

# MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

## EASTER WITH TRADERS POINT

AARON BROCKETT | APRIL 20, 2025

Remain standing to your feet. Happy Easter Traders Point family. So good to be with you today. Hey, this is the day and I just want to point out a little over 23,000 of us have gathered across all of our locations, but a little over two billion Christians today will be gathered together declaring one thing and one thing only.

Oh, man, the tomb is empty, Jesus is alive, and because He took off His graveclothes, you can take off your graveclothes as well. What that means is that addictions can be broken, relationships can be restored, anxiety can be lifted, anger can be cooled, hope can be found all in the power of Jesus' risen name. Come on, man. Amen.

Hey, I just very lovingly want to point this out. Some of you are still walking around in those graveclothes. And those graveclothes have the stench of sin and shame and death upon them.

That's about to change because a whole bunch of you are going to take off those graveclothes and you are going to walk into a watery grave of baptism and have those washed away. You're going to swap them out for the righteous robes that Jesus died for you to have. A whole bunch of you—that's going to happen, that's going to happen.

I just want to point this out. Today is the inaugural run of our brand-new baptistery here at Northwest. Isn't she a beaut? She's a beaut, man. And I was thinking about this whenever a ship goes on a maiden voyage, the way that they commemorate that is that they break a champagne bottle. I thought that would be a little bit inappropriate. So, how about this? How about we just dunk a whole bunch of people to commemorate the maiden voyage this day?

Listen. We baptized 109 people last night. I don't know how many we've baptized earlier but we're somewhere around 150 or so across all of our locations. And, man, you might be next. You might be one of them. We're praying for that to happen.

Across all of our locations go ahead and grab a seat and find John, chapter 11 in your Bibles. I hope you brought a Bible with you. And if you didn't you can follow along on the screen behind me.

I just want take this opportunity to welcome all of our first time guests. I know we've got a lot right now. In fact, if this is your first time at any of one of our locations, you came at the invitation of a friend or a family member... Could we just welcome our guests? It's so good to have you with us, grateful to have you.



Those of you who are tuning in online, those of you in additional seating—I know this hour at Northwest we’ve got people in overflow—man, if you came and you couldn’t get a seat, I’m so sorry, but I’m glad that you are here, glad that you are in additional seating.

I want to invite you back next weekend for a brand-new series that we are kicking off called Battle Plans. In fact, next weekend is free t-shirt weekend, which means that if you show up in person you get a t-shirt. And for those of you who are watching online, and are like, “Wait a second. I watch online.” Well, get in your car drive over here, get a free t-shirt. Once we’re out, we’re out. So come to an earlier service.

I know you are thinking two things. Number one: you’re thinking, “He’s not really serious. We can order it online later.” No, you can’t. You have to show up in person to get one. The other thing I know some of you are thinking is, “Is he bribing me to come back to church?” Yes I am! Unapologetically, man. I want to see you back next weekend as we kick off this brand-new series.

But today we’re in John, chapter 11. And just for the sake of those of you, if you’ve never been here before, I just want you to know what sermons are around here. Sermons are not Ted Talks. They are not homilies. They are not my opinions. They are not three points to a better you self-help nonsense.

In fact, I don’t want to do anything today that I don’t normally do. I know that today is a big day and everybody all week has been asking me, “Are you ready for the Super Bowl for pastors?” And I’m like, “Yeah, it is a Super Bowl for pastors,” but a big mistake you can make in a Super Bowl for pastors is to try to do something you don’t normally do.

So, all I’m going to do today is I’m going to read a few verses, explain a few verses, apply a few verses and then a whole bunch of you are going to get wet and then we’re going to go home. That’s what is going to happen.

I don’t know how this is going to go, but I do know this. I’ve studied myself full, I’ve written myself clear, and I’m about to preach myself empty. That’s about what is getting ready to happen.

One of my favorite definitions of preaching is: logic on fire. It’s like I just want to light myself on fire and invite you to watch me burn.

The Bible isn’t a textbook, it’s not a history book, it’s not a science book, it’s not a story book, and it’s certainly not boring. Man, if you think this book is boring, it’s because you’re reading it wrong. Or, likely, you are not reading it at all, you’re just repeating what you’ve heard somebody say about it on Instagram Reels, or TikTok.

Hebrews 4 says this of the Bible. It is living and active. It is sharper than a two-edged sword. It pierces to the division of soul and spirit, joints and marrow, discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Do you know what that means? That means you



go to the Bible and start reading it, by the time you get done reading it right, it's read you.

And I want you to know Philippians, chapter 3. I want you not to just know about God, I don't want you to have some general belief about God. I don't want you just to be an Easter and Christmas Christian. I want you to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised Him from the dead. Because that's life changing.

So, let's look at the text together. John, chapter 11, starting in verse 1. Follow along with me. It says:

"A man named Lazarus was sick."

Now, some of you are going, "Wait a second. It's Easter." Why are we in this passage? Yeah, it is Easter. Before Jesus walked out of the tomb, He empties one. So, this man Lazarus:

"lived in Bethany with his sisters, Mary and Martha This is the Mary who later poured the expensive perfume on the Lord's feet and wiped them with her hair."

