The Eyes of Doubt — Delivery Transcript

John 20 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, March 31, 2024 · *Through Their Eyes*

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It's always good when the Lord shows up and visits a room, isn't it? The Lord certainly has already made himself manifestly present in our service today through our worship. Thanks to our team, our band for leading us in worship. They do a great job. It's good to have everybody together on the whole band and certainly you can have the Spirit of the Lord visit with no band. But it sure sounds better with a real, with a big band. Especially when the Lord comes. As Taylor prayed, we're shifting into a preaching time. in our service, and I think the preaching time is just as much worship as the singing time is just a different type of worship.

So we're going to let the Lord speak to us through his word. We typically preach through books of the Bible in our church if you're new to Broadview. We took a pause though on our journey through the book of Genesis to look at the original events of the crucifixion and resurrection through the eyes of the eyewitnesses. One of the things about Christianity that makes it unique is that it's eyewitness testimony that points to the truthfulness of its claims. And the claims of Christianity don't center on an idea or ethical philosophy or anything like that.

The thrust of Christianity hinges on a person, an individual, a historical person, not like a person in a story arc like Lord of the Rings. No—a literal physical historical person named Jesus of Nazareth who claimed to be sent from God, the Son of God, the Messiah predicted and prophesied about in the Old Testament and the king of a kingdom that God was unleashing in the world. And so he spent the entirety of his ministry teaching and preaching about that kingdom and proclaimed to be king of that kingdom and basically said that that kingdom was going to overtake the world.

And so Christianity is fundamentally about a person. And that person is Jesus. And when you come to believe in Christianity, what you're believing in is a person. You're putting your faith in Jesus and his words and what he said and what he's accomplished and what he's going to do. And when you reject Christianity, you're rejecting a person. And you're not

rejecting a set of ideas or ethical philosophy. You're rejecting an individual who died for you and was raised from the dead for you. Now, a lot of people when they think about Christianity, they think about some of the central symbols of Christianity.

One of those symbols is the cross. The Bible teaches that when Jesus died on the cross, he wasn't just dying a physical death, but that there was a spiritual transaction taking place on the cross. Christians believe that when Jesus died on the cross, he was dying for our sins. And what we mean by that is that we as sinners were separated from God, who is holy. And that we could not have fellowship with God because of the sinful stain in our hearts, and that the only way we could have that stain removed was if someone who didn't have the stain removed it for us.

In other words, if someone who was pure and righteous could kind of cover us with that righteousness. And so what we believe happens on the cross is that Jesus, who was pure and righteous, he took our stain on the cross, that he absorbed our sin in his body and he paid the penalty for it. And not only did he do that for us, but he actually gave us what we would never have been able to earn for ourselves. which is his purity and righteousness. And I said last week, I don't think you can understand Christianity outside of the cross.

If you don't understand the cross, you don't understand Christianity because everything about the Christian ethic when it comes to forgiveness and contentment and endurance and joy and suffering, all of that stuff hinges on a proper understanding of the cross. But today is Easter, so we're not talking about the cross today. We're talking about the resurrection. And the reason the resurrection is so important even though there's maybe less theology attached to it. The reason it's so important is because if there is no resurrection, the cross is irrelevant. You might say it this way, you need the cross in order for Christianity to be understood, but you need the resurrection in order for Christianity to be believed.

If there is no resurrection from the dead, then we're wasting our time this morning. The cross is irrelevant. It's sad. It's unfortunate. It shouldn't have happened. But it's largely irrelevant to your life and to my life. And I know that sounds provocative, and you may think, well, I've never heard anybody say that before, but I'm not the only one who says this. I mean you can go to the very early disciples of Jesus or the apostle Paul. In 1 Corinthians chapter 15, he says, if Christ has not been raised, then we are still dead in our trespasses and sins.

If Christ has not been raised, then we are of all people most to be pitied because we're putting our hope in something that isn't real, isn't true, and won't change our lives. So the question is, did Jesus really rise from the dead? Because if Jesus really did rise from the dead, then that changes everything. And if he didn't, then we're wasting our time. And much of today is largely irrelevant. Now here's what's crazy. Christianity—we were living in a culture that was increasingly secular, increasingly more skeptical, more and more doubters.

