

Implications of the Resurrection

Matt Chandler – April 19, 2014

Happy Easter. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab them. Luke, chapter 24, is where we will be. Let me put the cards on the table. I know it's Easter, and so I know we're all over the map. What I mean by, "We're all over the map," is there are those of you in this room who are believers of Christ, follow him, celebrating the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Then there are others of you here who are what are, I guess, called "nominal believers."

What that means is you kind of show up at Christmas, you show up at Easter, and maybe once or twice the rest of the year you come in. Nothing really in regard to living your life really shows you to be a follower of Christ in any way, but you would define yourself as a Christian, probably because you look at people around you and you feel better than them. So you think you're a Christian, not based off of anything other than the fact that you have been in Texas a while and you're American and you have a moron friend whom you're morally superior to.

Then there are some of you who just aren't believers at all, know you're not a believer, not trying to be a believer, not here to play a game. Honestly, a neighbor pestered you, a coworker wouldn't leave you alone, or this is your gift to your spouse. "Get off me. I'm coming. This is my gift for the year. I don't want to hear about this again until Christmas."

I know that's what we're dealing with, and so let me just cut to the chase. I'll just lay it out on the table right out of the gate. In here today we're not celebrating the fact that winter is over. We're not celebrating the fact that spring is here. We're not celebrating the fact that flowers are blooming and white people are starting to change color. None of that is why we're here today.

We are here because we believe as Christians Jesus Christ literally and physically was resurrected from the dead. We believe it. We don't think it was ethereal. We don't think it was an analogy. We don't think it was, "Well, Christ got up when he was down, so we can get up..." We don't believe that.

We believe Jesus Christ was physically and literally murdered, killed, that he was in the grave from Friday afternoon until Sunday morning, and on Sunday morning he physically resurrected from the grave. We believe that. We have embraced that, and we have embraced the implications of that. Since we are a mixed room here, I simply just want us to talk about this, because you have to do something with Jesus Christ. You have to.

He's the most famous man in the world regardless of continent or country. He has been on the cover of more magazines. He is the topic of more debate. He is really a subject matter that is included in all of the world's major religions. Do you know Jesus appears in the Qur'an? Everyone has to do something with Jesus Christ, and so where I want to press us today is what are you doing with Jesus Christ?

In particular I want to start out with what are you doing with the resurrection, because if the resurrection is true, then it's all true. If the resurrection is not true, then none of it is true. If Christ literally was raised from the grave, then we have all the reason in the world to have hope and to live transformed lives. If he did not rise from the grave, then the Bible itself says we are to be pitied above all men. Did you know the Bible said if Jesus didn't physically, actually rise then we should be pitied above all men?

You think of all men, and the Bible is going, "If he didn't actually rise, you guys should really be pitied. Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you die. Stop this following Christ nonsense." Except it did happen. Did you hear what just happened? Some people went, "That's right," and then some people were like, "Please." I know. That's what I'm saying. It's Easter. I know what we're dealing with, and so let me read the text.

This is Luke 24, and, again, I know some of you could care less about the Bible. We'll get to history and history books and secular historians. We'll get to all of that momentarily. I'll let your side tell its story, but let's look at Luke 24, starting in verse 1. **"But on the first day of the week..."** That's Sunday for first-century Jews. **"...at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared."** That was how they were going to entomb his body.

"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. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the

ground, the men said to them, 'Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that 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 these words seemed to them an idle tale [make-believe] and they did not believe them. But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened."

If we're going to be intellectually honest here, here's what you have to do. You have to do something with this period of time. I don't know if it has ever really kind of struck at your mind to the reality that the secular world has done so much research and has so many different theories trying to describe what actually happened around the claim of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

So obvious is the objective historical evidence that something occurred that there are four dominant theories about the resurrection of Christ by those who do not believe he rose from the dead. Think about that. There has been scholarly work done. There's so much historic evidence that something happened there have been scholarly dissertations written, research done on what happened, by people who have no intention of believing or worshiping Jesus Christ.

Here are the four dominant theories, and my cards are on the table. Christian, they're absurd. Again, if you're not a Christian and you're like, "I think being raised from the dead is absurd," okay. Let's see if it's more absurd than what we're about to walk through. Here are the four predominant theories around the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Here's the first one: *They went to the wrong tomb*. You can giggle. I didn't write it. The theory around this brouhaha of the resurrection of Jesus Christ was these ladies were just so distraught in their grief they showed up at the wrong tomb. So when they ran back and told these other guys, then Peter ran to the wrong tomb.

