

Easter 2025

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[0 : 00] All right. Thanks, Lisa. Appreciate that. Good morning, everybody. Happy Easter. I've always! I've always wanted to do this. He is risen. Oh, there we go. It's gonna be a good one. Here! We go. If you got Bibles, go ahead and turn to John 20. If you don't, don't worry. We're gonna have all these verses up on the screen as well. And we're gonna read from the Apostle John's narrative of the first Easter story. And what we want to pull out from this is to answer three questions. What does the resurrection tell us about what God wants? What does the resurrection tell us about who God is? And what does the resurrection tell us about who we are?

So John 20 verses 1 to 19 says this. Now on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, they have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him. So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter, and reached the tomb first. And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed. For as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept, she stooped to look into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. And they said to her, Woman, why are you weeping? She said to them, They have taken my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him. Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?

Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus said to her, Mary. She turned and said to him in Aramaic, Rabbani, which means teacher. Jesus said to her, Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father, but go to my brothers and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God. Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, I have seen the Lord, and that he had said these things to her. On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, Peace be with you. We'll read verses 20 to 22 as well. When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit. This is the word of the Lord.

[4 : 00] So this is John's account of what he considered to be the most important moments to put into writing for remembrance for all time for Jesus's disciples and those who were yet to become Jesus's disciples regarding that first resurrection day. And he goes on to say at the end of actually this chapter that man, he included these particular ones, although there was many other things to include so that we who read them may believe. And I want to begin our time together by answering the question, what do we learn from this account about what God wants? How does it reveal God's heart?

Well, first, I think it shows us that God never wants to be separated from those he loves. It's interesting how Jesus shows up on resurrection day from morning till evening. We read that whole

account. He didn't show up as a haunting spirit from the great beyond a la Jacob Marley. He didn't get pulled from the great beyond like Samuel's spirit did by the medium at Endor. Now he comes back. He is physically present. And by the time the disciples get to the grave, and they're really expecting just to find a dead corpse, the stone is already rolled back. And the irony is as much as they go looking for him, he is the one who finds them. Mary in the garden, a group of them locked up in a room hiding away in fear. And to Mary, he says this very cryptic statement, don't cling to me. I have not yet ascended to the Father, which man, you read that and it sounds like Jesus is kind of saying, don't hold on to me until I'm not no longer around to hold on to. Little confusing, right? It's like, Jesus, if you need some space, just like say it, okay? Just come out and say it. But Jesus, that's not what he is implying. He knows what he's going to do. He knows he's sticking around for a while yet. He didn't rise from the dead, make some obligatory appearances to his disciples saying, see, I'm here, I'm alive. And then he doesn't peace out to heaven right away. He's around for weeks after this, after his resurrection. And he goes and finds his disciples and spends time with them. He spends time with Peter in a way that Peter really needed. He spends time with Thomas in a way that Thomas really needed. He spends time with the whole crowd of his disciples. He walks with some disciples on the road to Emmaus and he dines with them, breaks bread with them. And then he teaches them all the things that the resurrection proves and fulfills about him and the law and the prophets. And in those weeks, he spends time with his disciples again and again in fellowship, but also giving them the full download for how to interpret the Old Testament in light of his death and his resurrection. Jesus takes his time, post-resurrection, pre-ascension, and it proves the relational nature of God. He knows what we need and he moves at our speed.

[7 : 16] That rhymed, I didn't even attend it to you, but that sounded cool. Why does he do it? Because he loves them. He loved them all the way to the end. John 13, one captures it so well. As Jesus is heading towards that moment of the cross and then the resurrection, it says this, Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world. He knew that he was going away. He was going to the father. He was physically in person. His embodied presence with them was not going to be there anymore. And then it says, having loved his own who were in the world, said he loved them to the end. He was not in a rush.

To the very end, it says, aka the fullness of time allotted for Jesus on earth, for that first arrival of his, he wasn't in a rush to leave. He loved his own. He loved his cherished ones, his beloved, to the very end. And the heart of God is not to be separated from those he loves.

And the beauty of his resurrection is he puts a sign and a seal and a stamp that makes that reality permanent, which tells us about who God is. God is a God of the living, not the dead.