You had the new atheist movement a decade ago. gained a lot of traction and ground and a lot of people separated themselves from their Christian faith, especially a version of their Christian faith that seemed like a fairy tale.

What I'm noticing in the culture is that Christianity is on a comeback. It's getting more and more fashionable for people to call themselves Christians, to identify with Christianity. But what I see is that people are identifying with the name, they're identifying with the moral ethic, they're identifying with the historical organization and political mechanism of Christianity that's unfortunately present. But it's as unpopular as it's ever been for people to actually believe that Jesus was God in the flesh, that Jesus died on the cross for our sins, and that salvation is only given when we repent of sins and trust Him as our Savior and Lord and follow Him all of our days.

In other words, there's a rise of cultural Christianity, but of actual Christianity, it's still as unpopular as it's ever been. And so you really need to wrestle the question, not am I a Christian, but do I believe God raised Jesus from the dead. And so how is your answer to that question? How you answer that question says a lot about you. Now some people will say, yes, absolutely, God raised Jesus from the dead. You don't have any problem believing it. It's just like the Bible says it, I believe it, that settles it.

Others of you struggle with a little more doubt and skepticism and you say to yourself, well, maybe he's like alive in our hearts. He's alive like his Spirit's alive, his teaching is alive, like he's alive in that way. But I mean I don't know if the whole he was physically literally dead and came back and the whole claims of God stuff. I don't know. Some of you would say I'm not sure, and then some of you would say, no, he's not alive. It's just something that we say. Some believe it, some reject it, and some say I'm not sure.

And those have always been the three responses to the resurrection of Jesus. Some say, I believe it. Some say I don't, and some say I'm not sure. So you need to know if you're in the I'm not sure or I don't believe it place, that's okay. A lot of people live there because a lot of people struggle with doubt. Doubt is something that is common to the human condition. I think it's just by virtue of the way that we're wired. A lot of us are doubters. Some of us are more doubters than others.

You know, it's just kind of maybe your personality type. But you can doubt the Lord, whether you believe in him or don't believe in him, whether you're a follower of Jesus, been walking with Jesus 20 years, even you can struggle with doubt. We're going to see a passage this morning where the disciples of Jesus who were closest to him and who should have known that God would have raised him from the dead and they didn't see it because they were struggling with doubt. So if you struggle with doubt, you're not alone.

The question is, what do you do with your doubt? How do you keep your doubt from crippling your faith or crippling your life from being what it needs to be? And I think there's an answer to that question in our passage today in John chapter 20. So we're going to be in John chapter 20. We're going to start in verse 1. And to give context again, Jesus had been crucified. He had been teaching and preaching about the kingdom, he got himself in trouble with some big important people. They executed him through a Roman crucifixion.

The disciples are scattered. They are afraid for their lives. Mary and Mary Magdalene, who were with Jesus up to the very end, with John, were grieving. They don't know what to make of themselves. It says in 19 at the very end that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, who I'm going to call secret disciples of Jesus, They came and they took Jesus down off the cross and they put him in a tomb and they buried him and they had a big boulder rolled on the top of the tomb, and that's where chapter 20, verse 1 picks up.

It says on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene, who again was with Jesus to the end, stood with him at the cross. She came to the tomb early while it was still dark, and she saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So what does she do? She goes, oh, Jesus is risen. She goes to the disciples. He's alive. He's raised from the dead, just like he said. No, that's not what she does. Verse 2, she goes and runs to Simon Peter and the other disciple. I love this, the one Jesus loved.

That's John, by the way. He loves to call himself the one Jesus loves. This is not the only time he's going to brag about himself, but he's the one Jesus loved. And so Mary says to him, not, Jesus is raised, it's true, it happened. No, she says, they've taken the Lord out of the tomb. And we don't know where they've put him. Again, you can know Jesus, love Jesus, be close to Jesus, and still struggle with doubt, just like Mary Magdalene. She did not have a category in her mind for Jesus rose from the dead.

