

# Message Transcript

IF THE TOMB IS EMPTY, ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE | EASTER WITH TRADERS POINT | AARON BROCKETT | APRIL 4 & 5, 2026

Hey, if you would across all of our locations stay standing for just a moment. Happy Easter to all of you. How many of you know if the tomb is empty anything is possible? What I want you to know is that if you put your faith in Jesus then anything is possible because that means that God has already pulled off the impossible by breathing life back into the lifeless body of His dead Son. And man, if He can do that, then He can do anything.

He can take what is dead in you and bring it back to life. He can take what is broken within you and put it back together. He can take you, if you've been estranged from God, and He can reconcile you back to a holy, perfect, loving God.

In Romans, chapter 6 Paul says that the wages of sin is death. He also says that he is the worst of all sinners, by the way. However, he says your old, sinful self can be nailed to the cross of Jesus, meaning that your sin, your guilt, your shame, your accusation doesn't get to call the shots anymore. You are not a slave to them any longer.

And just like Jesus didn't stay dead, if you are united with Him by faith, you do not stay dead in your sin and accusation because that same power that walked Jesus out of the grave can walk you into a brand-new life.

And all of that is pictured in baptism. Let me translate that for you. If the tomb is empty anything is possible. And if the tomb is empty then there is hope for you and your healing. If the tomb is empty there is hope for that addiction that has been owning you in private to be broken.

There is hope for that relationship you've about given up on to be fully and completely restored. There is hope for the anxiety that has been keeping you up at night to finally lift, hope for the anger that has been sabotaging you to subside, hope for the cynicism that has been hardening your heart to melt away. New life can be found.

And, man, I don't care who you are, where you've been, or what you've done. Anything is possible because Jesus is alive, death has been defeated, redemption is possible, and hope can be found all in the power of Jesus' risen name.



Guys, I want you to know I believe it deep down in my bones that for someone today is the day that you are going to walk from death to life, you are going to go from darkness to light, you are going to step across that line of faith, you are going to go public with it in your baptism.

And who knows, maybe that someone is you. Maybe that someone is watching online right now here in Indianapolis and you are going to get into your car and drive over to a campus and you're going to get baptized. I've got about 45 minutes of preaching. That will give you enough time to get over here.

Alright, if you would go ahead and grab your seats. Like I said, Happy Easter to all of you. It's really, really good to be with you this weekend. This is the first of many, many services. For those of you who came and you could not get into the auditorium, if you are sitting in additional seats, can I just say thank you so much. I appreciate your patience with us. I hate it whenever people cannot make it into the auditorium. I know that we've got a full crew here at this hour. I've got a lot of good news to share with you today. Before we jump into that, I just want to acknowledge all of the guests who may be in the room. Would you put your hands together and greet anybody visiting for the first time? It is our unbelievable honor to have you here, genuinely.

And if you came at the invitation of a friend or a family member, I just want you to know that they invited you because they care about you and they love you. And they know what I'm about to say in the next few moments and they want you to hear it. And I've been praying over you for weeks and weeks. And we would love to see you back, we'd love to call you family very, very soon.

I want you to know that if you live in the Westfield area we are launching a campus there in August. And our Plainfield and Downtown campuses are launching Saturday nights this fall. So, mark that on your calendar as you are you are thinking that through.

And I want to invite you back next weekend to something called Born Wild Weekend. Services start on Friday night at 7. We have services on Saturday and Sunday as well. We are going to have a special guest here, Todd Pierce, from Riding High Ministry in Idaho. We are going to breaking, I say we, he is going to breaking a wild horse on stage in the auditorium in every single service making a connection to the gospel message.

And if you are scratching your head going, "What in the world is that?" Just come back to see. And if nothing else come back to see what might happen, a live, unbroken horse in a room. What could go wrong? So, we'd love to have you back for that next weekend.



If you brought a Bible with you, go ahead and turn to Mark, chapter 15. That's where we are going to be today. And if you are brand-new to our church, we have been in a year-long study of the gospel of Mark every single weekend. We've just been going verse by verse through it. And we made our way about halfway through chapter 5 last week.

And I thought, let's just go ahead for Easter and stay in Mark, but we're just going to skip ahead to the end. Any of you ever read a book and you read the last chapter first? And if you do that, that's so weird. But that's what we're going to do this weekend. We are just going to skip ahead to the very end to Mark's account of the crucifixion and the resurrection.

