

If you are a fan of the royal family in Great Britain, you’ve no doubt heard the news about Kate. Kate Middleton, the Princess of Wales, has been diagnosed with an unspecified form of cancer. That announcement was on the heels of her father-in-law King Charles also being diagnosed with cancer. But the Princess of Wales was in the news just before her cancer diagnosis for something that now is – in comparison – quite trivial and unimportant. You probably heard that on March 10, Mother’s Day in Great Britain, Kate apparently sent out a photo of her with their three children that wasn’t reality. She looked so healthy and happy, but people who study doctored up pictures saw pretty quickly that the picture wasn’t real. It was touched up a bit. It was altered. It was a fake!

Do you know if the pictures of your friends on social media with the comments echoing, “Oh, so pretty!” are reality? Or, with a little filter, a little photoshop, a little computer magic it looks like reality but isn’t. Or, if you are a high school teacher and your student hands in a grammatically perfect paper, do you recognize ChatGPT (a natural language processing chatbox driven by generative artificial intelligence)? In other words, that paper was AI. It’s not reality. Or, you find out that someone got a hold of your personal financial information and took out a second loan on your house. Their documents, their info, their claims were false, fictitious, fictional. All kinds of things in our world are not reality.

But 2,000 years ago, on a Sunday in early spring, no one photoshopped a picture of Jesus. No one stole his identity by getting access to his social security number. No one had a Varjo XR4, the most advanced Virtual Reality headset on the planet. And no, Jesus didn’t have an identical twin brother either. What the four gospel writers Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all reported was reality. This Jesus, the one who died, is alive.

Why is this significant for you – *every one* of you? The odds are slim that like Kate Middleton you will be hateful comments from around the world because you photoshopped picture of your kids. For you and me, however, the odds are very good that we will be in the same boat as Kate or King Charles with a cancer diagnosis. According to the American Cancer Society, on average 40% of the men in this room will be diagnosed with cancer at some point in their lifetime, and 38% of the women in this room will be diagnosed with cancer at some point in their lifetime. Based on our attendance here today, that’s about 46 of us. The reality of Jesus’ resurrection has direct meaning and application to you – even the 60% and the 62% of you who will never get cancer. Don’t you see? We are all *mortal*! The healthiest, the youngest, the ones with the best genes – all of us – will one day no longer be here, whether we get cancer or not. Our mortality is reality!

Mortal means that something went horribly wrong after God breathed life in Adam and made Eve from Adam. They were made to live forever, never age, never weaken in any way, and never die. Their life, not just physical, but spiritual – being completely in sync with God, one with him, in fellowship or communion with him – was to last forever in perfection.

The Apostle Paul wrote in our words from 1 Corinthians 15, **“For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also comes through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.”** *Those few words hold all the tragedy and sorrow of mankind’s existence in this fallen world. They also contain all the triumph and joy that’s waiting for us in the next.*

The Apostle Paul’s point is simple, it’s two-fold: **1) when Adam rebelled against his Creator, mortality came to this world** – it isn’t just humans that die, but all animals die, plants and trees die. Corruption, decay, devolution are realities that we live with. In plain words, every one and every thing gets worse until it dies. Death was sin’s penalty from Day 1 and it still is. And since we follow in the footsteps of our parents – we all keep on sinning even if we try to stop. The truth remains: in Adam all die.

I trust you are familiar with Sodd’s law, also called Finagle’s law, or Melody’s law. You and I usually call it something different: we refer to it with the name of aerospace engineer Edward A. Murphy, Jr. (not Eddie Murphy, the actor) who made this law more famous when he said, “If there are two or more ways to do something and one of those results in a catastrophe, then someone will do it that way.”^[1] Murphy’s law is a real thing. “if something can go wrong, it will.” And ultimately it ends or it leads to an end that God never, ever wanted. Murphy’s law is life in a sinful, broken world. It’s what God needed to and wanted to fix.

¹ https://todayinsci.com/M/Murphy_Edward/MurphyEdward-Quotations.htm#google_vignette

2) Life is found only in Jesus Christ. Because God wanted his creatures to be with him forever, he chose to jump into our world and become one of us to restore us to him, to undo the curse, to bring life to mortals. Jesus, the Son of God, the one who became one of us met the demands of “Love God with all your heart!” and “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus was what we aren’t. And what we are, Jesus volunteered to be punished for. Two days ago – what we call Good Friday – we commemorated his unfair death, a lynching, really. But this was God’s rescue plan – Jesus was dying in the place of and the substitute for every single human being. Yes, in your place too. With his death Jesus defeated sin – its curse, its guilt, its punishment, its power. But one more thing was needed.

