Dead, Buried, Raised, Alive! — Delivery Transcript

1 Corinthians 15:1–8 (ESV) · Wes Terry · Sunday, April 9, 2023 · *Easter 2023*

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In our early service at 8:15, I thought we were having mic troubles and sound troubles of the typical sort. But then the TV started going off, like turning off randomly, and then the lights started blinking off and on over there. Then the projectors went down. And then everything turned off. And turns out one of the fuses—of all days for a fuse to break—a fuse in our back end there just blew and was the cause of so many of our troubles. And so I'm a little bit hesitant to get up here to see what's going to happen.

I'm trusting God everything's going to go fine, because he who is in us is greater than he who is in the world. Amen. And I'm not one of those devil-in-the-soundboard kind of people. Like, I think spiritual warfare takes shape in other ways than, you know, your tech breaks. But it's just really kind of interesting that things break in the ways that they break on the days that they break in the ways that they do. It is a reminder that you're not here by accident. You are here by God's design. God is sovereign over everything that happens in this world, including things that happen in your life, even the difficult things that happen.

But you're here by his design. He has a word that he wants to give you, and he has a grace that he wants to impart to strengthen and encourage, perhaps even convict or save your soul this morning. And so I hope that you'll be open to what the Lord wants to accomplish during our time together as Taylor has prayed and as I have done as well. We're going to be in the book of 1 Corinthians, so if you have a Bible, you can turn there. If you don't have a Bible, we'll have verses up on the screen, or there should be Bibles underneath your chair there.

If you don't have a pencil, I would encourage you to pick one up. I didn't mention this earlier, but there's pencil cups right over there by the—you know, Ryan's holding one up. There's some right by Mike and this camera right back here. And then there's some over

there. Later on in the service I'm going to ask you to be indicating some things on your connection card. And if you don't have a pencil or a pen, you can use those, and don't hesitate to get up and just go and get one.

It's not going to bother me or bother anybody else. There are a couple of moments in life that can just absolutely change your life forever. This last January, Audra and I celebrated 11 years of marriage. And the time has flown by; it's been an amazing experience. But it all began in 2012[1] there at Pioneer Drive, and we were sharing the room with a couple hundred of our family and friends. And I remember that day like it was yesterday. I remember her coming down the aisle and how beautiful she looked. I remember getting tears in my throat, thinking, "I hope I don't have to say very much, because I'm already getting kind of weepy," and I'm not a weepy guy.

I only cried at *Batman* and that *Hardball* movie that one time. But I remember standing there thinking that David would not stop talking. He had like the longest sermon ever, even though it was only like five minutes. And I just couldn't wait to start our married life together. And I've told Audra this before, and it really is the truth. I have a hard time remembering what life was like before we got married, because that experience just swallowed up everything else that came before it and that was my new life after that.

Another experience similar to that was the birth of my first child, Blaze. I'd never seen the birthing thing happen before. I mean, I was part of a birthing, but I wasn't paying attention during that one 20, 30, however-old-I-am years ago. But I was part of this one. It was really interesting how all the things, you know, go about. But whenever I began to hold my firstborn son in my hands, this love came out of nowhere, exploded in my heart, a different kind of love that I never experienced before, and it changed my life forever.

I was never the same. And I share that love with our other two children, Addie Jo and Briggs, but that moment was a life-changing moment. And then when I became senior pastor of Broadview, I remember, 10 years ago,[2] my first day on the job, I remember just this weight sitting on my shoulders, a heavy, heavy weight. And I remember Pastor David coming into the office and saying, "Well, how do you feel?" And I said, "It feels a lot heavier." He said, "I imagine, because mine feel a lot lighter." And so that day changed my life forever.

This church has changed my life forever. Those life-changing moments, I know that you've had some in your own life, some for good, some for bad. There are life-changing moments that alter us. They never leave us the same after they happen. And that kind of dynamic happened many, many years ago, over two thousand years ago, with the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It is a historical event. It's not some philosophy or some kind of faith tradition, it is a historical event that happened in human history that literally changes everything it touches and everyone it touches.