Maybe. I've gotten lost before. Anyone else? I know humanity. I'm not trying to deny humanity as what they've experienced was traumatic, but if they just went to the wrong tomb and as Christianity began to spread and the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Romans tried to destroy the faith, wouldn't they

just have rolled out his body? Wouldn't they have just gone, "Okay, morons. They just went to the wrong... Here's his body right here. His followers are just morons"? But they didn't because there was no body to be found.

The second theory was *Jesus' followers were so filled with grief they hallucinated his resurrection*. Maybe. I've been around traumatic loss. Maybe they didn't sleep. Maybe they started drinking a little too much wine. Maybe they stumbled on some peyote or something. I don't know, but maybe there was a hallucination.

The problem with that is Jesus in his resurrected body appeared, not to just this guy over here and this guy over here, but appeared in front of hundreds of people. There isn't a lot of evidence that group hallucination can occur. He sat down with them. He ate with them for 40 days. He walked with them, and then those hallucinations stopped. Again, this is an absurd theory. It's a theory that would hold no water and has no such modern-day equivalent to other hyper-religious, cult-like followings.

The third one is the one that has the most traction over the last two millennia. It's called *the swoon theory*. The swoon theory is Jesus, having been severely beaten, hanging on the cross, blacked out because of loss of blood and because of the beatings he had endured, and they mistakenly believed he was dead and pulled him down and buried him when he was still alive.

If we're being honest historically, there is a ton of information throughout the centuries of people who were mistaken for dead and buried alive. Maybe there's something to that. In fact, there are certain civil war sites where they've excavated graves and they found soldiers who had been in their tomb who had pulled their hair out. They had come to in their grave. I probably shouldn't have shared that. It's just terrifying, isn't it?

It has happened, so maybe they're onto something. Maybe Jesus just swooned and then just didn't come back to life but kind of just pulled himself together and crawled out, somehow miraculously moving the stone, and that was what they thought was the resurrection. David Friedrich Strauss is not a Christian. He is a secular historian, and he thought...

Again, I just always appreciate intellectual honesty regardless of what side it's on, even if it puts weight and pressure on what we believe. I just think we have nothing to fear in truth, because all

truth is God's truth and we are of Christ and Christ is of God. So if it's true, praise God for it, and here's what Strauss says about the swoon theory.

"It is impossible that a being who had stolen half-dead out of the sepulchre [tomb], who crept about weak and ill, wanting medical treatment, who required bandaging, strengthening, and indulgence, and who still at last yielded to His sufferings, could have given to the disciples the impression that He was a Conqueror over death and the grave, the Prince of Life..."

So Friedrich here, our boy Strauss, is arguing there's no way if Christ truly swooned after having the flesh ripped off his back and a spear shoved up under his rib cage, puncturing his heart, and being nailed through his hands and his feet, could've crawled out of that grave and instilled into his followers he had conquered death and was the Prince of life.

They would've bandaged his wounds. They would've had to have given him great care, and he still would've given in to his wounds. Even honest secular historians would say it certainly can't be that. That leaves us really with the last one, and again this one was wildly popular for a long time.

It was that *the body was stolen*. His disciples stole the body of Jesus and then made up the resurrection so they could further their Master's teaching. Again, maybe... We've seen some crazy stuff in cults and stuff like that. Sure, why not? I think a couple of reasons are, first, historically speaking, even biblically speaking, even though I don't want to say *even* because I don't think there's a big gap in between history and the Bible... In fact, the Bible is very much a living history of the Son of God and God's plan to redeem all of his creation back into his sovereign goodness.

In the end the Bible writes the disciples are kind of cowardly morons, just very honestly outs them as pretty incompetent throughout the story of the gospel. In fact, if you sometimes go, "Surely somebody tampered with the Bible," I'm saying surely they didn't, or they would've taken a lot out, like Jesus' main men being as incompetent as they are brings me hope that no one messed with the Bible.

Do you really pay attention when you're reading? Jesus is telling a parable, and they're all there going, "Yeah," and then they pull away, and they're like, "We didn't get it either. What does that mean? Okay, so you threw seeds. So what's the seeds thing about? Like what happens when the weeds choke them out?" Jesus is like, "Are you serious? Okay, it's given to you to understand. Let me explain it to you."