So, what I want you to notice about this is that Jesus is good friends with this family. Now, He's more than good friends, He has refrigerator rights, that kind of friend. Do you know what I'm talking about? Somebody comes over to your house and they don't even have to ask permission to raid your fridge. They have refrigerator rights. That's the kind of friend Jesus was to them.

The other thing I want to point out here is that John is writing this in retrospect, which gives him the advantage of knowing what is going to happen next, which is why he includes a little detail around Mary pouring expensive perfume on Jesus' feet as an elaborate act of worship, which, by the way, Judas Iscariot had a problem with. If you've ever wondered why she did that in the next chapter, chapter 11, what we're getting ready to read, explains why she did that. It says:

"Her brother, Lazarus, was sick. So the two sisters sent a message to Jesus telling him, 'Lord, your dear friend is very sick.'"

So, understand that they send Jesus a DM, they say, "Hey, hey, hey our brother Lazarus is sick." And John wants us to know not only is he sick but he's very sick. Three times, three verses: sick, very sick. And then the ladies are saying to Jesus... They don't say Lazarus, they say, "Your dear friend. Jesus, Your bro. Your ride or die kind of friend is very sick. You need to do something about this."

Now, I want to point out two things here that are true at the exact same time that more of us need to get an understanding of. The first thing is this: Jesus loves Lazarus. Second truth: Lazarus is very sick. Those two things are true at the exact time.

The reason why I point this out is because oftentimes our logic, from our limited perspective goes, “God, if You really love me,” or, “If you really love the people I love, then you would prevent this bad thing from happening.” And that’s just not true. A bad thing happening in your life does not mean that God doesn’t love you. Both things are true. And it is true in this text. In verse 4 it says:

“But when Jesus heard about it he said, ‘Lazarus’s sickness will not end in death.’”

Now, the problem is, if you know the story, it sort of does. Spoiler alert. If you’ve never read this passage, Lazarus is going to die here in just a minute. So, what Jesus is saying here is that Lazarus’ story of sickness will pass through death but not end with death. And there is a massive difference.

Listen, man. I love mountaintop experiences and good days. Don’t you? I love mountaintop experiences, I love good days, but chances are in order to get to a mountaintop, you’ve got to go through a valley of the shadow of death experience. And you can’t live there. Fruit is not usually born on the mountaintop. It’s born in the valleys.

In fact, Jesus explains why this had to happen to Lazarus, but oftentimes we read past this so quickly we don’t see it. He says:

“No, it happened,” what happened? Lazarus got sick. This happened, here’s why, “for the glory of God so that the Son of God will receive glory from this.”

And oftentimes our logic goes, “Well, if God loves me then why would He allow me to walk through this.” I just want you to know that that is a legit question. And I’m going to be really honest with you, I don’t know why.

If it was up to me, if I was God, I’d do a whole bunch of things differently than the way God does it. Wouldn’t you? I’d make it to where broccoli made you fat and chocolate cake gave you abs. That’s what I would do. But nobody asked me.

So, can I just tell you this? If you’ve ever had somebody... When you’re going through it, man, a lot of suffering and pain and hardship—if you’ve ever had people who can’t stand it when you’re going through a difficult time so they try to look on the bright side view or it could be worse view. In the middle of that valley of the shadow of death, you know that that doesn’t help. That just makes things worse.

Can I just tell you this? You don’t like it, so don’t do it to others.

Here in just a minute we’re going to see how Jesus meets this family in the middle of their valley of the shadow of death experience.

I don’t have a good answer as to why tragedy strikes. I don’t have a good answer as to why the unemployment goes on longer than what you wanted. I don’t know why you are wrestling with cancer. You had a tumor, and the scans came back clear and then you go

back again and now there is another spot. I don't know why young children die prematurely. I don't know.

I do know this. Oftentimes I don't have ears to hear and to respond to truth until I'm walking through pain. I can understand it theologically, but it's another thing to understand it existentially.

And no matter what it is, Romans, chapter 8, verse 28 is true every single time. The challenge with this verse... Maybe some of you have read this verse before, and maybe it's kind of lost its power over you, it sort of seems a little trite. Maybe somebody tried to brighten it up and they attached it to this verse, so now you've developed resentment to the Word of God. But I want you to read it with fresh eyes again:

"We know He causes everything," everything means everything, good and bad and everything in between, "to work together to the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them. Here it is, "For He knew his people in advance..."

He knew you in advance. He knows every single day in your life before you were ever born.

"and he chose them," He's talking about us, "he chose them to become like his Son..." (NLT)

And right there it is:

God's primary goal for your life is not to remove all pain, but that you might become like His Son, even if He has to leverage pain to do it.

God's primary goal for your life is not the removal of all pain—warning, difficult truth coming in—but that you might become like His Son, even if He has to leverage pain to do it.

We don't like that. But that is true in every other sphere of life. You're not ready to run a marathon until you log the miles and have a little bit of pain. You're not going to get physically fit if you don't cut some things out of your diet that you enjoy. You don't just let your kids do whatever they want, you inflict a little bit of pain, from their perspective, to help them grow because you want them to grow up to be responsible adults.

