Hope Has A Name — Delivery Transcript

1 Peter 1:3 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, April 17, 2022 · *21 Days: Fast & Pray*

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That was good stuff. If you're new to our church, it's like that every single week. It's unbelievable. We have a great team that leads us in worship every week. And we're really, really blessed. So thank you to the team for leading us and all the hard work y'all put in week in and week out. If you've got a Bible, we're going to be in the book of 1 Peter. And if you're new to church or new to the Bible, the book of 1 Peter is in the very back with all the little bitty letters.

The second half of the Bible is what we call the New Testament. In the New Testament, you got the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. After the Gospels, you've got the book of Acts, which is kind of the Gospels continued. But then from there on you've got these letters that were written by apostles, disciples, different people, which were basically taking the truth of the gospel— Jesus lived, died, rose again— and applying it to normal, everyday life. And we're going to look at one of those letters called 1 Peter, written by Peter, a disciple of Jesus.

And I thought I would begin today's message by sharing something that I learned this week that I did not know before. You don't come to church on Easter and not want to know something or learn something, so I'm about to hopefully teach you something. The other two services, none of them knew what I'm about to share with you, so I'm hoping that maybe a couple of you can one-up them and say, No, I already knew that, Pastor Wes. But have you ever heard of the word eukatastrophe? Anybody heard that word before?

Eukatastrophe? No hands? Any hands? Well, we all know what a catastrophe is, right? You say, yeah, my house is a catastrophe. We all know what a catastrophe is. But a eucatastrophe — it was actually invented by an author named J. R. R. Tolkien. Anybody ever heard of J. R. R. Tolkien? He's the guy who came up with the movie *The Lord of the Rings*.[1] Any Lord of

the Rings fans? Absolutely. Any Hobbit fans? I was a fan of *The Hobbit*. *Lord of the Rings*— J. R. R. Tolkien came up with the word eukatastrophe, and here's his definition.

He says a eucatastrophe is a sudden, desirable outcome to a series of events in a story, aka a happy ending. That's a eucatastrophe. And if you think about *Lord of the Rings*, out of nowhere, here come the eagles, right? And they pick them up, and that's a eucatastrophe. Or at the very end, it's like the final battle, and the goblins, or whatever they're called— orcses, orcses, as Gollum says— the orcs are going to win. But then boom, out of nowhere, the return of the king. It's a eucatastrophe, a sudden, unexpected, desirable outcome to a series of events in a story.

So last Sunday was Palm Sunday. And Palm Sunday we celebrate it because Jesus enters into Jerusalem. Everybody welcomes him as a king. They call it Palm Sunday because they took palm branches and they were waving them, putting them down on the ground, saying, Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Everybody was excited. Jesus, the miracle worker, the wonder maker, he has arrived in the town. Unfortunately, the week ended, Holy Week ended as a catastrophe because Jesus, welcomed as a king, left as a criminal. He was unjustly arrested.

He was falsely tried. He was condemned for something he did not do. He was beaten within an inch of his life. He was mocked, he was crucified between two terrorists— criminals. He hung there, bearing our shame, crying out on the cross, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? After his death, his disciples were confused. They were running for their lives. They were wondering. They were trying to make sense out of what they had just seen and what had just happened. Certainly Jesus had been dropping hints throughout his ministry that the cross was inevitable, but never in their wildest imaginations did they think something like that could happen.

And then suddenly, between Good Friday and Sunday morning, as the dawn of Sunday— Easter Sunday, that first Easter Sunday— began to pierce sunlight through the midnight darkness, Jesus Christ rose from the dead. The disciples come to the tomb. They are looking for Jesus' body. The women had come to kind of put some spices and other things to prepare the body for burial. They couldn't find him there. All they could find were the clothes and then there was an angel standing above the tomb, the rock had been rolled away, and they said, what are you guys doing here?

What are you ladies doing here? Why are you looking for the dead among the living?[2] Jesus has been raised. And so go to Galilee where he told you he would meet you and tell the disciples. And everything changed. Easter, that first Easter, was a eucatastrophe. In fact, the *eu*— it's the Greek prefix for good, so it's a good catastrophe. A catastrophic series of events, what looked like absolute defeat, was transformed by the glory of God and the power of God to a happy ending, a eucatastrophe. And that first Easter Sunday stood as a testament, a

pillar of hope for those first Christians and those first disciples of Jesus, those first followers, had their lives absolutely revolutionized by the hope that they found in Jesus and people for thousands and thousands of years, millions, maybe billions of people at this point have found a similar kind of hope and that similar eucatastrophe, that similar happy ending, and that hope is available to you and to me today.