And when I say everyone, I mean everyone. We're not just celebrating Easter today with our three services and two campuses and people watching online. We're celebrating the resurrection of Jesus alongside of 2.2 billion other people around the world. One out of every four people on this planet believe that Jesus died, was buried, and on the third day God raised him from the dead. It is a historical event that changes everything and everyone that it touches. And so what I want us to do with our time together this morning, very simply, is to establish that it happened.

For those of you who struggle with doubt a little bit, I want to help you establish that the resurrection happened. And then I want us to look at why it matters. And 1 Corinthians chapter 15, I think, is going to give us some good evidence for the fact that it happened. And then Luke chapter 24 is going to give us some good evidence on why it matters. And so let's pick it up in chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians, verse 3. We're just going to look at that first phrase there where Paul says, "I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received."

I think this phrase here, *first importance*, is really important, because Paul is saying, if you don't think of anything else, if you remember nothing else, this is the core. This is Christianity, and this is what I received from the Lord, and this is what I'm passing on to you. And it is this thing that we're about to read from verses 3 to verse 5 or 6 that every Christian agrees on. Now there are lots of Christians who disagree on lots of things, right? We have Baptists who disagree with Methodists and Lutherans on the mode of baptism.

You have Protestants who disagree with Catholics on the nature of faith and works and salvation. You have Eastern Orthodox who disagree with the Roman Catholics on the nature of hell. And you have all kinds of non-denominational churches that disagree with everyone on everything, from the spiritual gifts to women in ministry. There are all kinds of disagreements in the Christian life. But if you took all the Baptists on one side of the room and all the Methodists on the other and all the Roman Catholics on that side and all the Eastern Orthodox and all the different people of all the different faith traditions all around the room and you were going to say one thing that every single one of those faith traditions could agree upon, it would be this phrase that we're about to read right now in chapter 15, verse 3, namely that Jesus "died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas," and "then to the twelve."

One out of every four people on the planet identify to some degree with those four pillars of the Christian faith. From the most casual believer to the most ardent disciple, they all build their lives on those four pillars. That he died, that he was buried, that he was raised, and that he appeared. From West Bengal to Timbuktu, there are people from all over the world who build their lives on that truth. Now the question is, how and why did that happen? How is

this Middle Eastern person who made these messianic claims—how is it that he gained a following that literally changed the world?

And the reason is because of the resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus, if you just want to put it very simply, the resurrection of Jesus made Jesus unique because the resurrection of Jesus vindicated the radical claims that he made in the days leading up to his resurrection. You need to know that Jesus was not unique in claiming to be the Messiah. There were a lot of people like Jesus in the first century who claimed to be the Messiah, but Jesus was unique in some of the things that he said about being the Messiah.

Jesus, unlike other religious leaders, did not claim to know the way to the truth or the way to know God. He said, "I am the truth. I am God." He didn't say, "I kind of have a relationship with God." He said, "I and the Father are one." He didn't say, "Follow my teachings or follow my path and you will live." He said, "Take up your cross and follow me and you will live." These kind of claims are only made by somebody if they are an absolute lunatic—cuckoo for Cocoa Puffs—or they are a fraud trying to deceive people for financial profit, or they literally are who they say they are.

And the resurrection of Jesus caused everyone to sit back and think a minute and go, "If he's not lying and he's not a fraud and he's not crazy, then he must be who he said he is." He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords; he is the Messiah who has come to save. And that evidence compelled them to bow the knee and put their faith in Jesus as Lord. And it was not easy to be a Christian back then. You may be sitting here thinking, "Well, if I had the evidence that they had, then maybe I would believe."

Or, "Maybe if I was kind of living in the first century and I was kind of one of those simple-minded people, then I would be a follower of Jesus." But if that's the way that you're thinking, number one, you just don't understand first century culture. And number two, you don't understand that they had a big cost associated with following Jesus as Lord. And the evidence that they saw in front of them had to have been compelling. And so what I want us to do as we look at 1 Corinthians 15 is to see some of that evidence.