But when God does it, theologically, we automatically jump to the conclusion that either He doesn't exist or He doesn't care. But in Romans 8, if you notice and you re-read it, God is the subject of those sentences, not your circumstances. The circumstances of your life are not the lord of your life and so often we treat them as if they are.

So, the sovereign God of the universe is the Lord of your life and Jesus is in complete control and He is sovereign. And I love that He is about to put that on display in this passage. His love is not ultimately demonstrated through our circumstances but

through the cross. If you've ever wanted to know God's love for you, if you've ever wanted to know if God cares, man you look to the cross.

What I mean by that is that if you were to have been there, at Golgotha, the day of Jesus' crucifixion, and you didn't know how this was going to turn out and Jesus is beaten and bloodied and nailed to a tree and about to breathe His last and you were able to talk to God, you would say, "God, hello. You need to intervene. You've completely lost control. They are killing Your Son."

He would go, "Oh, hold on. Just give it three days. I've got a plan. I know it doesn't make sense to you from your perspective, but I've got a plan."

And the deeper the pain, the greater the platform for God to show up and show out. So, in verse 5, I love this truth, it says:

"So although Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus..."

By the way, did you know that Lazarus' name in Greek means God is my help? So, you would think that with a name like that, and they're bros, and Jesus loves him, and He hears that he is sick, that He would immediately drop everything that He is doing and rush right over.

Because He loved Mary, Martha, and Lazarus He would just say, "You know what? I'm there." Or He didn't even have to go there. You know that Jesus is so powerful (He did this before) He could just heal Lazarus from a distance and revival would break out in Bethany. It would just be amazing. But that's not how this goes down. Verse 5 says that although He loved them, look at it:

"he stayed where he was for the next two days."

I'm just asking, does that look like love? Does that look like concern? No, actually, from our perspective it looks a little bit like apathy, like He really didn't care that much at all.

See, that's not supposed to be how it works. Except in the Scriptures... Listen, God's love for you and His cooperation with your plans are not dependent upon one another. And oftentimes we jump to the conclusion that, "I can't believe in God," or "I don't want to believe in God," or "I believe in God, but I'm really upset with Him because I wanted Him to do this thing, and He didn't cooperate."

Very lovingly can I just tell you that they have nothing to do with each other? If that were the case, if God's love for you and His cooperation with you were the case for you to believe in Him, then there wouldn't be any teenagers here who would believe in their parents.

You ever feel like you've cried out to God and He wasn't coming? He's staying put. Now, this is church so don't waste this place to be vulnerable and honest. But come on, any of you ever been there?



You cry out to God. It seems like a legitimate request. You feel like you checked everything in your life, “I think my motives are good. I think I’m trying to do things the right way. God, I don’t know why You wouldn’t answer this prayer. It’s a good prayer. Seems like a win, win for everybody involved.” Not showing up.

Some of you are married to a man, he’s a good man, you love him. But he’s not given his life to Jesus. And you pray every single week. You don’t want to push him away, so you just pray every Saturday night that he would come with you to church. And sometimes he does, but most of the time he’s on the golf course while you’re here alone.

And here’s the thing that really chaps your hide, he’s not even any good. You could understand if he was any good. And you are like, “I don’t get it. Why wouldn’t You save him? Why wouldn’t You help him to see?”

Some of you, you’ve been sick or loved ones are sick and you’ve anointed them with oil, and you’ve gathered around them and you’ve prayed over them and you’ve cried out to God, “God, please heal.” You don’t see why God wouldn’t answer this prayer, but it doesn’t seem like He’s coming.

Unemployment you can handle for a month or two, but it’s been six months going on to a year and you are like, “God, where are You in the midst of this?”

You raised your kids in church to love Jesus. You did everything you knew how to do and then when they grew up to be young adults... Now you’ve got a prodigal son or daughter who is in a foreign country, and it keeps you up at night praying for their souls, “God, why wouldn’t You listen to this prayer? Where are You?”

The book of Romans says God demonstrated—that word means here’s how God showed you—God demonstrated His love for you in this, that He gives you everything you ask for, the way that you asked for it, when you asked for it. It doesn’t say that. You are like, “You tricked me.” Yep, I did.

The book of Romans says that God demonstrated His own love for you—and this has nothing to do with circumstance—that while you were still sinners, Christ died for you—us.

That’s the verse that I read as an 18-year-old that led me to Jesus. I grew up in church, my grandfather was a preacher, I was baptized when I was six, I went to Sunday school every week, I went to a Christian private school. But I didn’t become a Christian until I was 18.

I knew all about God. I wasn’t saved until I read that verse in Romans and it smacked me right between the eyes. And I realized that Jesus didn’t just die for me because I was a good little boy trying to please Him. Jesus died for me when I was in the very midst of my rebellion against Him. That’s how much He loved me. And that’s how much He loves you.





Now, listen. If God would go that far man there isn't anything He wouldn't do for you. It's just that He's not on your timetable. And Jesus wasn't on theirs. He already told the disciples, "This is going to work out." Work out how? "For My glory and their good. Man, you just hang in there because I am not on your timetable." Verse 7:

"Finally, he said to his disciples, 'Let's go back to Judea.' But his disciples objected. 'Rabbi,' they said, 'only a few days ago the people in Judea were trying to stone you. Are you going there again?'"