It was started on the first Easter and it's available to us in Easter 2022. Hope, what is it? We all hope in things, right? Webster's dictionary defines hope as an eager expectation for something to happen. So if you can desire something, you can hope in something. Hope is where you have an eager, you cherish a desire with eager anticipation. You don't have to hope in Jesus to have hope in your life, right? Some people— a new mom or a new dad, an expecting mom or dad, they have hope in a newborn baby.

I hope he's born. I hope she's born. I hope there's no problems. I hope everything goes according to plan. Your hope is in that family. Your hope is in that child. That child becoming a certain kind of thing or living a certain kind of life. Some people have hope in a dream job, you know, a graduating senior, graduating high school or college senior. I want to get the perfect job. Give me the perfect income, give me the perfect American dream. Your hope is in those material things. You can hope if you're single, single man or a woman, and you're looking for that perfect spouse, your hope is in finding that perfect someone, having that fairy tale wedding, that dream life.

And your hope is in that thing. Hope is important. Everybody has hope. In fact, if you're taking notes, I think human beings are helplessly hopeful. You can't help it. You have to find something to hope in, otherwise life is not worth living. And so people all over the world, whether they're religious or irreligious, they're looking for things to hope in. Our hearts are like hope-making factories. We find things to hope in because hope is what gives meaning to our life. It adds zest. It makes life worth living. When you have hopelessness that controls the heart of a person, that hopelessness kills everything else in their life.

In fact, sometimes when people die, you know, they expire, as the medical field likes to say. They'll say things like, well, you ran out of hope. Or he gave up hope. When a man or a woman loses hope for their marriage, it's the beginning of divorce. Hopelessness is the justification that people use for their cynicism and nihilism in our culture. Hopelessness is the gas on the fire of things like suicide and depression. When you lose your hope, the death of hope kills everything else along with it. You've got to have hope in your life.

So what do you hope in? Have you ever thought about it? In whom or in what have I found my hope? Is it in some kind of material prosperity? Is it in the American dream? Is it in your family? Being a certain way and having a certain kind of life? Is it in some kind of outcome? I'm here to tell you that there is a hope that's available to every single person, whether you

grew up in the church or whether this is your first time in a church, a hope that will not disappoint.

A hope that is valid in the mountaintops of life and the valley low. A hope that can say, even when I don't feel it, he's working. That kind of hope is available to you because of the resurrection of Jesus. Hope has a name, and his name is Jesus. And this hope absolutely transformed the life of the person that we're going to read about today. His name was Peter, he was a disciple of Jesus. His life before he encountered the resurrected Christ, Peter's life was marked by absolute despair. Man, maybe you can identify with that.

Peter had experienced some failure. He had experienced some disappointment and it left him absolutely crippled. He thought to himself, I'm no longer useful, I'm no longer relevant. I cannot be redeemed. I've done the unforgivable sin in betraying Jesus. And he was a shell of a man. But then he experienced Jesus Christ risen from the dead. And the resurrection of Jesus fundamentally and radically changed him forever. And one of the reasons I want us to read 1 Peter and his account of the resurrection hope that we have in Jesus is because he believed in the resurrection for a reason that's different from why many of us believe it.

You may be here today and you say, I believe Jesus rose from the dead, but I believe it because the Bible says it. I believe it because my parents believed it, and I just wanted to believe what they believed. I believe it because I grew up in church and everybody believed that. Peter didn't believe it for any of those reasons. Peter believed it because he saw it. He literally saw Jesus Christ crucified by the Romans, buried in a tomb. Big old rock rolled over the tomb. He saw the death. He felt the death.

He felt the despair of losing the person he thought was going to deliver him and Israel and everybody else. And then he saw Jesus alive. He saw him raised from the dead, and it absolutely changed his life forever. And not only did it change him, not only did the hope transform Peter, through Peter's transformed life, Jesus offered hope to thousands and thousands of people all around the world. And those are the people that are in our letter. First Peter was written to a group of people who needed to rediscover their hope.

