



Jesus Is
Part 6 – Jesus is Alive
Pastor Ted Cunningham

Welcome. If you are a guest with us online today, we're glad that you're here celebrating Easter with us. As part of our worship, we take an offering and if you're on your phone or your tablet or a computer, you can go to the upper righthand corner of our website. There is a dropdown called "Give" and you can give online now. You can give with a bank account, a check... All sorts of ways to give online. Some of you have that set up as recurring.

We are grateful for your generosity because there is a lot we are able to do in this time. People have been asking, "What can we do?" Obviously, we are limited in the ways we can reach out into our community. We're obviously limited on visits and doing a lot of the work that I know Don and Rex do in meeting with people who are in the hospital or in homes, assisted living. We know the day is coming and is ahead of us where we're will be able to reach out in more physical ways like that.

But for now, we've been trying to think of ways we can continue to do ministry and do it well in our community. There are several things we get to share with you today that you, Woodland Hills church family, are doing in providing for this community. I've been excited about this one. There are a couple of things I'm very excited about this week. I just want to let you know right off the bat, as part of your generosity, throughout this week... It actually started last week. You are providing 750 box lunches for healthcare workers, first responders, and essential businesses in our community. So, I say thank you very much for that. Right now, Chick-fil-A and Schlotzsky's are making the box lunches.

To be very honest with you, some of the businesses we called like Walmart and Target... We even wanted to deliver to the workers there that are providing groceries for us. They declined to take it at this time for health reasons. We completely get that. There's another way that we can minister to them. If you are at one of these places... I've already told some of our folks that work in healthcare to be prepared and make sure their department or their group is getting those. I'm hoping this is just a place for us to start. So, thank you, Woodland Hills, for your generosity.

Then there was something else we were thinking about. How can we minister to so many in our church who are not working right now, so many who are unemployed? It's not just the financial toll that it can take on us, but also the emotional toll. We wanted to do something to give back to our church family. How can we encourage our church family? How can we provide something to them and, at the same time, have a small opportunity for all of us to see each other again?

This one... I can't believe I didn't announce this on social media. We're only announcing it here. We're not even going to put it on social media, so this is like a treat for those of you who call Woodland Hills your church home and you're watching today. We are actually going to have a family meal. No, it's not a potluck; it is a Chick-fil-A drive through meal. What Woodland Hills has done is we have basically purchased the Chick-fil-A drive thru from 2:00 – 5:00 pm on Thursday afternoon. We want to provide a meal for you and your family. We say enjoy a free meal. This is a meal, not groceries. Do I need to make that... It's a meal, not groceries.

What we would love to do... Some of you are like, "You're telling us to leave?" This is Dr. Fauci approved. You can do this; you can go through the drive-thru. He actually had a press briefing last week. He said how proud he was of Americans in the way they're doing carry-out, the way they are doing the drive-thrus. They are sticking with social distancing and not getting close.

So, you are going to see people you know and love and that you haven't seen in a month possibly between 2:00 and 5:00 getting their lunch or dinner or, as we call it in our home, linner. We need you stay in your car. You can get it, pull around, and eat in the parking lot. You can take it home. If you do take it home, I highly recommend that you eat the fries on the way home. Don't wait until you get home for those. But we are excited to see you. I'm excited to see you. So, put that on your calendar.

Some of you are like, "If we go through at 2:00 pm and each lunch, can we come back at 5:00 pm and get dinner?" We haven't worked out all the logistics, just get a meal. We know some people will have questions. But the drive-thru is available to you for free between 2:00 – 5:00 pm on Thursday. We will see you there. I think that's our first official church meal in 18 years. My brother, Andy, turns 50 this year. I know he's watching. He has never eaten at a Chick-fil-A, I know. He's still part of our family and we love him, and we want him to still be a part of our family, but I am hoping to see you, brother, Thursday afternoon between 2:00 – 5:00 pm.

So, how are you doing with quarantine? How are you doing with staying home? When I drive by Lowes and Menards and the grocery stores, I see a lot of you aren't, but how are you doing? I think there are some ways for us and some things to think through. I just wanted to give you some talking points to help you get through this month. I think there are some spouses needing to say this to each other. Just have this in your mind and be prepared to share this. *"I forgive you for what you will say and do in April, but y May, you better get your act together."* So, there's that. Our family has decided 100% immunity for the month of April, so maybe your family can say this right here. *"What happens in April, stays in April."* And all God's people said... Amen. Yes, we are going to forgive a lot of what we say and do this month.

