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Jesus to die for our sins and then rising him again. And we are just honored and humbled that you have come to us, those who sinned against you and turned traitor against you and you have brought us back into your family. And we praise you and we thank you for this. In the name of your precious son, Jesus, amen. Okay. Well, good morning. Friday was Good Friday. For those of you who are here, we came and we remembered the day that Jesus died on the cross. And today is Easter, the day that Jesus rose from the grave. And I remember as a kid thinking, hearing a lot of teaching about the blood of Jesus and the death of Jesus being the propitiation for our sins and all those sorts of things. And I thought, you know, it seemed to me very much like, well, the death, that was it. That was the turning point. That was the most important thing. And yet we seem to make such more of a big deal out of Easter and the resurrection. And I didn't really understand why for a long time. And so I began to look into it and study it and research it. And it turns out that there is some very wonderful, beautiful truths that I had not realized before. And if you haven't realized them either, we're going to talk about them today and hopefully that will bring a new level of light and joy to your Christian walk. So to begin with, because he lives, I am confident that the man called Jesus is the sinless Son of God. Romans 1.4 tells us that Jesus Christ was declared to be the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead. He was declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead. When most people in the world talk about Jesus, if they're being at least honest and thoughtful about it and not just trying to be a hater, they will tell you that Jesus was a good man. And he was. He showed love and compassion on the overlooked people of his time. They will tell you that he was wise teacher and that's also true because much of what Jesus taught has found its way into our systems of morals and laws. And they'll tell you that he was a great leader and this is also undeniable because the movement, the things that he has started 2,000 years ago are still going strong even today. But then those people will stop right there and then they'll try and say, "But he was still just a man." And they'll try to tell you that it would be completely possible for someone else to come along and be just like him, make all the right decisions, say all the right things, and someone else could be another Jesus. And that's where those people get this wrong. And that is what the resurrection proves to us. Jesus was not just a man. He was the sinless Son of God and the empty tomb proves it. There have been many good and wise teachers throughout history but they're all dead now. And there have been many significant religious leaders throughout history and they're also all dead now. But only one was so perfect and so powerful that he could overcome death. Only one tomb of all the great religious icons lies empty today because it was open from the inside. This was no mere man. And this is not just some legend or some fable. It was an actual historical event, witnessed by hundreds. There is substantial historical evidence both in Christian writings but also in secular writings that Jesus was very real, that he was crucified, and that he did rise again. At the time that the early Christian church was spreading across the world, there were still hundreds of people still alive who saw the resurrected Christ. It wasn't just some secret and everybody was like, "Well, just trust me." No, they had witnesses. And one of the most fervent persecutors of the faith, the man originally called Saul, now called Paul, became one of the most famous disciples after witnessing Christ. And John was the only apostle who died of natural causes. Every other apostle was martyred for their faith and none of them recanted at the end. No, Jesus' resurrection was a very real thing and it gives us confidence that we are not just following some man, we are following the risen Son of God. Next, because he lives, I am assured of my salvation. First Corinthians 15-17 says, "If Christ is not risen, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins." I spent a lot of time wondering why out of all of the things in this world that make me happy and sad, nothing hurts me more than when somebody I love dies. It hurts me down on a level that I've just never experienced before. And I believe, and this is just me speaking, but I believe that death is so painful to me and to many of us because it is something that we were never created to experience. I believe that it is contrary to the fundamental design of us and of nature. And that's what the Bible says, that we were created sinless and deathless and because we sinned, we must now all physically die. And the Bible agrees. It says the wages of sin is death and we believe this. But if that's not true, then that just means death is just part of the universe. It's just one of the laws of nature. But if it's just one of the laws of nature, then if somebody lived a sinless life, then they would just die and be dead. That's how that would work. But death couldn't hold Jesus. Why? Because he was sinless. Death, that thing that so many of us take for granted, that thing that we tell