They needed to be reminded of why life was worth living. Because for them, this was about 30 years after the resurrection of Jesus. Christianity was getting extremely popular throughout Asia Minor. People were becoming Christians like gangbusters just all over the place. But as the popularity of Christianity grew, so also did opposition to Christianity. As the movement spread around the world, Caesar and Pilate[3] and the other Roman power players were getting a little bit concerned that these Christians were upsetting the apple cart. They were not giving proper allegiance to Rome, and so they began to crush the Christian movement.

And so here is a group of Christians, many of them second generation, many of them not like Peter. They didn't see it, they weren't eyewitnesses, they didn't have firsthand experience. And they needed to be reminded, why is my life worth living? Why should I continue to hope in Jesus? Because I am enslaved to a boss who is mistreating me because of my faith in Jesus. I am married to a man or a woman who is abusing me, mistreating me because of my faith in Jesus Christ. All of these are actual examples from the book of 1 Peter.

I'm a person who is maybe in government or I'm in some kind of position of society and I'm being marginalized and maligned and slandered because of my faith in Jesus. So how can I, Peter, have a life worth living because of this hope that you say is available to me. They ask questions that a lot of us are asking. The question of hope answers the question, how then should we live? What makes my life worth living? Maybe you're here today because you're asking that question. How do I find the resources I need to deal with the incredible levels of stress and anxiety that I combat on a daily basis?

Anxiety is sky high in our culture right now. So how do I live, Wes? What kind of hope enables me to overcome those challenges? Some of you are asking the question, how do I live when everything that I hold dear is in jeopardy of being lost? How do I move forward when my kids are at risk of this thing and that thing and how do I find joy and purpose in a life that is full of so much pain and suffering? How then should we live? And for Peter, the answer to that question for his own life and the answer to that question for these second generation Christians and the answer that he would give to you and to me is to find a living hope that is in the Lord Jesus Christ because of his resurrection from the grave.

When you properly understand the resurrection, when you take the truth of the resurrection and apply it to your life in a practical way, you will discover a life that is absolutely worth living, a life that gives you power and resources to deal with stress and anxiety and unanswered questions and pain and suffering. And all the things that we combat on a day-to-day basis, we can have hope. Hope has a name, and his name is Jesus. Let's read it together, 1 Peter chapter 1, starting in verse 3. "Blessed be," Peter says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Because of his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Let's read it together just so we all have it down. I know you guys can do this. I heard you read the scripture earlier. You did a great job. So let's read it together. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Now, in Christ, you have a living hope.

That's the point of the text. In Jesus Christ, we have a living hope. A life worth living will belong to you when you belong to Jesus. And there are people in our culture who would hear that and laugh at it, but Peter is saying they don't understand. When you understand the

resurrection of Jesus and when you put your hope in a resurrected Christ, you will discover power to live a life that has meaning and purpose and value no matter what happens. If Jesus has not been raised, there is no hope.

If Jesus didn't die on the cross, if God did not raise him from the dead, if there was no atonement for sin, there is absolutely no hope. If Jesus was not raised from the dead, nothing even matters. Nothing in life. You're wasting your time being here right now. We're dead in our trespasses and sins. Let's eat, let's drink, tomorrow we die. Live it up. What are you doing trying to be religious? Go have a good time, you know, get out of here. But if Jesus has been raised, then nothing else really matters.

Nothing at all. As difficult as life may be, as hard as it may be in your current situation, this world and the brokenness of this world is the closest to hell that you're ever going to get. Because if Jesus has been raised, hope has a name, and his name is Jesus. And there's hope not only of life after life on this earth, but a qualitatively different kind of life that we can live today when we put our hope in Jesus. There was an old hymn. Maybe you heard it when you were growing up, if you went to church as a kid, called— victory, or called— "Because He Lives."

Anybody remember that hymn? Because He lives, I can face tomorrow. Because He lives, all my fears are gone. Because I know he holds the future, my life is worth the living just because he lives. A life worth living will belong to you when you belong to Jesus. In Jesus Christ we have a living hope. Now, the question I think that's interesting is, what makes the hope in Jesus a living hope? Some would say, well, because he's alive, and so he's alive, and the hope is living because he's alive. I don't know that's necessarily what Peter means by living hope, because the other times when this word living is used in the New Testament, it carries this idea of power.

