

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

You Only Live Twice

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 1249

I want to share with you this morning just some great truths about the resurrection taken from the Gospel of John. This particular Easter season, we have been using the Gospel of John as a basis for our Bible studies together and we're going to be looking at it again and you'd be in good order if you took your Bible and just kind of got ready to look at the Gospel of John because we're going to look at several portions in it.

I'd like to entitle, if you need a title, the message, , because I think that's really what the Christian hope is all about. There's much being written today on the afterlife. There's much being said about life after death and, as one writer called it, life after life. There are a flurry of experiences of those who were supposedly clinically dead in surgery or who had heart attacks and before they were resuscitated, went into a clinical death and when they come back from whatever experience that is, they report how wonderful it was and that they had touch with immortality and so forth and so on. And this has stirred up a tremendous amount of interest in the subject of immortality. And I think part of the whole involvement of the world in Easter this year to a greater measure maybe than in years past is due to this preoccupation with the subject of immortality.

It seems as though man has always grasped immortality as a drowning man would grasp a lifeline. It's just a part of man. It's something in him. As Solomon stated it from the human viewpoint in Ecclesiastes 3:11, "God hath set eternity in their hearts." It is something in man that longs for eternity, that longs for immortality. It is innate to man. No one needs to teach a beaver how to build a dam and no one needs to teach a bee how to make honey and no one needs to teach a bird how to make a nest and no one really needs to teach man how to sense immortality because it's just a part of his nature. God has set eternity in his heart. It is intuitive. It is instinctive for man to reach out and grasp the concept of immortality and I believe that that's part of the fascination with Easter. That's part of the fascination with the concept of resurrection and the concept of immortality that is heralded at this of the year.

And I suppose in the reason and the logic of man, there is some clear thinking about why there must be immortality. For example, so often in this life, the wicked seem to succeed and the righteous suffer. Good goes unrewarded in this life so often and evil goes seemingly unpunished. Truth is dragged through the dirt and wrong gets put on the throne and I guess we could summarize it by saying, "Nero sits on the throne and Paul is in the dungeon and something's wrong." And it's that way with man. There is a struggle for the reality of justice and equity and what is right and our reason

rebels against the fact that the inequities and the injustices of this life are all there is and when it's over, it's over and there's no making right and there's no equalizing and there's no justice. Death is the end of everything.

And the heart of man won't live with that and he seeks for a greater sense of justice, a truly equalizing, and so he looks at the afterlife. And he's right because God put it this way, "Whatever a man sows, that shall he also...what?...reap." Maybe not now but in the future life. And another thing that man thinks in his reason, I suppose, as he formulates the need for immortality, is the fact that the present life is so unfinished. It is so incomplete. How many unfinished symphonies? How many unfinished masterpieces where all we have left is the pencil sketch because the artist died? How many unfinished works? How many things that men and women set their sights to do and set their dreams to dream and never, ever happened? Life has a way of being so unfinished. How many children have died in child and how many youths and how many young adults and we wonder and we ask, "How could it be that everything is so incomplete?" And so the heart of man reaches out and says there's got to be more. Life cannot be just here and now and over and gone, not with this marvelous creature man that God has made.

Imagine, if you can, an artist who makes a masterpiece and just before the masterpiece is finished and just before it is ever displayed, he takes a knife and cuts it to ribbons. Or imagine a sculptor who takes his chisel and his hammer and his marble and sculpts out a masterpiece and just before it is completed and before anyone ever sees it, takes his hammer and crushes it to powder. And you say no artist would ever do that to his canvas and no sculptor would ever do it to his statute and man's reason says, "No and nor would God do it to His marvelous creature man." Nor would God ever think of man with all of his infinite potential being so incomplete in this life and then death be his destruction before he has ever made the masterpiece and before he has ever displayed the masterpiece.

And the Bible corroborates that by saying in Ephesians 2:10 that we are God's masterpiece and we will be made like Christ. And in Ephesians 3:10, that some day we will be displayed before the angelic hosts in all of the glory that is potentially man's in order that the angels might praise the wisdom of God. And so man says, "There's got to be more because of injustice. There's got to be more because of incompleteness." And I think another thing that the reason of man says is that there has to be more because of the basic unsatisfaction of this existence. God could never bring us into this world and say, "This is it, guys. Live it up. Grab for all the gusto you can get because when you've drunk this one, it's over." It's just too unfulfilling. And I always think of the line "satisfaction guaranteed." But it really isn't.