And the text we're going to pick up in Jesus has already been crucified and the way Mark describes the burial is very, very significant. Now, what he does from verses 42 to 47 is he is certifying... Any of you ever receive certified mail? It's like a guarantee. That's what he is doing here. He's certifying that Jesus really did die. He's going out of his way to make that point. And the reason why is to show that He really did rise.

The reason why I'm bring that up is because some, in an attempt to explain away the resurrection say, "Well, He didn't really die. He must have passed out. He must have taken a nap. He must have slumped over to the side and woke up and regained His consciousness. And everybody thought that He died and resurrected.

Mark is going to go out of his way to say, "No, He really did die." There is good reason for this. If you go over to Matthew's account of the resurrection, Matthew tells us that the leading priest and the Pharisees we're getting really nervous after Jesus' crucifixion and they went to Pilate and said, "Hey, we remember Jesus talking a lot about being resurrected on the third day.

If you actually go over to Matthew's account and read this for yourself, they actually referred to Jesus as the deceiver, which is kind of ironic. They said, "Hey, the deceiver said that He was going to resurrect on the third day, so let's seal the tomb. Matthew says it this way in verse 64 of chapter 27:

"This will prevent his disciples from coming and stealing his body and then telling everyone he was raised from the dead! If that happens, we'll be worse off than we were at first." (NLT)

They knew what was at stake. So, Mark is going out of his way to make sure that nobody can make up another story. Nobody stole His body. He didn't pass out. He didn't get buried in the wrong tomb. He was certifiably dead. That's what Mark is trying to make a point of. Let's pick it up in chapter 15, verse 42. He says:



“And when evening had come, since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage,” it would have taken a lot of courage for him to do this, “and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

“Pilate was surprised to hear that he should have already died. And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph.

“And Joseph bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus saw where he was laid.” (ESV)

Now, I want you to know what we just read, what Mark is doing is he is stacking receipts. Jesus really did, fully, undeniably, 100 percent and then some, die. And a guy by the name of Joseph of Arimathea was a respected member of the Council, a respected dude in society. He’s got a lot on the line—his reputation.

Think about this for a minute. They very publicly crucified Jesus as a criminal. Most did not want to be associated with Him, including His own disciples. They bailed. But Joseph ends up coming out. That’s why Mark points out that it took a lot of courage for him to go to Pilate and say, “Hey, can I have the body?” Because Pilate could say, “Were you devoted to Him? Were you a secret disciple?” And he could get in trouble, maybe even his life could be taken as well.

And he takes the body of Jesus, the corpse, and he wraps it up and he lays it in his own tomb. And the reason why that is important is because there are some theories that say, “Well, they pulled Jesus’ body down from the cross and they were in such a hurry before the Sabbath to get Him into a tomb, that they just misplaced Him.

“They put Him in the wrong tomb and then they forgot where they put Him. And then they went to another tomb the next day and saw that it was empty and they made up the whole thing that Jesus resurrected.” Joseph could have cleared his throat and said, “Now, wait a second. I put Him in my tomb. I know where that is.”



Any of you ever buried a body in the wrong place? It's not a common occurrence. The next thing he says he goes, "The Romans Centurian, who by the way was a professional executioner—the dude did it for a living, he was a pro, he put people to death daily so he would have understood if somebody would have just passed out or if somebody died. Pilate wanted to know, "Is He dead?" And he was like, "Yeah, He died."

And Pilate signed off on it. That would have been a legal confirmation of His death. It wasn't just the disciples saying that He died, it was Pilate saying He died. And Mark goes, on top of that, "Oh, by the way, there were two women who were there and they watched the whole burial go down." More eyewitnesses. So Mark is basically saying, "Jesus didn't pass out. He didn't slip into a coma. He didn't almost die. His body wasn't misplaced. He was dead."

The reason why we have to stress that is because if He didn't really die, then He didn't really rise. And that's why the apostle Paul stresses this head on in 1 Corinthians, chapter 15, verse 17. This is Paul putting all of the chips in the middle of the table when he says:

"If Christ has not been raised, your faith is useless—you're still in your sins."

I love the intellectual honesty of that verse even though it kind of makes you a little nervous. He's putting all of his chips in on this. In other words he says, "This whole thing, the Christian faith, rises or falls not based on its logic, not based on its morality, not based on its historicity, it's based on an event. It's based on the resurrection.

