

1. Dismiss RK (Clap)

2. Welcome Guests

- We are really excited about you being here today, because God is really excited about you being here.
- If this is your first time with us, we hope you received the gift we have for you from our Connections Team (If not, stop by our welcome tent). In that bag, you will find information about our RHC App.
- We would love for everyone to take 30 seconds to fill the CONNECT CARD you received when you walked in today. We not only want to CONNECT WITH YOU and find out how amazing you are [you are amazing, right?], but we want to know how we can serve you and pray for you. Please drop it by the Connect Center in the Lobby or at the Welcome Tent outside on your way out today.

EASTER SLIDE

Isn't this a great weekend in Boston?! Not only did we have an amazing service on Good Friday, as we remembered the death of Jesus that he might bring us to God, and not only did we have a blast hosting Egg Hunts at 5 locations around the city, and not only is tomorrow Patriot's Day and Marathon Monday in the greatest city on the planet, but today is the greatest day of the weekend, as we celebrate the greatest day in history, that changed all of history, when Jesus of Nazareth decided 3 days in tomb was long enough, rose from the dead, and walked out of that grave!

As we turn our attention to God's love letter to us, called the Bible, the question I want you to consider today is this: "What Do You See?"

"What Do You See?"

Ephesian 1:15-23

There are few greater gifts in life than the gift of sight! This week I discovered some merciful people in Florida who provide free cataract surgery to those in need. What did they name their nonprofit? "VISION IS PRICELESS."

It's hard to disagree. [Just close your eyes for a minute. Imagine spending the next 30 minutes without vision. What about the next 30 years? What about a lifetime?]

If you lost your physical sight, how much would you pay to regain it?!

For the 76% of adults with imperfect sight, we know the incredible value of corrective lenses and 20/20 vision.

This is readily apparent when it comes to our physical sight, but it's even more important when it comes to our spiritual sight. God made us to see, physically and spiritually. God wants us to see the world, to see one another, to see our own lives. - with clear spiritual vision.

When you look at life, "**What Do You See?**"

We are going to turn our attention to the book Bible of Ephesians where a brilliant and courageous man named Paul, prayed a prayer for an increase in the clarity of their spiritual vision.

Ephesians 1:15-23 (text displayed)

As we consider these words, I hope you will...

The Point: See what God offers you through Jesus.

Paul begins his prayer by expressing gratitude for these Jesus followers in Ephesus. He names two primary reasons:

1. Their faith in Jesus. They made Jesus their ultimate priority. God was now the reality from which everything else derived its meaning and fulfillment. Their love for God changed the way, #2...
2. They loved people. I'm just telling you, when you experience God's love, when you live and walk in it day by day, YOU WILL love the people around you in a qualitatively different way.

Then, in vv. 17-18, Paul asks God to enlighten the "eyes of their hearts" through the work of his Holy Spirit. Again, we can enjoy perfect physical vision *and miss* the spiritual significance of why we're here, what life is about, and where we're going. There's seeing (with our EYES), and then there's SEEING (with our HEARTS).

Helen Keller, a woman born deaf and blind, became one of the most influential people of the 20th century. She once famously said, "The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision."

God wants us to live with vision, HIS VISION. God wants us to know, understand and experience the three things he talks about in verses 18-23: HOPE, LOVE, and POWER.

"WHAT DO YOU SEE?"

I want to ask you three very important questions about your spiritual sight. The first is this:

1. When you look at tomorrow, do you see hope? (1:18)

First, Paul wants them to "*know what is the hope which he has called you*"

When we talk about hope, we're talking about a confident expectation that our deepest desires will be fulfilled.

Hope is so important for a couple of reasons.

#1. There is so much brokenness in our world that can cause us to lose hope like the subway shooting in Brooklyn, the war in Ukraine; as well as the vast and rising number of people effected by anxiety, depression, and addiction.