There are many pleasures in our lifetime but they are temporary and they are deceptive. The truth is that from the richest mansion to the poorest hut, every single person has his own peculiar combination of worries and fears and sorrows and pains and toils and sicknesses and disappointments. And man, who is created in God's image with such limitless potential and

possibility, is surely destined for more than this kind of terrible frustration that comes because of the unfulfillment of life.

And as the structure of the fish implies water and the structure of the bird implies air, the structure of man implies immortality and God says there is another life. There is a satisfaction. There is a bliss that you've never dreamed of. There is a happiness you've never conceived of. There is something more than you have ever imagined. Could be the experience of man. Yes, in this life, Jesus says in Luke, "At best, we are unprofitable servants." There's got to be more for the highest thing that God ever created. It can't end here.

And I'm glad to proclaim to you this morning, as the choir already has so magnificently, it doesn't end here. There is life after death. There is also, tragically, death after death for those who reject Christ. But for those who receive Christ, there is a glorious life, a life in which there will be equality and there will be justice and there will be the making right of every wrong, a life where there is completeness, where there is fullness, where there is wholeness, a life where there is satisfaction, limitless satisfaction. It is the eternal life of God that is granted to everyone who puts his faith in Jesus Christ, who died and rose again providing that very eternal life.

This, frankly, is the message of John's Gospel. The message of John's Gospel is simple. It is this; man may have eternal life. That's the message. God offers to us eternal life. Jesus says in the 14th chapter and the 19th verse, "Because I live, ye shall live also." In chapter 3, it talks about everlasting life. In chapter 4, it talks about everlasting life. In chapter 5, it talks about everlasting life. In chapter 6, it talks about everlasting life. In chapter 8, it talks about everlasting life. And on and on right on through. It's a book about everlasting life. It's a Gospel written by one of the followers of Jesus Christ to give us the message of the Holy Spirit regarding resurrection life, eternal life.

Now as John covers the subject of eternal life, there are four major passages which he builds around. And I want us to look at them this morning and the first one is in the second chapter. John chapter 2 is where we will begin. And here we find what I like to call resurrection power promised, resurrection power promised. Next, we'll look at resurrection power proven and then resurrection power personified and then resurrection power personalized. But first, resurrection power promised in John 2.

Now let me set the scene. Jesus has arrived in Jerusalem for the first time since His ministry began. He is announcing to the world that He is the Messiah. The 30 years of obscurity is over. He has descended from some time in Galilee to the City of Jerusalem. It is Passover and the prophet said that when Messiah comes, He shall come suddenly to His temple. And so when Jesus comes, He comes immediately to the temple. And when He arrives, we don't see the messenger of love that we thought we might see. We don't see the gift of love that we may have anticipated as God begins the ministry but rather we see the angry Jesus. He is angry. He is full of fury. Why? Because of what

He saw in the temple.

Let me set the background for you. Do you remember a character in the New Testament named Annas? Annas was the official high priest of Israel for many years, a tremendously powerful man. Being high priest in Israel at this time in history had very little to do with religion and almost everything to do with politics and economics. He was anything but a godly man. He was anything but a true priest. But Annas was a powerful man and he ran the Jewish system. He was so powerful that the Roman government removed him from power and put a succession of other high priests in his line. The one with whom we are most familiar is the man who was high priest at the time of Jesus' death whose name is Caiaphas. But although there were other high priests, including Caiaphas, the man who was always behind the scenes running everything, even running Caiaphas, was this man Annas. In fact, when Jesus was tried to be crucified, the first phase of the trial took place in front of Annas. Annas was the man in power. He had so much money that even when he was taken out of power, he proceeded to buy the priestly office from everybody who came into its possession. So he ran everything.

And it's interesting that he gained his tremendous wealth from being in charge of the temple concessions. You say, "What do you mean? Hotdogs, popcorn, peanuts and hats? What in the world are the temple concessions?" Well, the temple concessions were the sale of two things. One, animals for sacrifice; two, the exchange of money so that when pilgrims from all over the world came to give their half shekel temple tax, they could have it changed into the proper monetary system to be deposited.

Now this was a tremendous business. I told you last week that there was in one incident 250,000, a quarter of a million plus, animals slain at one Passover period. That's big business. That would mean that there would be well over 2 million people bursting the seams of the City of Jerusalem at the Passover. The place was literally crawling with bodies. It was literally loaded with pilgrims from all over the world who had come for the Passover. And Annas was turning a buck fast and he was making a killing and the system was in full blast and into that place walked Jesus and He was angry.

