

“Coming Alive - Be Alive”

Scripture: Jeremiah 23:5-8; Romans 8:1-11; 1 Corinthians 15

Graphics: Coming Alive

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: Be alive in the Spirit for life and peace.

1. Introduction

- A. Let's PRAY!
- B. This morning, we're wrapping up this part of our sermon series we've called **Coming Alive**.
- C. 6 weeks ago, I said that it feels like we, as individuals, as a nation, a community, a church, are beginning to come alive again after some mind-boggling times in our world.
- D. In many ways, it's taking way longer than we'd hoped. In March, when worship here in the sanctuary was shutdown, I had grand visions of the day we'd reopen...running back into the sanctuary to pyrotechnics and loud music welcoming us all back to worship.
- E. Instead, it kind of feels like we're just thankful to be back as we cautiously love on each other from a distance (either virtually or in-house), smile with our eyes and emojis, and worship with grateful hearts.
- F. And it also seems like we're not even close to being to a place where we feel like we're fully alive as a society or church or in our families.
- G. Yet! Despite ALL that, we are getting there, and I'm SO excited and thankful that we're able to be here this morning, joining our online church family, as one body of Jesus people, worshipping together!
- H. 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.
- I. Add to that 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 it's hard to wrap our heads around the future, and we're all about ready to lie down and wait for Jesus to come back.
- J. But, church, we STILL KNOW, that is NOT the way of Jesus! That's NOT the church! And that's NOT what we're called to be and do!

- K. We are called to keep **Coming Alive**. 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...new life in WORSHIP...and NEW life every day as you and I seek to leave behind EVERY sin and walk in the footsteps of Jesus together.
- L. This series has kept 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.”
- M. And that’s where we’re headed today...to Romans chapter 8:1-11.
- N. It’s all about life, now and forever...Coming Alive in the Holy Spirit...
- O. Grab your bible and turn with me to Romans chapter 8...

2. Scripture

A. READ ROMANS 8:1-4

- i. Once again, we read a *THEREFORE* in the beginning of this section... which we all know points to something that Paul said previously.
- ii. In this case, Paul was answering his question and partial answer in verses 7:24-25 when he asked, “Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!
- iii. He then summarized the experience of someone who is wrestling to become (and on the very verge of becoming, John Wesley would say) a follower of Jesus by saying, verse 25, “So then, with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin.” Law here with a small ‘l’ means general rule of something.
- iv. Basically, “My mind is drawn to Christ...but my inclinations are drawn to sin.” We all can relate at times in our lives.
- v. But Paul declares here, with conviction, that, “There is, therefore, now (after one makes that decision to allow the Holy Spirit to work in them by being rescued by Jesus from the body of sin and death) there is NOW NO condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
- vi. That’s a statement of FACT. Because of Jesus’ death on the cross and resurrection to new life, those who have, by faith in the power of Christ’s death and resurrection, altered the trajectory of their life and humbled themselves under the will of the God of the universe, ARE NOT ANY LONGER CONDEMNED to spiritual, everlasting death apart from God.

- vii. Condemnation, here, is the final and forever judgment that God must make for those who choose NOT to be saved by God's grace through belief in the sacrifice of Jesus. God gives every one of us EVERY chance to be saved. Some will choose it. Others will not.
- viii. Those who DO choose life will receive EVERLASTING life. THAT, church, is THE good news. WE ARE ALIVE FOR EVER because of Jesus.
- ix. But Paul doesn't dwell on the fact that we're not condemned, as awesome as that is. He moves quickly to the freedom to live that comes from knowing that we aren't condemned.
- x. And that freedom is all about life NOW...and it comes because the Holy Spirit is at work IN every person the moment they are set free from the bondage of sin.
- xi. God doesn't want us to simply be 'NOT CONDEMNED'. Paul says that God wants the church to experience His freedom right now...in every part of our lives.
- xii. And because sin leads to death, God dealt with sin and dealt with death, so that we could CHOOSE to walk as the Holy Spirit wants to guide us, and not according to the ways our sinful inclinations WANT us to walk.
- xiii. Paul then draws some more contrasts for us in verses 5-8...

B. READ ROMANS 8:5-8

- i. There isn't much that needs to be said here. For once, Paul is pretty clear.
- ii. If someone lives according to the flesh - which means that person simply allows their sin-nature to do whatever it wants - then the only thing that person is going to want to do - in fact, be ABLE to do - is what the sin nature wants them to do. And, they will want to do MORE of that only.
- iii. But, the person that lives in response to - in obedience to - the Holy Spirit, that person will be focused on the still small voice of the Holy Spirit within them to guide every thought, decision, and deed.
- iv. The difference, Paul says, is that the person who is focused on doing the sinful things is walking toward death (and will be condemned). The person who is focused on doing what Holy Spirit is asking is walking to life and peace, no longer condemned.
- v. Obviously, Paul is saying that walking toward death is bad, and walking toward life and peace is good.
- vi. Those walking toward death can't please God. Even though God has put within each person every born, a desire to please Him, whether we admit it or not. We can choose to walk away from God and ignore that part of our minds and hearts.

- vii. Paul then turns his attention to the Christians in Rome, both Jewish Christians and those Christians who've had no previous religion at all... verse 9... This is where all the arguments Paul makes...all the contrasts he brings...all the death and sin and life and righteousness, ALL crescendo...