Jesus, his kingdom is not a graveyard. And it's not a graveyard because there is no relationship in death. That is why death is such a terrible thing. It robs us of doing life with the people that we love, which is, to be honest, the richest part of being alive. God is not a God of the dead.

The psalmist wrote, I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living, not before the Lord in the land of the dead. Now you might argue, but doesn't it say, Jesse, that in a psalm somewhere else, that even if I make my bed in Sheol in the grave, you are there? Yes, it does. And this is where we need some theological precision. It's true in one sense that God's presence is inescapable. You think of the parable that Jesus told of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man, he dies and he's in torment in Hades. While Lazarus, as he dies, he goes to Abraham's side in heaven. The rich man asked for a merciful gesture from Lazarus. Come and bring, he says, come and bring me water to cool my tongue.

[9 : 54] I'm in torment over here. But Abraham speaks back to him. He points out to this rich man, there is an appointed chasm that the Lord has fixed between you and between us, and that is too great to cross.

We cannot go to you. You cannot come to us. And so when we say that God is not God of the dead, but God of the living, it is referring to a relational reality. The living, we pass through death, right?

That's why we can, even when the psalmist says, even though I make my bed in Sheol, you are there because God comes into those dark places. God comes into the grave for the ones that he beloveds, and he snatches us back up into life. The living pass through death into everlasting life because of Jesus, because of their faith in Jesus, because God wants no separation from his people, his children that he loves whatsoever.

But those who don't, when they go into the grave, they pass on into eternal judgment. And so if you are not raised to life in Christ, then by fiat, you are spiritually dead, having no relationship to God because God is a God of the living, not the God of the dead. And whether or not you believe in a literal hell, death, according to the Bible, means a black hole of existence devoid of God.

Jesus himself said that God will cast out those who don't believe into a place he described as the outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Whatever you believe, that is not walking with God in the land of the living. But the resurrection changes that. The resurrection changes everything because the resurrected Jesus brought his resurrection life to his disciples. And what we see is that it changes them. It changed them extremely, which teaches us an important truth about ourselves.

You aren't really alive until you are risen with Christ. When the resurrected Jesus showed up, it turned his disciples weeping to joy. It turned their confusion into understanding. It turned their doubts into belief. It turned their fear into peace and actually boldness. And the risen Christ was with them. And that was good. And that was amazing. But you know what? It wasn't enough. Here's what I mean.

[12:27] It isn't enough for you to know about the resurrected Christ. You must join him in his resurrection. To say it a different way, Jesus intends for you and for me to participate in his resurrection with him. And this is why verses, this is what verses 21 to 22 were about.

Jesus said to them again, peace be with you. As the father has sent me, even so I am sending you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, receive the Holy Spirit.

For me, when I read that, I see a hyperlink back to Genesis chapter one and two. And in Genesis one, God says, let us make man in our image. And he says, he created them. And it says, he blessed them and said to them, go fill the earth, go multiply, fill the earth, subdue it. And then we see in Genesis two, verse seven, the actual, the actual outworking of how God created the man. It says, then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils, the breath of life. And the man became a living creature. And that first man, Adam, he was brought up out of the ground by God himself, but he was just there, inanimate. He was fashioned and looked like what man should look like. He had all the ability to do what man could do, but he was lifeless. He wasn't a living creature and he wouldn't be until God breathed his life into him. Adam could not have a relationship with God. Adam could not know him. Adam couldn't go do the things that God had created and purposed him to do. He can go fill the earth until he was filled with God's breath. And that Hebrew word there can also mean God's spirit. So what does this have to do with Jesus's resurrection? Well, the second Adam is Jesus.

And he was laid into a tomb, literally swallowed up into the ground by death, but he was brought up out of the ground. He was brought up out of the tomb again. How? Romans 8, 11. If the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his spirit who dwells in you. Just like the first Adam waited for the breath of life in the grave, so did the second Adam. He was raised from the dead by the spirit, it says. And that's mysterious and I don't know how that works, but that is the account. That is what we do know. Now getting back to John 20 verse 21, can you start to understand what Jesus was doing when he breathed on his disciples? He is demonstrating that you, disciples of Jesus, you followers of Jesus, you are no longer children of the first Adam. You are the offspring of the second and greater Adam.

