



Passion
Part 6 – The Resurrection of Jesus
Pastor Ted Cunningham

Today, we are talking about *The Resurrection of Jesus*. I always love getting asked this question every week leading up to Easter. “So, what are you preaching on this Sunday?” We don’t need to get too creative, we don’t need to change any message. We’re going to go with Jesus is alive. We’re going to stick with that message this easter like we did last Easter and the Easters before because we want every person leaving knowing Jesus is alive and your sins can be forgiven if you’ve never placed faith in Jesus. Your life can have meaning and purpose and heaven can be your home if you will confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that he has been raised from the dead.

We’ve been going through this series that ends today on Easter. We’ve been going through the entire week leading up to Easter – the Passion week, the Holy Week. We kicked it off six weeks ago. Adam kicked us off with *The Triumphal Entry* and we went all the way through to last week, *The Death of Jesus*, and today, we come to the empty tomb. We’re going to look at the evidence of the empty tomb, the evidence of the resurrected Jesus, and then the evidence of your life and mine.

Jesus said this in John 11: 25 - **25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die...** And all God’s people said... Amen.

Gathered in this room, there are so many different faith traditions, but 2,000 years later, we are still celebrating the resurrected Jesus. Pentecostals are still shouting about it. Charismatics are still lifting their hands over it. Baptists are still amening it. Presbyterians are still studying it. Episcopalians are still toasting it. Anglicans are still chanting about it. Catholics are still standing, kneeling, standing kneeling, standing kneeling over it. And as non-denominational, we’re trying to bring all those expression together in one gathering. We’re glad that you're here.

Maybe you’ve seen the idea online that you only have one job to do. So, like when your team is in the big game and the kicker comes out and misses the field goal, what do you say? “You only had one job to do.” I always love this with the highway department. You only had one job to do (crooked center lane), and it started by showing up to work sober, that was the first thing you should have done. Spelling is a problem sometimes. You hand one job to do. A lot of bad spellers out there. I love this next one (misspelled) This next one is the best. You only had one job (right turn lane reads “Turn Left,” with arrow pointing right.) You only had one job to do. I had to fact check this next one because I did believe it. I thought someone photoshopped it. I fact checked it and it is true. This semi-truck driver hit the over pass and his trailer reads, “On the road to success, there are no shortcuts.” That I did for all my RV friends at Treasure Lake. Watch the overpasses. You had one job.

This morning, Woodland Hills Family Church, we have one job to do and that is to make sure every single person watching and every single person in here and every single person on campus leaves knowing Jesus is alive. That's the only job we have to do today as we celebrate, as we teach, as we worship, as we share.

I have a pastor friend who was sharing with his family the angst he feels every Easter – to be edgy, to find some new way to share it. His dad heard him saying all this and his dad was like, "Son, you've only got one job to do. Be crystal clear with the message that Jesus is alive." We want to make sure we share that message, we want to be clear about that message today.

A mom sent me this picture a few weeks ago from Critter Street. They got in the car afterward church and Hudson showed his paper. How many of you saw this that your kids brought home with five loaves and two fishes? Hudson shared the story with his mom. "Lots and lots of people showed up and all they had were five loaves and two fishes." Mom asked, "Well, didn't Jesus do something pretty amazing to take care of this problem?" To which Hudson said, "Nope. They just runned out." And then he even tagged it with, "Isn't that sad?" This is why we believe parents are the primary discipler of their child's heart. That's why you have to keep asking. "I think Jesus did a big miracle." Mom's building it up. To which Hudson says, "Nope." She texted me with, "What are you teaching up at that church?" As we do today as parents, we don't want to put any of the responsibility on Hudson's hearing. Can I get an amen on that right there? I just want to make sure we're crystal clear today, as we talk about the evidence of the empty tomb, the resurrected Jesus, and then the evidence of your life, and the evidence of mine.

We're going to start in Matthew 28. If you have your bibles, you can turn to Matthew 28. We're also going to be in 1 Corinthians 15. As we start at the empty tomb, we see all of the eyewitness testimony to the resurrected Jesus and then we come to a place where we ask, "What does this mean for you and what does this mean for me?"

