

After Easter

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[0 : 00] But this morning, we're going to have a little bridge here. Next week, we're going to open up a new series where we go through the book of Colossians.

But this week, we really wanted to, as we're back together after Easter week, kind of take a pause after celebrating the resurrection of Jesus and just kind of give the exhale.

Because you know how that is, right? When you have big events, Easter, Christmas, you get married, you have a baby, whatever it is, there's always like this buildup to it. And then there's kind of a, we did that.

What do we do now? Back to regular programming, right? Well, I actually think it's an important question to ask because after Easter, what we do next is really important.

You know, if you're only casually familiar with the Easter story, you might have this kind of picture in your head of Jesus was resurrected and then he kind of went around and he said a few things and then almost immediately after that, you see him floating into heaven.

[1 : 03] But the truth is, the Bible says that after Jesus was resurrected, he was on earth for 40 days doing stuff, like walking around, appearing to people, convincing people of who he was.

And I think those 40 days, within them, we can learn a lot about what comes next, what comes after Easter. And one of the key things we do see in the early days of the church after Jesus' resurrection is that the resurrection of Christ certainly wasn't just some one-off miraculous sideshow.

It was not like being a Christian, the resurrection was something you could take or leave. You couldn't really do the thing that we like to do in our modern time where you say, you know, I like some of Jesus' teachings, but like all this rising from the dead stuff, like I'm not into that supernatural things.

I mean, they made it very clear in their earliest writings that Jesus' resurrection was the whole cornerstone of the gospel and of our faith. Paul, in the book of 1 Corinthians, writing one of the earliest letters that went to one of these earliest churches, reminds them in verse 15, now it reminds you, brothers, of the gospel that I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

For I delivered to you, as of first importance, what I also received, that Christ died for our sins, in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day, in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the twelve.

[2 : 50] Then he appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Interesting side road here. If you are trying to fake or create like a new cult or religion, saying to a group of people within the lifetime of this event happening, hey, there's like 500 people that saw this, you should go talk to them.

That's a bad idea. Then he appeared to James, and to all the apostles, and last of all, to one untimely born, he appeared also to me, for I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

But by the grace of God, I am what I am, and his grace towards me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is within me.

Whether then it was I or they, so we preach, and so you believed. Now, if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there's no resurrection from the dead?

But if there's no resurrection from the dead, then not even Christ would have been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, and your faith is in vain.

[4 : 03] We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if it is true that the dead are not raised.

For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. Seems like he wants you to know it's important that Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, and you are still in your sin.

Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope for this life only, we of all people are to be most pitied.

But in fact, Christ Jesus was raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. So that's early letter to an early church, same gospel we preach.

Jesus is risen is key. You don't have a faith without Jesus being raised. But then that reality should immediately lead you to this next question.

[5 : 08] Okay, Jesus is risen. Hallelujah. What now? Because it's going to remain just this amazing fact of history until it becomes personally relevant to you.

I know a lot of us who have been parents would probably testify and agree to this kind of common moment when, particularly when you have your first child, and you've gone through all this stuff, and then you're getting ready to leave the hospital with this baby, right?

And there's always this kind of moment that's like, I mean, really? Like, like no instructions or anything, right? You're just going to let us walk out of here with a human. I guess we got it.

You know, it's at that moment that you really do start to realize that this special and miraculous moment that you just went through, like this moment when, that'll be seared in your mind forever, right?

When this new life has emerged from its mother and has been introduced to the world, you realize, man, this isn't the ending of a journey. This is just the beginning. Like all the months of pregnancy and the preparations we've done at the house are just a prelude because now it's, wow, I have a kid.

[6 : 21] What now? And the resurrection of Jesus is somewhat like that in that while it is this seminal moment in history and it is this moment at Easter that we gather around and celebrate, it was never meant to be just a moment to be amazed at and then move on.

It's not meant to show up for one Sunday and say, thank you, Jesus. And then back to regular programming. It is an invitation into a new kind of life.

And we're gonna see that invitation in all these interactions Jesus has with people while he's on the earth for 40 days. And so that's really what we wanna do today. We're gonna look at some of what Jesus was doing and we're gonna see if we can answer that question both for them and for us.