What that means is, if the resurrection didn't happen, then all of this is nonsense. (You got dressed up for nothing. You guys look good, by the way.) Church is just silly. The Christian faith falls apart. In fact, I say this every year at Easter and moms everywhere get nervous, "This is the last Easter you ever have to go to if Jesus didn't walk out of a grave."

In fact, you don't have to come back next week for Born to be Wild. You don't have to come back for the weekend after that or the weekend after that. There is no reason to gather. There is no reason to sing. There is no reason to hope. All of this is a sham if Jesus didn't walk out of a grave. Now, that's big stakes.

However, the other is true too. If it did happen, oh man, that changes everything. That means that nominal Christianity is foolish. That means that, "I believe a little bit but I'm going to live how I want during the week," is really dumb. You can't just treat Jesus like a holiday tradition and show up at Christmas and Easter, check a box, and then move on with the way that you want to live your life.



If the resurrection really happened then Jesus isn't just a good idea, He's King. And He deserves to be preeminent in your life. I don't know, man. Like the dude who defeated death and walked out of grave—I'm going to listen to Him. I'm going to follow Him. I'm going to make Him Lord of my life.

So, now that Mark has established that Jesus really did die, he's going to show that Jesus really did rise in verse 1 of chapter 16. Follow along with me in your Bible or on the screen. It says:

"When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him."

So, this is their version of embalming the body. Really, really fast—what they had to do to rush to get Jesus in the grave before Sabbath, they didn't do a proper job. So, they are going back to make sure the job was properly done. Verse 2:

"And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen,"

And by the way because of modern science and lunar eclipse stuff, we know it was like 5:43 a.m. on April 5 AD 33. By the way, this Easter is April 5—really cool. And:

"they went to the tomb. And they were saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?'" Mark 16:1-3 (ESV)

Because the stone was massive and huge and it dawned on them, "How are we going to get in because there is a stone over the tomb." So, what Mark does here in these verses is something kind of out of character for him.

Those of you who have been here for our study in Mark, you're going to pick up on this, Mark does something very unusual. He's repeating himself. He gets wordy. And that's not a characteristic of Mark. Mark is known for his brevity. It's the shortest of the gospels. He just barely gives us the facts and moves on.

But here, he keeps repeating himself, he keeps repeating the names of these women over and over again. Why did he do that? Bible scholar Richard Bauckham says this is another way of Mark letting us know that he is recording a historical account, not just making up fiction.

The repeated names of the ladies are sort of like source citations or footnotes if you've ever done a term paper. Likely these ladies would have still been alive after the recording of Mark's gospel.



So, what he's essentially saying to everybody who would read the account of the resurrection is, "Hey, if you don't buy this, if you're having a hard time believing it, I'm naming the ladies. Here's their contact info. They are still alive. They live down the street to the right. You can go talk to them if you'd like just to double check my story. That's what he's doing.

And then the question that they ask at the end of verse 3, "Who's going to move the stone?" is a really interesting question because what that means is the ladies were not expecting an empty tomb. They were not expecting the resurrection. They were expecting Jesus' body to be there.

One more case and point, they were going with spices to anoint the body to offset the smell of Jesus decomposing body. If the ladies were expecting the resurrection, they wouldn't have gone with spices, they would have gone with a fresh set of clothes and maybe a snack and a juice box. I'm sure being dead for three days is very famishing. Verse 4:

"And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. And he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him.'" Mark 16:4-6 (ESV)

So, they came expecting to find a dead body. What they found was empty grave clothes. Mark keeps mentioning that they were alarmed. It says it not once, but twice. And they really shouldn't have been alarmed because repeatedly, in Mark's gospel, Jesus told them that He would rise on the third day. He did it in chapter 8. He did it in chapter 9. He did it in chapter 10.

And knowing Mark is brief, he likely did it much more than that. But yet they are still alarmed even though Jesus had been telling them all along. It's almost as if they had short term memory loss or something. They had forgotten that Jesus kept telling them that He was going to resurrect on the third day. And then in verse 7 this young man says to them:

"But go, tell his disciples and Peter,' because they weren't there, 'that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.' And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." Mark 16:7-8 (ESV)



Mark, what he is doing, is he is essentially saying this, "There wasn't anybody who was expecting a resurrection at all. In fact, the angel had to remind these women, "You will see Him just as He told you multiple times." And he says, "Go tell the disciples," because the disciples weren't anywhere around.

