

The Resurrection

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Assorted

Speaker: Joel Greenwood

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So this week I was pondering the question. Why do people come to church on Easter? Some of you may know that Christmas and Easter are two of the largest attended services throughout the year. It's one of the top three Christmas Easter and anybody know the third. Mother's Day. Good job. Mother's Day. So we have Christmas Easter Mother's Day. And so I was trying to think, why do people come to church on those days? Why do they come on Easter? END 00:26 END

And the best answer that I could come up with with people that I've talked to is more people come to church on Easter because it's tradition because it's something that their family did when they were growing up. And so they just come to church on Easter, whether they believe what we talk about here or not, they come to church because of those family values. And I have to be honest, I appreciate that. That means a lot to me because I definitely think that our world could use a lot more respect. For other people. END 00:55 END

And so I appreciate the fact that some of you may be just come because you think to yourself, I'm not going to cause a big fight in the family. I'm just going to go on Sunday morning and we can go to Easter service together. But I do have to tell you that I don't believe just tradition and family values is going to get the next generation to come to church on Easter Sunday. I don't think that's going to be enough for them if they don't believe what we believe they're going to say why even go. And again, I have to be honest, I fully understand. END 01:24 END

If I had a family member that came to me and they were a Buddhist monk, and they said, hey, would you come to a service with me? We're going to have this special service. I probably would in the most polite and loving way. So you know what? I'd rather not. Thanks for inviting me. But I don't believe what you believe. And so it just might be kind of weird for me to be there. Now, today, I'm sure that there are people joining us here in this room, as well as online. END 01:50 END

Maybe even listening on the radio that don't believe everything that we believe and you're just joining us to stop your family from having a fight. And you're welcome here. Thank you for coming. Thank you for not causing a family fight. But what we are going to talk about today is going to sound crazy to you. I'm just going to be upfront. It's going to sound crazy, but you also need to know that this is the foundational truth to my faith, to what I believe, without this event that we celebrate on Easter, the resurrection of Jesus, you all need to know that my faith would be pointless. END 02:27 END

This is the very foundational truth of everything that I believe, and I also understand if you think I'm crazy for believing it. So don't feel awkward. There doesn't need to be any awkwardness between us. I can still love you. You can love me even if you think I'm crazy. All right? But I want to talk about what I believe happened on Easter morning. What we celebrate on Sunday morning. Because it is so important that the apostle Paul, even in the New Testament, said that if this is not true, if Jesus was not raised from the dead, then I am to be the most pitied of all men. END 03:03 END

Meaning if you don't believe what I believe, you can just feel bad for me today, right? That's what Paul is saying. If you don't believe this to be true, then and if it's not true, then you should just feel bad for us. Really, this is an all or nothing for me. Today is an all or nothing for me. The philosophical word for this is the idea

that this is where my faith is falsifiable, meaning if you could prove to me that Jesus wasn't raised from the dead, then everything I have based my entire life on has been false. END 03:35 END

Not true. Hopefully by now, you understand the importance of celebrating the resurrection. But even as we discuss the meaning of Easter, it wouldn't be a bad idea if you're here or watching online. If you believe something different, that you would consider where is your belief falsifiable? What could I share with you? What could I prove to you that would make your whole reasoning about where we came from and where we're going and what we believe about life, it would cause you to question that if I could share with you something, how would it change your beliefs? END 04:12 END

You see, we all have a story. Every single one of us has a story where we were born. When we were born, the family that we were born into, what we were taught when we were growing up, what we were taught to be true. And of course, all of the twists and turns of life that we didn't plan for. Some of the difficult experiences that we have gone through, and eventually, as all of those things play out in each of our lives, we come to our own conclusions about life and about faith. END 04:43 END

Sometimes this journey is intentional, we do research, we study, we ask questions, we read spiritual books. We talk to other people. We try to come to a logical conclusion of what we believe, but for other, it's an unintentional journey. You just don't really know what you believe. You're not really sure you're still trying to figure it out. So it's just not important to you. END 05:07 END