I often bring up the fact that Jesus called Peter *Satan*, the only highlight of the disciples, who constantly bicker about who's going to be the greatest among them while Jesus teaches on humility and lowliness. "That was great, Jesus. Now do I get to sit at your right hand, or does he get to sit at your right hand in your kingdom?" This is kind of the guys. These are his main men. This is the team he picked.

Peter says, "You're the Son of God." Jesus says, "Blessed are you, Simon Peter, among men, for God has shown you this. Now I must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things." He says, "May it never be, Lord." Jesus goes, "Get behind me, Satan." If Jesus calls you the Devil, how do you get over that? Men, think about something your wife could say to you that just takes you a while to recover from. It kind of haunts you. If you say, "You're deity. You're the Son of God," and get applauded for that by the Son of God and then the Son of God calls you the Devil, I'm just thinking that's kind of haunting.

What we see here in the middle of this is this idea that these cowardly... They've already run away. These incompetent... They can't quite get it. They don't have any special skills except fishing. They have now turned into some sort of SEAL Team 6 group of men who somehow make the guards guarding Jesus' tomb fall asleep, they get the door open, and then steal his body, and yet knowing they stole his body are still willing to have their bodies tortured and killed to protect the story.

No one breaks. They crucified Peter upside down, and he doesn't break. Every one of the disciples dies a brutal, horrific death. John, who wrote the book of Revelation, the church tradition tells us they tried to boil him alive, and he didn't die. It so freaked them out that they exiled him to Patmos. No one recants. That has happened in other things... Sure, but if they had the body, then it becomes either...

Keep in mind Peter has a wife. These are men who have families. Nobody recants and nobody calls it off, and yet the theory is they stole him. They somehow figured out how to get past the guards, and they stole his body and yet kept the story alive as they were slaughtered one by one and as other men and women by the hundreds were slaughtered.

Because that seemed so absurd, historians then move on and go, "No, what happened wasn't the disciples stole the body..." Because of course they had been too incompetent for that. "What happened is the authorities hid the bodies so the disciples couldn't take the body." Again, aren't we

now just trying not to believe? If the authorities took the body, then as Christianity begins to spread, wouldn't they just destroy the thing by presenting the body?

Why arrest them? Why feed them to the lions? Why kill them? Why put them in prison when all you have to do is roll the body out there? "He didn't rise from the dead. Here's his body. We have his body. We hid it because we thought they were going to take it." The theories around what did happen simply can't bear any weight. They're so fragile. If you put any weight on them, they just crumble.

For us who believe he actually was resurrected from the dead, this is not us crossing our fingers and hoping we're right. It's rooted not only in the text, but it's rooted in what I'll just call historic circumstantial evidence.

1. *Biblical evidence.* Here's the biblical evidence around the resurrection of Jesus Christ, first, throughout the Old Testament. The Old Testament prophesies the coming Messiah will die and he will be brought back from death. We don't have time in our gathering today, but I would encourage you at some point this weekend to read Isaiah 53. It is a breakdown, not only of the cross, but what will occur after the cross, namely the resurrection of Jesus Christ. So Isaiah 53 is going to talk about his resurrection.

Jesus taught at least four times on the road to Jerusalem that in Jerusalem he would be arrested by the high priests and he would be turned over to the Gentiles and he would be flogged and he would be murdered and he would be raised from the dead. It was in stunning detail. Let me read you some of these.

This is Mark 8:31. **"And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again."** That's what he's teaching them. Look at the frequency of this. There's chapter 8. There's chapter 9. It's even got some kind of sidebar teaching. Jesus is kind of going, "Hey, we're getting closer to Jerusalem. This is coming." Again in Mark 9:30-32:

"They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know, for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, 'The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise.' But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him."

If you'll remember what we already read in Luke, what did the angel remind the women and Peter? "Remember what he said to you in Galilee." This is what he said to them in Galilee. Here's something interesting. The human soul is so bent we don't want the actual God of the universe. We want a god of our own design. That's why they're afraid to ask. That's why they don't want to talk about it.

In their minds he's going to conquer Rome, and he's going to have a throne and a crown and an army. They get to be his right-hand men. They get to be kind of the inner circle of the King. Jesus is saying. "I'm going to go. I'm going to be arrested. I'm going to die. I'll come back to life," and they don't want to talk about it. They're afraid to ask. They don't want to ask. One more time, with a great deal of precision, Jesus begins to talk about what'll happen when they get to Jerusalem. This is Mark 10:32-34.