I have a friend that I know is watching right now. I see her picture down here, four seats over on the front row. I love all of the post she tags about Woodland Hills, but she always hashtags this comment here: #achurchaliveworththedrive because she comes up from Harrison, Arkansas. When this all broke in mid-March, I responded to one of her posts with #achurchalivenolongerrequiresadrive. We look forward to seeing you back here in the castle soon.

Today, we are talking about good news, but we're getting a lot of news these days and there are a lot of different types of news coming at us. I don't know if you remember growing up seeing **breaking news** hit the screen. You realized you need to drop everything and pay attention. Today, it feels a little bit different because every single 30-minute news cycle is labeled as breaking news. Although I did get breaking news today that I need to share with you. Right before the service began – I was actually shocked by this – the Walmart CEO says we are in the hair color phase of panic buying right now. I think of Margarita, Brandy, Michael Young... all of those who cut hair and work on hair in our town. Something tells me you are going to be the first people we all run to, hopefully, in the weeks to come. So that's breaking news.

We also have and you hear our president say it all the time **fake news**. I don't know if you've been watching the press briefings, but I told Amy I would love sometime to do a service like a press briefing where I took questions and then when someone asked a question, I could actually look at them and go, "You're a terrible church member," but we're not going to... Thanks, Russell. I didn't even need to use the laugh button.

How about this one? We seem to be getting a lot of **bad news** these days. I remember spring break. That was like the first bad news we had to give to our kids, but then it went way worse than that. Loosing a vacation was nothing compared to what we're dealing with right now. So, I know there is a lot of bad news that we're processing each day.

But today, Easter Sunday, here in the castle, here on the campus of Woodland Hills, but beyond the castle and into your home, into your car, wherever you're watching this, today, we are declaring the **Good News**. And what is the good news? The tomb is empty, Jesus is alive, and death is defeated. Happy Easter! That's the message today. Today, we don't get our good news from what we hope happens in weeks to come. Our good news comes from what has already happened. Our good news is coming to us, and from the scripture today, we are going to see this good news, Jesus himself proclaimed it. He told his disciples this. And we get this very succinct summation of Holy Week. We get this very clear, precise, one-verse statement of it when Jesus proclaims to his disciples. He began to explain to them that he must go to Jerusalem, suffer many things at the hands of the elders – the chief priest and the teacher of the law – and that he must be killed and on the third day, be raised to life.

At that statement right there, Peter pulled Jesus aside and basically said, "That ain't going to happen. I'm not going to let that happen." You remember what Jesus said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan. That is most certainly going to happen." This is the good news, the death and the resurrection of Jesus. What does that mean for us? I want to take you in your bibles to not only did Jesus proclaim in, but the angels announced it. They are the ones that made that first announcement.

We read about this in Luke 24. I want to spend a little bit of time with it this morning. ***1 On the first day of the week, very early in the morning (when it was still dark) the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. 5 In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for***

the living among the dead? 6 He is not here; he has risen! And would you say amen before your family, before children, before your spouse today. **Remember how he told you...** You already knew about this, but now you're being reminded of this and it's playing out right before your very eyes. **...while he was still with you in Galilee:** Here's the quote: **7 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'** I want us to spend a moment processing through Verse 8 as a church family today. **8 Then they remembered his words.**

That's what Easter is. It's reminding ourselves of the truth that the tomb is empty, Jesus is alive, and death is defeated. We did this last week when we took the Lord's Supper. We were remembering the death of Christ. We are supposed to do that every time we take the Lord's Supper. We're supposed to remember, be reminded of the death of Jesus, and we're supposed to do that until he returns. And that's how we're ending the series next week with *Jesus is Coming Again*. But it's what we're doing today. I want you to be crystal clear about this message today. The tomb is empty, Jesus is alive, and death is defeated. We are to be reminded of this, we are to remember this. The staff jokes with me all the time coming up to Easter. They'll be like, "What are you going to teach about this Easter? What's the message on this Easter?" I always go back with "We're going to cover the resurrection again. We're going to be reminded of the resurrection."

Here's why this weekend, to me, is such an emotional time, and it should be. We're going through a lot of emotions from Friday to today. Friday is the crucifixion, Sunday, today, is the resurrection. But Saturday is the in between day. There is a lot happening on Saturday. A lot changes from Saturday to Sunday. I just wrote down some of the emotions that people are dealing with on Saturday and actually Friday into Saturday. There is doubt, denial, uncertainty, worry, fear, death. Saturday is waiting. Are we learning something about waiting or what? Are we learning how to wait for the change, for the resurrection of Christ? Here's how today is marked. Here's the hope we have today. It's marked by certainty, not uncertainty. He is risen. It's marked by power, boldness, victory, life, and joy. Let me recap that again. We go from just... we can say in a matter of days, but it's really hours. We go from doubt, uncertainty, worry, fear, and death to now experiencing certainty, power, boldness, victory, life, and joy.