And I think that's kind of odd. Because as frequently as Jesus told them that He would be raised on the third day you would think that at least one or two of the disciples would have said, "You know, we should probably show up there just in case." But they weren't there.

I mean, whenever they open up a new Chick-fil-A they have that thing where if you are the first 100 people in inside you get free chicken for a year. So, people stay outside all night in sleeping bags.

Wouldn't you think that they would get some sleeping bags and sleep outside the tomb and say, "Hey, Jesus kept talking about this. I don't know if it's really going to happen because we've never seen somebody resurrect from the dead, but if it's true we want to be the first ones here."

If you were trying to fool everyone with a credible piece of fiction, you would have written all of this differently. Quite honestly, it's embarrassing to all of them. Repeatedly Jesus told them that He would rise so you would think the disciples would show up at sunrise with a DJ and party hats counting down as the stone rolled away: 10, nine, eight...

If you were trying to fool everyone, you wouldn't have had the very first eyewitnesses and proclaimers of the resurrection be women because, as many of you know, in ancient society women were marginalized and their testimony wasn't given much credibility at all. It was not admissible in court.

For example, there was this Greek philosopher by the name of Celsus, not Celsius the energy drink, but Celsus, who lived in the second century AD who was highly antagonistic to Christianity. He wrote a number of his pieces trying to list arguments against it. His primary argument, ironically, was that he said, "The resurrection can't be true because the first written accounts were based upon the testimony of women," which, precisely is why it should be considered true. Because Mark and the other gospel writers would have known that.

And if they were making it up as they were writing it out, they would have been like, "We can't have the ladies be the first ones to notice the empty tomb, let's have Peter or John be the ones. They got into a foot race there. Or maybe the Roman Centurian. How about Pilate himself? He shows up at the grave the next day and he sees that it is empty. And we write him into this." Guys, if you were making it up, you would write it completely differently.



And in the remaining verses in the chapter you see there is this tug of war, a struggle of belief. In verses 9 through 11 Mary Magdaline goes and she does what the angel tells her to do. Look at what it says in verse 10:

"She went and told those who had been with him, as they mourned and wept. But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it." Mark 16: 10-11 (ESV)

Any of you ever experience something and you go and tell somebody and he is like, "I don't believe you." Isn't that so hurtful? Essentially it's saying, "You don't believe my testimony about what I have experienced or seen." That's what they did to her.

In verses 12 through 13 Jesus Himself appears to two of them, Verse 12:  
"After these things he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them." Mark 16:12-13 (ESV)

So, this is why I say a lot, for some of us the matter of belief is not evidence, it's a matter of, "I want to live my life the way that I want to live it." If God ripped open the sky and went, "You-Hoo," you might believe for a little bit until you decided you wanted to do what you wanted to do again.

So, Jesus appeared physically and to these two and they were like, "We saw Him. We talked to Him; they didn't believe them. Verse 14:

"Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at table, and he rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen." (ESV)

Now, once again, if you were making this story up, what you would have done is you would have had all of the disciples believe immediately. Why put it in there that they doubted? I'm just pointing this out because I'm just guessing that with the number of people who are listening to this right now, there is somebody listening to the sound of my voice and is struggling to believe. And I totally get that. In fact, I think we all have. That's where faith comes in.

Thinking about this this last week, this is my 27 Easter message that I've written and preached. And every year it seems like I'm trying to do two primary things with it. I'm trying to convince half of you all that you are not crazy for believing in a physical, bodily resurrection and I'm trying to convince that other half of you all that you are crazy for not believing in a physical, bodily resurrection.



And I'm trying to reassure all of you that it's okay to have some doubts if the gospel writers tell us people had doubts. Mark tells us that some of the people who were closest to Jesus had doubts. So, you and I, living 2,000 years after, of course we might have some doubts about this.

And I don't think the disciples who doubted, I don't think it was because they didn't want to believe. I think they wanted to believe—maybe like some of you, "I want to believe but come on, I don't know. I don't want to be fooled." And I think that is why they struggled to believe. They didn't want to be fooled. They saw Him die once. They didn't want to be disappointed twice. I don't know if it was so much that they were doubters, they were just realists. And I don't blame them. Typically speaking, dead people don't come back to life.