In other words, "Jesus, You have enemies there. Your life is on the line there. Are You sure Boss? Do you really want to go back there?" And in verse 9:

"Jesus replied, 'There are twelve hours of daylight every day. During the day people can walk safely. They can see because they have the light of this world. But at night there is danger of stumbling because they have no light.'"

Does that help anybody? You know that when Jesus is saying this the disciples were standing there kind of confused. And you know there was one of them who was making the holy cattle call, "Mmm, so good Rabbi. I'm posting that right now."

Thomas is like, "What does He mean?"

"I have no idea. So good. So deep."

Now, Jesus is just essentially saying that as long as the sun is up the workday is not over. But as soon as the sun goes down the workday is over. So, He's saying, "I am the light of the world. As long as I'm down here, fellas, we've got work to do." That's what He is saying. But they don't get it. And so, He's going to spend the next few verses explaining it to them. Verse 11:

"Then he said, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep,'" that's kind of interesting; that's how Jesus sees death, "'but now I will go and wake him up.' The disciples said, 'Lord, if he is sleeping, he will soon get better!'"

Have you ever tried to explain to God how the world works? Man, spend less time informing God and more time listening to God. But they've got it all figured out, man. They know how sleep works. And Jesus is like, "I invented it. I know how it works." Verse 13:

"They thought Jesus meant Lazarus was simply sleeping, but Jesus meant Lazarus had died. So he told them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead.'"

Is it just me or does Jesus seem a little annoyed? I think He's a little annoyed. And then in verse 15 it says:

"And for your sakes, I'm glad I wasn't there,"



Wow, understand the implication of those words. He knows—we're going to see this in a minute—what Mary and Martha have been going through, the grief that they are experiencing. And Jesus actually has the nerve to say, "I'm glad I wasn't there." Why? He answers it:

"for now you will really believe." In other words, Jesus doesn't want easy beliefism, He wants true belief. That's what He's after. And then He goes:

"Come, let's go see him." Verse 16.

"Thomas, nicknamed the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, 'Let's go, too—and die with Jesus.'"

That's a better nickname for Thomas I think. Thomas' nickname is Doubting Thomas because he doubted a couple of times.

Any of you ever done something dumb in college that earned you a nickname and you're 40 years old and people still call you that? Now you know a little bit about how Thomas feels. Hey, this is just a little tip. Whenever you see Thomas in heaven don't go running up to him and go, "Oh, Doubting Thomas." Run up to him and go, "Oh, going to die with Jesus Thomas. High Five." You're going to make that brother's day. That's what is going to happen. Verse 17:

When Jesus arrived at Bethany, he was told that Lazarus had already been in his grave for four days."

Missed it. I think the reason why it says this is because there was a Jewish first century legend that said that when you die you didn't really die, your spirit kind of hovered around for a little while. It kind of swarmed around. And you could actually go back into your body within a day or two. And Jesus wants everyone to know that Lazarus isn't sorta, kinda, mostly Princes Bride dead. He's all the way dead. That's what is going on here. Flat lined. Verse 18:

"Bethany was only a few miles down the road from Jerusalem,"

What I love about the fact that John includes that little detail is because these are actual places and actual events. This is not a fairy tale. You can actually go there today and see all of these places. And in verse 19:

"many of the people had come to console Martha and Mary in their loss."

So, in first century large parties of people would gather together to help you mourn and wail for your loved one. And, if your loved one wasn't a very popular person, you could actually pay them to mourn so that way people would think that your loved one was a bigger deal than he was. But that's not the case here. People were legitimately grieving over him. And in verse 20:

“When Martha got word that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him.” She didn’t wait. She just ran out. I love that. “But Mary stayed in the house.”

So, what I want you to see here is that Mary and Martha are sisters and if you’re familiar with Luke 10 you know that they are sisters, but they are very different. They are wired up very differently. Martha is a little bit more driven. She a little bit more outgoing. And she didn’t even wait, man. She just runs out to meet Jesus. And look at what it says in verse 21:

“Martha said to Jesus, ‘Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died.’”

I love the way she connects this with verse 22:

“But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask.”

I love that. She is so honest with Jesus. She still believes. She knows that He can intervene. She knows He has the power.

She just wants to point out that He’s late. Any of you know that person? Let’s be honest. Any of you married to that person? Don’t raise your hands. It’s Easter. I don’t want to cause an argument.

I love it, man. She’s still acknowledging that He has the power to change things and at the same time she’s saying, “I just don’t get you.” In other words...

One time Jesus (did you know this?) Jesus healed somebody and He didn’t even mean to. He was walking through crowds of people. This lady reached out and touched the hem of his garment. Power left His body. And He healed her unintentionally. He turned around and He was like, “Somebody touched Me. Was it you? Was it you? Was it you?”

You know that is what is going on in her mind, “Jesus, if You can heal somebody without intentionally doing it, imagine if You would have tried in this instance. Imagine if You would have just dropped what You were doing and got here.” Verse 23:

“Jesus told her, ‘Your brother will rise again.’”