I think the evidence that is presented in this text is as compelling today as it was back then, but you be the judge for yourself. We don't have time to go into all of the evidence, but I just want to give you a handful. Number one, Jesus fulfilled all the messianic prophecies. I don't know exactly how many messianic prophecies there are in the Old Testament, but Jesus, I do know, fulfilled 322 of those messianic prophecies to a T. And we're not talking about kind of general, vague—if you kind of twist the numbers and smudge the facts a little bit, then he fits the bill.

We're talking specific, acute detail, like the city of his birth and the mode of his burial and the number of wages that it would be associated with his betrayal and the birth being from a

virgin, all of these things, messianic prophecies Jesus fulfilled to a T, and it was eerie the ways that Jesus fulfilled these prophecies. How else do you explain a bunch of monotheistic first century Jews committing blasphemy and bowing the knee and worshiping Jesus as Lord? Something had to have happened in their paradigm for them to think, "This guy is not just the Messiah, he is God in the flesh, and we will commit to him as king."

It's because he fulfilled all of the prophecies in the Old Testament that they were anticipating being fulfilled in this Messiah. That's one line of evidence. You see that in that phrase *in accordance with the Scriptures*. Notice he says it again, *in accordance with the Scriptures*: it's because Jesus fulfilled everything that the scriptures said the Messiah must fulfill in order to be truly the Messiah. The other evidence—and you may say to yourself, "Well, that's not that compelling. I mean, if I was making a religion and I was trying to deceive a lot of people, then I would just write a story like the four Gospels, and I would just make it seem as though Jesus fulfilled those things."

Number one, you got to recognize they weren't just writing a story, they were recording history, history that can be empirically tested and compared against other outside sources, so there's no discrepancy between the quote unquote legends or writings and the actual history of the events. Number two, if you were creating a legend, I don't think that you would defend the truth of that legend even in the face of brutality, torture, and death. And yet every single one of Jesus' disciples outside of Judas who committed suicide, every single one of them went to the grave defending the fact that Jesus had been raised from the dead.

They preached it, they believed it, and they believed it and preached it enough that they were willing to suffer torturous, martyrs' deaths as a result of their conviction. People generally do not die for something that they know to be false. If you don't believe me, just study Watergate. Did anybody study the Watergate thing? You had some of the toughest men in human history cave on each other when threatened with just a little bit of jail time. And yet with the disciples of Jesus, they weren't just threatened with jail time. Some of them were crucified upside down, some of them burned at the stake, some of them tortured, and yet not a single one said, "It's a legend, it's a lie.

I quit. I was just lying." None of them say that. You don't do that for something you know to be false. Now you might say, "Well, they got suicide bombers in Islam that die for something they think is true." Yes, for something they *think* is true; that's not the same thing as the disciples. The disciples would have certainty that what they were preaching is false if God really didn't raise Jesus from the dead, if they had hid the body or they had kind of conjured up something, they would know it to be false, unlike these suicide bombers who believe what they believe to be true, and yet none of them did so.

None of them caved, because it actually happened. God actually raised Jesus from the dead. You see this in our text in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 6. It says that Jesus appeared not

just to the twelve, but he "appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time." This is Paul's way of saying, "If you don't believe me, just go ask 'em, because they're still around." By the way, that little phrase, the verses 3 to 5—that he was raised, that he died, that he was buried—that's what a lot of Bible commentators say is a creed or a song, and they have dated it back to within five years of the crucifixion of Jesus.

So we're talking early, early, early tradition, and Paul is saying if you don't buy it, go ask 'em. There are 500 people walking around out there who Jesus personally appeared to. Don't take it on our account. Don't take it on Peter's account. Don't take it on the friendly people. Take it on the account of those five hundred people. And then if you don't believe that, consider that it wasn't just his disciples who believed Jesus was raised from the dead. It was skeptical family members and foes who believed him raised from the dead as well.