"And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, 'See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles [the Romans]. And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.'"

So Jesus is teaching this is what's going to come. Biblically speaking, you have the Old Testament that testifies it's coming. You have Jesus' own teaching, "I will die, and I will come back to life." The last thing I would want you to see in regard to biblical evidence is when the resurrection of Jesus Christ is argued by the apostles and other biblical writers it's rarely argued as, "Have faith in," but rather, "Talk to those who saw," eyewitnesses.

First Corinthians 15:3-6 says, **"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, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas..."** That's Peter. **"...then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep."**

Here's Paul's argumentation around the resurrection. He didn't say, "Just believe me, guys." He didn't say, "Just have faith." He said, "He appeared to Cephas, the twelve, and then to 500 others at

one time, most of whom are still alive." He's saying they're eyewitness accounts. If you get accused of a crime and I can find a witness, your word against theirs, maybe you go to jail; maybe you don't. If I can find 500, you're gone.

Paul's argument around the resurrection is, "There were at least 500 at one time, most of whom are still alive. Ask somebody. I'm not making this up." Who can do that? Who can say, "Go ask," if they're making it up? You have all sorts of witnesses who saw him alive. They didn't believe by faith. They might have accepted by faith his sacrificial death, but they saw him. They ate with him. They heard him teach. He was alive, not a ghost, not an apparition. He didn't float. Fish didn't fall through onto the floor. He ate. It was, "We touched him." He was alive.

2. *The historic circumstantial evidence.* The historic circumstantial evidence is through the roof. Let me walk through just a little bit of that, and then I need to make some points for you and me to consider on this weekend. First, you have *the utter and complete transformation of his disciples*. As I've already covered, these men were cowardly, weren't the sharpest knives in the drawer, and yet something happened to them that turned all of that on its head.

If we just take Peter, who got called *Satan*, he has this interaction with Jesus right before he's killed. He kind of is "bravado-ing" it up. "Even if I must die, I would not betray you," and Jesus is like, "Before the alarm goes off tomorrow morning, bro, three times."

"Not I."

"No, you. Yeah, Peter, you."

Sure enough, he denies him three times. We have this marked cowardliness. "Aren't you with Jesus?"

"I don't know that man."

"No, you have a Galilean accent."

"I do not know that man."

"I saw you with him."

"Blankety blank blank." The dude just went off, lost his mind. Then the cock crowed, and Peter went outside the city and wept, the Bible tells us, bitterly.

Then this same man stands up about 60 days later at Pentecost and preaches his guts out. It enrages the powers that be, and they brought him before them and said, "Quit teaching about Jesus. We have the same power to do to you what we did to him. Quit it." What does Peter do? "Oh, okay"? No, he's like, "Judge for yourselves what's right and wrong, but as for us, we can't help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

What happened to Peter? When did he get so big-chested? When did he get all yoked up and ready to roll, because up until this point he was a coward. Yet what the powers that be are going to begin to notice is these uneducated men are turning the world upside down. You have the utter and complete transformation of the disciples. They saw something that made them value their lives less than they did before they saw it. Circumstantial... Who knows what it was?

From there... This one has always blown my mind. *Jesus' family believed he was God.* How do you pull that one off? His mom who gave birth to him believed this was... Do you know his half-brother James became a Christian who was one of the pastors in the church in Jerusalem who was martyred, was killed.

He so believed his half-brother was the Son of God they pulled him up on the temple mount, told him to recant, he refused to recant, they threw him off the mount, he landed, fractured both of his legs, he's bleeding out, and he's praying for the mob that's trying to kill him. It enrages a guy, who picks up a blunt object and crushes his head.

How do you get your brother to do that? How do you convince him? Does anybody have a sibling? Does anybody think they could pull that off? "Hey, Matt." "My name is not Matt. I am the Son of God." I just don't think anybody can pull that off. If you can, that probably has more to... Your family members are probably the issue.

James not only believes his half-brother Jesus...he grew up with him...is the Son of God, but he's willing to die and not recant from saying it. What did he see? What could he have seen that made him believe that? If Jesus was just a magician, then certainly James was around in Egypt when he was learning. Surely his little brother would've been there when he was practicing.