That's why Jesus, I think, appears physically to over 500 eyewitnesses over the course of 40 days. Did you know that? It's not like He was appearing to a couple of them for 30 minutes and then went back to heaven and they are like, "Now, wait a second. Did we really see Him or was it just a bad burrito from last night?"

I think Jesus was like, "No, I'm going to appear to over 500 of you so you can all swap stories and talk about it and I'm going to stay around for longer than a month so you will know it wasn't just a bad dream. So you know that you weren't just imagining things." And to convince them that He had defeated death.

But even then Jesus acknowledges Himself that we might struggle to believe, which is why I love what He says in John, chapter 20, verse 29, I think He's talking to Thomas. He says:

"You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me." (NLT)

Who is He talking about? You. He had you in mind when He said that. He said, "Blessed are all of the people—these 500 eyewitnesses who get the opportunity to see Me physically resurrected. But you know what? There are going to be millions and millions and millions of people in 2,000 years who aren't going to get the opportunity to see Me physically. And you know what? There is a special blessing for them who believe."

And I want you to know, this isn't a blind or a dumb faith, there are good reasons to believe, astounding evidence. In fact, I would even go as far as to say that you'd have to have more faith to not believe the resurrection than to believe it.



Check out a guy named Jeremiah Johnson and some of his work on this, it's absolutely amazing some of the scientific, historical data that we have around the physical, bodily resurrection of Jesus. Because Christianity is not based on a story, a feeling, a set of morals, a religion, or a philosophy. It is based upon an event.

An event that most of the disciples gave up their lives for declaring that they believed that Jesus physically raised from the dead. They were proclaiming that. And their lives were taken from them.

Peter was crucified upside down. Andrew was crucified on an X-shaped cross. Matthew was stabbed to death for proclaiming this. Nathaniel was skinned alive and beheaded for proclaiming it. Thomas was killed with a spear.

The reason why I bring all of that up is that people don't die for something they know is a lie. And you might object and say, "No, man. People die all of the time for stuff they know that isn't true. That's why I have to take my shoes off at the airport."

That's not what I said. People will die for something that's not true if they think it's true. People will die for something not true if they are mentally unstable. Nobody in their right mind will die for something they know is undeniably false, and they may initially want to believe so much that it is true.

But here's the deal. Some of the disciples went for the next 40 years proclaiming this message was true and they were beat up and tortured and eventually put to death for proclaiming this message. Don't you think that at least one of them would have buckled?

Peter, as he's being hung upside down and just as the nails were beginning to go into his wrist that's when he is like, "Okay, okay. Maybe I've taken this a little bit too far. But, we've come this far and quitters never win so I'm just going to go through with this for a lie."

If Peter knew it was a lie, if he really knew that they kind of Weekend at Bernie's and this whole thing about Jesus was a scam... Only like four of you got that reference and I'm proud of that. Every one of these guys died for something because they had witnessed it.

You know, one of them was even Jesus' brother. How much faith does that take? I don't know if you have siblings or not. How many of you if your older brother or younger brother came up to you and said, "I am God." How many of you would immediately begin singing worship songs to him? No. Jesus' own sibling died saying, "He is the Son of God who resurrected from the dead."



Author C.S. Lewis refers to all of this as the liar, lunatic, or Lord logic. Maybe you've heard some of that before. Maybe not, it's new to you. It's this idea that you can't just believe one thing about Jesus when Jesus claims something else He is. You've got to figure out what you do with Jesus.

What we know first of all is historically He existed and He made radical claims. Jesus didn't say He was a good, moral teacher. He said He was the Son of God. Jesus didn't say He was here just to teach about justice. He said, "I've come to atone for sins." He made radical claims, which disqualified Him from just being a good guy or a wise moral teacher. Jesus does not leave that lane open.

For example, if I stood up here and I said to you all, "I am God in the flesh, build your life on me." You would go, "I don't know about that but the rest of what you said was very helpful." No, you would go call security. And rightfully so.

So, why are some of you doing that with Jesus? You are like, "Well, He was a good teacher. And I really like some of the things that He taught, serving the poor and justice. But the Son of God atoning for sins, I don't know about that." Well, He didn't leave that lane open to be claimed in.