And this Jesus is bringing, this is Jesus bringing his disciples into his resurrection reality. They just don't look on it and say, wow, Jesus, that's great for you. He's saying, no, no, you're joining me in this thing. Here's the implication for all who would be disciples of Jesus. You and I, we are not risen with Christ without being filled with his abiding presence. Just as God breathed his life into Adam number one, Jesus, the second Adam, son of God, God himself brings us up out of the ground, out of our spiritual graves, and he breathes his life into you and into me. Jesus said this many times.

[16:18] He told Nicodemus, it has to be this way. Unless one is born again, that is to say, unless one is born of water buried in death and of the spirit raised in resurrection life, one cannot see nor enter the kingdom of God. The resurrection of Jesus is, it is the defining moment of humanity. It changed the whole course of history and what is possible. The way to God's presence has totally changed. It is no longer into a temple made with human hands, hidden behind a veil, a thick curtain. That veil is torn.

The temple has been destroyed, but those just served to anticipate to Jesus according to God's plan. And the irony is here, maybe it's not irony, I don't know, but while visiting the temple, Jesus spoke of himself to a crowd saying, tear this down and I will raise it up in three days.

And he is speaking of himself and he is the new temple, the dwelling place of God's presence because of the resurrection. And all who are raised with him, our temple's just like him. God speaks to his church through the apostle Paul and it says in 1 Corinthians 6, 19, or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own. We get to join with Jesus in his resurrection. And because of the resurrection, you and me, our bodies have been changed from a lifeless tomb to a temple of the presence of God, the Holy Spirit himself, just like Jesus. We join in his resurrection with him. Why? Because God refuses to be separated from his children that he loves.

And if you believe in Jesus, then you have gone from death to life. A life lived in him, with him, a totally different way of living than the life you live before faith in Jesus. And again, God speaks through his apostles to us. Romans 8, 14, 15 and 16 says, for if we live, you who have been buried with Christ and raised to walk in newness of life. If we live, if we are alive in him, we live to the Lord. And if we die, we die to the Lord.

So whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end, Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. The Heidelberg Catechism, to saying that taught disciples the important truths of the faith. Centuries ago, it was built, and it used these verses to answer the question, what is your only comfort in life and in death? And the answer is, our only comfort is that we are not our own, but belong to our faithful Savior, Jesus Christ, both in life and in death. He has redeemed us from all sin and the power of the devil. He preserves us and assures us of eternal life through the Holy Spirit. This comfort comes from knowing that we are not dependent on our own efforts, but are fully and completely dependent on Christ, just like we were singing, in Christ alone, our hope is found. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me, the catechism finishes with. Because you and I are in Christ, because he is in us, we do all things to him, for him, by him, and always with him. This resurrection life is for our comfort, but you know what else it does?

[20 : 12] It also bears witness of what is to come after death, and after what Jesus says, heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

What comes after death? Well, the resurrection life tells us that there is something wonderful, and because we live in this resurrection life with Jesus, we testify to a superior future reality in this passing one. Think about that. You and I, we are like time travelers who have arrived from the future, living in the present now. We have arrived from a better future, and we step out, and we see the dissonance between that future reality that we know and that we have tasted of, and this present reality that is passing away, and that changes the way you and I live in this world. Hebrews 6, 4 to 6 says, it is impossible in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the Word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm, and holding Him up to content. And what I want to hone in on from this passage is that it is saying here that we have tasted of the powers of the age to come.

We know what it is like living in the resurrection of Jesus tells us what it is like to be born again into resurrection life is to taste of that future reality, and that changes how you live in this one.

It is a future kingdom of righteousness and peace and joy, where only one king is on the throne and is worshipped, and He made a way for us to join in Him by dying in our place, to join in that reality by dying in our place. The righteous suffering for the unrighteous, those are flavors, those are realities of the kingdom that is to come. And a life that testifies to that future kingdom calls us to take our sins seriously, and fight with God in order to put it to death in our flesh, to put our flesh to death, to crucify it, to mortify it. A life that testifies to the future kingdom calls us to live in a way that promotes justice and calls out injustice when we see it, all the injustice around us that doesn't jive with that future reality anymore. So we live differently. Our tribe is of a different tribe.