Man, what comes after Easter? I think the first and probably most obvious thing we see in Scripture is Jesus' resurrection yields an invitation to rejoice.

We pick up the scene after Jesus' death. There's a few women who had followed him that are on the way to the tomb to adorn his body. And it says this in Luke's Gospel, but on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb taking spices they had prepared.

[7 : 42] And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. But when they went in, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. And while they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel.

And as they were frightened and bowed their heads to the ground, the men said to them, why do you seek the living amongst the dead? He is not here. He is risen. Remember how he told you while he was still in Galilee, the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.

And they remembered his words and returning from the tomb, they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary, the mother of James, and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles.

But the words seemed to them an idle tale and they did not believe them. But Peter rose and ran to the tomb, stooping and looking in, and he saw the linen cloths by themselves and he went home marveling at what had happened.

You know, if nothing else, Jesus' resurrection is certainly an invitation to hope and rejoice. It is a never-to-be-forgotten testimony that nothing can stop the love of God.

[9 : 00] There is no good thing, no good purpose that can overcome the love and power of God. And I know for many of you, maybe the thing that you do feel like you need most is just hope.

And the resurrection is this permanent in history thing that testifies there is nothing that is so dead, there is nothing that is so gone that Jesus can't revive it.

And it's no different for these ladies. They were going to a gravesite. They were bringing spices appropriate for adorning the dead, not the living.

That is a sign not of hope, but of hope lost. And then the unthinkable happens. And in an instant, they were made alive again.

God still works like that. He takes things that you go, this can never be fixed. And like that, in a way that we can't explain, makes them alive again. And you know, I love that in this verse, you also see a range of hoping.

[10:06] You see these women fully rejoicing because now they know without a shadow of a doubt, Jesus is alive. They can testify to others that after night comes day.

And that's exactly what they do. But you also see those who want to hope, but aren't quite there yet. It says many thought these were just idle words.

Like they couldn't really believe that that could happen. Peter runs to see, but interestingly, he doesn't meet Jesus. He doesn't meet the angels. He's kind of left wondering, can this really be real? And if you're here this morning, that's where you're at. You're at a place where you're hoping that this could be true. You don't know if it's true, but you hope it is, but you haven't seen it yet. Then the resurrection has something for you as well because thankfully, Jesus' resurrection also yields an opportunity to see the gospel.

Later in Luke, that same day, it gives another story about Jesus doing stuff.

[11:14] It says, that very day, two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. And while they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened, they were talking and discussing together, and Jesus himself drew near and went with them.

But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, what is this conversation that you're holding with each other? And they stood still looking sad. And then one of them named Cleopas answered, are you the only visitor of Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?

And he said to them, what things? And they said, concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who is a prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priest and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death and they crucified him.

But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and beside all of this, it is now the third day since these things happened. Moreover, some of the women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning and they did not find the body and they came back saying they had seen a vision of angels who said he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but did not see him.

[12:30] And he, Jesus said to them, O foolish ones and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?

And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. So they drew near to the village in which they were going and he acted if he was going to go further, but they urged him saying, Stay with us for it is towards the evening and the day is now far spent.

So he went in to stay with them and when he was at the table he took the bread and he blessed and broke it and gave it to them and their eyes were opened and they recognized him and then he vanished from their sight.

Poof. And they said to each other, Did not our hearts burn within us when he talked to us on the road while he opened to us the scriptures?

Jesus meets with two other disciples, not the apostles, walking along the road to this village called Emmaus. And we see some interesting kind of resurrection body stuff, right?

[13:42] It says like they don't recognize him immediately but they walk and they talk. And it says, Beginning with Moses and the prophets, he interprets all the scriptures within them, the things concerning himself which is interesting because all throughout Jesus' ministry you see these moments where he is teaching, he is laying out the word and it just seems like nobody is getting it.

Like nobody is connecting the dots. Right? They're just like, Did he say, eat his flesh and drink his blood? What'd that mean? He said something wrong, I don't know.

But as Jesus teaches and talks, the scriptures come alive and the good news that this is Jesus comes alive and jumps to life inside of them so much that they say, Did not our hearts burn while he talked to us on the road and when he opened up the scriptures?