Historians tell us that they were selling doves, which is our currency would sell for a nickel at that time and they were selling them for \$4.00 a piece. That's a slight increase. That everybody who had an exchange of money was charged an exorbitant fee to exchange it and so the profits were absolutely high.

And Jesus entered in verse 13. "And the Jews' Passover was at hand and Jesus went up to Jerusalem and found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting. And when He had made a scourge of small cords, He drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overthrew the tables. And said to them that sold doves, 'Take these things from here. Make not My Father's house an house of

merchandise.' And His disciples remembered that it was written, 'The zeal of Thine house has eaten me up.'"

Now listen. Imagine thousands of people jammed into that temple, the city just filled to capacity, all of them there and the selling and the buying and the animals and the confusion and the chaos and into this thing walks one Man with one small whip and throws everybody out; incredible. It's just absolutely astounding the power and the presence that Jesus had and how He totally commanded a mass of humanity to move at His very will.

Well, He had really fouled up the system. This is the middle of Passover. This is big business. This is somebody who walks in and shuts down the whole operation. Do you think there was a reaction? You're right. Verse 18, "Then answered the Jews," and the Jews is a word that John uses to refer to the antagonists of Jesus, mostly the leaders. "The Jews said to Him, 'What sign shewest Thou unto us, seeing that Thou doest these things?'" In other words, You better do a trick to prove You're from God or You're in a lot of trouble for shutting down the Jewish system. You better give us a sign, a divine miracle, to prove that God has sent You or we're going to really let You know what You've done. I mean you don't just walk in and shut down the whole operation of Passover in the City of Jerusalem unless you've got some mandate from some higher power and the only higher power involved would be God. And the only way they would know that God was involved was if Jesus did some kind of miracle to prove it.

And in Jesus' inimitable way of answering them with profundity, He says in verse 19, "I'll give you a sign. You want a sign? Here's a sign. Destroy this temple and in three days, I'll raise it up. There's a sign." Man, I'm telling you, that is a sign. "You want to know whether I'm from God? Kill Me and find out. In three days, I'll come out of that grave." Now people, do you realize the absolute incredibility of such a statement? Christianity is the only religion in the world the veracity of which is totally dependent upon the claim of its leader to rise from the dead three days later, not four weeks eight days, indeterminate time, but three days. And He did it. He said, "Destroy this temple and in three days, I'll raise it up and that'll show you who I am."

And by the way, He cleansed the temple a second time later. Now you'll know why Annas was so upset at Him. Twice, He reached into Annas' wallet. So they say, "Give us a sign." He says, "I'll give you one." You want to know something interesting? Jesus never really gave signs and the reason He didn't give signs is because they never understood them when He did. In Matthew chapter 16, there's a very interesting text, Matthew 16, verse 1. "The Pharisees and the Sadducees came and testing Him desired He would show them a sign from heaven." Okay, You. You say You're the Messiah. You say You're the King of Israel. You say You're God in human flesh. You say You're the Savior, the Lord and so forth. We want to see a miracle. We want to see a sign. Do a sign. And listen to His answer. "He answered and said to them, 'When it's evening, you say, "It will be fair weather, for the sky is red and in the morning, it'll be foul weather today for the sky is red and

overcast." Oh, you hypocrites. You can discern the face of the sky but can you not discern the signs of the times?"

In other words, He says, "What good would it do for Me to do a sign? The only thing you can tell is the weather. You're great at telling the weather but you are no good at all at telling what's going on when I do a sign." Listen, He had done so many signs there was no need for anymore. Miracle after miracle after miracle and they kept bugging Him about it. In verse 4, He says, "A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign and there shall be no sign given to it but the sign of the prophet Jonas." And what is that sign? As Jonas was in the belly of the great fish three days and three nights, so shall the Son of Man be in the earth three days and three nights and that's the only sign Jesus really ever gave when they asked.

You want a sign for why I'm cleansing the temple? I'll give you a sign. I'll rise in three days after My death. Now remember in the Jewish mind, any part of a day constituted a whole day. So all He had to do was be in the grave Friday, Saturday and Sunday, some part of each, and it constituted the three days to the Jewish thinking. And so He says, "I point to the resurrection as the only sign. I promise you I'll rise from the dead." And listen people, if He didn't then everything is useless. The Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, "If Christ be not raised then is your faith vain." It's pointless. Well, and of course, this was a sign and He promised it but they missed the point because they always missed the point. They never got it right.