Now Jesus means here in just a minute, but she doesn’t catch on to that just yet. Look at what she says in verse 24:

“‘Yes,’ Martha said, ‘he will rise when everyone else rises, at the last day.’”

So, Jesus is thinking by the end of this day. She’s thinking on the last day. That’s eschatology. And Jesus goes in verse 25:

“I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me,”

Hey, anyone—circle that word and look in the mirror. That’s you. “Anyone, no matter what you’ve done, who believes in Me:

“will live, even after dying.”

That’s Easter.

“Everyone who lives in me and believes in me,”

I want to point those two things out. Believing in Jesus and living in Jesus are not the same thing. That’s why He separates the two. You can believe in Jesus but not be living for Jesus. Man, you need to live for Jesus. Jesus isn’t just your Savior. He wants to be your Lord. And He goes if you do that, man, you:

“will never ever die.”

And then He asks her a question that He’s asking every one of us:

“Do you believe this, Martha?”

I want to point out that Jesus says He is the resurrection and the life. Now, what does that mean? Well, Colossians, chapter 1, describes Jesus this way. It says that He was the first born from among the dead. The first born from among the dead. Now what is that? That means that Jesus was the first and the only One to have ever defeated death. He died and came back. So, He’s the first among the dead.

The Greek word for firstborn is *prototokos*. And if that sounds familiar that’s because it’s where we get our word prototype. So, a prototype is something for an invention. They develop a prototype to see if it works and if it works it goes into mass production.

So, the Bible calls Jesus the prototype of what is to come. Meaning that He was the first one to defeat death and it worked. So, now God puts all of us into mass production so that one day whoever is in Christ will not stay in the grave but be resurrected to new life in Him. That’s what that means.

And that new life does not begin on the day of your death, it begins right now. You begin to live it right now. And He asks her this, “Do you believe this?” And look at her response in verse 27:

“‘Yes, Lord,’ she told him. ‘I have always believed you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who has come into the world from God.’”

This is so beautiful, and I don’t want you to miss it. Even though she’s hurting, even though she’s grieving, even though that day she is in the midst of darkness she still chooses to believe rightly about God. And so much of the time it’s our pain and our suffering and our hurt that derails us from believing rightly about God.

Can I just tell you this, man? Doctrine matters. Doctrine is not the boring part of Christianity. Doctrine is not the academic stuff that really serious Christians do. Doctrine is the foundation so that when your world falls apart you don’t.



You can't believe rightly about God without having right thoughts about Him. And if you don't, you'll always be at the mercy of your feelings, your circumstances, or the latest idea posted by that influencer who is deconstructing.

Your feelings matter. And they are important. Do not hear me say otherwise. They are just not ultimate. They are a good dashboard to tell you what's going on with you. They are a horrible steering wheel to keep you on the road.

When you anchor your faith in the person and the finished work of Jesus... She's in pain but she believes rightly about God. Verse 28:

"Then she returned to Mary. She called Mary aside from the mourners and told her, 'The Teacher is here and wants to see you.' So Mary immediately went to him. Jesus had stayed outside the village, at the place where Martha met him. When the people who were at the house consoling Mary saw her leave so hastily, they assumed she was going to Lazarus's grave to weep."

So, being the good friends that they are, they want to go with her to give her some emotional support.

"So they followed her there. When Mary arrived and saw Jesus," look at this, "she fell at his feet and said, 'Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died.'"

Now, they say the exact same thing to Jesus, but in a very different tone. First thing she does, she falls on her face before Jesus emotionally exhausted. And she's like, "If You'd only been here." In other words, she's going, "What are You doing? I don't understand."

And I bet you've been there too. It brings up a really interesting question. I don't know if any of you have ever wondered this. Is it okay to question God? Well, according to this passage, yes. Because both of them question Jesus, who is God, and if you notice, Jesus doesn't get defensive. He doesn't get irritated. He doesn't bristle up on them.

Jesus doesn't go, "Whoa, whoa, whoa. Ladies, do you realize who you are talking to? I'm the Son of God." He doesn't do that. He lets them question Him. God can take your questions. He can handle them.

Listen, man. Whenever people are going through it, you don't need to have all of the answers to their questions. You don't need to try to console or soothe them out of it. You don't need to make things better for them. You just stay rooted in the character of God, and you just stay fully present with people.

Man, it is okay to question God. Just stay rooted in who is in control, which is why you need to have right thoughts before you get into the thick of it.

I don't know where we get this idea where we can never question God. The Bible questions God—Lamentations, the root word of that is lament. Read the Psalms, man.

The Psalmist is constantly questioning God. In fact, one time in Psalm 22 David writes these words, "Why have you forsaken me?"

Now, I've got to tell you, man. If I'm God and this is a book about me, I'd be like, "Hey, can we edit that one out? That doesn't really make Me look all that great." Instead, God does the opposite. The Spirit says, "Oh, David. That's good. Put that down in the book for generations of people to read all the way up to 2025."

Why? Because God just wants the real you, man. He doesn't want some fake version of you. He doesn't want you stuffing it. He doesn't want you wearing a religious mask. Man, you're taking that pain somewhere. Might as well be to Him because He's the only One who can do anything about it. Then in verse 33 it says:

"When Jesus saw her weeping and saw the other people wailing with her, a deep anger welled up within him, and he was deeply troubled."