In Matthew 28: 1-6, we read, ***After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.***

2 There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. 4 The guards... Now keep them in mind because they're testimony is going to be key in the evidence we have of the empty tomb. The guards ***...were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.***

5 The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. And here is the message of Easter in Verse 6. 6 He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. This is important and I love what Pastor Andy Stanley says, ***"If a man can predict his death and pull it off, you should go with whatever that man says."*** He is not here; has risen, just as he said. ***Come and see the place where he lay.***

Today, as I walked the campus, as I stood in the back, I saw many people here and some coming in. I know you're here with family. You were invited and we're glad you're here. Some are here on the promise of brunch after this service. For whatever reason you find your self here today, here is our invitation to you. Come and see. We want you to come and see and hear the story of the resurrected Jesus.

But now the tomb is empty, and this is a problem for the Pharisees. This is a problem for those who hated Jesus and crucified Jesus. They have to come up with a story. Now, does anybody here remember when your kids were small... How many of you have small kids? You've caught them in a lie. Have you ever caught your kid in lie? All of us know. We are born in iniquity, so we are all born liars, but here's what we often forget. We're born terrible liars. We're not good at it. I asked the worship team because I was going to try to get another illustration. I said, "Hey, anybody here have a story from their small child telling a lie and getting caught?" They all came on me with stories. They were all trying to outdo each other with who had the best story. We all have those stories about catching a kid in a lie and being like "You didn't think this one through." You got caught and you didn't have time to develop your story.

I just thought about this this morning. My brother and I used to play war in our backyard and shoot each other with bb guns. That's when kids were kids. If you want to lower the crime rate in this country, let your kids start shooting each other with bb guns this very minute. My brother wasn't smart enough to not hit the house. We don't hit the house with the bbs. He actually hit the house and put a whole in one of the windows. You could see where the bb went in and there was a little shattering from it. He was upset, but you know me, I'm like, *no big deal; I didn't do nothing.*

My brother had to come up with a story. He goes, "Here's what we're going to tell dad. It was so windy back here, this big tree was blowing, blowing, blowing, came down hit that little whole in the window and went back up." The number of times I would look at my brother while growing up like, *Are you stupid? He's not going to buy that.* He did. My dad bought that story. We were late into our teens before we told our dad the truth. We made sure we had our own car and a way to get away. But we tell stupid lies.

This isn't just a lie that the chief priests and the elders have to come up with about the empty tomb; it's a bad lie. You can tell they didn't have time to think this through. It's a bad lie and it is unbelievable evidence for the empty tomb.

We read down a little further in Matthew 28. **12 When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan...** So, this was after the guards came back and shared that the tomb was empty. Which, if you are a guard, uh oh. That's like, "You had one job to do." Stand there and make sure no one goes in and no one comes out. **...they gave the soldiers a large sum of money...** So, they have to sell a story. This is a bribe and it's a bad one. **13 telling them, "You are to say..."** And here's the lie. **...His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.**

We can make a lot of observations; we're going to make two. First of all, sleeping people make terrible eyewitnesses. Just ponder that for a moment. The 10:00 is a lot faster than the 8:30 service. They weren't getting it. They are going to tell people they were sleeping and they saw the disciples come and steal the body. You are idiots; that's not going to work.

Here's another observation that's very important. In that day, if someone escaped from a guard, the guard was put to death. You had one job to do. So, think about this for just a moment. Let alone someone comes into the tomb... These guards should have been put to death. So, now, they are the ones that are going to go share this story. Anyone who has just a basic understanding of the law would hear this lie and go, "Why are you still alive to tell about it?" The tomb is empty and the Pharisees, the chief priests, elders; they don't know what to do, so they start lying.

And now you get the evidence of the resurrected Jesus. In 1 Corinthians 15: 3-8, The apostle Paul says this to the church at Corinth. What he is going to share... Adam shared with me after the first service, and I loved it. He's telling the church at Corinth "There are people I'm going to talk about here that saw the resurrected Jesus. Fact check me. Go talk to them because many of them are still alive." He says, **3 For what I received I passed on to you...** And what he's saying is "I am a link in a chain of people who have seen the resurrected Jesus and I am sharing my story and I'm sharing their story." When you read this, you have to be reminded today, 2,000 years later, that you and I are a link in the chain to continue to share the good news that Jesus died and rose again. **...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, and then to the Twelve. 6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep (the 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.**

And he declares we've seen him... and here's what this means. I always want to be reminded of this every Easter. He gives six things that happen to you and me if Christ has not been raised from the dead. You know there are a lot of people today who are worshipping dead people. We worship one who is alive. There are a lot of people today who have staked their whole faith on someone who is dead, but we have faith in one who is alive. What Paul is going to say to the church at Corinth is, "Think about it for just a moment, if Christ has not been raised and he is still dead and buried, what does that mean for you and what it means for me."