#2. We put our hope in so many things we think will deliver (work, relationships, degrees, achievement, the pursuit of pleasure) only to discover they are false hopes, empty hopes.

We need a sure hope, a lasting hope. That's the kind of hope Paul wants us to see. This is not a "I hope I get that job." OR "I hope gas prices will fall." Maybe I will. Maybe I won't. Maybe they will. Maybe they won't."

No, this is a hope we can count on!

The good news of JESUS is a message of HOPE.

- Jesus was crucified on Friday. From the perspective of his followers, it was the DARKEST DAY.

- On Saturday, the ominous overtones of shock and sadness moved in like a cold, New England winter day. But as my guy Rich Villodas said this week, Jesus' dying words were: "It IS finished," not "I AM FINISHED," because he was just getting started!!!
- On Sunday... against the darkness, against the pain, against their grief and despair – a RAY OF HOPE dawned like never before as Jesus came back to LIFE!

Now, the resurrection of Jesus delivers the greatest reason for the TRUEST HOPE.

- We have personal hope! While our rejection of God left us separated from God, Jesus said:
 - **"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26)**
 - Now, because of Jesus, we have no fear of death! We have LIFE NOW & LIFE FOREVER with God through his sacrifice in our place on the cross and his astounding resurrection!
 - We simply have to believe in him (to trust him - to place our lives into his hands) and we will experience all God offers us! If you have not done that, there's no better time than today!
- But it's not just personal. This HOPE is for nothing less than the renewal and restoration of our world. A day is coming when all wrongs will be made right, all brokenness and evil will disappear! There will be no more tears, no more sickness or cancer, no more injustice or abuse. Just unending life, joy, and peace!

Where do you place your hope?

- Life is...
 - more than keeping our Wordle streaks alive! I'm at 28. That's 28 for 28 all time. Just saying...
 - more than our dream job,
 - more than making a lot of money,
 - more than enjoying the very best of human relationships.
 - More than having a lot of fun.
- As great as all these things are, deep down we LONG for something more, a better hope.

This is why C.S. Lewis said: "If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world."

T: When you look at tomorrow, do you see hope? JESUS CAME, LIVED, DIED and ROSE AGAIN to call us into a true and lasting HOPE!

2. When you look at God, do you see love? (1:18)

Secondly, he prays they would "[*know*] the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints"

- An inheritance refers to something valuable you receive from someone else, usually upon their death. For many, if not most people, it will be the most valuable gift they ever receive.
 - (I need you to be honest for a minute...) Raise your hand if you'd be happy to change your last name to Gates or Bezos when the time is right. Don't lie!!
 - Or maybe some rich Bostonian will follow the lead of the wealthy Portuguese aristocrat, Luis Carlos de Noronha Cabral de Camaram. who had no heirs of his own and chose 70 names out of a Lisbon phone book to inherit his wealth. That could happen to you! Probably won't! Haha...
- As we take a closer look at Paul's prayer, it is surprising to discover he is not talking about our inheritance, but GOD'S inheritance, "the RICHES of God's GLORIOUS inheritance IN THE SAINTS."

In biblical terms a "saint" does not refer to the most influential people in church history, but anyone who follows Jesus!

Can you believe that's how God feels about you? You may not feel loved or valued by anyone in your life... but God says...

- "You're incredibly valuable to me.
- I call you 'glorious!' I look upon you with complete pride and unrivaled affection!
- You are my inheritance, the treasure I am waiting for!"

Just when you think you've got God figured out. Just when you think he exists to boss us around, or keep track of how well we're performing, he says, "I delight in you, simply because I LOVE YOU!"

Listen, God loves you more than you've ever thought about loving anyone. Our greatest love is the faintest expression of his infinite love!

- What an astounding discovery to learn that God delights *in us!*
- What a cure for our insecurities. I want you to like me, but I don't need you to like me. Why? God loves me!
- What healing for our mental and emotional battles. I'm telling you, when this truth works itself down deep into our souls, it brings new levels of freedom, confidence, and joy!