You see this in our text in chapter 15, verse 7. It says that he appeared to James and then to all of the apostles. Who is James? James is the brother of Jesus, right? Do any of you have a brother? Raise your hand if you have a brother. So imagine if your brother came to you one day after taking off for 40 days and 40 nights, starving himself in the desert, and then he comes back and he's like, "Behold, I am the Son of God." What would you do? "You're the son of something.

You ain't the son of the God. I know that. Yeah, because I know you. You can fool them, but you can't fool me." And in a lot of ways that was James. For a lot of his life he struggled to believe Jesus was the Messiah and yet he becomes a leader in the Jerusalem church, one of the writers of the books of the New Testament, he goes from believing Jesus is a fake and a phony to believing Jesus is God in the flesh, raised from the dead, coming again as the Messiah of the Old Testament.

How does that happen? It happened because Jesus appeared to James, risen from the dead. And then it's not just family, skeptical family, it also is foes like Saul of Tarsus—Paul is writing this. He used to be named Saul of Tarsus. He was a persecutor of the church, hated Christians, wanted to wipe the movement off the face of the planet. And yet even to Saul, Jesus appears. If you want to read about it, it's Acts chapter 9. And Paul actually says in verse 9,[3] "I am the least of the apostles" because "I persecuted the church of God."

"And yet even though that's true of who I used to be, I'm all in on Jesus now. Why? Because he was dead, buried, raised, and appeared to me as well." So you have the fulfilled prophecies, powerful evidence. You have the conversion, preaching, and martyrdom of the early disciples—and then you have, I'm sorry, the preaching and martyrdom of the early disciples, and then you have the appearances to and conversion of family, foes, and followers. The last line of evidence, and this is where we'll spend the rest of our time, is with the empty tomb.

The founders of other religions like Muhammad and Buddha and Confucius, they all have pilgrimages. They all have disciples who make pilgrimages to the tomb of their founders. Every single year you can see this with Islam and Mecca.[4] It's one of the biggest things that happen every year. But you don't see any Christians making pilgrimages to the tomb of Jesus because there is no tomb of Jesus. Now they debate on where a tomb might possibly be, but there is no certainty because there never was a tomb. There never was a place that said, "That's where he was buried.

We know where it is because he had been there a while." They lost the location. They didn't know where Jesus' tomb was because there was nobody in there because the tomb was empty. All of these facts, historical facts, can be empirically tested outside of the New Testament. They are valid. You got to figure out how to make sense of the facts. Now the empty tomb, I want to spend some time on that because I think it brings some clarity and focus on to why the resurrection matters. And the best text to talk about the empty tomb is Luke chapter 24.

So if you want to take your Bible and turn there, we're going to spend the rest of our time in these 11 verses. It starts out by saying, "On the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared." They were going to anoint or take care of Jesus' body. The question of *they* is important because it wasn't a group of men disciples who found the tomb first. It was a group of women disciples, which is itself evidence of the fact that they're not making this up.

If you were making up a legend, you wouldn't have women be the first people to find the tomb because in that culture the testimony of women wasn't even considered reliable in a court of law. They did not have the kind of rights and respect that they thankfully have in our culture. The reason that they're mentioned first is because that's what actually happened. They're recording history, not making up a story. I think what's important though is not who necessarily finds the tomb, but why they were approaching the tomb. They were taking spices that they had prepared.

Why are they taking spices? They're going to treat Jesus' body. They remember Jesus had been beaten to a bloody pulp. He was a sad, sad state of affairs. He would have looked terrible, and so they're going up to clean up the body, to make Jesus look a little bit more presentable, or to restore whatever dignity that he might have had left. I think it's interesting that the men are not there. Maybe they're hiding, maybe they're fearful that they're going to get crucified like Jesus was. The point is they did not expect to see the tomb empty.

And you need to know that. They did not connect what needed to be connected, and that's why they get this rebuke from the angels in verse two. It says they "found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus." And so "while they were perplexed about this," "two men stood by them in dazzling apparel.

And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, 'Why do you seek the living among the dead?'" Great question, by the way, even for us today.