14 And if Christ has not been raised... He's telling the church at Corinth to ponder this for just a moment. **...our preaching is useless...** Now some of you have thought that before, unrelated to the resurrection, but what he's saying is our gathering and studying the scriptures together and learning the Word of God together means nothing. He's saying if Christ is still dead and buried, there's no purpose for you and I to be here right now doing what we're doing. **...and so is your faith.** Again, people have faith in those who are dead. We have faith in one who is alive. **15 More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God...** Now we're speaking lies. **...for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either.**

17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile... I've been making a practice of this the last few Saturdays before Easter – sharing with those who have lost loved ones and who are now mourning. Friday is suffering and pain. Saturday is confusion and doubt, but today is life, hope, victory. So, on Saturday, I find myself texting or calling widows, widowers. I remember a few years ago doing this. We had a funeral just a little bit before Easter. The gentlemen who lost his son was mad. He was in the anger stage of grief. In those moments, if you want to mourn with those who mourn – we've talked about this a lot as a church – it's best just to practice the ministry of presence. Just be there. You don't have to say anything. You don't have to come up with a word. But I have found that it's time to stretch ourselves a little bit on Saturday.

I texted my friend and said, "I want to see you tomorrow at Woodland Hills. Join us for Easter where we celebrate the resurrected Jesus, and we talk about the resurrection of the dead. You need to be reminded of that." Now, we don't, as 1 Thessalonians 4 talks about, Believers in Christ Jesus, we don't mourn like ordinary men. We mourn with hope because we believe Jesus died and rose again. There are those who are mourning today. I want to say if Christ has not been raised, you mourn like ordinary men. But because Christ has been raised, you mourn with hope. He goes on to say, **...you are still in your sins.** There is no forgiveness of sins if Christ has not been raised. **18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.**

You've been to dreadful funerals. I've been to plenty of dreadful funerals where the person did not know the Lord. They never placed faith alone in Christ alone to spend eternity in hell, separated from God. I've been to those funerals. Do you know what Paul is saying? Has Christ not been raised? If that's the case, all funerals are dreadful. All of them are to be in misery. **19 If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.**

But if you're Pentecostal, Charismatic, Baptist, whatever your faith tradition has been, you can amen this. After saying all of this, he says, **20 But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead...**

So, the six things we just looked at, the things that happened to us, Christ has indeed been raised from the dead. What does that mean? Our gathering has great purpose. Our preaching has great purpose. The Word of God going out still changes hearts and lives. Your life has purpose and meaning. In your brokenness, Jesus restores. He brings hope, he brings life, your sins are forgiven, heaven in your home. Those who have died in Christ, you will see them again one day. This is the joy we celebrate on this day.

So, we have the evidence of the resurrected Jesus, but we also have the evidence of your life. At Woodland Hills Family Church, you need to know we believe in the resurrection of Jesus, but we also believe in the power of the resurrection. There are plenty of people that would be on campus today and at churches all across the country who believe this historical event. They believe the tomb is empty, they believe Jesus is at the right hand of the Father. They believe all of that, but I'm going to ask you, do you believe in the power of the resurrection? There is a difference in believing in the resurrection and believing in the power. That's why Paul said in Philippians 3: 10, **I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection...**

And you need to know, at Woodland Hills Family Church, the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is the same power available for you, your relationship, marriage, and family. I have to tell you... And I'll work through anything with you, anything you share with me, but you're not going to be meet with a lot of dread or grief when you come to me and tell me something is hopeless. When you tell me your relationship, your family, your marriage is dead, and there is no bringing it back to life. What are we doing here then? We're here because we believe Jesus was raised from the dead and we believe the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is the exact same power that raises your lifeless soul at the moment of your salvation.

You say my marriage is dead. You can only bring dead things back to life. You can't bring living things back to life. Your marriage is dead, your family is dead, relationship is dead, that relationship with your son or your daughter, or your mom or dad is dead? Do you believe in the power of the resurrection? Because we believe Jesus is still breathing life into dead people. We believe Jesus is still breathing life into dead marriages, dead, families, and dead relationships. So, today, believe in the resurrected Jesus and believe in the power of his resurrection.