You say, "Tanner, this sounds good, but how can we be sure God loves us like that?" Look to the cross.

"God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins." (1 John 4:9-10)

T: When you look at tomorrow, SEE HOPE! When you look at God, SEE LOVE! Finally...

3. When you look at today, do you see power? (1:19-23)

God does not simply provide hope for tomorrow. He delivers power for today.

In verse 19, Paul prays that we would see, KNOW and EXPERIENCE, "*the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe according to the working of his great might*"

- Paul uses the strongest words he can find to describe the unlimited power of God.
- He stacks word after word to communicate the overwhelming power of God to effect change in us and through us.
 - He says it's "immeasurable greatness" (*some translations say "surpassing greatness"; others say "incredible greatness" or "incomparable greatness"*)
 - He says this power works according to God's "great..." "might..."
- Then, to elevate his prayer even further, Paul quickly moves to where this power was most impressively displayed.

Verse 19. "*this immeasurable great power [IS THE SAME POWER – verse 20] that he worked in Christ (you ready for this?) when he raised him from the dead*"

HAPPY EASTER!. This is wild! Bust out the mind-blown emoji!

Think about it: how much power does it take to make someone who is dead, undead? It takes divine, supernatural, dare we say, miraculous power. Never in the history of the world has someone been raised from the dead by their own power.

Paul says, THAT POWER, is ALIVE - IN - YOU.

And if that weren't enough, he goes on to elaborate in verses 20-23 by saying this power that raised Jesus from the dead, available to us, is also the same power that...

- caused Jesus to ascend to the right hand of God where he presently reigns over EVERYTHING (v.20).
- enables Jesus to dominate all other spiritual forces (v.21).
- gives him the name that is above every name (v.21). No person, no kingdom, no other god can rival his status.
- AND just to make sure everything is covered... Paul says it is the same power that put "all things under his feet" (he has all authority).

Jesus now leads his people with this kind of power.

What does that mean for us? It means everything.

Answer this question: Is Paul praying they would receive a new power? Or Is Paul praying they would know a power they already possess? It's not a new power, but a power they already possess!

Because the SAME POWER that raised Jesus from the dead is now working in us by God's Spirit (cf. Ephesians 3:16)...

- There is no opportunity we can't step into
- and no challenge we can't step through.

Resurrection power is IN YOU. Somebody say: "I have the power."

- You have the power to love people with a divine love.
- You have the power to live each day with the joy of heaven.
- You have the power to walk through sorrow with a supernatural peace.
- You have the power to serve others, seek justice, and extend forgiveness you never thought possible.

God has given you HIS POWER. IF YOU HAVE JESUS, YOU HAVE GOD'S POWER.

T: When you look at tomorrow, do you SEE HOPE? When you look at God, do you SEE LOVE? When you look at today, do you SEE POWER?

My prayer for you is that you will...

The Point: See what God offers you through Jesus.

On this special Easter Sunday, I want to give everyone an opportunity to respond to what you've heard.

God has a sure hope for you. God loves you more than you can imagine. God wants you to experience his power to live with purpose and navigate all of the highs and lows of life.

Please pull out the Connect Card you received when you walked in... I have no doubt God has spoken to you in a specific way today. We would love for you to share that with us, so that we can pray for you and support you in your spiritual journey.

At the top of the back of the card you see a question: "HOW CAN WE PRAY FOR YOU?"

- You can share anything you want.
- Perhaps you just want to write: more hope, or more love, or more power.

Then below that, you'll see some other steps you can take.

- I am going all in with Jesus for the first time, today! Don't hesitate. You know you've waited long enough. For those of you who make this choice, it is the greatest decision you will ever make!
- Others may say: "I want to explore more about Jesus." That's great! We're here to help you.
- Whatever the step, you share and step out as God speaks to your heart.

You can finish filling those out, as I pray for you!