Here's today. Today we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, and there is hope. We have hope because we believe Jesus died and rose again. The problem is you and I feel today more like Saturday. We know what we are proclaiming today. We stand on what we are proclaiming, but we're in this season as a community, as a city of Branson, and then out through our nation and around the world with this waiting, waiting, waiting. When is the joy coming? When is the victory? That's the tension that we live in right now.

Here's really what's going on. **We wrestle with Saturday fears while resting in Sunday truth.** Saturday fears are uncertainty. Saturday fears are doubt. I haven't had a phone call in the past two weeks that didn't start... Most of the phone calls I've had in the last couple of weeks, the first half of those phone calls have been, "So, what do you think?" What's the question everyone is asking? "When do we open up?" I think the real question we're asking, beyond "when do we open up," is "When do people start showing up?" "What do you think?" "Ted, do you think it's May, do you think it's June?" "Ted, do you think it's going to be back by school time?" "When will mass gatherings be allowed?" I want all of us to

practice saying this” “I don’t know.” Today, we’re not resting in what we don’t know. We’re resting in and we’re finding hope and joy and victory in what we do know. And what do we know? It’s what we’re being reminded of today. The tomb is empty, Jesus is alive, and death is defeated.

Julie lost her mom this weekend. Can you think of better words to hear than the tomb is empty, Jesus is alive, and death is defeated? We’ve been saying it around here quite a bit. I have no problem wrestling with these fears. I’m going to wake up and deal with doubt like you deal with doubt, uncertainty like you deal with uncertainty. I can wrestle with that. You can wrestle with that. I will wrestle with that more coming up. We’re all itching to find out what happens April 30 – May 1. We’re all itching, wrestling, uncertainty, doubt, worry, but where do we end up? It’s where the lament psalms end up every time: with a confession of trust. Our hope today is not in what we don’t know. We’re not using the words “I hope this happens in June.” Our hope comes because we know Jesus died and rose again. This is why Jesus appeared to many after the resurrection.

He appeared to many and proved it. We read it in 1 Corinthians 15 - **3** *For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas (Peter), and then to the Twelve. 6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred... So, now hundreds of people can give testimony to the resurrected Jesus. ...of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living... Remember, this was written 2,000 years ago. ...though some have fallen asleep.* That’s a biblical word picture for death. **7** *Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, 8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.*

Jesus appeared... And here’s the thing. We talk about these words, Peter himself wrestled with all of this. Obviously, when we use the word *denial*, Peter is the first one we think of in the Holy Week story. Denial, doubt, uncertainty... Imagine him waiting in his home, waiting in the home on Saturday. The uncertainty and the fear that he was gripped with. But when Jesus appeared to Peter, when the resurrected Jesus appeared to Peter, it changed everything. He becomes this bold, on fire, dare I say it, in-your-face preacher. And his message of hope was strong, loud, and clear as the church started at Pentecost. And as he preached that first message after the Holy Spirit fell on them.

This is where we go from Jesus appeared to prove it and then the church testified to it. And 2,000 years later, that’s what we are still doing. The church is testifying to it in everything that we do. Let’s look at Peter’s message in Acts 2: 22-24. I remind you that this is a message that comes after or at Pentecost, but after the church has started. This is coming from the one who denied Christ, denied knowing Christ. But once he met the resurrected Jesus, everything changed and he became bold, taught about life, and had power and certainty and conviction in his message.

Here’s a snippet from his sermon; Acts 2 contains his whole sermon. **22** *“Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. 23 This man was handed over to you by God’s deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. 24 But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.*

And the church begins to function as the church, worshipping the Lord, learning how to live life together in the Lord, serving one another. By the time you get to Acts 4, you have to see how ministry and the resurrection are tied. This is why we are thinking of ways during this time, this shut down time where we can't meet physically, more ways that the church can minister to one another, as we are going to read in Acts 4... That's why the Chick-fil-A thing was an exciting thing for us. It's a way for us to minister to each other and to minister to those in our church who are hurting right now by providing food on the table at a difficult and challenging time. As we minister to one another and as we minister to the community, we are testifying to the resurrection of Jesus.