Listen. He's either lying through His teeth, He's completely unhinged, or He's the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He defeated death on your behalf and walked out of a grave. The one thing that He refuses to be is your life coach or your guidance counselor or your co-pilot.

There is no question the impact that Jesus has made on history. I mean you just look at the stack of evidence. The guy never ran for political office but more people have chosen Him to be their leader than anybody who has ever lived. He was never formally educated, He never lectured in a university, but He's had more students than anyone ever has or will. He has never been a therapist but He's helped more people than any counselor or psychologist combined.

He's made the cover of Newsweek almost every single year. He split the calendar into two: BC and AD. One in three people in the world worship and serve Him. Two thousand years later we're still talking about Him. Not bad for a liar or a lunatic.

No. He's Lord. And Jesus changed everything. Here's the question though. None of that really matters unless you come face to face with this question: Can He change you? Will you let Him change you?

I've got two truths for you. One you're going to completely agree with the second you're not going to like. Here's the first one:

**The world right now is certifiably jacked up.**



Would you not agree with that? I think we can all agree with that. Even for those of us who are not too expressive in church we can be clapping, "I agree with that. It's certifiably jacked up."

It's a dumpster fire. Right? We can untangle ourselves or get ourselves out of this mess. We can't moralize ourselves out of this mess. We can't buy ourselves out of this mess. We can't rationalize ourselves out of this mess. It's a mess. All sorts of issues, man. We can just name them: relationally, politically, financially, economically, biologically, randomly, and anything else that ends in "ly." That's the first truth. We all agree with that.

Here's the second truth. You are not going to like this much. You and I contribute to it. We are to blame. There is this spiritual problem that cannot be solved any other way. Now, here's the thing. You and I have been brought up in whatever culture that we've been brought up in, this is true even in other cultures, you and I are highly incentivized to view ourselves as a victim.

That's why whenever we talk about all of these problems that we can list, most of the time you never see this in online comments or conversation or anything like that, "Well, you what guys? I'm sorry. I'm to blame. My group, my tribe, my political party—we're to blame. I'm really sorry. We'll try do deal with that."

No. What do we do? "It's them." Whoever them is. We don't like what they are doing. They are victimizing. We're the victims. They are all pressing. We're oppressed. We don't really frame it like sin, we frame it to where it is a little more palatable for us to swallow, "I'm not perfect. I just made a mistake. Nobody's perfect."

So, if we mess up it's very easy to say it's somebody else's fault. It's our parents' fault. It's our trauma's fault. We ate processed foods as a kid. Listen, man. Some of that is true. Some of that is true.

But Jesus said this. He must be crucified. On the cross, Jesus was saying this world is certifiably jacked up and you are to blame and only I can get you out of it. So, He took the sin that you and I deserved to be punished for upon Himself. What He is saying is that you and I, I'm including myself in this, we are not just victims who have been sinned against, we are villains who have done the sinning.

You are like, "Yeah, that's really offensive." Well, it would be if I was pointing my finger at you saying that you are the ones. I'm pointing it at me too. I'm in the same boat. We're all in the same boat. The ground is level at the foot of the cross.



The problem is not out there. The problem isn't with them, whoever they are. It's in here (our hearts). I've got to look in here (my heart) and I need a heart transplant. I don't need a heart adjustment, but a transplant. And it's not something I can do myself.

And right now I'm not asking you what you believe about God. I'm not asking you what denomination you grew up in. I'm not asking what tradition you feel more comfortable in. I'm asking you this. Have you conquered the sin problem in your heart? You are a sinner in need of a Savior. You are not a mistake in need of a life coach.

And I want to give you two truths that will hopefully land on you and set you free. Number one:

### **God is so holy that a payment for sin had to be made**

And,

### **God is so loving that He made that payment Himself**

And the last two verses of our passage today, verses 15 and 16 say:

"And he said to them, 'Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel...'"

What's that? What I just now said to you. I'm proclaiming it to you. He said you proclaim that gospel:

"to the whole creation.' To all of the things. To all of the people who you can't stand. To all of the people you think are the problem. Go declare it to them. Preach it yourself:

"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved," That's a promise. "but whoever does not believe will be condemned." (ESV)

Condemned by what? Your own sin. And Jesus has already made payment and He wants to clear your name and cleanse your heart.