And so they said, verse 20, "Forty and six years was this temple in building and wilt Thou raise it in three days? But He spoke of the temple of His...what?...of His body." They never got it. He says, "Destroy this temple and I'll raise it in three days." And they said, "Uh, it's taken us 46 years," and it wasn't finished yet, do you know that, when He said this. It was finished until 64 A.D. and it was destroyed in 70 A.D. "Forty six years we've been working on this and You're going to knock it down and put it up in three days?" They missed the point and they used the emphatic pronoun for "you." You? Who are you?

But they never forgot that He said that and later on in Matthew 26 when they were trying to get a way in which they could accuse Him to crucify Him, some false witnesses came in and said, "He said He would destroy the temple." And throughout the Book of Acts, Acts 6, 7, 17, 21, in those places, there is either the direct statement or the intimation that Christians were being persecuted because they were the ones who were plotting the destruction of the temple. They never forgot that. They never forgot their misunderstanding that Jesus was going to wipe out their temple and they tried to use that as a ploy against Him to accuse Him of being a revolutionary who was going to wipe out Judaism. They missed the whole point. But you didn't miss it, did you? And I didn't. Resurrection power was promised right here, right here.

Now I want you to go to John 11 and see resurrection power proven. Now Jesus knew that He was going die and He knew that He was going to rise again but He also knew that the disciples weren't that sure about it and His followers weren't and they hadn't really seen too much of His power over death although they'd seen it over disease. And maybe He realized that He needed to reinforce them a little bit, that He needed to let them really know that He was going to rise. In chapter 10 and verse 18, He says, "I have power to lay My life down and power to take it again." Now that's a tremendous statement. I mean no man in his right mind is going to make that statement unless he can do it. Nobody is going to say, "Go ahead. Kill me. I'll be right back in three days." But Jesus said it and I'm sure He felt that the disciples were a little shaky about whether He could pull it off and so He said, "I'll give you a little demonstration of the kind of power I'm going to use on Myself in a little while."

And He demonstrated it on a man named Lazarus. Let me set the scene for you. Lazarus is dead. That's basically the scene. In addition to that, he's been dead four days. The Jews did not embalm. The Egyptians did. The Egyptians would disembowel a body, take out the brain and soak the body in a solution for 70 days and then wrap it and mummify it and that's why some of them are still around. I stood face to face with the Pharaoh who was alive in the day of Moses. I saw him. He did not see me. He was there but he did not recognize me. But I'll tell you, they did a job when they mummify.

But the Jews did not. They just sprinkled a few spices, wrapped a little cloth and stuck him on a shelf and that's the way it was and Lazarus had been there four days and the Jews had a legend that the spirit hovered over the body for three days but on the fourth day, the spirit departed because the body had decayed so much. And so Jesus waited until Lazarus had been dead four days so that the Jewish people wouldn't question that the spirit had departed and he was good and dead.

And then in verse 17, we get the picture. "When Jesus came, He found that he had lain in the grave four days already." And that's exactly the way He wanted it. "Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs," or a ten-minute ride on an Arab bus. Some of you have been with me on that bus. And Jesus arrives in Bethany and He's got His little group of disciples. "And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary to comfort them concerning their brother." In those days, when somebody died, the community came and everybody cried and everybody mourned and everybody gave sympathy and you had to have dinners and so forth and it went on for days and the procession at a Jewish funeral was very interesting. They carried the body along in the procession, they buried it, and then they proceeded to have a procession around town, publicly mourning and so forth all over the place. It's interesting, too, that they always put the women in front of the line to remind everybody that women were the first to sin and bring death into the world. I don't know how you feel about that but that's what they did.

And so here would be the procession, the women out front. No doubt Mary and Martha leading the procession, coming along. Bang! They run right into Jesus and then the little dialogue, "Oh, why didn't You come? Oh, if You'd only been here he never would have died. Oh, Lord. If You'd only

been here. How could You stay away when we sent the message to You that he was sick near death?" And then they have a little conversation and I want you to go all the way to verse 34.