And so as I share my story, my journey with you this morning, all I ask is that you would take an intentional journey yourself as to why you believe what you believe. Whatever that is, it doesn't bother me. Whatever you believe to be true, why do you believe that? Because unfortunately, I have talked to far too many people in my office and just around the community. When I begin talking about life and about faith and where we came from and where we're going, some people have never intentionally even thought about that. END 05:39 END

And for me, that breaks my heart because I think it's the most important thing that you could ever do. It's worth your time. It's worth your energy to spend a little bit of time to answer those questions. So here is my story. I was raised in a home that went to church that probably doesn't surprise many of you, right? My family took me to church on Sunday mornings, but I wouldn't say that God was always the first priority. I was taught about God. They, you know, we prayed before meals. END 06:08 END

We would go to church on Sunday, all of those things. But I wouldn't say that it was forced on me or pushed on me. My parents laid the foundation for the Christian faith, but as I got older, especially in my teenage years, I began to wonder why the Christian faith was right, and all the other faiths were wrong. Why was it that what my parents were teaching me was right, but all these other faiths, the Buddhists, the Muslims, those that are atheists that don't even believe in a God, why are they wrong? END 06:38 END

And why is what my parents is teaching me right? And so I started a fairly long process of trying to find the answer to that question. It was mostly behind the scenes. Most people didn't even know I was going through this kind of discovery of trying to figure out the answers to these questions, but it was on my mind a lot. What didn't take long to figure out, even as a teenager in high school, was that all religions couldn't be created equal? END 07:06 END

I remember seeing bumper stickers when I was driving when I was younger that said coexist. And they had all these images of all the different faiths and the point of that bumper sticker is let's all just get along. Well, I don't have a problem with the idea. Let's just get along. But what I discovered really quickly as I was reading about these other faiths is that I could not believe that they were all right. And just say, you believe what you believe, I'll believe what I believe, and we can both be right. END 07:33 END

And the reason why that was true is because my faith said something that contradicted their faith, and their faith said something that contradicted my faith. So it was impossible to just say we're both right, because you couldn't be. And so I came to the conclusion either their right and I'm wrong, or I'm right in there wrong, or we're both wrong, and there's some other solution. There's some other answer to the question. Therefore, I had to decide what do I truly believe to be true? END 08:04 END

What makes the most sense? What is the most logical and when I find out what that answer is, what does that mean for my life? Obviously, since I'm standing here before you, you know the end of the story. So it's not a cliffhanger. I believe in Christianity, right? That's why I'm here. I don't think the church would have hired me if I kind of landed somewhere else. But I want to share with you how I landed on that. END 08:28 END

And I want to celebrate today and share with you today what was truly the final piece of the puzzle for me in coming to the faith that Jesus Christ is God, that he was crucified and he was resurrected. So I want to share that with you. Let me pray and then I will get started into that. Heavenly Father, again, we gather before you today. We have offered up our praise, but we continue to offer up our praise and our thanks to you. END 08:57 END

Lord, there are many different people here today and people that are watching online, listening on the radio, and we are all at a different spot in our faith journey. And so I pray that we would respect that with each other. There's certainly no judgment here. No condemnation for my belief is we are all sinners. We've all made mistakes. There's not a single person in here who's perfect. But that as we are all at those different spots in our faith journey, lord, it is my prayer. END 09:28 END

That we all would take that next step towards you. Whatever that is and whatever that looks like. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen. Now, obviously, I've already mentioned it, but on Easter, Christians, myself included, celebrate, remember, and proclaim the good news that Jesus Christ is king and that he was raised from the dead and conquered death. END 09:54 END

A few weeks ago, as we have been in this series called king Jesus, I proclaimed how Jesus had conquered sin and shame. This is why our greeting on Easter morning when you walk in the doors or as we start the service, we say he is risen and the response is he is risen indeed. It truly is that simple, even though it sounds crazy, that is our belief. As someone who believes that Jesus is my lord, I believe him with what he said in Mark chapter 9 versus 30 through 32. END 10:26 END

So let me read that to you. Mark tells us that the disciples left that place where they were, and they passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were because he was spending time teaching just his disciples. And so he said to them, the son of man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, they will kill him. And after three days, he will rise. Now, I want you to imagine being the disciple sitting there and hearing this. END 10:54 END