We read this in Act 4. ***32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. 33 With great power... conviction. As Rex always likes to say when he prays here at church. He calls it a holy unction. ...the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all 34 that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales 35 and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.***

This was the passage I shared with the worship team on the first Sunday that we did not meet in the middle of March; I believe it was March 15. After we put that service together and I knew there were shows still going on, but I knew that week was going to be the week they shut down. I knew for many of our entertainers and many in the entertainment industry, that income was going to be lost immediately. Some people have asked me... Some of you have been asking other people in the church if I'm okay. I have to be honest with you. The Lord is working through all of this in my life, in my family's life, in your life. I believe that.

Amy came with me last week and she's here with me this morning because I was very emotional and have been very emotional. I have to be honest with you. It's really only when I step into this place. I deal with it throughout the week. I find myself only getting emotional when I pray these days. I can't understand it, but when I pray... That's why you've noticed we've had a couple different people praying before the messages. Last weekend, Amy said, "I'm coming with you this week because you need help, you need support." Then we got out in the truck after last Sunday and I looked over at her and she said, "I get it." There's just a heaviness that comes on us when we got to the livestream.

Back to March 15 is when I felt probably the heaviest, knowing what our town was bracing for. I gathered the worship team around on the stage and I read this text to them that I just read for us this morning. I said, "I just want you to know that from Bobby to Kevin to Josh and Lori, to all of our tech team, we are family, we truly are family."

I've been laughing with Katie Gumm who is our experience director. I don't know if you know, but she's really in charge of the church right now. I said, "What's it feel like to be the senior pastor these days?" That's because the person who makes all of this go out is the valuable one.

But we gathered up here on this stage and there were many tears on this stage as I just read this text to them. I reminded our whole team we are family. "The power of the resurrection alive in this church,

this is what we testify to, it's what we share with people, it's what you're proclaiming as you play and as you worship. This is powerfully among us. I want you to know that part of that means we meet one another's needs." I let our team know, "I don't want you to stress about finances right now. I want you to minister in the good name of Jesus. I want you to share that and be clear and confident, but to know your church family loves you and cares for you."

We're a church of over 2,000 when we meet physically I know, but there are probably more than that with people who kind of come and go and maybe aren't as committed. We just want you to know... We've been taking benevolence offering. We have many people who are still being generous. We don't know what May looks like. We don't know what June looks like, but we are committed to this passage right here. We are committed to what the church is supposed to do, and testifying to the power of the resurrection. And hear it clearly. I don't say this on behalf of myself, this is on behalf of the church family that provides the resources. I think last Sunday was our largest benevolence offering in the life of the church. We have the resources. We have the funds. We want to help people.

Every time I say that, people are like, "Oh, no, it's going to go crazy." We're helping people and at the same time asking them to steward the stimulus check that they're getting well. Just please hear the heart from this church. We continue to testify to the gospel of Jesus that the tomb is empty, Jesus is alive, and death is defeated, and we will continue to help one another meet needs. Please know that, please be a part of that, please be generous in the power of the gospel. If you have the resources to give, give. If you need help, ask for it. That our church can continue to practice what it means to be the church and to be ministry.

I just pause and say thank you to everybody. I don't know... that little three minute Because He Lives video. I don't know if you have any idea how many hours and hours and hours they poured into three minutes for us this morning. We so grateful for them and what they continue to do.

Your salvation depends on it. Let's move on to this as we talk about the tomb is empty, Jesus is alive, and death is defeated. I want you to know your salvation depends on what we're talking about today. Some of you are depending on family history for your salvation. Don't do that. Some of you are depending on church attendance for your salvation. No... Don't go with church attendance. We're preaching about an empty tomb to an empty room today. It's not about church attendance. It's not about giving. It's not about your works, no matter how good they are. It's not about abstaining from the bad. Don't depend on that for your salvation. For by grace you are saved through faith.

In 1 Corinthians 15, we read about the resurrection. There are a lot of important things to say about this text. **17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile...** That means if Jesus isn't alive, everything we're talking about means nothing; you have no salvation. Why? **...you are still in your sins.** Your sins are not forgiven. **18 Then those also who have fallen asleep** Those who have died **in Christ are lost.** **19 If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.** I want you to know and be clear about the fact that your salvation depends on everything that we are talking about today.

In Romans 10, Paul says this: ***9 If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*** It's not about when your mom and dad started taking you to church, it's not about how faithful you are to attending church, it's not about what you're doing right or what you've stopped doing that's wrong. It's about faith in Jesus. It's about believing in and depending on the message that we're proclaiming today. So, if you're living like we're living in the Saturday feeling time and you're living in Saturday without the hope of Sunday, without the victory of Sunday, without the message of Sunday, without the truth of Sunday, we want you to continue to work through everything you're working through emotionally, find help, lean into family, but we don't want you to do it without Sunday truth, without the Easter message, without knowing that the tomb is empty, Jesus is alive, death is defeated, your sin can be forgiven. You can have life in Christ, eternal life.

