BUT GOD.
- vi. I was lost BUT GOD found me. I was a sinner on a track for hell, BUT GOD poured out grace.
- vii. With God, it's always like that. While we were weak (the Greek in verse 6 is more like powerless) Jesus died for the ungodly - those without faith in Jesus.
- viii. I love how Paul says, "Look, no human would die for GOOD or RIGHTEOUS people, let alone bad, sinful, selfish people."
- ix. BUT GOD (there it is)...God works in counter-cultural, other-focused, and mind-blowing ways...BUT GOD PROVES His love by sending Jesus - HIS ONLY SON - to die for sinners!
- x. That death leads to being saved from the wrath of God (at the judgment when Jesus returns), praise God.
- xi. And the faithful aren't just saved because of Jesus' **death**, but while people are enemies with God, in our minds and hearts, Jesus STILL died for us.
- xii. But he didn't just die...he ROSE AGAIN. So not only are we saved by Jesus' death on the cross, but we are giving NEW LIFE by HIS new life!
- xiii. That should cause every believer to be jumping up and shouting AMEN right now!
- xiv. We are dead in our sin, BUT GOD gives us salvation through Jesus' death and LIFE through Jesus' resurrection!

xv. In THAT, Paul says, is our grounds for boasting in what God has done through Jesus.

3. Application

- A. The pathway to Coming Alive is the promise God gives us in Christ. But if you recall how Paul started this section by talking about Abraham, it's a promise that's been for God's people for thousands of years.
- B. Abraham knew that the promise was for him and for Sarah and his offspring and their offspring.
- C. The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah knew the promise, too. Here's what Jeremiah heard from God: "The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: "The Lord is our righteousness." Therefore, the days are surely coming, says the Lord, when it shall no longer be said, 'As the Lord lives who brought the people of Israel up out of the land of Egypt,' but 'As the Lord lives who brought out and led the offspring of the house of Israel out of the land of the north and out of all the lands where he had driven them.' Then they shall **live** in their own land." Jeremiah 23:5-8
- D. This isn't about being simply freed from slavery like when the people of God were brought out of Egypt.
- E. This isn't just about not dying, church! In fact, it's not even all about being alive. The promise of God for us is that even in the midst of our suffering and the world's mess, **BUT GOD...**because of God, the promise is that we can **COME ALIVE** every day!
- F. I want to give us some practical application for this today, because we aren't just called to **BE** alive, but to **COME ALIVE** in the power of the Holy Spirit every day we **ARE** physically alive.
- G. Here's how:
 - i. **First, live out your peace in Christ.**
 - a. If there was ever a time when you were being called on by God to live out godly peace in this world, it's now! And remember, the biblical concept of peace is not simply the absence of conflict. Peace is wholeness in God...completeness and connection to God's heart for others.
 - b. We've heard the term 'peaceful protest' a lot lately. And while that phrase may, at first, seem like an oxymoron, whenever there is injustice in the world, God's heart breaks...God protests. God protests when sin in your life and my life causes us brokenness. God protests when people

are killed, including the unborn. God protests when you and I choose to ignore that stirrings of our hearts to speak up or stand up. Injustice can't have peace. So God protests...people protest...all because peace means wholeness and rightness and righteousness.

- c. And when, through faith in Jesus, we have peace with God, whatever happens in this physical life - whatever suffering we have in any form - leads to spiritual growth - to patience, character, and hope.
 - d. Live out your peace in Christ and you will be a hope-filled, patient person filled with godly character. And, I would add, a powerful witness to the work of the Holy Spirit in your life.
- ii. Then, you can **boast in love of God**.
- a. Verse 11 encourages each one of us, "...more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."
 - b. Spend time rehearsing in your mind the things God has done in your life over the past week...weeks...months. Keep rehearsing those things until those sink all the way down to your heart.
 - c. From your heart, lift up praises to God.
 - d. Maybe you're healthy and have not been affected by COVID-19. Maybe you did and recovered.
 - e. Maybe you've learned more about yourself while you've had time alone.
 - f. Maybe you're hopeful more today about our nation, and an end to the sin of racism, than you've ever been...and you realized that it starts in you and not someone else.
 - g. Now, go out and tell someone! Boast about what God is doing. Don't boast about the church or the pastor or your own stuff. Boast about what GOD is doing in your life, in your heart, and in the world.
 - h. Do that on social media...God knows we need some relief from the cesspool of social media and news. Do that today.

4. Conclusion

- A. But God. We were dead and we suffer...BUT GOD! On the other side of BUT GOD comes the hope and peace.
- B. Coming Alive because of what God has done means living out that peace and hope...and boasting in what God is doing.
- C. Come alive every day, church! Start today!
- D. Let's pray and then we'll close with a great song that proclaims, BUT GOD! PRAY!