You know, I think in there is kind of a clue, a hint about what after Easter looks like that God is trying to get you to see in that verse. He's saying, When your heart starts to burn within you, when the things of Jesus are proclaimed, it can be a sign that Jesus is calling to you.

And I know for many of you in here who are followers of Jesus, you would probably say something exactly like that if I were to ask you about your journey. You would say, Frankly, I didn't care about any of this stuff.

[15:10] I wasn't interested in it. There was nothing that drew me to it. And maybe, maybe yes, there were some events along the way, like maybe something really difficult happened that made you question your life, or maybe you, you just ran into a follower of Jesus that you'd never met, just someone who could be such a good friend.

But it's not just those moments that move you from hostile or skeptical. There's, there's a place where you would say, I don't know why, but the things of Jesus became interesting to me. Jesus' voice set ablaze dead things in my heart. And I would just give to you, if you start to feel that, an interest, a restlessness, why did I not care about this, this fantasy, this fairy tale, and now I can't stop listening?

That's a sign that Jesus can be calling. We shouldn't ignore it. But I'll give you a warning. Often, when you start to hear that voice, when your heart starts to burn, there will be other voices than Jesus that show up to discourage you.

One of those voices is doubt. And Jesus' resurrection yields us an invitation to put away that doubt. So Jesus continues doing things in these 40 days, and in John chapter 20, it gives us an interface with one of his apostles.

[16:43] It says, Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, We have seen the Lord. But he said to them, Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails and place my finger into the mark of the nails and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.

And then eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them, and although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood amongst them and said, Peace be with you.

Again, resurrection body stuff. Hey guys, boom, like in the room. And then he says to Thomas, Put your finger here and see my hands and put out your hand and place it in my side.

Do not disbelieve, but believe. And Thomas answered him, My Lord and my God. Jesus said to him, Have you believed because you have seen me?

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believed. Interesting side note here, it says eight days later, which meant the timetable of Jesus removing Thomas' doubt was different than the rest of them.

[18:02] He let eight days pass. And then Thomas is a real I'll believe it when I can see it kind of guy. He is not by nature a trusting person or what you would say might be given to like faith or belief.

And interestingly, Jesus doesn't rebuke him for it. Thomas, the doubter, is invited to investigate, to see for himself.

But then when he does, he's told stop doubting. which means Jesus isn't repelled by your doubts. But also, doubt is never commended in Scripture as something noble.

Bring all your doubts to Jesus doesn't mean that's where he wants you to stay. He wants you to seek. He wants you to ask for what you need to stop doubting.

And he wants you to be okay if that timetable is different for different people. But when he gives it, when he gives you what you need, he wants you to move from doubt to belief and trust.

[19:15] But doubt isn't the only voice. Another, I would argue, even more powerful voice tends to enter our mind when we first start to hear the voice of Jesus.

And that's the voice of shame. Shame is that voice that cries out, you know what, even if this is real, it's not for you. You are not the kind of person that can draw near, not after what you've done.

They may not know you, but I know you. Look at what you've become. Can that be undone by anyone? But it is not called the good news for no reason because glory to God, Jesus' resurrection yields an invitation to be restored.

You know, it's kind of interesting, we've been looking at John 20, and Peter is with the other disciples when Jesus starts making appearances. So he's seen Jesus, and then in John 21, it describes how the party has gone back to Galilee, kind of waiting on what Jesus is going to do next. And describing what Peter does, it says, he's like, I'm going fishing, which seems a little odd when this turn the world upside down stuff is happening, right? I guess you just go back to what you know.

[20 : 39] And so he's like, I'm going to go out there and fish, but there's kind of something to it. And then Jesus shows up just like he did all those years ago when he called him to be a fisher of men. And Peter is still a passionate guy.

He dives out of the boat. And they all kind of sit here on the bank and have a meal. But as they're having this meal, you start to kind of get this sense of maybe a little awkwardness here. Because it says in verse 14 of John 21 that this is the third time that Jesus has been revealed to the disciples since his resurrection.

And throughout all that time with Peter, we've sort of been dancing around this issue, right? Because if you recall, the last time Jesus saw Peter he was publicly denying him three times. And so now finally Jesus addresses Peter directly and he says, when they had finished breakfast, Jesus says to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?