Verse 33, we'd better start. "When Jesus therefore saw her weeping and the Jews also weeping who came with her, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled." The Greek says, "He shuddered." He began to shudder inside. Now you say, "What was making Jesus shudder? What was hurting Him so much?" Because He was standing face to face with the consequence of sin and it had touched His heart deeply because He loved Lazarus so very much. They were close friends. Many occasions when Jesus had nowhere to go and nowhere to rest, He would jump across the Kidron Brook and ascend the Mount of Olives and duck down the back side a few feet into Bethany and get some rest in the home of Mary and Martha and Lazarus and they were very dear and precious friends. And now He could see the pain and the agony and the wrenching and the tearing and the separation that death brings and death is a result of sin and He began to realize His own coming struggle with sin and the cross and the agony and all that death and sin meant and it began to cause pain in His inner being. And so He began to shudder at the power of death, the consequence of death.

And He said in verse 34, "Where have you laid him? And they said, 'Come and see.'" And Jesus burst into tears, the Greek says and He was weeping not because of Lazarus because He was about to raise him from the dead. He was weeping because He saw the pain of sin and the agony of sin and He realized there was a mass of humanity gathered all around Him, the Jews who were still in unbelief. And nothing was going to convince them and they, as He had said earlier in chapter 5, would die in their sins and come to the resurrection of damnation.

And so the pain of all of it was tearing at His heart and the Jews didn't understand it and they said, "Behold, how He loved him." They had thought in verse 36 that He was weeping because He loved Lazarus. Well, He was weeping because He loved everybody and He saw what sin had done. And some of them said in 37, "Could not this Man who opened the eyes of the blind have caused that even this man should not have died?" I mean we know that He's a healer. Couldn't He have prevented this whole thing? Oh, they were so puzzled. If He loved Lazarus so much, how could He have delayed in coming and not come in time to heal him? "And Jesus therefore...verse 38...again shuddered coming to the cave."

It tells us there was a cave and a stone on it. In those a cave, an average one would be six by nine by ten. It might have as many as eight shelves on it where the bodies of a given family would be placed as they died and there would be a little rut in the front and a stone rolled across and then rolled back if ever the grave was needed again and that way it was sealed. They came to place where Lazarus was. He had been dead sufficient time so that it was convincing that he was dead. And all of a sudden in 39, Jesus said, "Take away the stone." And at this point, Martha comes unglued, to put it mildly. "The sister of him that was dead said to him," in good King James English, "Lord, by this time he stinketh." Well, you know what she meant. She meant that the terrible horrors

of death, the decay and the rot and rigor mortis and whatever else had set in and she couldn't understand why Jesus hadn't come earlier and she couldn't understand why now He had to see Lazarus personally to say His goodbye. Couldn't He just leave the stone alone? She only thought He wanted to say goodbye.

And Jesus says to her in verse 40, "Didn't I say to you that if you would believe, you would see the glory of God?" He's not saying the resurrection is predicated on her belief. He is saying that her understanding that it is an act of God is predicated on her belief, because a lot of people saw the resurrection but not all of them assigned it to God, you see. He says, "Look, I'm about to show you divine reality. I'm about to put God on display here, Martha. Hang on and you're going to see something." And then Jesus prayed.

In 41, "They took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, 'Father, I think Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always. But because of the people who stand by, I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me.'" Now the reason Jesus prayed to God the Father was to connect Himself to God in the minds and the eyes of the people watching. Earlier in John's Gospel, He had said, "I work and the Father works. We're in this thing together." Later He says to Philip, "You've seen Me; you've seen the Father." And Jesus just makes the connection to the Trinity here and says, "Father, I just want to talk to You a little bit so they'll know where I'm coming from and that We're in this together." And so He connected himself to God and then He began to put on the display of divine power.

In verse 43, "When He had thus spoken with God, He cried _____. He literally yelled. He literally screamed to the top of His voice, "Lazarus, come out." Now the impact of that moment is staggering. By this time, you've either concluded that Jesus is completely out of His mind or that He believes in Himself or that He just doesn't understand what He's asking. Nobody walks up to a grave and does that. Nobody! Some time, I would like to ask some healers why they don't but they don't. "Lazarus, come out."

And, of course, as you know, He had to say Lazarus because He had so much power if He'd just said, "Come out," every grave in the world would have released its victim. So He said, "Just Lazarus this time." And in John chapter 5, we studied John chapter 5, we realize that He will be in the future day the one who raises the dead of all the history of the world from the graves at the voice of His mouth. But here, just Lazarus. "Lazarus, come out." Now people, this is the acid test. Jesus has promised resurrection power. He's about to prove it. Did it work?

