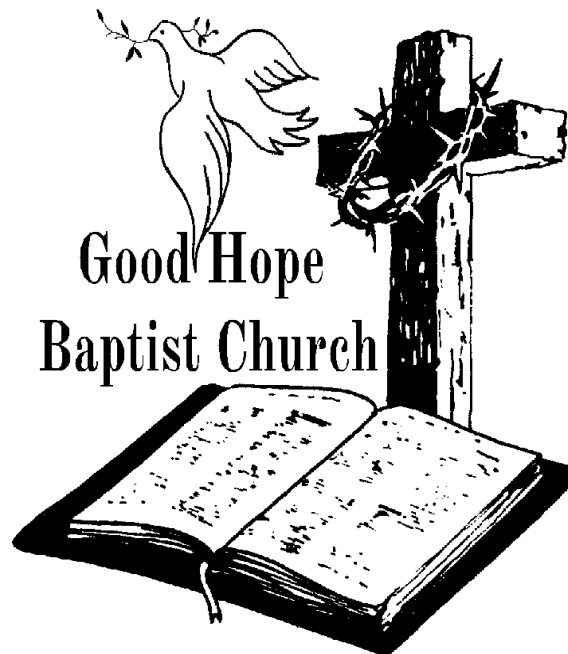


An Easter Pleading

Romans 12:1; Matthew 5:13



Good Hope
Baptist Church

Living Together In The Love Of God

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FOCAL Read Responsively Romans 12:1 ^{KJV} I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, [which is] your reasonable service.

Matthew 5:13 ^{KJV} Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

In Churches all throughout America today congregations will be focused on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Many pastors will preach out of the text:

Matthew 28:6 ^{KJV} {Jesus} is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

I love that text. It is a beautiful text, and it emphasizes why Christianity - among all the religions of the world - is the only way unto God. We who are Christians serve a risen Savior. We sing that truth in the wonderful song, *He Lives*:

**I serve a risen Savior, He's in the world today;
I know that He is living whatever men may say;
I see His hand of mercy; I hear His voice of cheer,
And just the time I need Him, He's always near.**

**He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!
He walks with me and talks with me
Along life's narrow way.
He lives, He lives, salvation to impart!**

**You ask my how I know He lives?
He lives within my heart.**

Jesus Christ has risen from the grave. All of the other so called religious leaders - whether Mohammed, Buddha, Confucius, Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddy, Taz Russel - only Jesus rose from the grave! We know He rose from the grave, because there were many early Christians who saw Him and died professing what they saw. The Apostle Paul said:

1 Corinthians 15:3-8 ^{KJV} For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: 5 And that he was seen ...

This is the Gospel of Christ! Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and was buried, and rose again the third day. And Beloved, **He was seen!** Who saw Jesus? **He was seen by Peter, and the other Disciples.** The Bible tells us that **over five hundred believers saw and touched Jesus following His resurrection.** He was seen by His **stepbrother James**, a man who did not even believe that Jesus was the Savior until he saw Him in the resurrection. Jesus was also **seen by the Apostles one last time as He stood before them in Jerusalem**, saying:

Acts 1:8 ^{KJV} But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part

of the earth.

The Apostles saw Jesus **ascend into Heaven (Acts 1:9).** Listen to me! **Jesus was seen by Paul on Damascus Road** as he was brought to salvation. Jesus broke Paul on the Damascus Road, so that he cried out, **"Lord, what will You have me to do?"**.

Every believer who saw the risen Jesus went out telling others of Him. And every believer *died horrible deaths* proclaiming the same message the angel proclaimed at the tomb: **"He has risen, just as He said!"**

What Is Our Goal?

Illustrate I saw a sign over the register of a restaurant once, and I really liked what was written on it. It read:

"We are a restaurant, and we serve good food. This is our business. This is not a Bank. We do not loan money, nor do we cash checks."

When I read that sign I thought to myself, **"I wish every person who calls themselves "Christian" were that clear on our reason for being!"** There are so many people in the world today who think that the goal of our faith is just to get to Heaven. Listen to me: That **CAN'T BE THE GOAL!**

If Heaven were our goal, God would have already taken the Christian there. Once you called out to Jesus

to be saved, believing that He died and rose again the third day to make payment for your sins, then if Heaven is the goal why didn't God take us to Heaven? If Heaven is our goal then why do we all fight so hard to stay alive and on this earth?