[21 : 44] And he said to him, yes Lord, you know that I love you. And he said, feed my lambs. He said to him a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love me? Peter said to him, yes Lord, you know I love you.

And he said to him, tend my sheep. And then he said to him a third time, Simon, son of John, do you love me? And Peter was grieved because he had said to him a third time, do you love me? And he said to him, Lord, you know everything, you know that I love you. And Jesus said to him, feed my sheep, because truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands and another will dress you and carry you to where you do not want to go.

And this he said to show by what kind of death Peter was going to glorify God. And after saying this, Jesus said to him, follow me. It's very interesting to me that when Peter failed as he did at that crucial moment and denied Jesus, he suffered an assault on two things.

One of them was he suffered an assault on his pride, which is a good thing. He also suffered an assault on his identity, which is a bad thing.

[23 : 06] And man, you could, and many have, write an entire sermon on just the mechanics of this restoration that Jesus does for Peter here, but just as kind of a little short notes on it.

It's beautiful to me that Jesus asked him this question three times, which it says grieves Peter, because I'm sure that is intentionally reminding him of that. And I think part of that is so that that boastful part of Peter that cried out, Jesus, I will never abandon you, is left in the past.

Peter's pride is put in the dumpster of history. But also, with every step, with every time he asks him the question, he's also reaffirming who he is.

Feed my sheep. I called you to be a witness and an apostle, and that has not changed. I trust you. I want you to feed my sheep. And then Jesus assures him that he will become this rock that his name, he gives him the name Peter, and he doesn't look like a rock at all throughout the pages of the gospels, but Jesus assures him, you will finish well.

[24 : 31] You are going to finish in the same way that Jesus did, which means Peter's failure isn't the last word. And it means our failures aren't the last word.

You can be restored. Also, incidentally, it tells me that I do think part of Jesus restoring you, like part of that process, is at some point you're going to have to ask yourself, which matters more to you? How you feel about yourself, or what Jesus says is true about you? It's probably another sermon for another day, but what a sobering realization for Peter.

And I'm sure a lot was going through his mind, because he's going to stand strong. He is ashamed of what he's done, and Jesus is going to say, no, you're going to stand strong, you're going to be like me, and you're going to die, and it's going to be really bad, really bad.

You can almost feel all of those emotions rolling around in Peter, because as they're talking after Jesus says that, he looks back at John, who's kind of following behind him, and he says, well, what about him?

[25 : 40] Jesus gently reminds him, you don't need to worry about that, because you follow me. And that's because Jesus' resurrection yields an invitation to run your own course.

Peter turned, and he saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who would also lean back against him during the supper, and said, Lord, who is it that's going to betray you? And Peter saw him, and he said to Jesus, Lord, what about this man?

And Jesus said to him, if it is my will that he remains until I come, what is that to you? You follow me. And so the saying spread among the brothers that this disciple was not to die, yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but if it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things and has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true. It's interesting to me, it's almost like John is feeling here, I think that he's obviously trying to correct something about his course here, and he says, you know, I'm not lying about this, I'm going to die, guys.

But you see two men with two very different courses. You know, one of the things that I think becomes very clear to every one of us, usually really early in life, is that life is not going to be fair.

[27 : 09] At least not as we understand fairness, because at the very least, I think all of us could admit you're born with certain advantages and disadvantages, right? And usually life doesn't alleviate all of those for you.

There's going to be things that you have and things that you don't, and there are all sorts of harsh and cynical and unhelpful ways you can deal with that. You can kind of lash out and dwell on what others have been given and what you don't, what hands somebody else got dealt and what you got dealt, and you can become bitter about that and let it consume you.

You can also become prideful and just refuse to yield anything, to never seek mercy, to never just give unearned favor in the name of fairness.

It's not fair. They didn't earn it. But interestingly, the picture that Jesus paints between Peter and John is not like a scale, trying to measure out which of them got the better fate.

It's not like looking at a hand of cards and seeing who got dealt pocket aces. What Jesus portrays looks more like running a course, walking a path, a journey with Jesus as the one at your side.

[28 : 25] And that language of running a course or race is seen throughout the New Testament. In Hebrews 12, it says, Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight in the sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith for who for the joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

We are to run the race that is set for us, and the model is Jesus who ran the course that was set for him. It's the same image that Paul's going to use in the waning days of his life as he instructs his dear son in the faith, Timothy.

