

1 Peter 1.3

God's life

Christ Church Selly Park

Easter Sunday 31 March 2024

God's Good News [7]

Our champion

This term we've run something called 321: a short course that looks at 'Life According to Jesus'. I think it's brilliant – here's a taster from one of the videos we watched on Tuesday.

Show opening illustration from 321 Course Video 7 – Champion.

Jesus is heaven's Champion who has joined *our* failing team. We are Team Adam, and we are failing at life, heading for relegation. Nevertheless, Jesus joins us as our Champion. He says, 'My life will be for you, and my victories will be your victories.'

The Gospels, the biographies of Jesus, are like the match reports of Jesus taking on our arch rivals. Jesus takes on temptation and he resists it. Jesus takes on sickness and he heals it. Jesus takes on the chaotic forces of nature and he calms them. Jesus takes on evil powers and he drives them out.

All of these forces are far bigger than us; we lose to them. *Every. Single. Time.* But not Jesus. As he walked this earth, he fought them for us, and he won *for us*. And then on the cross he takes on the Big Ones. On the cross Jesus takes on darkness and death, he takes on our sin and our guilt and our shame – *all* of it – and he takes it down to the hell that it deserves.

To those who watched it seemed like Jesus had lost. But no – on Easter Sunday we see the ultimate comeback. Jesus bursts out of the grave as the victor over sin and death and hell. And he comes to us saying, ‘It’s for you. It’s for you.’ Did you ever wonder why the stone was rolled away? It wasn’t for Jesus: he could walk through walls. The stone was rolled away *for us*, so we could see inside and know that his victory is our victory. He wins, we celebrate – though we have not expended a calorie of effort.

This is the beating heart of the Christian story. The Bible says: **thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ** (1 Corinthians 15.57). He wins, we celebrate. The Bible says: **[God] has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead** (3). Do you see? He wins, we celebrate.

This is the message of Easter, and it is the only true hope around.

Our hope

What do you hope for?

Perhaps you're hoping for an Easter egg to scoff down after lunch today. Perhaps you hope for someone amazing to follow Jurgen Klopp as manager of Liverpool FC, or for Keir Starmer and Labour to fix the country.

Well, an NHS medical director got in trouble this week for telling people not to eat a whole Easter egg at once, given the average Easter egg contains three quarters of an adult's recommended daily calorie intake.

If you put your hope in gorging yourself on chocolate, football managers or new governments – you *will* be disappointed.

But if you put your hope in Jesus, you will not be disappointed.

Peter says that God **has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead** (3).

This is no false promise. This is no wishful thinking. This is true hope, hope that does not disappoint (see Romans 5.5), hope that is certain because Jesus has already defeated death. Death did its worst, and Jesus won by rising to new life for us: that is why it is **living hope**. He wins, we celebrate.

I wonder: are you any good at the game of life? I've scored a few life goals, but probably as many own goals...

I struggle with regrets. Sometimes I am overwhelmed by guilt and shame. Every day I feel inadequate, every day I despair at my knack for selfishness, pride and anger. I am weak, I am dying – it's all too much, I can't handle any of these things by myself.

In Team Adam we don't just need a Coach shouting advice from heaven or even from a holy book. Even with the best advice I'm still stuck because the problem is me, and I'm dead in my sin. I don't just need a Coach – I need a Champion – I need a Saviour.

Jesus says: do you have regrets about your past? I take your past, I nail it to the cross and I give you *my* future, *my* risen life.

Do you have shame? Jesus says: I endured burning shame and I buried it forever. Now I've risen beyond it to give you new life with your head held high.

Do you despair of your sinful heart? Jesus says: I became sin on that cross and I rise to give you my Spirit and a new start.

Do you fear death? Jesus says: I have taken that ultimate death – the deadly judgement of God against sin – I have died it for you. Now let me lead you through the troubles of life and into eternity.

He wins, we celebrate. **Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ** (1 Corinthians 15.57).

This is the life God has for you. This is the only true hope you'll find in this world: **[God] has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead** (3). This is the only hope that won't disappoint, the only life that will carry you safely through whatever comes.

This is God's life, and it is for you.

Do you want it?

Adapted from the script of the 321 Course talk 7, 'Champion'.