C. READ ROMANS 8:9-11

- i. This is where the preacher jumps up OUT of his seat and says, “DO YOU KNOW THIS JESUS?!?”
- ii. This Jesus was born of a virgin, was fully God and fully man, taught, called, and loved disciples, suffered, died, and was buried. Rose again on the third day and is seated right now, in heaven, ruling as King of Kings and praying for YOU.
- iii. And if you believe all that, then YOU are not in the flesh. YOU are not bound by the desires of flesh. YOU are not in Vegas or in the grave.
- iv. YOU are in the Spirit, since the Spirit dwells in YOU. YOU belong to Christ and Christ to YOU. It's like being submerged in an ocean of God's grace and love. It's all around you and you are IN IT.
- v. Even though your body might be wasting away because of the sin that still is a reality in your life, intention or unintentional, then and now, you have LIFE NOW and in the FUTURE because the Spirit IS life because the SPIRIT IS GOD in YOU!
- vi. And, as if it couldn't get any better, Paul looks the Roman church square in the eye and says, “And...And! If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in YOU...he who raised Jesus from the dead will so the SAME EXACT thing in you.”
- vii. Now, that could be taken two ways. Is it that the Sprit of him who physically raised Jesus from the dead will physically raise YOU from the dead too? Or is it that the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead will spiritually raise you from sin and death right now?
- viii. The answer, of course, is YES! It's both/and! It's for NOW and it's for LATER, it's for physical resurrection and spiritual re-birth, and for everlasting life!
- ix. Praise the Lord, church!

3. Application

- A. So what? I'm glad I'm saved and I'm glad the Spirit lives in me and I'm glad I have everlasting life. But how does this all give me life and peace today after worship is over? Monday's coming... what's my game plan to BE ALIVE?
- B. From Paul's incredible words to the Romans, there are three things to do. One is aspirational and the other two are very practical.

- C. First, the aspirational one. Ready? **Be alive today in the hope of your own resurrection.**
- i. All of 1 Corinthians chapter 15 is Paul's argument that because Jesus was raised from the dead, then YOU will be raised from the dead if Jesus is your Savior. Jesus defeated death precisely so that death would not be an issue for you or me.
 - ii. 1 Cor. 15:20-23 says, "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. 22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him."
 - iii. Be Alive in the hope of your own resurrection. When you do, then, indeed, nothing can separate you from God's love and grace...not hardship or famine or sword or disease or trials or anything under the sun.
- D. More practically, now... two things.
- E. **#1 - Put more emphasis on the presence and the work of the Holy Spirit in your life.**
- i. I had a Professor say that it's critical to put the emPHASis on the right sylLABle. If we get that messed up, life makes less sense.
 - ii. But if you put the emphasis on being more aware of the very person that Jesus sent to BE his very presence with you now, then you can see clearly the path He wants you to take.
 - iii. Paul said that those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.
 - iv. This is intentional thinking and praying and seeing...and that leads to intentional living IN the SPIRIT.
 - v. You and I are not called to be passively living in God's grace without an intentional focus on the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. Part of the challenge of the church in America is our lack of yearning and passion for the presence of the Holy Spirit.
 - vi. Turn you heart to the Spirit more and more. Allow the Spirit to lead you on that path where God continues to guide you in every decision...every action.
 - vii. And that path is always away from sin (away from being ruled by our flesh) and towards God's will. Along the way, God will keep asking you to reject sin, which is the final life-giving action.
- F. **#2 Crucify the sinful inclinations within you.**
- i. Sounds easy. It is not. In fact, it's impossible on your own effort.

- ii. Sin works in some pretty subtle ways, some of which we choose, intentionally to do, and some we allow to happen passively.
 - iii. Paul said, “You are not in the flesh.” You don’t have to be ruled by sin... and, in fact, God is asking you to choose to intentionally crucify it, just like Jesus was crucified on the cross.
 - iv. 2 Corinthians 10:5 says, “We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”
 - v. In my life, this verse has been an incredible reminder that I can choose to walk away from sin and towards Christ.
 - vi. This work is not done on your own, but in the strength of the Holy Spirit... through prayer and focus.
 - vii. Give control of your mind and heart, physically, emotionally, literally, spiritually, to the Holy Spirit. Allow EVERY thought and deed to be captive to and obedient to Christ.” Remember, a life of obeying is Milestone 4 of our PUMC Intentional Discipleship Process.
 - viii. The incredible thing about giving up control of your life to the Holy Spirit is that you’re not actually giving anything up. You’re gaining a partnership with the God of the Universe...who KNOWS everything good for you.
- G. Be Alive in hope of your resurrection. Be Alive as you put more emphasis on the Holy Spirit. Be Alive as you crucify every sin.

4. Conclusion

- A. In the 18th and 19th centuries, physical death wasn’t quite as definitive as it is today. Diseases like cholera would often mimic death and people were often declared dead but not actually dead. Because of that, there was an odd, yet common practice of providing a way for those who had been declared dead and buried to, at some point in the future, if they revived, to communicate with the world above that they were NOT dead. Sometime it was a bell on the end of a string or a clear glass cover on a casket that allowed you to see breath, etc.
- B. And there are historical records that confirm it DID happen. Can you imagine what it would be like to be dead and then come back to life, if even in the eyes of the people around you?
- C. Imagine with me, now, the possibility of Coming Alive every day, not just physically, but spiritually!
- D. That’s exactly what Paul has been telling us in this section of Romans. He said, we’re all dead because of sin, But God. God made a way through One Man, Jesus. That man, who was fully God and fully man, died and rose again, Once for All.

- E. Because of that Good News, we are to Offer Ourselves by receiving God's free gift of salvation. That gift brings us life as we live in a state of Being Rescued. Rescued then become Alive!
- F. Be Alive for now and forever from here is all about the presence and work of the Holy Spirit IN US!
- G. No bell needed. We are NEVER declared dead because Jesus is Alive!
- H. Be Alive, church!
- I. Let's Pray...