He gets angry in this passage. Now, the word that the New Testament uses to describe this extreme emotion of Jesus... The word that is most commonly used is this word right here. It's another word for compassion. It's kind of a funny little word. It's called:

splagchnizomai

And it basically just means a twisting of the intestines. That's a lot of what I get whenever I go through Taco Bell now a days. A little bit of splagchnizomai. That's not the word that John uses in this passage. John actually uses a different Greek word. He used this word:

embrimaomai

And it means this, deeply moved with emotional indignation. In other words, Jesus gets hacked off.

Have you ever seen someone get so moved and so mad that they cry? That's what is going on here. What's He mad about? What's He upset about? You. I think in this moment He's realizing, He's thinking back to the creation of the world (He was there) and what His and God the Father's intentions were for creation and for you and me.

And now He's come face to face with the death of His friend, Lazarus, and He's going, "This is the result of sin." And He's ticked off about it. "I didn't create you for death. I didn't create you for cancer. I didn't create you for divorce. I didn't create you for pain and fear and sorrow and death." And it makes Him mad. And Jesus goes to the deepest part of our pain. So, He says in verse 34:

"Where have you put him?" he asked them. They told him, 'Lord, come and see.'"

And in verse 35, the shortest verse in the Bible, three words:

"Then Jesus wept."

If you want to start memorizing Scripture, start with this one. You need a few wins under your belt. Alright? I think you can probably memorize three words.

He weeps. He sits down with Mary, puts His arm around her and He just cries.

Can I just ask this? How is it that we somehow associated tears with weakness or even worse a lack of faith? Maybe some of you have had people tell you, “Hey, don’t cry.” They just can’t stand it when you... It makes them uncomfortable when you get emotional. So, have you ever had somebody say this to you? “Oh, don’t cry. Don’t cry.”

Or the worst—maybe you grew up in a church where the pastor said this to you, “Oh, man. Why are you crying? You don’t have enough faith.”

Between services I’ll oftentimes be talking to people, and they will start sharing some really deep-seated stuff. And it’s not uncommon for people to get emotional and they begin to cry. And almost always they say these two things, “I told myself I wasn’t going to do this.” And I just want to go, “Why did you tell yourself that?”

And then they do this, “I’m sorry for crying.” Stop apologizing. Your tears just mean that this matters. If crying equals weakness, or a lack of faith, then Jesus is both weak and has no faith, because Jesus is weeping with them.

Can I just lovingly tell you to stop telling people not to cry? And stop apologizing for crying. Here’s why. If, when it’s time to cry, you won’t allow yourself to, then when it’s time to rejoice, you won’t allow yourself to do that either. Emotions are a gift from God to help us navigate life—great dashboard, horrible steering wheel, so make sure you don’t confuse the two.

And He knows how this is going to turn out. Jesus knows... Here’s the most astounding thing to me. Jesus knows what He’s going to do here in just a minute. He knows that this day is going to end awesomely. He’s going to have dinner with Lazarus that night.

Here’s how I would have been. I would have been like, “Ooh. I can’t wait to show you what I’m about to do.” But not our Lord. Man, He just sits with them in their grief. He is the resurrection and the life. He knows how it’s going to turn out.

Can I just say this to you right now? Right now, when you are in the midst of an experience like this, no matter what you are going through, He is perfectly present with you in the here and now. Verse 36:

“The people who were standing nearby said, ‘See how much he loved him!’ But some said,”

There is always a some said:

“‘This man healed a blind man. Couldn’t he have kept Lazarus from dying?’”

Man, can I tell you if you lead or you're responsible for anything—if you have a bunch of eyeballs on you just always know that there is a critic. There was with Jesus, which just makes me feel better. Maybe you too. That is a part of the sermon just for me. Verse 38

“Jesus was still angry as he arrived at the tomb, a cave with a stone rolled across its entrance. ‘Roll the stone aside,’ Jesus told them.”

It's Easter. Any of that sound familiar? I think as Jesus is standing there, He's thinking in the back of His mind, “Here in the not-too-distant future, that's going to be Me.” I love this:

“But Martha, the dead man's sister, protested, ‘Lord, he has been dead for four days. The smell will be terrible.’”

Now, if you remember from Luke 10, Martha was the one who was scurrying about in the house. She was the one busy while her sister was sitting at Jesus' feet. So, she would have cared about this stuff. She would have been the one making sure that the candles were all lit and making sure that there were no strange smells. She's really concerned about this. She's like, “Jesus, you open up that tomb, he's been in there for four days. It's going to stink.”

The King James version, I love how it says this, it says, “Lord, he will stinketh.” True word. Look it up. Verse 40:

“Jesus responded, ‘Didn't I tell you that you would see God's glory if you believe?’”

She already said she believed. I think this is interesting. When it comes to actually putting that faith into action and seeing the stone rolled away, now she's not so sure. Isn't that like you and me? Man, it's easy to believe on Easter, packed rooms, everybody is excited.