He says to him in 2 Timothy 4, For I'm already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight.

I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Henceforth, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but also to everyone who loves his appearing.

What did Paul take joy in at the end? I have finished my course. Which means the ambition of the follower of Jesus isn't a lot of the things you might put up there.

[30 : 01] Paul didn't say, my goal was to plant 30,000 churches, which would have been a great goal. It's the kind of thing Jesus would put in your heart, but he didn't say that. He didn't say, I want to be remembered because of starting a movement or big books that I've written.

He didn't want to be remembered for the letters that he sent out becoming part of God's holy word. It wasn't any material thing like his family or kids or leaving a legacy.

Again, all good things that Jesus might have us pursue, but you're not guaranteed any of that.

Which means the only thing you can do day after day is to run the course that Jesus sets for you.

That is how Paul measured a life well lived. So when you do that, if you say, okay, Jesus, let's do it.

I want to walk the road with you. The next kind of little piece of wisdom I'd give you on that that I think we see again after Easter is don't presume you know exactly what the course will look like. [31 : 09] Because depending on the kind of person you are, you might imagine grandiose and amazing things and you're going to be really disappointed if Jesus gives you something mundane.

Or on the other hand, you may be the sort that's like, I'm kind of a nobody and I really don't want that big a job and can I just please be quiet in the corner? And that's what you're hoping Jesus gives you.

But neither of those might be the case because Jesus' resurrection also yields an invitation for new people to be called. Right after Jesus ascends to heaven, the followers of Jesus, it says about 120 of them are gathered in this place waiting on this spirit that he promised.

And Peter, who it seems has found his wind as a leader after talking with the master, stands up and addresses kind of an elephant in the room, like a wound that I'm sure is festering for the brothers, which is that one of their own, Judas, has betrayed them and left this big hole in their company.

And Peter reminds them that this happened to fulfill the scripture and that they were told about this and that now the time has come for another to take his office also as scripture had foretold.

[32 : 24] And so in Acts 1, we pick up that story and they're trying to pick this replacement. It says, so one of the men who has accompanied us during all this time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us beginning from the baptism of John up until this day when he was taken from us, one of these men must become with us a witness to the resurrection.

And so they put forth two names, Joseph called Bersabbas and also called Justice and Matthias. And they prayed and said, you Lord know the hearts of all, show us which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside and has gone to his own place.

And so they cast lots for them and the lot fell to Matthias and he was numbered with the eleven apostles. So the time comes to pick Judas replacement, to be numbered among the twelve apostles.

And they do some things we would think about. They pray about it. They wisely consider it with input like who has been amongst us, who has been walking with Jesus. And then they turn to this old tradition that they would have understand from their history as the people of God of casting lots which for them wasn't some sort of sorcery or the like.

It was just a way that they knew from their tradition to kind of take it out of your hands and trust it to God. But even so, it's still kind of striking, right?

[33 : 57] Like contrast this to how Jesus called the others to apostles. He went away for a special time and he fasted and prayed for special discernment.

And then there's all these kind of like holy moments, right? Again, he like shows up to Peter and his brothers and there's this whole thing with like miraculous fish and he walks up to a tax collector's booth and says, come after me.

And he tells another one, hey, I saw you sitting under a tree. And the guy was like, whoa. You know, like all these kind of things, right? And in this one, what you have is wise discernment and then a dice roll.

And then on to the pages of the New Testament walks a man, Matthias, who you've never heard of to this point and catch this, you're never going to hear about in Scripture again.

Do you know what that tells me? You know why I think God wanted him selected like this? It means there's no holy few. I mean, for sure, there is that great cloud of witnesses that we talked about in Hebrews that the men and women of the past who inform us and inspire us.

[35 : 10] But Christianity has never been just this special cadre of anointed people that advance the kingdom. I mean, think about it.

If we were running this show, let's just admit, when we're talking about the 12 apostles, we would probably be tempted to say, you know, why didn't God just kind of hurry up and get Paul in that role, right?

Because we all know Paul. Paul's like the real 12th apostle, right? Who's Matthias? But that's just not what you see in the pages that roll along in the book of Acts.

