

The Explosive Power of the Resurrection — Now

by John Piper

This sermon focuses on the power of the resurrection, emphasizing the ability to sing in suffering and love even the least deserving, drawing inspiration from Jesus' voluntary sacrifice on the cross and the joy that was set before Him. It highlights the example of Paul and Silas in Acts 16, who sang hymns in prison, showcasing the transformative impact of the resurrection's hope on enduring suffering and showing love to others.

Scripture: John 15:11, Romans 5:8, Hebrews 12:2, Acts 16:25, Romans 8:18, Luke 14:14, Matthew 5:11

Topics: "Resurrection Power", "Joy in Suffering"

Description

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Transcript

Let's pray together. Father, I ask that you would grant that by the power of the resurrection we would be able to sing in suffering and love our enemies. I pray that we would be able to move from the cross through the resurrection into hope circle back around and live a life crucified.

And then forever enjoy your joy. So draw near now, please, and help me in these few minutes to bring the explosive power of the resurrection by your spirit into our suffering. I pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. If you had been there at the cross you probably would have vomited or screamed or pulled out your hair or thrown yourself on the ground and pounded the dirt and sobbed yourself into exhaustion. To have nails or spikes driven through your arms and legs and then to have your whole body weight hang there for hours and then have legs smashed or a spear run through your side was almost unbearable to watch.

I think it would have been for us in our modern sensibilities and surely unbearable to endure. And Jesus volunteered for this. He chose it.

It wasn't forced on him by any man. You remember what he said? Nobody takes my life from me. I lay it down in my own accord and if I lay it down I can take it again.

Do you think that I can't call to my father and have 12,000 angels to rescue me at any moment? Nobody forced him to do this. This was what he chose to do. I'm not trapped.

You think Herod or Pilate or the mobs in Jerusalem or the soldiers are in charge here? They're not in charge. My father wrote this drama. My father and I agreed my role in the drama is to be crucified.

It's what I do freely. I'm in charge, not Pilate. There's a name for this.

It's called love. This is the way Paul put it in Romans 5. God chose his love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. That's the name of volunteering for that kind of suffering for us.

So the greatest suffering in the service of the greatest love for the least deserving, how do you do that? That's my question. How did he do it? How do you do it? Because you must do it. Here's the answer of Hebrews 12.

For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross. Hebrews 12 too. For the joy that was set before him on Friday morning before him, he endured the cross.

So the humiliation of being stripped and the lacerations of the scourging and the nails through his hands and feet and the spear in his side, all the while able at any moment to call upon his father to be rescued and refusing at every moment in pain as the lightning bolts shoot up from his ankles to his brain, at every moment choosing to be there and stay there for the joy that was set before him. What was that? What was the joy beyond the horrors of crucifixion that kept him on the cross? What was the joy beyond the greatest act of love that enabled the greatest act of love to happen? Here's his answer. This is the answer of Jesus.

No one takes my life from me. I'll lay it down on my own accord, and if I lay it down, I will take it up again. Destroy this temple, and in three days, I will raise it up.

The Son of Man must suffer many things and be killed, and in three days he will rise from the dead. I will never die again, I will be an eternal high priest by the power of an indestructible life. All authority in heaven and on earth will be mine.

I will be the king over all kings, Lord over all lords. I will be alive forevermore, and in my hand will be the keys of death and Hades. I will sit with my father on his throne.

I will have in my hand a check signed with my blood for the perfect, completed, irreversible purchase of my bride. I will be surrounded by angels and saints crying with a loud voice, worthy is the lamb who is slain to receive blessing and honor and wisdom and power and riches. And from my throne, I will build my church on earth.

The gates of hell will not prevail against it. When the time is full, I will come in power and great glory, and I will fill the new heavens and the new earth with my glory, and I will say to my bride, enter the joy of your master. So when Hebrews 12 to says for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, that was the joy.

The resurrection, that future, that hope, that joy streaming from the future into the horrible present, holding him on the cross. If he were here, which he is, what he would say to you is this, so I'll let him say it. John 15 1, 15 11.

These things I have spoken to you, the ones that I just spoke to you through John Piper's summary. These things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you and your joy may be full. So God intends for the joy that was set before Jesus that gave him the power to endure the greatest suffering in the service of the greatest love for the least deserving to be your joy for the same.

That's what it means to be a Christian. To embrace the whole Christ, the suffering Christ, the risen Christ, the reigning Christ, the coming Christ, who at every point says that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full. So the reason the resurrection has explosive power now is the same reason it did for him then.

In his case, the hope of the resurrection had explosive power because of the joy that he saw holding him on the cross, and so it will be with us. For the joy that is set before us in the resurrection, we will endure the cost of love no matter how high for the least deserving. Right? That is Christianity.

So let's take one crazy, glorious example of somebody who lived this way and what it looks like. Acts chapter 16, the Apostle Paul, as you know, is preaching in Philippi. And there's this demon-possessed slave girl whose masters use her for fortune-telling and make a lot of money, and she keeps crying out after Paul while he's preaching very annoyingly, these are servants of the Most High God, and Paul has just had it after numerous days, and he turns and he says, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ, come out of her! And the demon comes out, and these men lose their girl and their money.

So pastors, you preach all day, just don't mess with people's money unless you want to be faithful. So they're really angry at Paul, and they drag him before the magistrates, and they lie about them, and they strip them of their clothing, and beat them with rods, throw them in prison without a trial, put them in the innermost prison, put their feet in stocks. So here's the picture.

Paul and Silas shamed by being stripped, beaten with rods, sitting in the deepest prison, feet in stocks, sleepless at midnight, and you know what they're doing. They're singing. My wife and I read this last week.