Easy to believe in church. Easy to believe in the middle of a sermon, it starts to kind of make sense to you. Then we say: Amen. You walk out. Real life hits you in the face. Your knees start to wobble. Man, I believed at church that God can roll whatever stone away, but now I'm not so sure—this might stinketh. Verse 41:

“So they rolled the stone aside. Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, ‘Father, thank you for hearing me. You always hear me, but I said it out loud for the sake of all these people standing here, so that they will believe you sent me.’ Then Jesus shouted, ‘Lazarus, come out!’”

Charles Spurgeon, who preached in London in the 1800s and was known as the prince of preachers, I love what he says about this text. He says, “The reason why Jesus called Lazarus' name specifically is because if He wouldn't have, He would have emptied the whole graveyard.” I love that, man. All of a sudden it's a Michael Jackson Thriller video.



This isn't like a cool trick. This is a picture of salvation because if you notice, Jesus didn't call Lazarus to be a better Lazarus. He didn't call Lazarus to just splash on a little cologne to mask his stinketh. He called a dead man to come out of the grave. That's salvation.

Jesus is calling you and me out of death into life, out of darkness into life. The Bible says you are dead in your sins and dead people don't respond, they have to be called. Not to a better version of you, because you are not a mistaker in need of a life coach. You are a sinner in need of a Savior. You and I are dead in our sins and our only hope is to be made alive in Christ.

So, if you've ever been told that salvation is by grace through faith and not by works, that's not entirely true. Because you are saved by works, just not yours. You are saved by the finished work of Jesus on a cross on your behalf. No easy believism. No cheap grace. Because it cost God His Son, and it cost Him everything. So, in verse 44 it says:

"And the dead man came out, his hands and feet bound in graveclothes, his face wrapped in a headcloth."

Just get that image in your mind. Lazarus is like, "What's going on? I can't see anything."

"Jesus told them, 'Unwrap him and let him go!'" (NLT)

In other words, take off those graveclothes. Why? Because living people shouldn't wear graveclothes anymore. Living people don't wear dead people's clothes. So, salvation is when you come to Jesus, and you repent of your sins. What does that mean? It means you take off your graveclothes. They don't fit you anymore.

You are alive in Christ. You don't need to do the things that you used to do—done before, prior. You aren't your desires. You aren't your pursuits. That old you is dead and the new you is alive in Jesus. And only Jesus gets to tell you who you are.

Now, I'm fully convinced that one of the reasons why Christianity doesn't work for some people is because they didn't really respond to the true gospel. They only responded to half of it. And when you respond to half of it, it doesn't fully take.

I'll just be honest with you. For the longest time in my life I only knew half of it. And it was not life changing.

Here's what I mean. I've heard it explained this way. Let's just say that you owe the bank millions of dollars, and the banker calls you up and says, "Hey, I need to talk." You go down to the bank and he's sitting in the office and the banker says, "Listen. We've just been looking at everything. We just realize that there is no way that you can possibly repay all of this debt. So, today we're going to tear up the note. You are completely forgiven of the debt. You don't owe us a dime."

Now, would you not agree—pretty awesome day? You walk outside and you are like, “Sweet.” And you call your friends and you’re like, “Hey, dinner at the steakhouse tonight is on me.” And all of a sudden you’re back to your old habits that got you in the problem to begin with, because you just got forgiven of a debt but that’s not going to change your spending habits.

No, see the true gospel is this. The banker calls you up. He calls you in. He says, “Hey, you can’t pay back this debt. We’ve forgiven the debt. Before you go we just want you to know we’ve added your name to the family trust. So, now not only do you owe us zero dollars, you’re actually worth millions. Not because of anything that you’ve done, but simply because you’ve been brought into the family.”

And when you leave that day, that should actually sober you up and give you this unspeakable joy inside. And it will change the way that you live, at least it should because now you’re going, “Not only have I been forgiven, I’ve been given riches that I do not deserve. I do not want to squander them. So, now I’m living from a new identity and not my old one.

Listen, man. Jesus isn’t just offering you the forgiveness of sins. More importantly, He wants to clothe you in His righteousness, which is why the way that you live matters.

Listen, man. You’re not trying to earn salvation. You are living from victory not for it. And it is not just about grace, and love, and acceptance. It is equally, if not more so, about truth and righteousness.

Colossians 3 says to the redeemed, “Hey, man put to death the sinful things lurking within you.”

One of the early church fathers said, “Be killing sin or sin be killing you.” So, if you’ve given your life to Jesus, but you’re still kind of harboring and allowing sins to lurk within you, and you’re justifying it, and you’re saying, “Well, God is okay with it because He’s all about love and acceptance,” that little pet that you are just playing around with will eventually grow up to be a predator that will devour you. So, man, you put to death that self because you’ve been given a new identity.

Some of you came here today and quite honestly it’s not so much that you don’t believe in God, you just don’t believe in you because you’re like, “I’m unforgiveable. I’m unredeemable.” And it actually comes out as anger against God, but really it’s just hatred toward yourself because you’re like, “Man, I’m not worthy of this. Pastor, you don’t know what I have done, you don’t know what I’ve thought, what I’ve seen. You just don’t know.”