Why are you looking for life in places of death? You're never going to find true life in money and status and success. You're going to find it in the Lord Jesus Christ. You're looking for a living thing in a place of death, and "he is not here," verse 6, "but has risen." And then the phrase, "Remember how he told you." "Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise."

I know I don't know for sure that this is how this went, because I don't know if angels have a sense of humor, but kind of the way I imagine it going is, "Are you serious? Really? Did you not pay attention? How many times did Jesus tell you that this very thing not only was going to happen, but must happen?" And if you're curious, there are three times that we know of in the Gospels. Three times that Jesus told them, "I'm going to go to Jerusalem. I'm going to be delivered into the hands of men.

I'm going to be crucified. I'm going to be buried. And on the third day I'm going to rise." If you don't believe me, just look. Luke chapter 9, verse 22. They're there in your notes if you like taking notes. Their problem is they failed to grasp what they should have remembered. Look at this. Luke chapter 9, verse 22: "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised." Not just will—must suffer, be rejected, killed, and raised.

He says it again a little later in Luke chapter 9, verse 44.[5] This is right after the Transfiguration, this incredible experience where Jesus is on the mountain and Moses and Elijah and all these people show up and Peter and James and John, they're like, "Wow, you really are God, you really are the Messiah." And then right after that, Jesus says, "Let these words sink into your ears"—I don't know how else he could be more clear. Pay attention —"The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men." "But they did not understand this saying, and it was concealed from them."

They failed to grasp what they should have remembered. One more time, Luke 18—this is as they're going into Jerusalem, right before the Passover. "Taking the twelve, he said to them, 'See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be'"—or must be—"'accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise.'" But they failed to understand these things.

"This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said." They failed to grasp what they should have remembered. Here's why this is important. A lot of you are

church people, right? You come here every single Sunday. A lot of you maybe grew up in church. Maybe you don't go to church anymore, but you know you went to Sunday school, you did all the things, you know all the stories. You can know about and be around all the things and still miss the main thing. If it happened to them, it can happen to you, it can happen to me.

You can know all the things and miss the main thing. And our church will sometimes go door to door and we'll invite people to church and we'll share the gospel with them and sometimes offer to pray for them. And a lot of the times we'll run into people who kind of push back against us coming there because they'll say things like, "Well, I already go to church." Or, "I'm already a member of a different church." Or, "My uncle is a preacher." "My great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-granddad was a preacher." And a lot of times they actually are members of other churches and we'll have that conversation and it's legitimate.

But a lot of times what people are doing is they're saying, "I don't need that because I've already got this." And they're kind of appealing to their religion and tradition and experiences to say, "I don't really need to talk about spiritual things. I don't need to talk about the cross and forgiveness and resurrection. You know, I stay away from that. I have this." And that's a symptom, I think, of what the disciples are guilty of. They failed to grasp what they needed to remember. The phrase—I don't know if you've heard this phrase—a gospel inoculation.

An inoculation is where a doctor will inject you with a vaccine and what he does is in that vaccine he gives you an ineffective version of the virus or of the disease or whatever it is, so that your body, when it gets the real disease, will say to itself, "Man, I don't need that," or, "Here's how I'm going to respond to that. Just kind of get rid of this thing," instead of getting infected. Instead of getting the disease and sick, you've been inoculated. And I think a version of that has happened spiritually in West Texas, being a pastor here for as long as I've been here, where there are many, many people who know all the things.

But they've missed the main thing. They've been inoculated with the gospel: "I don't need that. You know, I have this religion. I have this safety. I got baptized. I walked the aisle." They don't have the reality of the resurrection living in their life. It hasn't transformed them. They're not really on fire, passionate for Jesus. They've been inoculated just like these disciples were unable to really grasp what they needed to remember, because they knew all the things and they forgot the main things. If you don't remember anything else this morning, remember this.