Heaven isn't the goal - it's the end of the trip. What is the goal? The *individual* goal is that each one of us **be like Jesus**. Our *collective* goal is to win others to Christ so they too can **be like Jesus, and in so doing build the Kingdom of God. We are in the Kingdom building business.**

I want you to understand that *we do not build His Kingdom in our power*. The Bible tells us:

Psalms 127:1 ^{KJV}... **Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it:**

God is building His Kingdom one believer at a time. It is God Who causes us to be **born into His family**. Look at your focal text. The Apostle says:

FOCAL Romans 12:1 ^{KJV} **I beseech you therefore, brethren**

Illustrate "Brethren" or "brothers and sisters" is a FAMILY word. In the physical world I have a brother and two sisters. They are my family not by *my* choice (though I do love them), but they are my family by birth. **You enter a physical family totally apart from any act of your own will.** I am a "Buffaloe" not because I have horns and smell funny but because my momma and

daddy are Buffaloes. My brother and sisters are all Buffaloes. We are "**brethren**". **Now if you have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation you are my *spiritual* brothers and sisters. We are born a second time through the activity of God. (John 3:6-8).**

Jesus said "**You MUST be born a second time**". (John 3:7). You are born into the Kingdom of God by believing that

John 3:16 ^{KJV} **For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.**

Listen my Beloved:

1 Just as Jesus Christ rose from the darkness of His tomb, every believer in Jesus rises from the darkness of this world!

The Bible says that our Resurrected Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ has **called us**

1 Peter 2:9 ^{KJV} **out of darkness into His marvelous light:**

2 Just as our Resurrected Savior broke the power of Satan, we who are His are brought from

Acts 26:18 ^{KJV} **the power of Satan unto God, that {we} may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in {Christ}.**

Satan has no hold on me, and has no hold on any of God's children. **We are products of His Resurrection, promised victory and eternity *because He lives!***

3 Just as sin and death had no hold on our Jesus, sin and death have no hold on the Children of God. The Bible tells us:

Romans 6:12-14 ^{KJV} **Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. 13 Neither yield ye your members [as] instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members [as] instruments of righteousness unto God. 14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.**

Oh glorious Grace! We who belong to Christ by faith belong to His Kingdom and His rule. We are not the old dead things we were before. Those of us who are Christians are to ...

FOCAL **Romans 12:1** ^{KJV} ... **present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, [which is] your reasonable service.**

Our Lord Jesus said it this way. He said:

Luke 9:23 ^{KJV}... **If any [man] will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.**

Will you come after the Resurrected Savior? Then **take up your Cross and follow Him**. The world despises the Cross. Satan despises the Cross. You will be despised for carrying the Cross. But only those born again will ever enter Heaven. And those who are born again are called by God to build His Kingdom.

4 Just as the Resurrected Savior *made Himself available to God* we who are His are to make ourselves available to God. Look again at the text:

FOCAL **Romans 12:1** ^{KJV} ... **present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, [which is] your reasonable service.**

Word Study That word "present" is the Greek word PARISTEMI, which means "to yield" or "make yourself available to". Our God uses not the best and the brightest, but He uses *the available*. He used an **available Chaldean named Abraham** to start His earthly Kingdom. God used an **available shepherd named David** to rule His Israel. God used an **available virgin named Mary** to bring forth the Messiah. He used an **available fisherman named Peter** to head up the Apostles. And God used an **available Pharisee named Paul** to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles.

If God's individual goal for my life is to make me like Jesus, then I make myself available by talking to Him (prayer) and learning of Him (Bible reading). I must myself available for teaching (go to Church) and learn

not to be selfish (give).

We Are Not Called To Be Good For Nothing

Illustrate A little boy asked his mother, "Momma, will you give me a dollar if I can be a good boy?" She said without thinking, "Son, why don't you be good for nothing like your father?"

Jesus warned us as Christians that we are to be good for something, not good for nothing. Speaking of Christians He said:

Focal **Matthew 5:13** ^{KJV} **Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.**

Illustrate When Jesus used "salt" to describe Christians, He knew exactly what He was saying. Salt is very common in our world today, but back in Christ's day salt was a rarity. I am told that back before they figured out how to purify salt and extract it from the earth that wars were fought over salt mines. As a matter of fact, where there was no coin minted, people were often paid with salt. That's where the phrase "**He's not worth his salt**" came from.

The Christian is to be the **salt of the earth**. We are Kingdom builders, and are to be about the business of being good for something. We are to be salty, yielded to God and resistant to the world and to Satan. The Scripture says:

Context **Romans 12:2 KJV** **...be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what [is] that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.**

Illustrate The reason why has fallen so far away from God is because too often **professing Christians are good for nothing**. A recent survey done by the **Barna Research Group** found that:

"... one-quarter of born-again Christians say that all people are eventually saved or accepted by God (25%) and that it doesn't matter what religious faith you follow because they all teach the same lessons (26%). Most surprising is that an even larger percentage of born-again Christians (40%) indicated that they believe Christians and Muslims worship the same God."

The salt has lost its saltiness! Too many believers look and act *exactly like the world*. The Lord warned us that we must not blend with the world. We must not **be good for nothing, or else we will be trodden under foot of men**. That's happening today.

Salt activates, irritates, and penetrates.

Salt Activates Salt in the shaker has no value. It must get out of the shaker and into the plate. We must carry our faith outside of these four walls and into the world! **Our Lord Jesus Christ didn't stay in the Temple, and**

He didn't stay in the Tomb. He got out and shared the Kingdom Gospel with those around Him - and so must we! The Christian way of life is a fascinating way of life - and we need to share that with the world. I am excited to be a Christian - aren't you?