You don't just see the apostles, and you don't just see Mary, and you just don't see any number of other men and women who are close to Jesus. You see stepping onto the pages of Scripture other people whose names you've not heard before in the story.

You see people like Priscilla and Aquila who get to know Paul just by work association. They're tent makers. Like that was their profession. And so they run into Paul making tents, and they become one of his most faithful companions in the spread of the gospel.

[36 : 16] You see stepping on the pages of Scripture people like Apollos, who's this person preaching with power for Jesus, but he's kind of getting some stuff wrong because nobody's giving him the full revelation of Scripture.

And so he runs into Priscilla and Aquila, and they take him aside in small group discipleship and lead him as he leads others. He's a powerful force in the church with a Greek name.

There are people like Stephen who was one of the first deacons and one of the first people to lose his life for the gospel. And incidentally, I love Stephen's story too because, again, in our minds, we don't have a filter for your position is not who you are.

And Peter, or Stephen, is a deacon. And again, I think there's this part of us that would be like, well, the real people are whatever is the next thing. Is it elder or is it an apostle?

But I promise you, when Stephen gets to heaven, after being stoned to death, God didn't say, well, you know, if you really got it right, you would have been like an elder or something.

[37 : 24] I mean, Stephen runs the course that's given to him. You know, from the moment Paul was made an apostle to the Gentiles, so to the non-Jewish world, if you know anything about Paul, or frankly, if you've ever met any of the type that has kind of like just the fire like Paul for church planning, you knew it was only a matter of time before his heart was going to turn to Rome.

Because Paul just can't not. Like, you can't tell someone you're the apostle to the Gentile. He's going to, he's like, where is the biggest and the most, like, I've got to go preach Jesus there.

And throughout his life, he's longing to go there, and finally, he gets to go on a journey there, and it's like a crazy journey. It's like a whole story in itself. There's like a shipwreck, and like a snake bites him, and all kinds of like crazy stuff.

And it feels like the story's building up because it's so dramatic of, and then Paul arrives in Rome to plant the church in Rome. But when Paul gets there, what the scripture says is, the brothers come to greet him.

There is already a church in Rome when Paul gets there. And of course, Paul does his thing and tries to convince more people and get stoned in jail and all the Paul things he does, right?

[38 : 52] But I love the fact that lost somewhere in the pages of history, some follower or followers of Jesus were the first ones to get to the capital, to the capital of the Roman Empire with the gospel.

Unknown people established the church that Paul found when he got to Rome. And that means you can certainly have people you look up to in your faith, maybe a parent or like an author or a pastor. It's good to be inspired by the faithful men and women of the past. And it also means you can be called into a position of leadership, and that can certainly matter. But this advance of the gospel isn't about any of those people.

people, Jesus is the hero of the story, and he alone is worthy of worship. But he says you do have a place.

This isn't just Jesus did something amazing and the disciples did something amazing and now the world's stuck with you, the second string, right? We'll just muddle through it. You have a role in the story, and it is critical you play it.

[40 : 04] I mean, not to put too fine a point on it, but I guarantee you there is someone in your life right now that you are the only lifeline to the gospel they've got. You are the only connection to the words of the Father, and they need you.

Paul couldn't do it. I can't do it. Jesse can't do it. They need you. This takes us to our final point today, which is Jesus' resurrection yields an invitation to shine the light of the gospel and make disciples.

Jesus is very unambiguous in what, in telling his followers what he wants them to do after Easter. Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them, and when he saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted.

And Jesus came and said to them, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I've commanded you.

And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. Interesting textual and pastoral side note here. It's actually pretty incredible to me that verse 17, where it says some doubted, is in there,

right?

[41 : 29] Because partly, again, back to this whole thing of, if you thought they're trying to make up a new religion, as some people claim, that you really wouldn't want to include embarrassing details like some doubted.

I mean, in front of the risen Jesus, I mean, really? Like, he's right there. And I mean, you would be tempted to say, like, there's no way except, like, I know people.

And that's how it works, right? Right? And pastorally, it's exactly the kind of thing I would expect a good father to do. Because, you know, this word, when it says they doubted, that's not a word in the translation that means something like utter rebellion or rejection or unbelief.