This is why I'm preaching on this sermon. My wife and I read this, and we read the Bible together every night. We pray.

I read this story, and we looked at each other, and we just said, we don't do that. It's one of the most convicting stories in the Bible. It's devastating.

We grumble. You grumble. You grumble at the slightest thing.

That's not the power of the resurrection. Grumbling is not the power of the resurrection. We're just like everybody else when we grumble.

So I'm preaching to myself. You understand that? It says they were singing hymns. Now there's a word for psalms.

You read it in Ephesians. Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs. We know what psalms are.

They're not singing psalms. They're singing hymns. Somebody wrote them besides David.

Who wrote them? I don't know who wrote them. Paul probably wrote them. Silas was the musician maybe.

But here's the amazing thing. They knew him by heart. The greatest men in the world are singing men.

I mean, can you see them walking from city to city, arm in arm, ready to go to jail, singing all the way? How else would they know them? This is amazing. So it's midnight, sleepless, beaten with rods, feet in stocks, dark in the prison, and they're singing. Now I want to know, how can you do that? What is this power that I so long for more? That's my question.

Four times in the book of Acts, Paul puts in one sentence why he winds up on trial and in prison over and over and over. And I'll read them to you. Before the Jews in Jerusalem, Acts 23, it is for the hope of the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial.

Before Felix in Caesarea, it is with respect to the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you this day. Before King Agrippa, why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead? Before the Jews in Rome at the very end of his life, it is because of the hope of Israel that I am wearing this chain. The resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of all who are in Christ was the sustaining power of Paul's song in suffering and love for the jailer.

I say love for the jailer. Why do I say that? You know, don't you, that when they were singing at midnight there was an earthquake? You got to be careful what might happen if you sing with a friend at midnight in misery. Are you afraid to go there? It's midnight.

He just called. He's in desperate need. Let's go sing.

When the earthquake happened, all the doors were open, all the stocks came off. The jailer is about to kill himself and they could have said, make my day. Watch him kill himself and head for Thessalonica.

Triumphant. God released us. And that's not what they did.

They saved him. They saved his life. They saved his soul.

And they welcomed this perhaps most undeserving man in Philippi into their eternal family. So I'm going to say singing in the jail, loving the jailer, is the power of the resurrection fruit. That's what I want.

I hope that's what all of Nashville wants. It's a really religious city, you know. Probably pagan to the core underneath, but religion in the Bible belt, but a lot of grumbling goes on here.

And of course, all you people watching are just as bad. It's not about Nashville. It's about human nature.

It's about Piper after being a Christian for 64 years. No, 7, 67 years. So how does that work? What does it look like, Paul? We want this.

We want to sing at midnight after being beaten in jail with our feet in the stalks when we can't sleep. We want this. This is Christianity.

This is not weird. It's weird to murmur if you're a Christian. Here's the way Paul put it twice.

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing to the glory that will be revealed. Romans 8, 18 or 2nd Corinthians 4, 17. For this light momentary affliction, light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory.

Beyond all comparison, I whispered in Johnny's ear. I hope you're watching, Johnny. She told me she'd watch in the hotel.

I whispered in her ear, this is for you. I wanted you to be here when I preach this because this is for you and us if we have any sense. Johnny knows this.

He could preach this better than I could. Jesus, let's just go behind Paul to Jesus for one more minute or two. Jesus made the connection between the resurrection hope and singing in suffering and the resurrection hope and loving the undeserving.

He made those two connections. Paul learned them from Jesus. Let me read them to you.

This is Matthew 5, 11. This is Jesus. Let him say this to you.

Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you, say all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account, strip you of your clothes, beat you with rods, put you in stocks. Rejoice in that day, that midnight moment. Rejoice in that day for great is your reward in heaven.

That's resurrection hope streaming into the moment of your suffering and saying rejoice. If we don't do that something's deeply wrong in our grasp of the sovereign goodness of God. Here's the other place where he made the connection between hope and loving the undeserving.

Johnny quoted this. Well, actually it was on a video on her website that I saw her quote. But when you give a feast, invite the poor.

This is Luke 14, 14. When you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, the jailers, the slave girl, and you will be blessed because they cannot repay you. Next sentence.

You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just. That is what it means to say for the joy set before you, you invite people to your house who can't pay you back. Get it? Now I assume, I'm almost done.

I assume that I'm surrounded by people who love to sing. Me too. I love to sing.

I wish I could sing. I'll do it anyway. I love to sing.

So, how will we sing when our suffering comes? How will we sing to the Lord and love the jailer when our suffering comes? And I assume you know another thing. Namely, that this lavish setting, Bridgestone Cathedral or whatever they call it, and Gaylord Resort. You understand, don't you, that these few days of living in this lavish, otherworldly, paradisaical, unrealistic setting is an opulent aberration in the Christian life.

You get that, don't you? We, if you don't learn in this posh setting to sing in suffering, Keith and Christian are wasting their lives. I didn't ask him if I could say that. That's just truth.

You don't have to ask about truth. So, I'm pleading with you. What will it be, what will it be that enables us to sing when our suffering comes and love the jailer? And the answer is for the joy that is set before us.

That's the explosive power of the resurrection now. Singing to the Lord in suffering and loving the least deserving. That's not a personality trait.

That's Christianity. Let's pray. No guilt in life.

No fear in death. This is your power, Lord Jesus, in us to sing in suffering and to love the jailer. No power of hell, no scheme of man will ever pluck us from your hand until you return or call us home.

The power to sing in suffering, the power to love the jailer, O risen Christ, pour out this explosive power on us all, I pray in Jesus name. Amen.

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