Jesus was delivered into the hands of sinful men. He was crucified. He was buried. And on the third day, he rose. And if God raised Jesus from the dead, there is new life in Jesus' name for you and for me. Don't walk away from this church thinking, "That was such a nice

children's program, and the preschool wing was so put together, and there was a little funky smell on the way to the preschool wing because of the bathroom that flooded earlier in the week, and other than that everything was so wonderful.

And he talked about the soundboard going down in the 8:15, but it didn't go down in the 9:30. I thought that was interesting." Don't think about any of those things. If you remember nothing else about this Sunday morning, remember that Jesus is alive and there's new life in his name. That's the main thing. And if your life is not characterized by that new life, if your life is not characterized by repentance of sin and confession of sin and confidence in salvation, but instead it's just kind of this dead, apathetic, maybe I am, maybe I'm not, maybe I will, maybe I won't go to heaven kind of mindset.

You don't have the real thing. You might have been inoculated from the real thing. And this morning the Holy Spirit would say to you, today is the day of salvation. Today is the day where you receive Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior, and your life is never the same. "They remembered his words," verse 8, "and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them."

I love that last sentence, that they did not believe them because it seemed like an idle tale, if you do a word study on that phrase. It can be translated, "Girl, you're crazy." They thought these women had lost their minds. And this is important because a lot of people again dismiss Christianity thinking, "Well, that was simple-minded people back then, believing in a simple-minded religion." No, it was not. It was difficult to believe that Jesus was who he claimed to be. And there were people who thought, "You have got to be out of your mind," back then.

The reason I bring this up is because I know a lot of you may be here this morning who struggle with doubt. And you think to yourself, "I can't really give my life to Jesus yet because I have these doubts," or, "I can't be sold out all the way for Jesus because I have these doubts." And you need to know, just like these disciples, you can be a follower of Jesus and still struggle with doubt. A lot of people do. In fact, I'm a preacher, committed my life to this whole gospel message, and I struggle with doubt often.

And I'm not saying I don't have answers—I have discovered incredible answers to so many of my early questions, but that didn't get rid of my doubt. I just had new questions that I needed new answers to. In fact, some of the new questions I have are even harder than the first questions I have. Doubt is just a thing that many people struggle with. But you can be a follower of Jesus and struggle with doubt. You're not the only one. And it's been happening from the very beginning, even from the first century.

If you look at Matthew chapter 28, Great Commission: Jesus has been raised, he's appeared, he's been hanging out with them for 40 days. They go up on this mountain, he's going to give them their last final words, and it says, many worshiped him, "but some doubted." Peter, when he hears these words from the women, the first thing Peter does is he says, "I got to see it for myself." The reason you don't have to worry about doubt is because Jesus will never rebuke you for your doubts. What Jesus does is he demonstrates the evidence to satisfy your doubts.

You notice when Peter, if you read a little bit later, he goes to the empty tomb. What does he find? He finds the stone rolled away. He finds clothing on the seat there, and he finds a face cloth folded up, indicating Jesus is going to come back. Why did Jesus roll away the tomb? Because he obviously didn't have to. If you read a little later, he's like teleporting through walls like Star Wars. It's really crazy. He did not roll away the tomb so that he could get out. He rolled away the tomb so that the disciples could look in.

He wanted them to see. Thomas—when Peter comes back, he's like, "Guys, it's the real deal. These women aren't crazy. I don't know what's going on." And Thomas says, "I'm sorry, guys, unless I see the scars in his hand, unless I touch it, unless I put my hand in that hole where they stabbed him, I just can't believe." And what does Jesus do? A little bit later—it's in John's Gospel, John chapter 20, verse 27—"Hey, Thomas, come here. Put your finger right here. See my hands. Hey, Thomas, let me see your hand.

Right there in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." Jesus never rebukes you for your doubt. Jesus will respond to your doubts with a demonstration of the evidence. And so here's how you handle doubt. Doubt your doubts, keep your doubts in perspective and let your doubts push you to an answer. Doubt your doubts. In our culture, it's so fun to doubt. Everybody's doubting, everybody's deconstructing everything. Nobody ever latches onto anything. The whole point of having an open mind is so that you can latch it down onto something. So, yes, have an open mind, but let that open mind drive you to a truth, drive you to the answer that you can latch down upon and say, "This is worthy of my conviction.