Not knowing anything that we know today, try to put yourself back in that story. And this guy that you have been traveling with for three and a half years, you've seen him do miracles. You believe that he's the son of God, but now he makes this claim. I am going to be killed, but don't worry, I'm going to come back to life. Remember the crazy thoughts, right? This is crazy. And so Mark tells us that, of course, the disciples did not understand what he meant, and they were afraid to ask him. Just like all of us would be. END 11:23 END

You ever have somebody share something with you and you have no idea what they're talking about, but you just keep kind of smiling and nodding your head, you know? Because you don't want to ask the question because you feel like I probably should know what they're talking about, but I don't have any idea. Jesus stands before his disciples. Before anything happens and he tells them, I am going to be killed and I'm going to be raised back to life. And so I come to the conclusion in my own life that anyone who can predict their death and resurrection and actually pull it off, I'm just going to believe that person. END 11:52 END

I'm going to follow what that person says. That's enough for me to say, okay, I will submit to you. You tell me what I'm supposed to do, what life is supposed to look like. As I studied other religions and other faiths and belief systems, I don't know of anyone else or any other religious figure that has made that claim and then actually followed through with it. Now, I understand that some of you here today watching online, you doubt that that's true. You think it's all made up and that's fine. You want more proof to the story. END 12:23 END

There's a video that I wish I could show you, but I wasn't sure if I was able to or not. Some of you are familiar with the website, the Babylon bee. Now I don't promote everything. They say or do, all right? But there's a video on there that's basically the disciples hoax. What if this whole thing is just made up? If you want to laugh this afternoon, you can go ahead and search that online, all right? But for some of you, you're thinking this is. It's just the whole thing is made up. It's a lie. Give me some proof. END 12:49 END

Maybe you yourself, you come here today, and you have a scientific explanation as to why we're here and why life exists and where we're going. And so you've come to your own conclusion and that is okay. I get it. I wish that I could stand before you today and give you 100% absolute proof in the resurrection. I wish that I had video footage that I could show you. But even then, you could say, well, someone just doctored it or made it up or whatever else. END 13:17 END

And so I have to be honest, there is a level of faith that is necessary here to believe. I can not prove to you beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus was resurrected. But again, as I shared a few weeks ago, if you haven't watched that message, it was two weeks ago. For me, there is enough evidence to believe it. So if you weren't here, go back and watch that. And I just began to scratch the surface of the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus. And again, I know it sounds crazy. END 13:46 END

If you're not raised in the church, I can't imagine what this sounds like today. You actually believe that a guy came back to life? Yes, I do. It's unbelievable. Let me take a minute though and address the opposite idea, because I know that it takes faith to believe what I believe. END 14:01 END

But as I talk with others, the belief that seems to be the most prominent outside of Christianity, those that don't believe in a creator, they don't believe in a resurrection more than likely they adhere to some type of pseudo belief of a Big Bang Theory, evolution, chance that we're all just here randomly, we exist, and these aren't just random theories, please, again, don't misunderstand me this morning as I was in high school and even in college and I began to study this. END 14:34 END

I found that there is some evidence that seems to support these theories of Big Bang and evolution, and that's what made it difficult for me. That's why many people hold to this belief system. The problem, though, as I studied this in high school and even in college, was that most people believed that these theories, evolution, Big Bang, all of these were based on science and that Christianity was based on faith. And so the two didn't really compare to each other. They were apples and oranges that the Big Bang is based on science. END 15:05 END

It's based on fact and evolution is based on fact and Christianity is all based on theory and belief. This is where I believe as I talked with most people, there was a lack of thought and intention in how they've come to the conclusions they've come to. I remember reading some of the evidence for evolution, Big Bang, all of those that seemed pretty convincing, but there were definitely some holes that existed. With not a lot of good explanation, so as I talked with people, it dawned on me. END 15:36 END

If I was going to believe evolution, Big Bang, all of these other things, then I had to answer this very difficult question. Where did all of the stuff come from? Because those that believe in a Big Bang Theory, those that believe outside of a creator, they have to answer the question, where did that stuff originally come from? And the only answer that anybody was ever able to give me or I read in any scientific book was this. It just always existed. END 16:04 END