Illustrate A preacher went to the doctor. "**Doctor, you've got to give me something to help with my snoring.**" The doctor asked, "**Is your snoring keeping your wife awake?**" He replied, "**No, it's keeping my congregation awake.**" Dear friends, there are entirely too many people - preachers included - that are more excited about food or a football game than they are about Jesus. But HE is the Resurrected Savior and HE is the only Way unto Life. If you're not following Jesus, you're just not living!

Salt Irritates If you have ever had a cut on your hand and have gotten salt in it, you know that salt irritates. It burns! Jesus told us that we are not to **be conformed to this world**, but to be salt. He said:

John 15:19 ^{KJV} **If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you....**

It is amazing that so many who profess to be Christian will modify the Word of God in order to be acceptable to the world. We cannot compromise His Word! The Christian and the world will always be at odds with one another. Listen Beloved: We are not to attack the world, but we are to uphold the Truth of God's Kingdom

Gospel! When hated, we are not to hate back. We are salt and light. The Bible says:

Context Romans 12:17-18 ^{KJV} **Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. 18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.**

If possible, we are to live at peace with all men. We are not suicide bombers, as the Children of Mohammed are. We do not convert people at the point of a sword. We are **salt and light, followers of the Risen Savior.** We trust the living Christ. When attacked what do we do? The Bible tells us:

Context Romans 12:19-21 ^{KJV} **Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but [rather] give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance [is] mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. 20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. 21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.**

Overcome evil with good, and leave vengeance to our God! We will - by faith - overcome.

Salt Penetrates A small amount of salt will penetrate and permeate what it is put in. It blends without losing its saltiness. We need more Christians to stand up for Jesus Christ in America today!

In the first century the Church stood up and followed a resurrected Savior - and changed the world around

them. We must do the same thing in this century and at this time.

**We Must Not Forget Our Goal:
God's Kingdom For God's Glory**

Thom Rainer, the President & CEO of Lifeway Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention said:

"The unchurched really want to see a Christian live incarnationally. Most of them will gladly listen to us if we show love toward them and toward other Christians. Most of them desire to see a Christian live his or her faith as well as speak about it."

A *New York Times* article dated August 2, 1985 gave this report. Listen to it carefully:

NEW ORLEANS, Aug. 1— A guest at a party for lifeguards celebrating their first drowning-free swimming season in memory drowned Tuesday, the director of the New Orleans Recreation Department said today. Madlyn Richard, the department director, said the body of Jerome Moody was found on the bottom at the deep end of a department pool as the party ended. She said Mr. Moody, who was 31 years old, was not a lifeguard, but four lifeguards were on duty at the party.

Think about that for a minute. A man drowns in a swimming pool surrounded by lifeguards - and isn't discovered until the party is over. **I don't mean to be**

harsh, but dear friends, how many people around us are going to hell while we look the other way and hope that *someone else* does something? We who are Christians are to be the salt of the earth. If we will not do our job, then in time we will suffer - and are beginning to suffer even now. Jesus said:

Focal Matthew 5:13 ^{KJV} Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

Christians today are being walked on. Why? Because we have not stood up for the Risen Savior. The world will not respect an apathetic believer.

Our country is at a crossroads, and we are not far from utter destruction! We as the salt **MUST** work. We must stand up for Jesus and do as He calls us to do.

Illustrate Based on recent Supreme Court rulings the following is a rule of Law in our country.

1 You may not display a Cross on public property *unless it's on fire*, in which case such action is protected by the First Amendment of the Constitution as a free expression of speech.

2 In most states a minor may abort an unborn child without her parents consent, yet without her parents permission she may not go on a school field trip to the zoo.

3 In public schools you may distribute condoms to twelve year old children without parental consent, but you may not give them a Bible under any circumstances.

4 If you want to use a dog for medical experimentation the animal rights groups will sue you. Yet there are many who are suing for the right to use the tissue and stem cells of aborted babies for the same purpose.

John Adams wrote, **“Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other.”**

I am praying that we as God's Church will stand up and stand together, following our Risen Savior for the Glory of God and the HEALING of our nation.



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Matthew 28:6; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8; Acts 1:8; Acts 1:9

What Is Our Goal?

Psalms 127:1; Romans 12:1; John 3:6-8; John 3:7; John 3:16; 1 Peter 2:9; Acts 26:18; Romans 6:12-14; Romans 12:1; Luke 9:23; Romans 12:1

1 Just as Jesus Christ _____

2 Just as our Resurrected Savior _____

3 Just as sin and death had no hold on our Jesus _____

4 Just as the Resurrected Savior *made Himself available to God* _____

We Are Not Called To Be Good For Nothing

Matthew 5:13; Romans 12:2; John 15:19; Romans 12:17-18; Romans 12:19-21 _____

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