# Let’s Live

## Easter Sunday

Easter is all about life – the resurrection life of Jesus filling us and
overflowing from us. No matter how consistent our habits, none of us
can truly live the life God invites us to without the resurrection life of
Jesus renewing us deep inside. It is both our motivation and our energy,
and it causes our habits of faithfulness to be shot through with joy.

## Sermon Outline

#### Mark 16:1-20

#### ‘Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.’ (v20)

### Introduction:

A helpful way to introduce this talk is with the idea of improvisation. You could start with a clip of a dancer or musician improvising – or perhaps one of your own musicians could do this.

Our Covenant Sunday and Lent materials have focused on habits. When we choose to build habits of prayer, hope, kindness and unity, it’s because we want to be consistent in making our own faithful response to God’s faithfulness. But those habits aren’t all there is to the Christian life. They’re like the rhythm and structure of a piece of music, which allow the skilled musician to improvise; or the basic forms and steps of a dance, which allow the experienced dancer to improvise new moves.

This account of Jesus being raised from the dead paints a picture of the believers living a resurrection life which is far from a set of routine habits. They are experiencing something dynamic and life-changing – world-changing. They are improvising as they go, riffing on the love of God and seeing miracles. And we are invited to live that gloriously rich life too.

### Preaching the good news

Early manuscripts of Mark’s Gospel stopped at verse 8, leaving us with the image of the women trembling and bewildered. It was probably first written to the early Church under persecution, so this sombre ending would have resonated, but later it received an epilogue. In 11 verses, the mood shifts from discouragement to joy.

We read of Jesus visiting his disciples in various places and finding an
atmosphere of cynical unbelief. He rebukes them for it, and tells them to do
the opposite: instead of questioning his resurrection, they are to go and preach
it (v15) … and they do. They even find themselves preaching it in new languages (v17)

* When we’re filled with resurrection life, we can’t help but tell stories of God’s goodness.
* How might our habits of prayer, hope, kindness and unity help us tell people the good news, when the opportunities arise?

### Driving out demons

The disciples have spent three years watching Jesus undo and push back the work of the enemy, bringing light into the darkness of people’s lives; refusing to let lies go unchallenged; speaking up for the oppressed; fasting and praying to see freedom come to the captives. This wasn’t new-fangled stuff. But now they have resurrection life as the energy for it. No longer will they just watch him do it and marvel; it’s their turn to drive out demons in all sorts of ways (v17), their turn to do all that he has done, and more (John 14:12).

* With the power that raised Christ from the dead at work in us, we can push back and undo the works of the enemy too. Wherever we see darkness at work, we can pray and speak and act in such a way that it has to go.
* How do our faithful habits of prayer, hope, kindness and unity help us drive out darkness?

### Taking risks

This epilogue to Mark’s Gospel has something of the flavour of the Book of Acts about it. Resurrection life will mean the believers can handle deadly snakes and poisons and not be harmed (v18), and the Apostle Paul did indeed handle a deadly snake without incident. Though this is the moment to say, ‘Don’t try this at home!’

Jesus has spent years teaching the disciples that God’s power is beyond the laws of nature. Here he is, sitting with them, having been raised from death, demonstrating yet again that God’s laws overtake the laws of nature. In that case, perhaps miraculous protection from poisoning doesn’t seem quite so remarkable after all.

The point here is not that we should go snake-charming whenever we can (there have been sad cases of churches trying it), but that we can take risks when God asks us to, trusting that impossible things can and do happen.

* When we have resurrection life, we can step out in faith, take risks and expect miracles.
* How do our habits of prayer, hope, kindness and unity help us to take risks?

### Heal sick people

Again, healing the sick is not a new thing for the disciples. They’ve seen it hundreds of times by now. It isn’t even particularly unique to Jesus; rabbis often healed. And Jesus’ disciples have done it themselves, travelling through the towns of Judea, two by two.

And now they will be doing more of it than ever. Resurrection life means that healing won’t just happen where Jesus is, or where a pair of disciples happen to turn up; it will happen wherever believers gather and pray for one another.

* Where there is resurrection life, there will be healing of all kinds. Nowadays it’s often through medicine, but we can still expect the wondrously unexplainable type too.
* How do our habits of prayer, hope, kindness and unity help us become more adventurous in believing for healing?

### Conclusion:

This epilogue to Mark’s Gospel leaves us in no doubt that resurrection life is an adventure into the beautiful, the surprising and the exhilarating. The early Church began to live those things almost immediately, but they kept tight hold of their habits. They prayed together daily; they spoke hope to one another and to the world; their communities were marked by kindness; and they kept on at the work of building unity with one another.

As we keep growing these habits, like a rhythm or a dance step, we will find ourselves ready and able to improvise in the ways of resurrection life.

## Prayer and Worship Ideas

### Do some rhythm and improvisation

Find a simple line dance or circle dance which everyone can participate in, and enjoy the exhilaration (and hilarity) of dancing together as a community.

Then continue the dance, but invite a few people to move into the middle or out to the front to improvise their own dance steps.

If you have musicians, invite the band / music group to play a piece of music or sequence of chords, then invite one or two musicians to improvise over the top, if they feel able to.

### Pray for miracles

Do you have any miracles you’re praying for as a corps at the moment? God’s people have the privilege of asking God for impossible things. If we’re not needing to do that, it may be time to enlarge our prayers.

Identify a miracle which your congregation would love to see happen, and then invite them to commit to praying regularly for it.

### Dispel some darkness

Identify a situation in your local community which seems dark – an injustice, a lack of resources, someone living with discouragement or grief, or a troubled neighbourhood. Think about how, as a corps, you might bring light and hope, through your prayers, your words and your actions.

### Bless the risk-takers

Is anyone in your corps starting something new or stepping out of their comfort zone for some reason? Get into a habit of inviting risk-takers forward, hearing what they’re up to and praying for them.