

“We are Resurrection People. Alleluia Amen!”

*Mark 10:17-31, John 11:25, Psalm 23:3, 1 Peter 1:3-4, 1 Corinthians 15:53-58, Colossians 1:18-20
& Ecclesiastes 3:11*

Pastor James York

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Children’s Sermon

Good morning we are resurrection people meaning we believe life follows death, light follows darkness. We are resurrection people meaning we believe our future is joy, love and peace. Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus is resurrected. Today in worship every time someone says, “*We are resurrection people,*” everyone will respond by saying “*Alleluia Amen!*” Let us try it. We are resurrection people. *Alleluia Amen!* Alleluia means praise the Lord. Amen means certain, sure, reliable, to be trusted. We are resurrection people. *Alleluia Amen!* Since this is good news, I hope everyone will say *Alleluia Amen!* excited, bursting with joy, perhaps shouting, perhaps with arms raised. We are resurrection people. *Alleluia Amen!* Please pray with me. Good morning God, thank you for resurrection, for light after darkness, for life after death, for a future of love, joy, and peace. Thank you that we are resurrection people. *Alleluia Amen!*

Prayer for Understanding Risen Lord, transform our hearts with resurrection joy. Help us listen, experience and believe the depth of your grace, the enormity of your love and the resurrecting glory of Easter. Amen.

We are resurrection people. *Alleluia Amen!* No matter what happens to us eternal, resurrection life is our future. No matter who, or what, we lose all will be found. Every sunrise is a reminder of resurrection and that every darkness will be followed with glorious light. Every Sunday is an Easter celebration of the abundance of ever-expanding forms of life that are triumphing over every fleeting form of death. Jesus said: **John 11:25 NLT “I am the resurrection and the life.”** Scripture proclaims: **Psalm 23:3 NRSV “God restores my soul.” 1 Peter 1:3-4 NLT “God raised Jesus from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.” 1 Corinthians 15:53-58 MSG select phrases “Let me tell you something wonderful, a mystery. In the resurrection scheme of things, this has to happen: everything perishable taken off the shelves and replaced by the imperishable, this mortal replaced by the immortal. Then the saying will come true: Death swallowed by triumphant Life! Who got the last word, oh, Death? Oh, Death, who is afraid of you now? It was sin that made death so frightening and law-code guilt that gave sin its leverage, its destructive power. But now in a single victorious stroke of Life, all three—sin, guilt, death—are gone, the gift of our Master, Jesus Christ. Thank God!” Colossians 1:18-20 MSG “Jesus was supreme in the beginning and—leading the resurrection parade—Jesus is supreme in the end. From beginning to end Jesus is there, towering far above everything, everyone. So spacious is Jesus, so expansive, that everything of God finds its proper place in Jesus without crowding. Not only that, but all the broken and dislocated pieces of the universe—people and things, animals and atoms—get properly fixed and fit together in vibrant harmonies.”** The word of the Lord thanks be to God. We are resurrection people. *Alleluia Amen!*

The theme of the Presbyterian Church USA General Assembly was, *Live into Hope*. Hope is a confident expectancy in the promises of God. God promises, love endures forever. God promises resurrection life. At opening worship, Reverend Professor Dr. Jerry Pillay, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches proclaimed: “Hope is not some shoddy sensational feeling, a romantic gesture or a shallow experience. Instead, hope is grounded in the historical suffering, death, resurrection and ascension of our Lord, Jesus Christ. This hope is real and now, even though hope is something of the

future. Jesus brings love and forgiveness, redemption and restoration, justice and peace, acceptance and inclusion, compassion and mercy. Jesus comes to give life and hope. It is Christ Jesus who gives us the strength to overcome. Be moved by the Spirit to live into hope and find your identity in God and God's plan for humanity. It will not be easy. Living in the Spirit enables, empowers and fuels hope. Amidst hopelessness, fear and despair, we can trust God for the present and the future that all will be well. The hungry will be fed, the oppressed set free, the weak strengthened, the downcast raised up and wars will cease. We live with resurrection hope. Hope that creation will be restored. Hope that justice will come. Hope that peace will come. Hope that forgiveness and healing will take place. Hope that we will all be one in Christ." We are resurrection people. *Alleluia Amen!*