It's a word that just hints at hesitation, kind of double-mindedness, right? They worshiped and they hesitated. Just like we find ourselves doing.

I'm all in, sort of. And I don't think it's included to encourage doubt or double-mindedness, because we've already seen Jesus call us out of that.

[42 : 39] But I do think he left that verse there to just, again, hit on this idea of, if you are a person that is of the mind that man, there is this holy few of people who never waver in their faith and they know.

Jesus, in the midst of the weakness of the people around him, still calls them forth. He still commissions them. He affirms to them, I have all authority on heaven and earth.

And because of that, I can tell you to go out anywhere on this planet with this singular mission, go everywhere, tell everyone the good news, baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teach them how to follow me.

Just quite simply, make disciples. You know, I'm a lover of history. I always have been, mainly because of the stories that it holds. And because of that, I've made it a habit over the years, from time to time, to visit old graveyards.

And that might not be your jam, and I would understand it. You might think that's kind of a macabre hobby for someone to have. But one of the reasons I enjoy it is because if you've ever gone to some of these really old or ancient graveyards, the epitaphs on the stone are just so much more lively than the ones they are today.

[44 : 01] I mean, you will find everything out there. You'll find poems and quips and, like, riddles and snarky comments. Like, you'll find all of it, right?

But you will also find, in an abundance that might surprise you, believers testifying to their hope in Jesus.

Someone that you can tell the last thing they wanted remembered is that when somebody stood here and read this epitaph on this stone, they would know that this stone, this cold blanket of earth, it's only a temporary assignment.

They wanted you to know that I hoped in Jesus when I was alive and I am still hoping in Him now. And that just brings us back to where we begin.

Jesus is risen. What do we do now? Because it's just a fact in history until it becomes personally relevant. What the resurrection really is, when it becomes more than a story to you, is the ultimate hope.

[45 : 03] It is a hope that won't waver even when death approaches. It's the hope that a person has when they have resurrection life in them that cries out, Jesus is alive and because of that, I'm alive.

You can be alive too. You can be restored. And one day, He's going to return and all of this is going to be made new. And we say amen to that.

As the band comes up, a couple ways you can respond. If you're here and you're not a follower of Jesus, again, it's always just a privilege to have you with us.

Jesus often says something like this when He's talking to people. He says, to the one who has ears, let them hear it. And so I would not try to convince you of the truth of this gospel other than to say this.

If there is any part of your heart that doesn't feel like it wants this moment to pass, if there is something in you that is interested in this, then this is an invitation to stop doubting and believe.

[46 : 15] It is an invitation to put away shame in your life. Jesus' invitation is to stop believing what the world says, what you feel about yourself, and to hear what your Creator, the one who loves you, has to say.

And if that's you at all, I would simply say, just don't let the moment pass. And come talk to us up front, even if you're not fully ready. We'd love to answer your questions. There'll be a prayer on the screen. That's a way you can ask Jesus.

Jesus, it's very simple. It's not asking for a mountain of gold. He just wants your heart. To the one who repents, there is mercy without end.

If you are a follower of Jesus, I think the message for us is run the course that is set for you. Easter is a miraculous thing, and it is the foundation of our hope and faith.

But after Easter, you're going to have to run the course set for you. Maybe before you take communion today, this is a day maybe to ask the question, God, is there anything in my life that I am longing for or striving for that's not on your course?

[47 : 30] It is the easiest thing to set goals, to set hopes and aspirations and pursue them, particularly if they're not evil things, but to pursue them with the hope of that's what I want to see happen.

But the Bible pretty bluntly tells you, you don't know if you'll have tomorrow. The only thing you have is to run whatever course is left.

And Jesus will lead you in that. And then when you're ready, you can come and take the communion, take it back to your seat again as a reminder of it's not a course you run by yourself. It's course you run in him. So, Father, we give you this moment of prayer and communion.

Whatever is needed. And I just pray if someone here like Thomas says, I'm not going to believe unless I see it. I pray you'll let them see it. You'll give them what they need. Someone in here is ashamed.

[48 : 35] I pray you'll give them the grace and courage to believe that their sin is not greater than you as a savior. I pray you'll give us the grace to see the course before us and the courage to run it. your kingdom come, your will be done, Father. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.