It carries this idea of effectiveness, of creating change in your life. And so really what Peter is suggesting is that when you put your hope in Jesus, God's power comes to dwell within you to such a degree that you're fundamentally changed. Maybe you were controlled by fear and anxiety, but when the power of God comes to live inside of you, you're no longer controlled by those things. Maybe you used to be driven by greed. Now you're controlled by contentment. Maybe you used to— you carried a lot of guilt, you carried a lot of shame, you carried a lot of insecurity.

In Christ, when you hope in him, You don't carry those things anymore. The power of God comes to live in your heart and changes you from the inside out. You are forever drastically changed. That's how the word's used in the book of Hebrews, chapter 4, verse 12, when it says that the word of God is living. That's what Peter is saying is true of the hope that's in Jesus, not just because I want it to be true or I can hope it to be true and I can kind of mind over matter it.

He's saying no, it's none of that. It's because God raised Jesus from the dead. That's why there's power and hope in him. When you put your hope in him, it's power to change your life because God raised Jesus from the dead. And so you got to ask yourself the question, why would the resurrection of some self-proclaimed Messiah over 2,000 years ago— why would that historical event unleash the power of God into my life today? And there's a lot of answers to that question, but there's at least these two. The first has to do with the presence of Jesus in the world right now.

If the resurrection really did happen, that has bearings on how we think about the presence of Christ in our world today. The second question has to do with the claims of Jesus. So let's talk about the first one. Why does the resurrection unleash the power of God into my life? The first reason is because if God raised Jesus then, that means he's literally present still today. Sometimes when we pray, people will pray in Jesus' name. You've heard me pray that today. When we say, when we pray in Jesus' name, we're not saying that because we're trying to honor some dead guy from the past or we're trying to honor the founder of the Christian religion.

When we pray in Jesus' name, what you should think when you say that is what the book of Hebrews says, that Jesus Christ right now is seated at the right hand of God, and it says he always lives to make intercession for us. In other words, when we pray, it's as if Jesus Christ is sitting right next to us and he's interceding. He's translating our prayers before the throne of the Father. He's saying, I know they're asking for this, and I know that they have this issue and that issue going on in their life, but don't do it for them, do it for me.

Don't do it because of their goodness. Do it because of my goodness. He's interceding for us. He's present in your life right now. When Jesus was raised from the dead, he met his disciples on that mountain in Galilee. He told them, I want you to go and make disciples. I want you to take the kingdom gospel that I was preaching, and I want you to preach it to the rest of the world. But don't you ever forget this one thing. I am with you. You're never going to be alone. I'm with you always, even to the end of the age.

You never have to wonder. Does God care about me? Does God see me? Is God with me? You will never be left. You'll never be forsaken. He's with you always because he's still alive. In fact, his presence, I believe, is in this room even now. If you would just have eyes to see it and ears to hear it, the Spirit of God is in this room. As the word of God is being preached, the Spirit of God is taking the truth of the Word and it's saying, this is the truth.

This is true about Jesus. What he's saying about his resurrection is real. His spirit bearing testimony to your spirit that you're a son of God, you're a child of God not because of anything good that you've done, but because of what Jesus Christ has done for you. You can experience the presence of God in your life right now. And if you would say, Well, that's news

to me, I've never experienced the presence of God or the power of God in my life, then that's a sign that you don't fully understand the resurrection.

Because if he was raised then, it means he's present today. The second thing the resurrection does is it validates the claims of Jesus. The resurrection is as if it's God's stamp of approval to say everything my son said is true. If someone claims to be the Son of God and says, I'm going to prove my claims by being executed by the Romans on a cross. And I'm going to make a comeback. Three days later, God's going to raise me from the dead. If somebody makes those claims, makes that promise, and then actually pulls it off, you should probably just go with whatever else they say.

Because that's an incredible act of validation. That's as if God was saying, believe him. This is my son. What he said is true. Which includes all the things he said about why he came into the world, it includes the truth of everything he said about why he died and the meaning of that death. He told his disciples in John chapter 15, the reason I'm laying my life down for you is because I love you. Some of us struggle with whether or not we could be loved by God, whether or not we matter to God.