At a robust 6:45am breakfast discussion, Pastor Mark Elsdon invited everyone to live into hope by believing the promise that God is doing a new thing. Dream big, because God is big. This opened a floodgate of inspiring testimonies from Presbyterian congregation innovators. Pastor Mark reminded the gathering: "There is a lot to mourn, we should recognize the sadness, and know that there is also rebirth, resurrection and new opportunities. We are resurrection people." *Alleluia Amen!* Pastor Sharon Core shared how the congregation was struggling, the building was a financial burden and the community was desperate for affordable housing. Arlington Presbyterian Church partnered with a development company to provide 173 units of affordable house with perpetual presence for the church as part of it. A rural congregation shared how their church has become a community center offering a hub of resources for the community. They named and acknowledged the suffering. They worked with the community to broker resources. Now the church is the heart and soul of the community. Pastor Darius Bultena said: "We are hyper-focused on how to turn the church around, but that is the wrong question. The question is how do we get involved in the neighborhood and then the church follows it." Pastor Sharon said: "Sometimes we can treat our buildings as idols. And while it is lovely to have a place to physically gather, we worship the God who has set us loose in the neighborhood."

Nineteen-year-old Sarah Mibulano was a refugee supported by Emmanuel Faith Chapel, a Presbyterian new worshipping community, where she sings in the choir and teaches youth. Sarah was commissioned a YAAD, Young Adult Advisory Delegate to General Assembly. Moments before her flight to General Assembly, she received her United States citizenship. Sarah said: "This is my country. It feels amazing."

Reverend, Dr. Victor Aloyo, President of Columbia Theological Seminary, concluded his sermon which concluded General Assembly, by proclaiming: "God makes the impossible possible. It does not make life easier or answer all of the questions we may have, but it makes new life possible. For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible. We are creating an environment where we testify to the presence of God's grace in our lives. We will not be mired in fear and scarcity. May the joy of the Lord surround you and keep us all in this new day." We are resurrection people. *Alleluia Amen!*

Victor began his sermon by asking: "How can we find ourself again to live more fully? Do I need to do anything to experience life more abundantly right now? When were you restless and longing for something? The goal is to find fulfillment and vitality in the present moment." All of this, and more, is found in the question the person asked Jesus. "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" It is a good question. How, when, why, have you asked it? How are you living into hope? How does your life reveal resurrection? Jesus showed the person a way forward, a new beginning, a new day. "It is likely that you have asked that question when budget shortfalls were threatening and church members were declining, when grief stifles your spirit, and when the life you lived was not what you wanted. How can I find myself again to live more fully; that is the question the person asked. They knew there was something beyond their control that could explain why they existed." Jesus replied. "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible." We are resurrection people." *Alleluia Amen!*

Victor said: “To move forward, to make a fresh start, what might you, what might the PC(USA) have to let go of to experience this new day? Is there anything that you or I can do to accomplish what seems impossible? Is not that what our Lord is offering us every day? In order to achieve a new way of life, discarding the old ways of thinking is crucial. Such a letting go involves not only discarding monetary wealth but also anger, fear, guilt, task lists, power, unwarranted expectations, ingrained habits and other unhealthy behaviors and attitudes. We demonize the rich person, but our lives are filled with stuff,” Victor said. “I like my stuff; don’t you? Whenever something I have is taken away, I grieve because the pattern of life I have been accustomed to is taken away.” A new day is dawning. God makes the impossible possible. Every death is followed by glorious resurrection life. We are resurrection people. *Alleluia Amen!*