Verse 44, the minute Jesus said, "Come out," every decaying process in the body of Lazarus reversed itself like running the film backwards and, whoosh, backwards it went and out he came. "And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was bound with a cloth." And just imagine him coming out of the grave and everybody is just "Aah!" They're just

in absolute stark panic. He comes walking out of the grave and it's apparent that they were so frozen that nobody moves and Jesus says, "Well, loose him and let him go. Poor fellow. Just leave him that way." I've always thought I don't know who it was that took that thing off his face but it wouldn't have been me. Ooh.

Listen, Jesus promised resurrection power. Jesus proved resurrection power in the case of Lazarus and everybody saw it and it went like wildfire through Jerusalem, didn't it? And everybody knew he was dead and everybody knew he was alive. But there's one more step we need to see. He not only promised it and proved it; he personified it. Look at the 20th chapter of John. He personified it.

The great climax of resurrection power was when Christ raised Himself from the dead. He was dead on the cross. There's no doubt about that. We know He was dead because the Roman soldiers who were non-believers, who were expert executionists, who were trained to recognize death, said He was dead and didn't break His legs. To be sure, they jammed a spear into His side and it confirmed their diagnosis of death. He was taken and buried and left there Friday night, Saturday, Sunday in the morning and then we come to chapter 20, verse 1. "The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre." Here comes Mary running in the morning. The stone is gone. She runs and comes to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved. These guys are pals for the first 13 chapters of the Book of Acts and we see them together here.

And she says to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him." I don't know who the "they" is and I don't think she knew who the "they" was. But she figured somebody has taken Him. "Peter therefore went forth and the other disciple and came to the sepulchre and they ran both together and the other disciple did outrun Peter." John was younger no doubt and he just took off, came to the sepulchre. But he was very timid. And in verse 5, he stooped down and kind of peeped in. "And he saw the linen clothes lying but he didn't go in. Then comes Simon Peter," and guess what he did? And went charging into the sepulchre, right on by John. "And saw the linen clothes lying and the cloth that was about His head, not lying with the linen clothes but wrapped together in a place by itself." Boy, that gives you goose bumps.

He's come right out of the clothes and they're just there. And then He's taken off the thing on His head and folded it and put it in another place so the world would know there wasn't any struggle. There wasn't any fight. There wasn't any robbery. There wasn't any hurried unwrapping Jesus and hauling His body away. Everything was perfectly in order. And when John saw all of that, it says in 8, "Then went in the other disciple who came first and he saw" and what? "And he believed." What did he believe? He believed that Jesus rose from the dead and Jesus later appeared to Peter and He appeared to James and He appeared to the disciples three times and He appeared to more than 500 witnesses at once, overwhelming evidence.

Listen, Jesus personified resurrection power when He came out of the grave. And He set in motion a movement that's never stopped. Here we are nearly 2,000 years later and look at us. Thousands of us all over the world. Millions of us all over the world. No hoax can perpetrate that. Those disciples went out and died for the resurrected Christ. Would they have done that if they had stolen His body? The Church was born. The incredible evangelization of Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the uttermost part of the earth, the result of the living Christ. The whole Book of Acts is the story of the preaching of the glory of the resurrection. Jesus conquered death. Jesus was the victor over the grave.

Jesus had said to Martha, "Martha, I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in Me though he were dead yet shall he live and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Do you believe this, Martha?" And then He proved it in raising Lazarus and then He personified it in raising Himself from the dead. Listen, Jesus then said, "Because I live...what?...ye shall live also. I am He that liveth and was dead and am alive forevermore and have the keys of death and Hades." He is the living Christ who offers life. He personified resurrection.

Lastly, resurrection power has been promised, proven, personified, and now watch this. Resurrection power is finally, in the Gospel of John, personalized; personalized. Chapter 20, verse 11, the first personalization of the resurrection was to Mary Magdalene. Mary stood outside the sepulchre weeping and it's indicative of an unrestrained, sobbing weeping. And as she continually wept, she stooped down and looked into the sepulchre and sees two angels in white sitting but undoubtedly didn't realize they were angels, one at the head and the other at the feet where the body of Jesus had lain. "And they say to her, 'Woman, why are you sobbing and weeping?' And she said, 'Because they have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him.' And when she had thus said, she turned herself back and saw Jesus standing and knew not that it was Jesus." The tears and the sorrow and she didn't recognize Him and, of course, He was in a glorified body.