And I remember thinking to myself, that's not very scientific. Where did this stuff come from? And that's the only answer that I heard. It was right then and there that I realized that their theory at its core, all of those theories that they say are based on science sounded just as crazy as the belief that I had that a man could be raised from the dead. I came to the conclusion that their theory actually requires more faith than believing in a creator. END 16:35 END

As I would continue to do more study, I felt personally, I came to the conclusion that my belief actually had more evidence than their belief. I'm reminded of a joke in one of the books that I was reading about this whole debate in the story goes that there were scientists and the wisest of men came before God and they said, we can do everything you can do. We can create human beings. We can create life. We can do all of this. And so God said, okay, go ahead and do what you need to do. END 17:04 END

And so the scientist and the wisest man on the planet came together and they started to form the dirt and everything else and God said, wow, wow, time out. Get your own dirt. Right? This idea that where did everything come from? It had to come from somewhere. So I had come to the conclusion, okay. I have to believe in the resurrection and I believe in a creator. It makes more sense as I look at the world around me. And again, there's a lot more that went into that study. And into that journey for me. END 17:33 END

But if the resurrection was true, I was now left with the decision in my own life. If I believe that Jesus is God and that he was raised from the dead, then what does that mean for me? The first conclusion I came to is that it means I should listen to what he says. And so I remember spending time in the word of God. I look at the Bible as God's words that are given to us. And it means that he actually conquered death, that God actually conquered death through Jesus Christ. END 18:03 END

And I can put my hope in him. It means that I need to listen to the scriptures, including this one in first Peter, chapter three versus 15 and 16. When Peter says, but in your hearts, revere Christ as lord. And always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience. So that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. END 18:35 END

And so I stand before you on Easter 2023, trying to be obedient to this, giving you an answer for the reason for the hope that I have in Jesus Christ. Why do I believe what I believe? My belief that Jesus was raised from the dead is not as crazy as it 1st may seem. At least in comparison to the other options, and if the resurrection is true, then my moral compass must align with the words of Jesus. END 19:05 END

This was probably one of the most difficult steps for me in my journey because it meant that I don't get to decide what is right and wrong based on my feelings. I don't get you believe what is right and wrong for me and for you and for everything else based on my own feelings, it means that I must submit to a higher authority. It means that I had to come to the conclusion, I'm not God. He is. So what did that look like in my life? There were a few steps. END 19:35 END

The first step, I had to admit that I was a sinner, and I was lost without Jesus. I had to recognize my complete inability to make things right that I had wronged. It was easy for me to look at my life even as a high schooler. It looks different at different ages and to see all of the ways that I had messed up. All of the mistakes that I had made, and then to come to the conclusion that I couldn't fix those. END 20:03 END

And on my own, if I didn't change, I was going to continue to do those things. And so the Bible called this repentance, turning away from my life a sin. Turning away from doing those things that I wanted to do and now submitting to God. Now, this looks and feels a lot different at 8 years old and 20 years old and 40 and 60 and 80. It looks different. But it's that journey of submitting to God. The second thing that I had to do was to hand over control of my life. END 20:34 END

If I was going to call Jesus my lord, that meant that I was proclaiming that Jesus was my master. If I say that Jesus is my lord, it means that I try to submit to him in everything that I do. It means that I was willing to admit that I had already and was going to continue to make a mess of my life. And so my life is not my own anymore. I give it to him. END 21:01 END

The best analogy to help me understand this as a teenager was the idea of driving and that I needed to get out of the driver's seat and get into the passenger seat. Now I wish that I could tell you that I've always stayed in the passenger seat, but there's been many times I've tried to have a Chinese fire drill with God. Say, okay, you get out, you know, I'm going to get out, and I'll get back in the driver's seat. I have many times had to be reminded that I'm not in control. END 21:29 END

That God is and that if Jesus is going to be lord of my life, I have to submit to him. It certainly doesn't mean that I'm going to be perfect. Then I have everything figured out. I wish that I could tell you that life was easy from that point on, but it's not scripture was very clear that if I'm going to follow him that I must daily carry my cross. There's going to be difficulties. I'm not perfect. I continue to make mistakes. I'm glad my wife's just watching online and not here because she would tell you. I'm not perfect. END 21:57 END