The gospel of Mark proclaims: **Mark 10:17-31 NLT** “As Jesus was starting out on his way to Jerusalem, a man came running up to Jesus, knelt down, and asked, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “Why do you call me good?” Jesus asked. “Only God is truly good. But to answer your question, you know the commandments: ‘You must not murder. You must not commit adultery. You must not steal. You must not testify falsely. You must not cheat anyone. Honor your father and mother.’” “Teacher,” the man replied, “I’ve obeyed all these commandments since I was young.” Looking at the man with love for him. “There is still one thing you have not done,” Jesus told him. “Go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” At this the man’s face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God!” This amazed them. But Jesus said again, “Dear children, it is very hard for those to trust in riches to enter the Kingdom of God. In fact, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!” The disciples were astounded. “Then who in the world can be saved?” they asked. Jesus looked at them intently and said, “Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But not with God. Everything is possible with God.” Then Peter began to speak up. “We have given up everything to follow you,” Peter said. “Yes,” Jesus replied, “and I assure you that everyone who has given up house or sibling or parent or child or property, for my sake and for the Good News, will receive now in return a hundred times as many houses, siblings, parents, children, and property—along with persecution. And in the world to come that person will have eternal life. But many who are the greatest now will be least important then, and those who seem least important now will be the greatest then.”

The person was rich. They enjoyed stuff. They liked being in control. They accumulated wealth to buy safety and ensure retirement. Jesus’ comment to sell everything is probably hyperbole, an exaggerate, to get everyone’s attention, to drive the point home. Idolatry is placing anything above God. Idolatry is seeking anything more than seeking God. Idolatry is despair that death will not be resurrected. Jesus’ teaching is likely, sell enough that you love God more than you love stuff, that you love people more than your personal pleasure. Is this what happened when the congregation gave up control of their building and shared the land to provide 173 units of affordable housing? At first, did their faces fall? Initially, did they go away sad? Sometimes resurrection comes after we let go.

We are to put ourselves in the shoes of the rich person. We are to ask, how can I find myself again to live more fully? What do I enjoy more than God? What do I need to let go? What makes me sad? How can I live into hope? How am I being resurrected?

Scripture proclaims grace, God’s unconditional love. God doing the impossible. In the coming world, all will have abundant, eternal, resurrection life. The greatest will be the least; the least, the greatest; the first, last; the last, first; which is a way of proclaiming all will be equal, all will be one in

community. There will be no hierarchy. No one will be left out. All will belong. All will feast at the Lord's table.

Victor said: "Scripture does not say the rich person refused to follow Jesus' instructions, but that they walked off with a heavy heart. Upon returning home, they may have sold their belongings. The process may have taken them months or years; there is no way for us to know. The issue is not what they did or did not do, it is all about us and what we are willing to do to accept the fullness of life and the abundance of God's grace."

Peter is in a similar state of being as the rich person. Peter said: "We have given up everything to follow you, Jesus." Peter is one step ahead of the rich person. Peter was sad, his face fell, when he gave up comfort, control, and stuff to follow Jesus. And Peter is still wrestling. Was it what God wanted? Jesus assured Peter, the rich person and assures us, that we will receive hundred times more, that is resurrection.

Who can be resurrected? Who can be saved? **Jesus looked at them intently and said, "Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But not with God. Everything is possible with God."**

Ecclesiastes lists seasons then proclaims: **Ecclesiastes 3:11 "God has made everything beautiful for its own time. God has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end."** In every season, God is drawing us toward marvelous, eternal, resurrection life. Jesus speaks of these seasons as the unforced rhythms of grace. Jesus is always with us recovering our life.

Resurrection is all around us. Resurrection is in our essence. Resurrection is in most fairy tales, novels, and movies. A person overcomes obstacles, that is resurrection. An unlikely hero saves the world, that is resurrection. A person discovers who they are, that is resurrection. Someone finds love, that is resurrection. Truth prevails over lies, generosity over greed, perseverance over difficulties, goodness over hate, peace over fear, grace over revenge, that is resurrection. Wonder, awe, opportunity after drudgery, grief, desolation, that is resurrection. Community after war, that is resurrection. Wholeness after brokenness, that is resurrection. God makes the impossible, possible. We will live into hope. We will enjoy the fullness of life. We will rejoice in the light. We will be saved. We will be resurrected. We are resurrection people. *Alleluia Amen!*