This is worthy of my certainty." Doubt can be a friend to your faith if you'll let it. And so we've seen evidence that the resurrection happened. We've seen some areas why the empty tomb brings things into focus. The last thing I want us to look at is why the resurrection ultimately matters. And it's right there in that little bitty word we've seen over and over again, the word *must*. Why does the resurrection matter? Because the resurrection was God's scheme, or God's unique solution, to our universal problem. If you look in chapter 24, you see he told you that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of men and on the third day rise.

Jesus, when he uses this Greek word, it's a Greek verb.[6] It means it had to happen. There was a spiritual reality in place so that it had to happen this way. So it's not just that the

resurrection happened, right? It's the resurrection had to happen. There were problems that needed to be solved, and the only way those problems could be solved is if Jesus died for sinners and was raised from the dead. There is a problem that a lot of us don't like to talk about, a lot of us kind of shy away from even today, and it's the sin problem.

Every person who's ever lived has a problem in that they are separated from the God who created them because instead of submitting to his design and his will for their life, they say, "I want to do it my own way." So they rebel against God, they reject God, they do life their own way. Romans 3:23 says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Yes, there are times where maybe you're a victim of other people's sins. But not all of your brokenness in life is someone else's fault.

A degree, maybe the greatest degree, of the brokenness in your life is your sin, which has alienated you from your Creator, your God, and it's a problem. Because if you sin against a holy God, something has to happen. For God to be just, He has to punish you for your sin. Either you get a just punishment for your sin in all eternity because you've sinned against an eternal God, or someone stands in your place as a substitute to take the penalty for your sin as that perfect eternal sacrifice. Those are the two options.

And so, what God has done in Jesus Christ is He has sent Jesus into the world to be that sacrifice, to atone for your sin so that you could be forgiven. Jesus' death and resurrection is God's unique solution to our universal problem. There's a lot of ways the Bible talks about this. 2 Corinthians chapter 5 says that God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God. In other words, on the cross this transaction took place where Jesus got our very worst, our failures, our mess ups, our sin, and we got God's very best.

The righteousness of Jesus Christ was credited to us, wraps around us like a cloak to cover our sin and our shame. When Jesus was being beaten and tortured within an inch of his life and spit on and humiliated and mocked and scorned, crucified with nails in his hands and his feet, dying a tortured death at the hands of the Romans. He was not just dying for us, he was dying instead of us. It was our death, he died, and the resurrection of Jesus was God's way of saying to you and to everybody else, past, present, future, the sacrifice of Jesus was sufficient to forgive you of sin and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

That's why the resurrection matters. Which means the resurrection this morning is not just something for us to celebrate. The resurrection is something for us to receive. The resurrection is a gift of life to those who are willing to embrace it. And if there's never been a time in your life when you've personally received the gift of salvation, the true gift, not religion, not church membership, not what your mom and dad gave you because you were a little kid growing up in church, but the real thing, where you say to yourself, "What I do know is greater than what I don't know.

I know I've got a sin problem. I know there's a holy God before whom I am guilty, and I believe Jesus died for my sins and can give me eternal life." If you're there, if the Holy Spirit has brought you to that place, then you need to receive it. And the way that you receive it is by faith. It's by saying to God, "I can't, and I believe you can, and you have in the person of Jesus Christ. And so I receive you into my life today." And so before we leave this morning, I want to give you an opportunity to make that decision.

And that's why we have these decision cards. I want you to look at—can everybody just grab your card? Everybody grab it so I know you've got one and hold it up. Everybody can answer this question. And the question is: which best describes your relationship to Jesus today? So what I want you to do is get a pencil or a pen. And I want you to check one of these four boxes. A, B, C, or D. A is for *already*: "I've already got a relationship with Jesus." If you do, praise God.