“The last enemy to be destroyed is death,” Paul wrote. Only God could do it. And he did. Death being destroyed hinges on the reality of Jesus coming out of his grave alive. If his body is still in a tomb on the outskirts of Jerusalem, then you are I are wasting our time today. Then our dream of being with God when we die in a place called heaven is bogus, a sham, deception, a façade, a joke. If Jesus is still dead so is our hope of ever being alive after our heart stops beating. If Jesus is still dead, our living with God one day is NOT a reality.

That point is EXACTLY what the Apostle Paul was making in this whole chapter of 1 Corinthians 15. But Paul reminded his readers in Corinth that over 500 people had witnessed Jesus alive – not just eleven disciples and four women, but 500! They were still living to verify that they saw Jesus! Now Paul insists that Jesus being alive means Jesus being 100% God is a reality! (Remember he predicted that he would rise again on the third day and he did it.) Our sins being washed away is a reality! Greatest of all, our resurrection, yes, each of us walking out of a grave like Jesus did is a reality. **“In Christ, all will be made alive”** is not merely referring to all people rising from the dead on the day Jesus returns (his second coming). He’s talking about the reality of life for everyone who puts their trust in this Jesus. You will be made alive – not just your soul, but physically with your body made perfect – to live with God forever. That is resurrection reality. That is your resurrection reality.

A couple years ago, Jonny and Caterina Robinson who live in England with their two sons, Josh and Buddy, went through a family tragedy. Willow, their cat, went outside during some really heavy storms and didn’t come back. They went up and down every street, plastering the neighborhood with posters, hoping they would find her. Ten days later they found her, actually the remains of a dead cat on a busy road. They took those remains to the vet, hoping that they didn’t belong to Willow, but the vet confirmed they did. So they had a memorial service, and buried them in their garden. The boys were so upset that they stayed home one day from school. Jonny, the dad, couldn’t sleep at night. He started taking long walks just to clear his mind. And two days after they buried Willow, he went out for a walk and came back a few minutes later holding something. He was holding Willow. Willow was alive. He found her out in the yard by their shed. And it really was Willow, which meant ... they had buried someone else’s cat in their garden. It also meant that, in one moment, *everything changed*. In one moment, tears of sorrow turned to tears of joy. In one moment, hearts that were heavy turned happy. In one moment, screams of pain turned to shouts of delight. In one moment, something they never imagined could happen ... did. It all changed in an instant.

Everything has changed for us too. Every promise that God gives you is true. Death is done. Whether you live to be 100 or not, your life will end with being with God, all because of the resurrection of Jesus. You also have a completely different outlook on life because the God of life, who defeated death, is on your side and says his victory is your victory. That all changed in a instant on Easter morning.

We are all going to leave here today – if you stay for our dinner you’ll leave here full – and go back to our own reality. Your life, your challenges, your disappointments – your reality. On this day of celebrating life, you’d think everyone would be overjoyed. But you know, of course, that some people are planning a funeral today. All those people in Baltimore on or near the Francis Scott Key Bridge early Tuesday morning assumed complete safety was their reality, until a 9-million pound ship hit the bridge at 9 miles per hour. A collapsed bridge, cancer even in someone who is rich and famous, or other horrible things in this life are realities even on Easter.

But in spite of whatever sad, tragic, painful, or harsh reality you might face, the resurrection of your Savior, your Good Shepherd, your Friend brings you a reality that no can change, or steal, or turn into something that really isn’t true. I heard a story about a missionary in Africa telling about a new believer, a former Muslim, who when asked why he believes in Christianity replied, “Well, it’s like this. Suppose you were going down the road and suddenly the road forked in two directions, and you didn’t know which way to go, and there at the fork in the road were two men, one dead and one alive—which one would you ask which way to go?” The reality is Jesus is alive. He lives, and you are loved and forgiven by God himself. Jesus’ resurrection reality is now your resurrection reality. One day it will all be clear and we will be forever grateful. Amen.