Are we just insignificant dust in the universe? Well, yes, we are, but God still loves us. Jesus said, "No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends." I'm calling you my friends. Your Creator God loved you enough, John 3:16, that he sent his one and only Son into the world that whoever would believe in him wouldn't perish, but they would have everlasting life. You can believe that to be true. If I go to heaven, will God let me in? Have I been good enough? And you never have to have that debate in your mind.

You can have absolute confidence that I am loved by God and I am eternally secure because I have put my faith in Jesus Christ. You can believe it to be true. Not because I said it, and not even just because the Bible said it, but because Jesus has spoken it, and God validated those claims through his resurrection from the grave. It was a historical event that changed the game forever. Jesus said in Mark chapter 10 verse 45 that his death was a ransom for sin. He said the Son of Man didn't come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

You can take that to the bank and believe it to be true. Which is kind of a double punch because on the one hand, Jesus is saying of you and me before I came, you guys were in trouble. Because every time you did things your own way instead of God's way, you were accruing a debt before God. It's called a sin debt. And if you were to have to pay your own debt, even if you had a million second chances and a million different lifetimes to live, you would never be able to pay off your sin debt because it's so infinitely great.

Your sin against a holy God, you are not able to atone for yourself. And so that's why God sent Jesus into the world. He sent Jesus into the world, and Jesus did what none of us do:

Jesus lived a sinless perfect life of love and obedience to his heavenly father. And then, as a sacrifice, as an atoning sacrifice, he voluntarily laid down his life. And as he hung there on the cross, humiliated and condemned and shamed, he wasn't experiencing his humiliation or his shame because he had none. He was the sinless, spotless Lamb of God.

He was bearing our condemnation. He was bearing our shame. He was receiving the wrath of God for our sin into his own body so that you and I could have our sin debt released. So the grip that the devil sometimes has on us, the guilt and the shame, the seeming inability to overcome temptation, all those things that are true of us, we could be liberated from those things, not because of what we have done, but because of what Jesus has done for us. You can believe that to be true. You don't have to hope it's true.

You can know it's true because God raised Jesus from the dead. It was God's stamp of approval saying the debt has been paid, paid in full. All because God raised Jesus from the dead. Now you may be saying to yourself, man, well, I want some of that hope in my life. I want power to change. I'm miserable. My marriage is falling apart. I don't have any kind of hope for my future. My kids, everything that I thought would give my life meaning has now been taken away from me. How do I find my hope again?

According to Jesus, the only way you can have true hope in his name, hope that gives you power to change is by being born again. That's what Peter says. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, because according to his great mercy, he has given us new life, a new birth, in his name, through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. I want to show you this with the English Standard Version. It says, according to God's great mercy, he — God the Father— "has caused us to be born again."

He actually uses the word born again. So for you to have the living hope that's uniquely available in Jesus Christ, you've got to be born again. What does it mean to be born again? It's not just something you can snap your fingers and decide to be. And not just anybody is born again. Peter's writing to a group of Christians, and so it's something unique to being a Christian believer. You've got to be born again. And according to Jesus, being born again is the prerequisite to salvation. There's a conversation that Jesus has in the Gospels with a gentleman named Nicodemus.

Nicodemus was what you call a Pharisee. A Pharisee was kind of like a professional religious person back in the day. You could kind of think of him as a preacher is today, except nothing about grace, nothing about Jesus. They were just really, really moral people who made you feel inferior because of their morality. Anybody know anybody like that? Every time I'm around them, I feel like I'm a terrible person. They just kind of weigh me down. That was the Pharisees. And everybody respected the Pharisees because they were very, very moral, but nobody really wanted to be around them because when you got around them, you felt terrible about your own existence.

Jesus comes on the scene. Nicodemus is one of those people, right? Jesus comes on the scene and says, everything those Pharisees are telling you is false. They are blind guides leading blind people down a path of destruction. Stop listening to them and start listening to me. You can imagine when Jesus said that. It upset the apple cart, and it made a lot of the Pharisees very angry with Jesus. In fact, that's ultimately why he ends up getting crucified, because he was saying everything they say is wrong. You need to listen to me instead.