There's not a single person in here who is. And so I had to hand over control of my life. And the third thing I had to do was believe in my heart that God truly did raise Jesus from the dead. And if he could do that, then he also could raise me. It gives me hope that God could raise me from the dead as well. And once I had done these things, as I read scripture, it was very clear that the Bible said, I will be saved. END 22:29 END

Not maybe, not I hope so, as I talk with people in my office, it's always discouraging to me when they're going through a difficult season of life or just a hard situation. And I begin to ask questions and you know one of the questions I love to ask people, where do you think you're going to go when you die? And most people say, I hope I go to heaven. And I just cringe on the inside. What do you mean you hope? And I find that most people have this belief that when I stand before God, and I'm judged, there's going to be this big scale there. END 23:01 END

And they're going to put one bag on one side of all of the bad things I've done. And the other bag is going to be of all the good things I've done, and I'm just going to hope that my good side outweighs my bad side. That is not what scripture teaches. Scripture is very clear. And Ephesians chapter two versus 8 and 9, for it is by grace, you have been saved through faith. And this is not from yourselves. It is a gift from God. It is a gift. You are saved by grace through faith, not by works. END 23:31 END

I'm sorry if you felt like coming to church on Easter Sunday was you're getting to heaven card, okay? It's not. I wish that we could do enough good things to do that. And to try to earn our way so that we knew. But scripture says it's a gift. You can know because he has promised it. It's not by work so that no one can boast, meaning that nobody stands here with a judgmental finger in your face saying, I know everything you've done, I've got it all figured out. Absolutely not. END 24:00 END

But I can base my Salvation on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And so today, I simply ask you, what is your next step? Have you made these commitments? Have you made these proclamations? Have you come to the conclusion in your own heart and life that Jesus truly is God? He is lord. He is master that he has conquered death and the grave. END 24:28 END

And if you have proclaimed that with your mouth, again, the apostle Paul says that if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is lord and you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. It's very clear. You don't have to leave here. I never answer the question again. Do you know where you're gonna go when you die and say, I hope I go to heaven? You can answer with confidence. I know that I'm going to heaven to be with my savior. Because of his death and resurrection, and I have proclaimed him as lord. END 24:58 END

Many of you here today, many of you watching online have already made that proclamation. And so today continues to be a celebration, a time of giving glory and honor and praise to God for your Salvation. You've come to the same conclusion that I have come to, that this just makes the most logical sense. And of course, after that, I have felt God's presence in God's spirit, and I know it to be true. But there's others of you that are still wrestling. And I can just honestly tell you if you're still wrestling with this, that your eternity is still in question. END 25:30 END

My prayer is that you would not leave here without at least considering, could this be true? Could this really be true? And if it is, why wouldn't I submit to him? Why wouldn't I give my life to him and control? If he can conquer death, if he created the world, I wouldn't want any other master. END 25:57 END

Believing that he has your best interest in mind. That he knows better for your life than even you do. It's a hard thing to swallow and definitely the older we get, the more difficult that is. Because we like control. But God says to give it up. If you give up your life, you will have eternal life. So as always, the altars are open. END 26:29 END

If you want to come and make that proclamation with your mouth, you don't need to stand up in front of everybody and proclaim it. Though, if you did, that would be awesome. For some of you, you're like, hey, man, I just came to church on Easter Sunday, and that's just a little too weird for me. That's fine. I'm going to be sitting up front during the closing song. You can come talk to me afterwards. You can find somebody to talk to. If you have more questions, I'd love to have a conversation with you. Even if you don't believe what I believe. I just love to talk with you. Because it is my belief. END 27:00 END

That God loves you so much. That he sent his son Jesus to die on the cross to take your place and to take my place. So that we could have life with him. Let me close in prayer. Heavenly Father, we come before you today. To celebrate the resurrection. END 27:28 END

And some have gathered here in person, some are joining us online. Some are just listening on the radio as they drive. And I don't believe it's a coincidence that they're hearing what they've heard. We call this the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. That we can have Salvation through him. So lord, as we celebrate the resurrection, if there are those that hear my voice and have not proclaimed you as their lord and savior, may your spirit work in their hearts right now. END 28:05 END

And when they come to know you and the blessings that follow. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen. END 28:13 END