Last week, a young man came up to me... I'm loving the interaction. Young people are thinking, and they are thinking deeply. This young man, about 10, 11, 12 years old, walks up to me after the last service or maybe it was between the 10:00 and 11:30. He hopped right up on stage, walked up to me and goes, "Hey! If Jesus did all of this, why do we still need hell?" I was like, "Okay. Give me just a second. I was getting ready to put the table away. I was going to take a swig of water. This is a pretty big question. I'll start with the good news. You don't need hell. Jesus died for you." I love when a young person has the passion. I said, "Have you placed faith alone in Christ alone? Is Jesus your Savior?" He says, "Of course! What do you think I'm doing here?" We need to give that testimony more. Do you know the Lord? "Of course, I do!" It's cuter with a 10-year-old than a 50-year-old. It's a little hostile when I do it.

But Jesus is still breathing life... I love the story of the man born blind. Jesus heals this man and now he has to go in and give an account. The people that hated Jesus, the people that would ultimately crucify Jesus are like, "What happen to you, and I want you to tell me about Jesus."

Last week, the clip with Alistair Begg... I know a lot of us have spent time thinking about this week. The thief is there with the angel and the angel asks, "Why should I let you in?" The thief is going, "I don't know." The angel asks, "Do you know the doctrine of substitutionary atonement? Do you know the doctrine of justification by faith?" The thief says, "No, I don't." The Angel says, "Well, on what basis should I let you in?" The thief says, "The man on the middle cross said I could come." I want that to be your testimony today. May that be your testimony that you would place faith alone in Christ alone.

Look at what the man born blind, who is now healed, says when they ask if Jesus is a sinner because they are wanting to know about Jesus, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know."

You're not going to be able to answer all the questions you get asked. He said, "I don't know. These questions you're throwing at me right now, it's a lot. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see." That I know that I'm clear on. That I'm walking in. We want you to leave today. Come, see, believe. That you would place faith alone in the resurrected Jesus.

One of my traditions every Easter is waking up early and listening to the Gaither Vocal Band sing, *He's Alive*. I don't listen to a lot of southern gospel, but I do every Easter. I listen to worship and country music. Those are my two primary things, but on Easter, I have got to hear David Phelps hit that note in *He's Alive*. Every time I'm listening to it, my thought is, *I'm a tenor. I can hit this note*. And I do with the headphones on. And then the next time I listen to it with the headphones off, I think *I am not a tenor*. I cannot hit that note. There are time, and Amy will tell you, when I am belting it out. I'm up at 4:00 am. I'll feel her hand come over on my shoulder like *there, there buddy. Just settle on down*. And then I'll invite her to join me for worship. The tap on the shoulder gets a little bit heavier. *Not right now. We've got a long day ahead of us*.

There is a scene that I love and it comes to us from John 20: 1-10 ***Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. 2 So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"***

3 So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. 4 Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5 He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, 7 as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. 8 Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed.

I'm asking the Holy Spirit to call people right now by name. You're here with family or friends, you're here at an invitation. Yes, come and see, come and see, come and see that the tomb is empty. Come, see, and believe. Believe in the resurrection of Jesus. Then look at Verse 9. To me, this is so important for those who think they have to figure it all out before believing in Jesus. That they have to be able to answer all of the questions. Look at what it says. There in the middle of this scene and it says, ***9 (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) 10 Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.***

[performance of He's Alive]

Ted Cunningham: They said, "Come up and say something afterwards." I said, "What! No!" Unbelievable, as we celebrate the resurrected Jesus today. We had two people that got baptized after the last service. I remember one time my daughter was young. We were at an airport. She went up and asked a guy... She had to be four years old. She asked him if he believed in Jesus. That's when I kind of backed off to see what the four-year-old can pull off. The guy said, "Yeah, I do." She said, "I believe in him, and I have been baptized." I can't remember how old she was, but I want that to be your testimony today that "I came, I saw the empty tomb, and I believed."

Scripture says if you will declare with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that he has been raised from the dead, you will be saved.

Father, in the name of Jesus, we have seen the empty tomb, we know the resurrected Jesus, and for that, we are grateful. Jesus is alive, our sins are forgiven, our life has purpose, and heaven is our home. We are grateful.

For the one who has never placed faith in Jesus, that today would be the day of their salvation. For the dead marriage, dead family, dead relationship, that today would be the day that the person, the mom, the dad, the husband, the wife calls out, cries out for the same power that raised Jesus from the dead to raise their relationship.

We pray all of this in the might name of Jesus. And everyone agreed and said... Amen.