Now is your time to proclaim it. We talked about Peter becoming bold. Now is your time to become bold. Now is your time to proclaim it. Follower of Christ, blow up social media with your faith in Jesus. Let our family and friends know, without obviously being annoying. We don't want to become annoying, but we want to be bold proclaimers of Sunday truth, bold proclaimers of the Easter message.

For those of you who have never placed faith in Jesus, that today would be the day. I want to lead you through a prayer right where you're at. This prayer is just your opportunity to declare Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that he has been raised from the dead. If you would bow with me wherever you are, in front of family and in front of friends. If you are ready to commit your life to Jesus, then I'm going to encourage you to pray this prayer.

Repeat after me. Dear Jesus, you have promised that if I believe in you, all of my sin will be forgiven. I want to learn the purpose for my life. Accept me into your eternal home of heaven one day. I confess my sin and I believe that you are God, my Savior. I receive you into my life as my Lord. Today I'm turning over every part of my life to your control. You have the right to call the shots in my life.

If you prayed that prayer... Again, it's not about the words of a prayer, but about the decision you're making in your heart because we believe faith alone in Christ alone is what saves us. Faith alone in Christ alone. If you've made that decision, we would love to know about it. Whatever decision you've made today, whatever decision you'll be making over the weeks to come, would you let us know about it? We're going to put our church email up here and we would just like you to send us a quick note at hotline@woodhills.org. If you don't mind and if you would be okay with us sharing your story, if you'd be okay with us sharing your decision to follow Christ, we would like to do that in the weeks to come. One of the things we know is right now people are craving connection more than content. We get that and we want to find creative ways to let you still connect with one another. So, share your story with us.

Woodland Hills family, this is also an opportunity for you to share your prayer requests with us. How can we pray with you during this time? As you wrestle through Saturday fear, but rest in truth and the promises of Sunday that the tomb is empty, Jesus is alive, and death is defeated. We will rest in that today. That is our hope.

We don't know... and this has gotten me in trouble too the last few weeks. People are like, "Man, this is kind of depressing sometimes the way you say it." I'm trying to work on the way I say it, but I don't know what the weeks and months ahead hold, but I know everything that I have declared today from the Word of God is the truth of God's word. That I know. That I can rest in and that I can find hope in.

I'm going to close us in prayer. You've got to stick around today. If the kids are running around right now, grab them and bring them in because some of their teachers, here in a couple of minutes, want to say hi and wave to them and call them out to let them be able to see that friendly face. Get your kids gathered around while I pray.

Father, it's in the name of Jesus that I'm so grateful for this church. A lot of times we say this place and I am grateful for the physical space we have here to meet and to gather that you have provided for us. Lord, I look forward to meeting back in this place. When, I have no idea. I'm not finding my hope in that, but I am finding my hope in you. For it's in you we put our trust, for it's in you we put our hope. Today, we celebrate the fact that the power that raised Jesus from the dead is the same power available for us today in our lives.

I pray for many right now who have never placed faith in Jesus, and they've been trusting in so much. They've been trusting in bank accounts. That ain't working anymore. Or trusting in jobs and all this that they have built. Some have spent years building up something that they've been trusting in more than you and it's gone now. That today would be the day that they place their trust in you.

During this waiting time, during this Saturday feeling time in our community, may it be a recalibrating time. We have more time for prayer, we have more time for reading of the scripture, we have more time for sharing our faith with our loved ones. May we be bold in that. May parents today be asking their kids about their salvation. I pray that many parents today, on this Easter Sunday, are leading their children to Christ, teaching them this message about the death and the resurrection of Jesus.

Father, I am so grateful for how you've provided. I'm so grateful for the generosity of our church. I'm so grateful that we are able to lean on one another in these times. I'm so grateful that we're still able to give and provide to meet the physical needs of those who call Woodland Hills home, and then able to minister to the needs of those in our community and around the country. So grateful that five weeks in we are supporting our missionaries 100% with no plans of changing that. Father, that's you. We rest in you, we trust in you, and we know you are the ultimate giver and provider of all that we have. I pray peace for every home right now, that people would rest in you and rest today in the Sunday truth, the message of Easter that the tomb is empty, Jesus is alive, our sins are forgiven, and death is defeated.

We love you and it's in the name of Jesus that we pray it. Amen.