We want to celebrate with you. B is for *begin*. You say, "I need to begin." Maybe you'd say, "I need to begin a real relationship with Jesus. I had a childhood faith that is not suitable for my adult problems, and I need an adult faith, something I own for myself. I need to begin a relationship with Jesus." Maybe you struggle with doubt like me and you say, "I need to consider it more." C is for *consider*: "I'm interested, but I've got this hurdle and this hurdle." And if that's true, great.

Check the box as a public way of responding to Jesus this morning. And then D is for "I don't intend on making that decision." And that's fine. You may be here at the behest of your spouse or family or friend, and you're just like, "You know what? Sounds good, sounds nice, glad for the warm fuzzies, but no." And if that's you, that's okay. Just be honest with yourself and with the Lord. Where are you in your relationship with Jesus? You may say to yourself, "I don't belong here. I can't follow Jesus because I wouldn't fit in with these people."

And if that's your thinking, that's just because you don't know these people. If you knew these people like I know some of these people, you'd say, "Oh, I fit right in here." Because this is a church full of people who once were lost, but now are found. Once were school dropouts, serial adulterers, liars and cheats, but now we're not. Once were parenting failures, porn addicts, prison sentences, substance abuse. Once were lost, but now are found. If the resurrection of Jesus can change us, it can change you too. And so where are you in your relationship with Jesus?

The band's going to come up and lead us through a time of response. So here's what we're going to do. We're going to stand in just a few moments and respond to the Lord. If you checked letter B, here's what I want you to do. In a minute, I'm going to have a word of prayer. And if you say I need to begin a relationship with Jesus, I want you to pray a prayer after me, okay? And if you pray that prayer, I want to give you an opportunity to respond in your faith publicly.

And the reason I think it's important you respond publicly is because Jesus died for your sins publicly. And Jesus says, if you're ashamed of me in my coming, then I'll be ashamed of you at my coming. And so I want to give you an opportunity to make a private faith commitment to Jesus and then make a public demonstration of that faith commitment after we pray. So let's pray together. If you check letter B, I just want you to pray a prayer like this: "Lord Jesus, I admit that I'm a sinner, and I see how my sin has separated me from you.

I also believe that Jesus died on the cross for my sins and that three days later you raised him from the dead, proving that his death was sufficient to forgive me of my sin. And so today, Lord, I confess Jesus as Lord. I surrender my life to him. And I ask that he would come into my heart, forgive me of my sin, cleanse me of all unrighteousness and brokenness, as I give myself to him forever. Amen." Now here's what I want you to do. I know it's a big step.

[Recording ends.]

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "our first anniversary on in 2011"; Wes and Audra were married in January 2012 (consistent with his "11 years of marriage" this January). Source: Broadview Baptist Church, "Our Staff" (broadview.church/our-staff). ↩
2. Transcript note: spoken as "13 years ago"; Wes became Lead Pastor of Broadview in March 2013, following David Cason's retirement—10 years before this sermon (he has been on staff since 2006). Source: Broadview Baptist Church, "Our Staff" (broadview.church/our-staff). ↩
3. Transcript note: spoken as "in verse 8"; "I am the least of the apostles … because I persecuted the church of God" is 1 Corinthians 15:9 (verse 8 is "he appeared also to me"). Source: 1 Corinthians 15:8–9 (ESV), BibleGateway. ↩
4. Transcript note: spoken as "you can see this with Islam and Mecca" (as a pilgrimage to a founder's tomb); the annual Hajj goes to Mecca, but Muhammad's tomb is in Medina, in the Prophet's Mosque under the Green Dome. Left as spoken. Source: Wikipedia, "Green Dome." ↩
5. Transcript note: spoken as "Luke chapter 9, verse 24"; "Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men" is Luke 9:44 (with verse 45 following). Source: Luke 9:44–45 (ESV), BibleGateway. ↩
6. Transcript note: spoken as "it's a Greek preposition"; the word translated "must" (Luke 24:7), *dei*, is an impersonal Greek verb. Source: Blue Letter Bible lexicon, G1163 (δεῖ), "Part of Speech: verb." ↩