people are just inescapable, it cannot hold the sinless one. Now Jesus had to die to take the wages of our sin, but because he himself was sinless, death couldn't keep him. And this now assures us of our salvation. If the sinless one went to death, then he went to death because of our sin. And if he took our sin to death, then our sin has been taken from us. The wages of our sin have been taken from us. And therefore I am assured of my salvation because he lives. Next and tied right into that one is that because he lives, physical death is not my end. 1 Corinthians 1520 says, "But now Christ has risen from the dead and has become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep." Now while we are confident that we have our salvation, unfortunately the body we live in, our flesh, has fallen victim to the curse brought about by sin, and one day our bodies must die. But the Bible refers to Christians who have died as having fallen asleep. This is not some secret mystery about us not having to die, but rather it's a beautiful reminder that just as our asleep is a temporary state that we will one day wake up from, so is death a temporary state that we will one day rise from. One day, according to 1 Thessalonians 4 16, the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. The Bible doesn't say that we are going to spend eternity as little spirits with wings riding on clouds playing harps. The Bible says that we are going to be resurrected into real physical bodies, and we will live and breathe and feel wind on our face and splash water on our face, and we will be alive. It will be real. As we talked about in our last point, we are assured of our salvation. We are assured that our sins have been removed from us having been nailed to the cross. Because death can only hold those who die in their sins, we are confident that death cannot hold on to us. Death didn't conquer Jesus. Jesus conquered death. And since we are in Him and He is in us, then we have conquered death. Physical death is not my end because He lives. The next thing I learned from the resurrection of Christ is that my imperfection will be replaced with perfection. Second Corinthians 5, 1-2 says, "For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation, which is from heaven." Friends, not only do we have resurrection and look forward to, but because our sin has been removed from us, we have perfection to look forward to. If we believe that everything that's wrong in this universe is the result of sin, then once we are reborn without our sin, we will finally have the perfect bodies that God planned from us from the beginning. And not only that, He's promised a perfect world for us to live in. We don't know exactly what that means. It assumes that we will have no more sickness or injury or dying. Some have speculated there might be some kind of supernatural component because the resurrected Christ was able to reappear in the midst of His disciples when they were all locked together in a room, but that's just speculation. We won't know until we get there. But the one thing that we can count on is that we will no longer have that little cartoon devil on our shoulder trying to get us into trouble. The flesh we live in today is cursed, and it tries to drag us away from the life of God, the life of the Spirit. That's why Paul tells us to crucify our flesh and to walk in the Spirit. He wouldn't need to tell us to do that if it wasn't something we needed to do. But friends, once we're resurrected, there will be nothing left that we need to crucify, because heart's full of goodness and light and love. And so because He lives, I have salvation, which means I have resurrection, which means that I will have perfection. Next, because He lives, I can trust God's promises. Psalm 16.10 says, "For you will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will you allow your Holy One to see corruption." This verse is one of the hundreds of verses written before the life of Christ, which describes the life of Christ. In other words, it's prophecy. When God makes a promise, He fulfills it. When He makes a prophecy, it comes to pass. There were verses that speak of the Messiah rising from the dead. If Jesus had not risen from the dead, then God's promise would have been broken, and we could no longer have trusted His word. But not only was the resurrection of the Messiah prophesied, there were more prophecies to be fulfilled by the Messiah that Jesus hadn't done yet. And none of those could have come to pass if Jesus had remained dead. But because He has risen, the prophecies were not broken, all future prophecies are still on track, all of God's promises are still trustworthy because He lives. Number six, because He lives, Jesus now works on my behalf. Romans 5.10 says that, "For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." It is a sad thing when a married woman becomes a widow. The husband she relied upon, who was her partner and helper in this life, goes away and she is left alone. In fact, the Bible gives special instructions to the church in regards to caring for widows because of this. But now think about this. The church is the Bride of Christ. And it would have been a sad, difficult thing for the Bride of Christ to try and make her way on her own without her beloved. But good news, Jesus came back for His bride and He promised