And you’re right. I don’t. Can I just very lovingly say this to you? You are not your past, you are not your behaviors, you are not your desires, you are not your scars, and you are not your wounds.



That addiction that you've been battling for decades that has gotten the better of you every single time, that is not the biggest thing about you.

Your divorce that was so embarrassing and blew up your life and was honestly your fault, that isn't the biggest thing about you.

Your bankruptcy that just left you in financial ruins is not the biggest thing about you.

Your abortion, as much the shame from that that you carry in your life, is not the biggest thing that ever happened in your life.

Look right at me. The biggest thing that ever happened to your life is that God so loved you that He sent His Son to take away the sin you could never pay on your own and now He has clothed you with His righteousness. You are a redeemed son or daughter of the King.

If you think, "I could never be redeemed. I could never be forgiven." Listen. Man, you are giving too much credit to yourself and not enough credit to your Savior. You are a pretty good sinner. I know some of you are.

But Jesus is a far better Savior. And aren't you so glad that He is? His blood washed all of that away. And now your graveclothes don't fit you anymore. So, can I just ask you this? Why are you still wearing them? You can walk in a manner worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Some of you walked in here today a dead man or a dead woman. You didn't know it because you look pretty good. You clean up pretty good. You live in 5,000 square feet, drive a decent set of wheels, and your Easter outfit (by the way, you guys look amazing) but underneath the pastels and the floral patterns (I say this in love) you stinketh with sin and shame. And no amount of behavior modification is going to rid you of it. Here's the thing. You know it.

So, can I just ask you today, do you believe? He is calling you out of the grave. So, man, you take off those graveclothes that you came in here wearing and you step into a watery grave, and you swap those out for the righteousness that Jesus died for you to have. You can walk out of here today, on Easter, a Spirit filled, super-naturally resurrected creation in Jesus Christ.

Now for some of you it has started to get on you, hasn't it? A little bit of conviction, you're kind of like, "It's time to go. You go get the kids. I'll swing the car around. We'll go Easter brunch this feeling away." Now, you can do that. Or you can respond.

Some of you are like, "Well, Aaron, I've got tons of questions." Great. God can handle them.

"I'm a little bit cynical of all of this stuff." Good. God can handle that too.



"I've got some doubts. I've got some fears. I've got some anger with God." You know what? He can handle that. Bring it to Him.

Those are graveclothes, man. You'll never free yourself from them. Lazarus couldn't do it on his own. He was all bound up. Neither can you.

Here's what I want to ask you to do. If you'll just pray this prayer with me across all of our locations, and those of you joining us online. Bow your head. Close your eyes. If you are ready to pray this prayer, let me just lead you through it.

Father God. I come to you today on Easter. I'm a mess. People wouldn't really know it because I've gotten really good at pretending I'm not. But I'm a mess. And I realize that I've only understood or responded to half of the gospel. I just thought this was all about forgiving me of the things I've done wrong and then one day I get to go to heaven. But I haven't really changed. It's not working.

So, God. I want to respond to the whole gospel. So, I'm asking that You would forgive me of my sins. I confess them to you. No more excuses. No more explanations. No more reasoning them away. I'm a sinner. And You are a holy God. And You know what You are doing, even though You're not on my timetable.

So, I confess my sins. I want Jesus to become Lord and Savior of my life because He's the Son of God who did what no one else did do or could do. He took on my sins on the cross and He defeated death on my behalf.

So, by Your Holy Spirit would You please come into my heart and reside within me? Change me. Change my outlook. Change my desires. Change my perspective—more of Jesus less of me until it is Christ alone.

Would You seal my salvation so that nobody or no thing can take it? And for the rest of my days, I am going to do my absolute best to follow after you as imperfectly as I will. But I want to be your son, or your daughter, so I receive that in the power of Jesus' precious name. Amen.

Now, with your head still bowed and your eyes still closed at all of our locations if you prayed that prayer, if you made that prayer your own, would you just slip up your hand right now just as a testimony to your faith, just slip up your hand. In every single service we've had hands go up all around the room. Let's celebrate that. Cheer you on—those of you who are like, "Yeah, man. That's me. That's me."

Now, listen. You can look at me right now. I know that some of you know the very first time you pray that the Bible says that the first thing that you should do after praying that, your first act of obedience, is to be baptized. It is an outward expression of what you just prayed. Why? I don't know. We'll ask God one day why. But I do know this. It is super, super powerful in someone's life.



For others of you, maybe that was a recommitment. You are like, "You know what? I've wandered away. I did not understand the full gospel." We celebrate both. But if you prayed that prayer for the first time, or if you don't remember your baptism, if you are like, "I need to draw a line in the sand and have a new beginning today," what better day than Easter 2025 for that to be your spiritual birthday?

I'm just going to invite you as we celebrate and worship together to be baptized. Our campus pastors will give you instructions at every campus. Here at Northwest you can walk right out those double doors. You can take this new baptistery for a spin. We would love to dunk you in it. Maybe multiple times if you'd like. Grab a friend and go right now, before your inner attorney talks you out of it you submit yourself to Jesus Christ.

Would you please stand to your feet? We're going to celebrate some baptisms. We're going to celebrate because the tomb is empty. Come on. Let's go. Let's go.

