

The hope of resurrection \* Acts 20:7-12 (Acts 2:42-47)  
July 12, 2020 \* Langford Community Church \* Graham Gladstone

*(Presented as if by an eyewitness)* It was a hot day - the kind of day when just taking a breath leaves your mouth desert dry. The kind of day when a cup of water seems like a sparkling treasure. And the night was just as hot.

And yet there we were - crammed into the upper room of one of the brothers' houses. Standing room only.

But we were thrilled to be there because Paul was there. Paul! - the persecutor turned preacher - was passing through our little town and so we gathered together as the church to break bread and hear him teach.

And we were not disappointed.

He told us how the God and Father of our Lord Jesus has shown him mercy, so that he – Paul - would always stand as an example of God's undeserved mercy. He shared with us the ways the Gospel was changing people all over the world. And he reinforced in us the hope of resurrection - that just as Jesus died and rose again, so too shall we, when we trust in him.

He went on and on, late into the evening, but we didn't care. We were delighted to hear the good news about Jesus from a man who knew it from personal experience, from the depths of his being.

He spoke with such power and yet such humility. This man had been transformed by the hope of the Gospel.

Around midnight though, a cry of alarm swept through the gathering. Out on the edges, a young man named Eutychus had nodded off. The heat of the room got to him I think - and the many lamps we had burning made it all the more toasty and warm - and he fell asleep. Sadly though, he was sitting in the only space available to him - a window - and so when he fell asleep, he fell to his death.

People gasped in horror to see him fall and a sense of panic gripped the crowd. The power of Paul's teaching seemed to be eclipsed by this awful tragedy. And yet as people milled about, I noticed Paul pause and bow his head and then down the stairs he went.

I made my way over to the stairs and followed Paul down. When I reached the ground, Paul was already bent over poor Eutychus, praying again. And then all of a sudden, Eutychus gasped and opened his eyes and Paul shouted up to the upper room – 'do not be alarmed. His life is in him. He is alive.'

When Eutychus walked back up the stairs, it was an emotional moment. Tears of sorrow turned to tears of joy and people burst into song, praising God for this miracle we'd all seen with our own eyes.

We thought about calling a night but Paul insisted – 'we're here to break bread and fellowship together and that's what we're going to do.' So we sat down to eat.

Paul broke the bread and passed around wine, and I'll tell you, the words 'do this in remembrance of me' never seemed so real. We broke bread together and then ate together and then Paul picked up

right where he was when Eutychus fell, buoyed by the miraculous demonstration of God's resurrecting power. He spoke right through until the next morning and left us wanting more.

Never before had the Gospel seemed so real and I will never forget that miraculous night.

*(Graham speaking)* What a story eh? A tragic death, a miraculous resurrection - it must have radically altered every person there.

But what about us? What does Eutychus's story mean for us?

Well certainly there are people who have taken this as a warning not to fall asleep during sermons (or against preaching too long!) but frankly, I really think that Eutychus becomes for us an object lesson in the hope of resurrection.

When we believe in Jesus, we have the hope of resurrection. Just as Jesus was raised to life, just as Eutychus was raised to life, so too shall rise we when we trust in Jesus. Our hope is not floating off to heavenly clouds where we live on cream cheese and angel food cake; our bodies will be raised indestructible, perfect, able to do things in eternity that we can never do now. That's the heart and soul of Christian faith that gives us confidence to live in this world, come what may. You will rise again in a glorified body.

And we need to be a church that is focused on sharing that hope of resurrection. There are some churches out there that are living only for this life. They're acting essentially like a social club. They're more hung up on the colour of the carpets and the style of the music than on the Gospel and they miss out on what should really be the main thing for us as a church – living in the hope of resurrection.

And this is where this message ties our sermon series all together. A church in action should share the hope of resurrection. A church in action shares the hope of resurrection.

An inactive church focuses on human things, not the things of God. An inactive church doesn't serve together or spend much time together – they're much more concerned about their own interests. An inactive church rarely prays together. They're more interested in doing things THEIR way than asking what God would have them do and so they have very little hope of sharing the hope of resurrection with the world.

But that's exactly what we need to do. Jesus died and rose again to give resurrection life to the countless sleepers out there who are going through life oblivious to God and their need for Him. Countless Eutychuses sleep-walking through this life with no hope for the next.

We want to be a church in action, sharing the hope of resurrection.

To do that, we need to focus our attention as a church on the priorities that we see in Acts – teaching and fellowship and breaking bread and prayer. We saw that all through Acts didn't we? - teaching here and through the Jerusalem council and the Berean church, fellowship with Dorcas and the Deacon's food program, breaking of bread here in Acts 20 and prayer for boldness and for Peter in jail. Those were priorities for the first generation church and they need to be for us too.

And I have the sense that they are. I get the sense that you want to grow through teaching, that you want to serve each other and the world, that you want to share resources with each other and that you want to pray together for God's will. So let's keep at it. Let's think about how we can leverage what we already do to advance. And let's ask God to make us more and more single-minded in our pursuit of His will.

You know, I'll be honest. I've noticed a few husbands nodding off in church before. And I've had a few wives apologize for their husbands nodding off. But you know what? The center of our faith is worth staying awake for. The hope of resurrection. The certainty that though our bodies may fail us now, God will raise us up in perfect, super-capable bodies.

Let's be a church in action, sharing that hope of resurrection.