that He will never leave her nor forsake her. We, the church, the Bride of Christ, have not been abandoned by our beloved to death. He still lives and He is still with us. Physically He dwells in heaven, preparing a place for us, but He has put His Spirit within us that comforts and teaches and convicts and guides us and reminds us and helps us accomplish everything that we would be able to do if Jesus Himself were right here leading our church, leading our Sunday school, teaching up here every Sunday. Through the power of the Holy Spirit in each one of us, we have the same relationship that we would as if Jesus were right here Himself. And not only is His Spirit working within us, but He is up there in heaven interceding for us, constantly praying on our behalf. You see His death was the point at which power over Him was given away to the hands of men, but now that He lives He has taken that power back and He uses it in intercession for His people. The point is this. His death, something done to Him, was powerful enough to reconcile us to God. How much more does His life and what He does with it benefit those of us whom He loves? Jesus works on my behalf because He lives. Number seven, I have a relationship with God, not a religion because He lives. Corinthians 6, 16 says, "And God has said, 'I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be my people.'" There are a lot of religions in the world, as I'm sure you're aware. So many people performing rituals, adjusting their conduct, making sacrifices, all in the hopes of depositing into some spiritual bank account. They follow the motions out of guilt and fear without any tangible evidence of merit. Sadly, many of those who call themselves Christians live this way. But not us. Once a Christian is born again, He has access to the power and presence of God. We are not relegated to mindless, repetitive chanting or shouting prayers into a quiet sky. No, we have access behind the curtain into the holy of holies. We have access into the presence of God. And therefore, we do not just have some mindless, dusty old religion, but because He lives, we have relationship with God. And finally, because He lives, I can face whatever comes next. Hebrews 13, 5 and 6 tells me, "For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you, so we may boldly say, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?'" This final point is more of my "therefore, therefore" point. Because He lives, therefore the previous seven things we talked about are true, therefore I can face whatever comes next. Because death is not my end, because my sins are forgiven, because I have a resurrection and a perfect body, because I can trust God's promises, therefore I can face whatever comes next. As we spoke about last week, Jesus calls His disciples to follow Him. And He has no intention of taking the easy road. The life of a Christian is one that leads through difficulties, trials and persecutions, in addition to the regular hardships of life. He calls us to give to those who cannot repay. He calls us to serve those who have nothing to offer us. He calls us to love and pray for our enemies. And all of this runs counter to our very nature. Nevertheless, He promises to provide everything we need for this difficult journey, tangibly, emotionally and spiritually. And best of all, He will never leave us or forsake us. Friends, the death of Jesus on the cross was the payment for our sins, but the story didn't end there. He emerged from the grave, He conquered death, and He carried into all the beautiful promises and truths that we've covered here today. Perhaps you haven't realized all these promises before today. I hope once you begin to reflect on these things, that you will be more confident and assured in your Christian walk. But if you're here today and you've never repented on your sins and turned to Christ, then these promises don't yet apply to you. But it's Easter. It's the day of new birth. What better day to begin your new life than today? After we're done here, you'll see some of our pastoral care team walking around with little name tags on and just find me or one of them or someone you've seen just participating in today's service and just say, "You know what? I'm ready to be done with my old life and I want this new life Pastor Matt is talking about." And they'll help you to -- they'll pray with you and they'll help you get started on the right foot. I hope today has illuminated and encouraged you. I hope you realized just how many good things are yours right now as a Christian because he lives. Before we sing, let's pray. Heavenly Father, it is so good that you sent your son Jesus to die to take away our sins. It is so much better, God, that he has risen from the dead and proved all your promises to be true, to prove his victory over sin and over death and to assure us of our victory over sin and over death. And we praise you and we thank you for this. And God, if there's anyone here today who has not yet trusted in you and repented of their sins, I pray, God, that you will touch their heart with your beautiful light and love and realize them that you have something wonderful in store for them if they will just turn to you. Thank you for all of these beautiful promises and truths. Continue to remind us of them as we go throughout our week. In Jesus' name, amen.