He would've been like, "Yeah, he learned that magic in Egypt. He isn't God. Yeah, that little curse the fig tree, I was there when he was learning that trick." No, he worshiped him, he loved him, and he gave his life for him. What are we to do with that? That's historic circumstantial evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If you saw your brother slaughtered and then you saw your brother's body put back together, resurrected days after his death, that's going to do some things to your mind and to your heart.

Again, there are a couple of other things, and I have to hurry here. *The women were the ones who discovered him in the tomb.* That doesn't register with us much, but I can tell you in the first century, women's testimony was not admissible in a court of law. If a woman saw a crime and the woman was the only one who saw the crime, you couldn't ask that woman to testify on your behalf because the court wouldn't accept it.

She was a woman, a weaker vessel. She couldn't be trusted. That's why I think, in part, when the women showed back up to the disciples and said, "He's not there. He's resurrected. We talked to an angel," do you remember what the Bible said? It sounded like idle chatter. It sounded like, "You ladies haven't had anything to do. You're sitting around making up stories." Don't get upset. I'm not saying I think that's in the... That's how they were viewed.

Let me ask you a question. If you're trying and building a false religion that would just sucker in people for... Some of the dumb arguments I hear are for money and power, because that's what was happening in that first couple hundred years when they were getting slaughtered and killed and fed to lions and all that. There's a lot of money and power to be had as a marginal group of people despised in an empire.

What in the world? If you're going to make something up, why would you put women discovering Jesus' empty tomb when you knew for most of the empire, most of the known world, women were treated and honestly regarded like cattle, like property, like, "Your dog doesn't get to testify in a court of law, nor would your wife's sister or mother"? Yet Jesus shows his love for women and their role in the world he has created, as he makes all things new, by letting women be the ones who discover the empty tomb.

Then just a couple more... In fact, I think another one that kind of marks me probably because I've been in church now for 20-something years. *The focus of worship moved off of Saturday*, which they

had practiced for thousands of years in accordance with the Ten Commandments, *and it moved to Sunday.*

I don't know what your background is in church, but church folk, for whatever reason, don't like change. In fact, all you need to do is do something for six weeks, and very quickly church folks will be like, "We've always done it that way." For six weeks, bro. Worship moved off of Saturday and onto Sunday.

Why? It's historical circumstantial evidence for the resurrection. Again, secular first-century writers Josephus, Pliny the Younger, and Salustius all wrote about the resurrection of Jesus Christ and some of the weird things that happened in the temple upon the death of Jesus Christ. These are not Christians who are going, "Something has happened. Something just occurred. Something has been turned upside down."

This is historic circumstantial evidence, but if we put together the biblical testimony with the historic circumstantial evidence, there is a far greater intellectual...I'm not talking ethereal or spiritual...case to be made that no one will deny: Jesus Christ, Jesus from Nazareth, the historical figure whom was crucified by the Roman Empire was resurrected three days later and that resurrected Jesus of Nazareth is God in the flesh, God the Son. If this is true, then there are implications. Let me give two implications quickly.

3. *Implications.* If this is true, and I think it is true based on, yes, my faith, and I'm approaching this as, "I want it to be true," not, "I don't want it to be true." If you're approaching it as, "I don't want it to be true," I'm sure you've already just kind of discounted all the arguments I have and I've thrown before you and you just know, and you're thinking of another one to say, "Well, what could've happened was a bunny hid some eggs." That's what ends up happening when you don't want to believe. You want to put other hurdles there.

Ultimately, if this is true, and I believe historically, biblically, and every way it is, then that means *our sins are legitimate, needed to be handled, and were completely handled in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.* If Jesus was resurrected from the grave, then what that resurrection means is death has been defeated, and the Bible tells us death is a result of sin.

Therefore, death has now been defeated in the person and work of Jesus Christ, which means your sin, my sin, is a very serious thing and required the life of Jesus Christ, and his resurrection is the

evidence the bill has been paid in full. I said last week, and I want to say it again because it's Easter, please don't create a god of your own imagination that is some sort of sky fairy that just puts happy dust on people.

When you do that, you make him unloving and cruel and a god who is not concerned with justice at all. If God is just a love fairy, just sprinkles happiness on everyone, then you have created a god with no standard of holiness, no standard of justice, who will not judge justly his creation, but he is a just Judge, and you and I have been in glad rebellion against God. The anger of his justice is pointed with 10-point accuracy right at us.