Why should you listen to me? Well, watch these miracles. Boom, boom, boom. And all the people were like, I think I'm going to go with this guy. I don't even like those people. I want to listen to what this guy has to say. And Nicodemus, even though he was a Pharisee, he's like, I want to hear more. So he sets up a meeting with Jesus late at night. It's kind of like dating that boyfriend you were never supposed to date. I don't want anyone to see us. Yeah, so you get in there.

And Jesus is sitting across the table from Nicodemus and he knows why Nicodemus is there, he knows he's interested, and he knows what's really at issue. And so before Nicodemus can even get the words out of his mouth, Jesus tells him in John 3:3, "Truly I tell you"— Nicodemus— "unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." And Nicodemus doesn't get it. He says, how can I be born when I'm old? You know? Can I go back into my mother's womb? That sounds just really gross on the face of it.

Can I enter a second time and be born? And Jesus is basically saying, You don't even have categories for what I'm telling you. You are so accustomed to living in the flesh, you are so accustomed to rules and regulations, you are so accustomed to external, forced-on self-righteousness, you are so in that world, you don't even have a category for the gospel. He tells him, verse 5,[4] "Truly I tell you, unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." You got to be born again.

Here's how I want you to think of it. Jesus is saying there has to be a sense in your heart where you recognize I can't save myself. You have to come to a place where you realize I don't need Jesus so that I can like add him on to what I'm already doing. It's not like Jesus plus I'm a pretty decent person all the way up to here. I just have this and this. So I'm going to add Jesus, so it's my righteousness plus Jesus' righteousness, and that'll get me across the finish line.

Jesus is saying that's nonsense. Because your righteousness, even though it may be good to you, it's not good to God. You've got to have something totally different. You've got to be reborn. You can't come with any of what you got going on. You've got to have something totally separate than that. And so you've got to be born of water and the spirit. I think water is a reference to the water of baptism, specifically the baptism of John the Baptist, so not physically getting wet, but a spirit of repentance, a spirit that recognizes my righteousness cannot save me.

There has to be something from outside of me who comes and pulls me up and rescues me. Another way to say it if you're taking notes, the object of your hope must change. The object of your hope must change. Think of being born again as the seedbed of salvation, unless and until you come to a place that you realize I can't save myself, only God can save me through Jesus Christ. Your soil is not ready to receive salvation. It's still rocky, it's still thorny. You might be able to add Jesus on.

You might wear Jesus like a coat, but he's never going to change your life. You've got to have humility. You've got to have a desperation. You've got to have an eagerness that says, God— you plead on the mercy of God— please save me. That's the seedbed of salvation. That's the only ground out of which the flower of God's grace can really bloom in your life. When you do that, you're shifting your hope. You're saying, My hope's not in the American dream, my hope's not in a nice big house, my hope's not in a big fancy job, my hope's not in being married, my hopes are not in having kids, my hope's not in any of those things.

Those are icing on the cake, but my true peace, my true wholeness, my true happiness is found in Christ and in Christ alone. He is my hope. When you make that transition, the Spirit of God, when you make that transition and then you call out on the Lord, you respond to him in faith, the Spirit of God comes and lives inside of you and you become born again. You become something new. You're not adding Jesus on to something else. You're replacing something broken with something that works. You're replacing something old with something new.

You're being born again. That's the central message of the New Testament. That's the seedbed of salvation. And some of you need to make that decision this morning. The reason you're here is not because you're with your family or you're celebrating somebody's baptism. God has you here because you've never made that decision. You've gone to church, you've given money. People think that you're a Christian, but you've always doubted. You've always wondered, Have my good deeds outweighed my bad deeds? You've never had certainty. You've never had confidence. Some of it's not even your fault.

You got bad teaching. You grew up in traditions that were more like the Pharisees and less like Jesus. And this morning God is calling you to repent of your sin and to cry out for Jesus for Jesus to save you, in Jesus alone, By grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. And you're going to have an opportunity this morning to make that response public, which leads to the second thing I want to say, and then I'll be done. Not only is being born again the seedbed of salvation, being born again is the symbol behind baptism.