"Jesus saith unto her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?'" She's supposing Him to be the gardener. Isn't that interesting? The gardener, she thought. "Said to Him, 'Sir, if you have borne Him from here, tell me where you have laid Him and I will take Him away.'" If this is only a rental tomb, a temporary one, and you have to remove Him, I'll take Him. "Jesus said to her...in Aramaic...He said to her, 'Miriam.'" Just like that, she knew. Whoever called her Miriam in Aramaic but her family and her friends? And she looked at Him and said...in Aramaic...'Rabboni'...Lord." She knew. You see, Jesus personalized to her the resurrection because He cared and He offered to her resurrection life, His living presence.

Look at verse 19, "The same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews," here are the great heroes of the faith locked in a room because they're scared to death, all sitting in there trying to plan a strategy. And it says, "Jesus came and stood in the midst, the doors being shut." I like that. And He said, "Peace be

unto you." No wonder. If you were in a room and the doors were shut and somebody came through the wall, it would tend to unsettle you a little. Peace. "And when He had so said, He showed them His hands and His side and then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, 'Peace be unto you, as My Father has sent Me, even so send I you.'" And to the disciples, He personalized the resurrection. Verse 24, one fellow didn't show up that night.

My dad, when I was a little kid, used to tell me that's a good reason to go to church. You might miss something really important. Thomas wasn't around. "So one of the twelve called Didymus who was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, 'We have seen the Lord.'" Now you can imagine his zeal. "We have seen the Lord!" You know, this is unbelievable! "And he said to them, except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, put my finger into the print of the nails, thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe."

Boy, there's nothing like somebody to rain on your parade, is there? "And after eight days," just imagine eight torturous days for poor Thomas, "the disciples were inside and Thomas was with them. And then came Jesus, the doors begin shut again through the wall, stood in the midst and said, 'Peace unto you.'" And he zeroed in on Thomas and said, "Thomas, reach here your finger and behold My hands and reach here your hand and thrust it into My side and be not faithless but believing." And Thomas said what? "My Lord and my God." Now you see, Jesus personalized the resurrection to Mary Magdalene to secure her faith, to the disciples to secure their faith, to Thomas to secure his faith.

And you know something wonderful? Verse 29 says, "Jesus said to him, 'Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.'" There are going to come some after you, Thomas, and they're not going to see the prints of the nails but they're going to believe and the resurrection will be just as personal to them as it's been to you. And that is the message of verse 30 and 31. "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples which are not written in this book."

But listen. "But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have...what?...life through His name." Now listen. He personalized the resurrection to Mary Magdalene. He personalized it to the 12. He personalized it to Thomas. And now John says in verse 31, He wants to personalize it to everybody and He will. If you believe, He'll grant unto you everlasting life. "Blessed are those who have not seen, yet believed." Let's pray.

We think of the words of Peter who said we walk by faith, loving whom we have not seen, the words of Paul who also said we walk by faith not by sight. And we realize, Father, that Christ is no less real, no less alive, that we were Thomases with outstretched hands to touch the risen Lord. Thank You for the promise of resurrection. Thank You for proving it. Thank You for personifying it. Most of all, thank You for personalizing it and offering to every person resurrection life, that believing, we might

have life through His name.

While your heads are bowed and eyes closed, just a parting moment, no one leave. The Apostle Paul said that "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in thine heart that God has raised Him from the death, thou shalt be saved." Eternal life is offered to those who believe in His death and resurrection and confess Him as Lord. Do you believe? Have you confessed? I know many of you, perhaps most of you, have. I know some of you have not. Easter means nothing; resurrection in history is nothing, unless it means life in the present and forever to us as individuals, unless it is personalized.

And so in the quietness of this moment, perhaps this is the time when you should reach out to God and confess your sin and acknowledge that Jesus died for your sin and rose again and that you believe that and you confess Him as Lord. Father, thank You for the great day we've shared already, for what we anticipate tonight as we come together again.

Pray for every life here, that no one would leave without You. No one would leave who has not confessed Jesus as Lord. Draw those into the counseling room that You would desire and meet every need in every heart. Thank You for making the resurrection life our life that we might know You forever and ever and all that You have planned for us. We pray in the name of our risen Christ. Amen.

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