We have rebelled. We have lied. We have made accusation against God. We do believe we are our own functional gods. I could go on and on. God has made a way, and it's a way that's not built on your effort. It's a way that's not built on you being good. In fact, one of the things the Bible is going to tell us is the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ has freed you from the law. That doesn't mean we don't obey the law, but rather it means you can't save yourself with it.

If you've come in here, it's Easter, and you're just kind of like, "Man, I'm just guilty of so much," you are guilty of so much, but here's the good news. You cannot earn your way to God. Christ has made the way for you. If you could earn it, you could save yourself, and then Christ would've died for nothing. The resurrection is evidence that what occurred on Friday was the glad absorption of all God's wrath toward those who would repent and believe so now when God looks at us there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. None. Think about that. No condemnation.

"It's easy for you to say that. You don't know where I've been." I don't need to know where you've been. "You don't know what I've done." I don't need to know what you've done. It doesn't matter what it is. "You're saying that because you don't know." I'm just saying that because there are probably people in this church who could make your sins look a bit junior varsity, a bit fourth-string tight end.

By the way, your thought process there is idolatry, like you're the one guy who's so busted up you can out-sin the cross. If you could out-sin the cross of Jesus Christ, we wouldn't be celebrating Easter, and Jesus would still be in the ground. The resurrection of Christ is this objective evidence. It has all been paid. If it wasn't all paid, then Christ would be in the ground.

The fact that he is not in the ground shows us it has all been paid and God has saved you to himself and he has saved you for the great mission of pushing back what is dark in the world. We are the most entertained generation the world has ever known, 600 or 700 channels and nothing on. All the information in the world in your pocket right now and yet restless. Why?

Friends, you were created for more than you're walking in. When Jesus came, he said he came bringing the kingdom, that he was the King of the kingdom of God. He was going to push back what was dark in the world. Therefore, the more we make this about him, the more we flourish. The more we make this about us, the more we are robbed of joy, we are robbed of life, we are robbed of energy, and we are robbed of vitality.

The great irony of life in the modern world, our mantra, is, "I live my life the way I want to live it," and yet the fruit of that is weariness and exhaustion. Do you want to live? Die. I'm not talking physically, not suicide. That's not what's happening here. If you want to live, die to yourself. I say this all the time. If you're a Christmas and Easter, you might have missed it. I'm just honestly saying you might have missed this.

The more you make the world about you, the more miserable and exhausted and angry you're going to be. The more the world stops being about you, the more life, energy, and joy there is to be had. "If life is about me, you'd better do what makes me feel good, do what makes me happy, do what makes..." So now there's pressure on my wife, there's pressure on my kids, because it's about me. "When I roll up after work, there are some things that had better be done. This isn't about her. It's about me. My role with my kids is about me. People at work had better recognize it's about me."

What God says is the most freeing thing in the world. "It's not about you. Your money isn't about you. The gifts I gave you aren't about you. That's about me. The places I put you, opportunities you have, are about me. It's about my kingdom, my glory, what I'm doing," and you and I have been called into *the* story in the universe, the only story there is. If you're not a believer, just know you're in God's story, and unless you repent and believe, your part in that story is to display God's justice.

If we repent and believe, we get to be the picture of God's grace and his mercy. Be a trophy of grace, not a picture of God's good, right justice. This is what we're celebrating, that Jesus was raised from the grave, defeating death, purchasing our souls, adopting us as sons and daughters, forgiving us completely, but only to those who believe and by faith embrace that grace and repent of their sins.

God has made a way. Let's enjoy our families. Let's have a good weekend. Let's not drift too far from this. Let's pray.

Father, thank you for these men and women, for the opportunity to just think about and dwell on the reliability of your resurrection and what that means for us. Father, where we've made this about us, forgive us. Where we have tried to save ourselves or we've compared ourselves with others in order to spiritually feel better than them, I pray that you would break through all of that. I thank you for your saving work on the cross.

I thank you that the resurrection shows us that bill has been completely paid. Thank you that there's no sin with more power than the cross. I pray that you would call unto yourself those men and women in this room, Father, who might define themselves as Christians but to this point in their lives have not laid their yes down, given their lives to you, and begun to pursue that relationship with you that was purchased so beautifully in the cross. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.