We're going to see some baptisms in just a few minutes. And baptism is an external picture of the internal transformation that takes place when you become a Christian. When you get baptized, you go under the water. And it is symbolic of you saying, I'm dead to sin, I'm dead to that old way of life, I'm dead to self-salvation, I'm dead to salvation by works, I'm dead to

trying to do Jesus plus what I've got, I'm dead to all of that. The object of my hope is shifting to Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone.

So you go under the water, you're buried with him in baptism into death— spiritual death to all that old way of life, and I come up out of the water, and it's symbolic of the new life that I have in Jesus. New desires, new hopes, new dreams, new ambitions, new everything, because the old me is gone and the new me is here and the new me is absolutely fundamentally clothed in Jesus and Jesus alone. It's like you have a Jesus suit. You have a whole new reason for existing because he is now your hope.

He is your reason for living. He's what gets you up in the morning. He changes everything. And that's why we get baptized. We don't get baptized to make ourselves Christians. We get baptized to reflect the reality that the Spirit of God has already saved us. And so if you're here this morning and the Holy Spirit is calling you to make a decision to trust in Jesus as Lord, then this morning you need to express that publicly through baptism. And I'm going to give you an opportunity to do that. The band's going to come up in just a few moments.

They're going to lead us in a song. And you're going to have an opportunity to raise your hand and say, Jesus is calling me to salvation. Jesus is calling me to be baptized. And after you raise your hand, I'm going to ask you to come to the front and meet Bonnie. She's going to be standing here in a pink dress. You can't miss it. And she's going to help you go to the baptistry and get baptized. You say, well, I don't have any clothes. It's all right, we already took care of that.

We've got the shirts, we've got shorts, we even have towels. All right, you don't have to drip dry or anything. Do not leave this place without responding to God if He's calling you to salvation. Don't go another day wondering, Do I really have confidence in my salvation? Do I really know that I know that I'm saved? So you're going to have that chance in just a minute. The others of you who need to be baptized— you need to be baptized not because you are not a Christian. You need to be baptized because your baptism was never on the right side of your salvation.

We at this church practice what's called believers' baptism, and we call it believers' baptism because we only believe baptism is appropriate after you believe. You might be here this morning and you got baptized as a baby because your mom and dad wanted you to have faith as an adult. It's like they're saying in advance, God, save this child, help this child come to a place of salvation, and this baptism is reflective of that covenant that we want them to grow into. I understand why people do it that way. I just don't think it's biblical.

And if you're here this morning and you've always wrestled with that, you felt like the Lord was telling you you weren't really saved back then. And so that baptism does not say what I want it to say. It says more about your parents' faith than it does your faith. And maybe you

got saved when you were 10, 15, 25 years old, but you've never been baptized after that act of faith. And this morning, the Holy Spirit is saying to you, today's the day. Today's the day where you go public. Stop putting it off.

Stop making excuses. Today is the day where you say, I am not ashamed to say Jesus is Lord, and I am glad to express how Jesus has absolutely changed my life. Some people don't want to do that because, well, I don't want people to think less of me, or I don't want them to think I'm weird, or I don't want them to think I haven't been a Christian. That's a terrible excuse for being obedient to what the Lord wants you to do. If he's calling you to be baptized, then respond in faith, in obedience to what he's calling you to do.

So here's how I want us to respond. And it's going to take a lot of courage on your part. If the Lord is calling you to respond— but I want us to all bow our heads and close our eyes so nobody's feeling self-conscious about somebody looking at them. But I'm going to be watching. All right. And if you're here this morning and you'd say one of those two things is true of me— either I need to get saved this morning, I need to trust in Jesus as Lord, or I need to get my baptism on the right side of my salvation.

I want you to raise your hand. All right? So first— all right, I see those hands. Anybody else want to raise your hand? Say, either I trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior for the first time. I see your hand right there in the black. Or I need to get my baptism on the right side of my salvation. Anybody else? I see your hands. You can go ahead and put your hands back down. I see your hand there in the white. Anybody? Either I need to get my baptism on the right side of my salvation.

I see your hand. Or Jesus is calling me to put my faith in him for the first time. Anybody else? Still time for you to respond. Whatever's holding you back from making that decision, I promise you it is not worth the value and the joy of being fully surrendered to Christ and fully obedient to what he's calling you to do. All right, you can look back up at me. If you raised your hand, here's what we're going to do. I'm going to ask Bonnie in just a few minutes to come up here to the front.