I don't know, you may be sitting here today and saying, "Yeah, I've heard all of this before and it doesn't really do much for me. Valiant effort. I really appreciate all of the energy that you are putting into this. But I don't buy it."



And I would say this. A lot of times one culprit of that if you are unmoved could be that you are only believing half of the gospel. Because the gospel isn't just forgiveness, the gospel is a complete transformation. And it's a supernatural thing that ends up happening. Jesus was supernaturally brought to life. You need to be supernaturally brought to spiritual life. And that's not something you can do on your own.

So, for many of us if we say, "Well, I tried all of that and it didn't work or it didn't take," maybe you just believe half of the gospel, which is the forgiveness side. And you tried really, really, really hard to be a good Christian," and you failed because you will, because you can't. And you are like, "Well, it didn't work."

It's kind of like this. Let's just say you owe millions, and millions, and millions of dollars to the bank. And the banker called you up one day and said, "Hey, can you come in for a meeting." And you go in and you sit down and you're kind of nervous about what they are getting ready to say. And they say, "Hey, listen. We know that you can't possibly pay back all of this debt so we decided, as a bank, to tear up your note and just completely forgive you of all of the debt."

Now, that would be a pretty good day. You'd walk out and go, "Alright. That's awesome." But that doesn't necessarily mean that you've been changed because you didn't really deal with the root of the problem as to why you got into millions of dollars of debt to begin with.

So, it's very likely that you would go back to your old spending habits, you go back to your old gambling addiction, you'd go back to foolish spending and you'd find yourself in debt again. And you go, "Well, that didn't work." And you get angry at the bank.

But, if the banker brought you in and had a different conversation and said, "Listen. You can't pay off these millions, and millions, and millions of dollars of debt so we've decided to tear up the note and forgive you of the debt. But also we've decided to adopt you into the family business and add your name to the trust."

Now, all of a sudden, you walk out of the bank and you are forgiven of the debt and you are worth millions simply because your name got transferred to the trust—that's different. That would change the way that you saw yourself. That would change the way that you live, at least it should. That should rattle you out of your slumber to realize, "I don't deserve any of this. Now I want to live worthy of it."



Listen, man. Jesus is not just offering you the forgiveness of sins. He is offering you adoption into His family. He is offering you righteousness. In fact, if you look at how many financial terms are given throughout the gospels... Jesus talks a lot about He has come to pay for your sins. God has come to redeem you from your sin. The last words that Jesus speaks on the cross is tetelestai, which means paid in full. It's a receipt.

But then He says, "Hey, now you get adopted as an heir." The fancy, theological term for this is penal substitutionary atonement where Jesus takes on your sin and He gives you His righteousness so that when God looked at Jesus He saw your sin and when He looks at you He sees Jesus' righteousness, which is why the way you live matters. And we don't live for victory; we live from it.

It is not just about grace. It is not just about love. It is not just about acceptance. It's not about easy believeism or the forgiveness of your sins. It is also about righteousness and holiness and God putting a robe around you and saying you're a brand-new person. So, now you live from that. You pursue truth and righteousness and holiness. Colossians 3 says that you put to death the sinful things lurking within you.

If you are here right now and you came at the invitation of a friend and you're not necessarily a church goer a lot and you are hearing all of this and you are like, "This is interesting. I'd love to come back next week and check out Born Wild Weekend but you know, Aaron, I don't know that I really fit in here. I mean, I came here three Easters ago and this is my first time back. That's how good of a Christian I am.

"I've been through a mess since then. I've gone through a divorce. I've been broken. I'm selfish. I'm addicted. I tried to clean myself up and have a nice Easter but even on the way over here the kids were cussing in the minivan. I don't know that I belong here."

I want you to know you belong here. Jesus went to a cross so that you would belong. And I want you to look around the room, whatever room you are in. And I know it's an Easter crowd. Everybody looks pretty good, pretty cleaned up, pretty together. Don't let them fool you, man. Because the people you're looking around the room at... As a pastor I am no longer surprised by the stuff that people confess to me any longer.

And in fact, if you can't be here then you can't be anywhere because Jesus went to a cross to pay for your whatever: your past, your online searches, your gambling debts, that affair, that brokenness. Man, He paid it all so that you wouldn't have to. And now the question becomes: Would you allow Him to change you?