Our people are a different people, so we don't play along cleanly with party politics, because we don't fit nicely into either side. We fight for the unborn. We become the solution for the orphan, fostering and adopting. We are generous to the poor. We look out for the poor. We care for the poor, because Jesus said, man, those, if you do any of that to the least of these, you have done it to

me.

[23 : 24] We have concern and care for the sojourner and the immigrant, because we too are pilgrims passing through. We are ambassadors as people of the future kingdom living in the present. We are ambassadors bearing witness to that, bearing witness to that, which is never going to pass away.

And friends, it is hard and painful and confusing and lonely at times to navigate life in this passing world, trying to be as faithful as possible to bear witness to the future one that we belong to. It is not easy. We will feel out of place. We will be those that don't quite fit into the ideological camps and tribes of this world. Because of that, we're going to pick up wounds along the way from those who don't understand us. That can come from people outside the church, and that can come from those inside the church. And that is hard. But hold strong. Hold strong in Jesus. Hold strong with Jesus and know that he is holding on to you. And even better, we get to do that together. You don't have to face any of that alone. But let this hope give us endurance. Earth has no sorrow that heaven can't heal.

Every sorrow, every difficulty, every pain that we face, earth has no sorrow that heaven can't heal. There is a reason that Jesus bears the wounds of the cross to prove himself.

[25 : 12] And there is a reason that he left behind the grave clothes. The wounds of sin and suffering can be healed. The power of the resurrection tells us that every sin we've committed, every bit of suffering, you and I have endured of being sinned against, all the guilt and shame that we can carry, the anger, the bitterness, the despair, the loneliness, the depression, all those things that create a tumult in our soul, all our sin, all those things, all those feelings, they're placed on Jesus who suffered and died in our place.

And his hands and his feet and his side still bear witness to it. And what they proclaim is that the penalty of our sin has been paid.

When we look at those scars on a king that has risen and say that he is alive, it also means that the power of sin has been beaten. Those scars of Jesus, they are healed.

They're not bleeding anymore. They're not causing him any more pain, but they are the trophies of his triumph. There is only one way for us to be healed from sin and suffering, and that is going to him.

And that is in him. In his grace, and in his goodness, and in his power. As we wait for heaven's joys, in this life, there is healing from sin.

[26 : 46] There is freedom from sin's power. So the band come up and we look to respond. In a moment, we're going to take communion. And I want to say to you in the room, if you're not yet a follower of Jesus, we are so glad you're here.

But before you can come to communion, you come to Jesus. Jesus is the one who saves. He is the one who heals. He is the one who forgives.

And there's going to be an opportunity for you to respond. There's going to be prayer up on the screen for you to pray. And I want to encourage you to pray it. If you are already a follower of Jesus, as we come to the table, remember that communion is an invitation.

It's an invitation by our Savior, our risen King, to come to him. To look upon his sacrifice. It reminds us of his wounds, his body broken and bloodshed for our redemption and for our healing.

So that we could be one with him because he is a God who cannot stand to be separated from his children. It reminds us too that our King is risen.

[27 : 57] He is alive and he is reigning and that he is coming again. He left behind the grave clothes. Live to him.

Bear witness to that better future reality. I'm going to pray for us. And then you're released to get communion.

Bring it back to your seat and take it when you're ready. So Jesus, we prepare ourselves and look to you as we come to your table.

We hear the invitation. Some of us in the room are hearing the invitation of a Savior who is calling them for the first time into putting their faith in you, Jesus Christ.

And I pray that you would move upon them in a mighty way. Open the eyes of their hearts to see and know and understand. For those who believe as we come to the table at your invitation, that we would come with great thanksgiving.

[29 : 06] As we pick up the symbols and the signs of your death, your body broken and your blood shed and hold it in our hands, we are like those disciples that got to put, that got to touch the wounds in your hand and in your side and in your feet.

Lord, help this moment to build our faith, our faith in you, our faith that you are for us, our faith that you love us, our faith that you want to be with us, and our faith that you have called us into this resurrection life and you have called us to live out to that future reality in this passing one.

We can only do it because of you. In your name I pray, amen. Amen.