And after I pray, I want you to get up out of your seat. And I want you to come forward and meet her. And she's going to take you to our baptistry. Taylor and the team are going to lead us in a time of response. And while they're playing and singing that song, those of you who've made that decision either to surrender to Christ for the first time or to be baptized— even if you've been a Christian before, to get your baptism on the right side of your salvation. I want you to stand up, come forward, meet Bonnie, and we're going to go and we're going to get ready.

Okay, we've got the T-shirts, we've got it all ready. Do not let getting wet be an excuse for why you don't want to get baptized today. All right. The second thing that's going to happen

is after we leave, there are going to be men here. Pastors of our church or deacons in our church, spiritual leaders, ordained pastors who are going to be here to pray with you and receive you. If you have a need that you want someone to pray with you about. Maybe you would say, I'm a Christian, but my hope got shifted somewhere along the way.

I've been looking to money, I've been looking to success, I've been looking to people's approval, and I'm anxious, I'm worried, I'm a wreck. I need Jesus to open my eyes. I need to make him my hope. I want to rededicate my life to Jesus this morning. There will be people here who can receive you as you make that decision public and pray for you. Maybe it's something totally unrelated to that. Maybe you're going through some suffering and you just want someone to pray with you. There will be people here to navigate that decision with you.

If you'd say, you know what, I need to get saved and baptized, but today ain't the day. I want to tell my mom, I want to tell my dad, I want people to be here. Then don't leave without making the decision public. You know, come to the front, say, hey, I just want to let people know I'm deciding to follow Jesus. I'll get baptized in a couple of weeks or a couple of months from now. And make it public. But do not leave this place without responding to the Lord. All right, so I'm going to pray.

Those of you who made decisions— everybody's going to stand, but you're going to stand, you're going to come up and meet Bonnie. And then we're going to respond to the Lord. The altar is open if you want to pray. There will be people here to receive you. Tanner, if you want to go ahead and come up. And Dustin, if you want to come up. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we thank you that we have a living hope in Jesus. That we don't have to ever look anywhere else for security or salvation or forgiveness or grace.

It's all ours. Everything. The love of God. The security of salvation, the resources we need, contentment, generosity, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, self-control, all of those things are ours in Christ, in Christ alone. You're so good to give us the gift of the presence of Jesus Christ. You're so good to give us salvation, even though we were undeserving. And who are we, having been given such amazing gifts, to say, No, not for me, or to say, No, not today, or to say, No, I'd rather have something else. Would you open our eyes to see the futility of living life without you and the futility of living life in disobedience to what you're clearly calling us to do?

Move right now, Holy Spirit, to open our eyes, to create change in our hearts, for us to put a marker down in the ground that says things are different from here on out. I'm deciding to follow Jesus. We give this time to you. We pray your kingdom come and will be done. In Jesus' name. And God's people said, Amen. Let's stand together.

1. Transcript note: spoken as "J. R. Tolkien … came up with the movie *The Lord of the Rings*"; the author is J. R. R. Tolkien, who wrote the *Lord of the Rings* books (the films came later; "movie" left as spoken), and he coined "eucatastrophe" in his essay "On Fairy-Stories." Source: Wikipedia, "Eucatastrophe." ↩
2. Transcript note: spoken as "Why are you looking for the dead among the living?"; the question the two men at the tomb ask in Luke 24:5 is "Why are you looking for the living among the dead?" Wording left as spoken. Source: Luke 24:5 (CSB), BibleGateway. ↩
3. Transcript note: spoken as "Caesar and Pilate" among the Roman officials opposing Christians when 1 Peter was written (about 30 years after the resurrection); Pontius Pilate governed Judea only from about AD 26 to 36/37, decades before that time. Wording left as spoken. Source: Wikipedia, "Pontius Pilate." ↩
4. Transcript note: spoken as "verse 3"; "born of water and the Spirit … cannot enter the kingdom of God" is John 3:5 (verse 3 is the "born again … cannot see the kingdom of God" line quoted just before). Source: John 3:3–5 (CSB), BibleGateway. ↩