See, the people sitting around you in this room who are clapping and saying amen and they are raising their hands. He didn't change them because they were good decent people who just got another chance to get their life together. No. They were dead people and Jesus made them alive and they are refusing to forget it. And that same power can lift you and set you free. That can happen.

Here's what you have to do. You just simply have to receive it. Jesus has already done everything necessary for your past to be forgiven and your future to be secure. But you've got to receive it.

So, here are a few questions. Do you believe it? And you might be like, "I don't know. Kind of." Good enough. Jesus said all it takes is the faith of a mustard seed and let Him then begin to water it and watch it grow into something that becomes much more sustainable.

How about this? Do you want to believe? Back in Mark a father was like, "I do believe. Help me in my unbelief." Maybe that's all you can muster. But Jesus will meet you. All you've got to do is take one step and Jesus will run to wherever you are.

And here's the next. Will you receive it? And you are like, "Well, how do I do that?" Just do this. You just open up your hands. And you just say, "Would You give it to me? Would You help me. Help me receive it by Your Spirit."

So, can I just say this? If you are ready to believe and to receive, if you would across all of our locations and online just bow your head and close your eyes and by faith let me lead you through this prayer. And you just pray this right where you are from a sincere heart.

God, I come to You today and I confess I am a sinner. I am not a mistaker, I'm not imperfect, I'm a sinner. And I've gone my own way and I've chosen what I want over what You want. And I know that I cannot fix that on my own. But, today, on Easter weekend I believe. It's a little bit of faith, but it's all I've got. I believe in Your grace. I believe You are a good God. I believe that You love me, not because I deserve it but because You are good.

Jesus, I believe that You died on the cross for my sin. You took my place. You paid my debt. And I believe that You rose again (proving that your sin and debt do not get the final word). So, right now I turn from my sin and I turn to You. Forgive me, change me, make me new, give me a heart transplant. I give You my life, my past, my present, and my future. I surrender all.



Thank You for saving me. Thank You for setting me free. And from this day forward, to the best of my ability, by the power of Your Spirit I will follow You. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

And, man. If you prayed to receive that we want to celebrate that with you right now. And you know the Bible says that the very first act of obedience is your baptism. And baptism, by emersion, is a physical representation of you doing what we just talked about—you being lowered into a watery grave and then resurrected as a new creation in Christ, symbolizing your death, burial, and your resurrection.

Also symbolizing your cleansing. The waters of the tank don't save you; it's just regular old tap water. We haven't tested it. We don't want to know what is in it. It's not what saves you. It represents what saves you.

And, right now, I want to invite you, across all of our locations, to be baptized. What better weekend than Easter weekend when we celebrate the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus?

Now, some of you I know that you came here and it's getting on you and you're feeling kind of convicted and your inner attorney is objecting and you're trying to figure out where the exits are. And you are like, "I don't want to do this. And it's Easter Sunday. I didn't come prepared."

We've got you, man. We have got t-shirts and shorts and even underwear. And you can take that underwear home. We don't want it. Like, you take it home. And we've got everything you need for your baptism. And I want to encourage you, maybe right now, if you would just grab the hand of the person who brought you and say, "Would you go with me? I'm scared. I'm nervous." Hey, you should be nervous because it's representing your death and you being set free. Some of you were sprinkled in your tradition growing up. And you're like, "Well, should I do that again?" Or, "I don't know what my family will think. I don't want to dishonor them." I don't want you to dishonor them either.

I will say this. You need to be grateful for what they've done for you because they were doing their absolute best to set your life up on a spiritual foundation where you would follow Jesus for the rest of your life. So, I don't think it's you dishonoring them. I think it's you thanking them and then building upon that foundation that they laid.



But the problem with it is that I want you to have a memory of your death, burial, and resurrection. They have a memory. You do not. And you might say, "Well, that came later at my confirmation." That's fantastic. I don't want to do anything to disregard your confirmation, but I would say that I don't see a confirmation in the book of Acts associated with baptism.

I want to encourage you right now to have that experience, to have that memory right now. So, across all of our locations I want to ask you to stand to your feet. We're going to worship. We're going to celebrate every single baptism that we see. I'm going to turn it over to the campus pastors to give you instructions at their locations right now.

And here at our Northwest location you can go right out these doors to my right, your left. There will be some very friendly people there who would love to greet you and talk with you and get you set up with everything you need.

Come on, man. Let's lift up our voices and sing and celebrate as we see people step from death to life together.