So she tells Peter and John, what do Peter and John do? Well, they go to investigate. And it says in verses 4 and following that they run to the tomb. Again, John's kind of bragging on himself. He's like, I got there first. Peter was super slow. He got there later. Peter went in, I looked out from the outside, and so when they go in, it says in verse 7, the wrapping that had been on Jesus' head was not lying with the linen cloths, but was folded up in a separate place by itself.

So if he was stolen, that was an OCD thief. The other disciple who had reached the tomb first, that's John, again bragging, I'm so fast. He also went in. He saw, look at this, he saw and believed. For they—or but they—, being Peter and Mary Magdalene, they did not yet understand the Scripture that he must rise from the dead. And then the disciples returned to the place where they were staying. So what you see is a contrast right here, right? You see a contrast between faith and doubt, belief and unbelief.

John, the disciple that Jesus loves, the guy that was with him all the way to the end, he goes in, he sees the empty tomb, and he immediately believes. He sees evidence that the tomb is empty. I think he probably remembered all those times where Jesus said, I'm going to be crucified, die, and on the third day rise. all of that computes in his mind and he believes. But Mary and Peter don't believe. And so they go back to where they were staying, and you got one believer and two doubters.

Why did they doubt? The first reason they doubted is the first reason we doubt. Sometimes we doubt because there's a gap between the facts and our understanding of the facts. For a lot of people the reason they don't believe in the whole Christianity thing is maybe because they don't even know the facts. They don't think that there are any historical facts surrounding the resurrection. They think Christianity is just a bunch of hogwash and fairy tales and stuff like that some people—it's not because they don't know the facts; they know the facts, they just don't have a category of explaining the facts that is sufficient to actually explain what they see.

Again, Mary saw the empty tomb. She didn't immediately default to God raised Jesus from the dead because that wasn't a category in her mental box. And for a lot of people today, they would say Jesus rose from the dead. I mean, people don't rise, dead people don't come back from the dead. There's an intellectual barrier because of the gap between the facts and their ability to explain them. And so they reach for some other kind of explanation that will fit within their mental framework for how to make sense of what they see.

That's what the original disciples did. That's what a lot of us do today. And so again, some of it's not related to the resurrection, some of it may be related to theological questions that you have of like, I don't understand why the Bible says this or why Jesus does that and the answer is there. The answer is actually pretty clear, but it doesn't fit within your framework, so there's a big gap between the facts and your understanding. That's the first reason they doubted. And again, they're not alone in their doubt.

Everybody who's back there at home in Jerusalem is in a room with the door locked because they're afraid of what the Jews are going to do in terms of harming them or causing them violence. So what does Mary do? She's grieving. She's sitting there at the tomb. She's crying her little heart out because somebody stole Jesus' body. And it says that two angels appear and they ask Mary, why are you crying? And Mary says, I'm crying because they've taken the Lord and I don't know where they've put him. And as soon as she says this is in chapter 20, verse 14, as soon as she says this, she sees Jesus.

Jesus shows up, risen from the dead. But she doesn't see him as Jesus, she sees him as the gardener. And I don't know why that is, and maybe Jesus looked a little bit different. I don't know, but she's telling Jesus, they've taken Jesus. It's kind of ironic she can't see. Again, there's the gap between her facts and her understanding of the facts. And it's not until Jesus

calls her by name—Mary—that the scales fall from her eyes and she believes. And as soon as she sees Jesus, she runs to him, she clings to him.

And Jesus basically says, just, you know, get off me, girl. I haven't ascended to the Father yet. You got to give me a little bit of time. And go tell the other disciples that I've raised from the dead and I'll meet them in Galilee. And so that's exactly what she does in verse 18. Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, I have seen the Lord. And she told them what he had said to her. Again, one of the reasons I believe the gospel is true, because these people don't come off looking super great, and in that culture, to have women be the first one who witnessed Jesus risen from the dead would have not done them any favors if they were going to create their own religion and have it be believed by people because testimony of women in that culture was kind of not taken all that seriously and yet that's exactly what they say because that's exactly what happened.

So Mary's in there. She's telling people, I mean he appeared to me. I can't believe it. And John is probably thinking took you long enough—you know, he's already there. Peter said, I don't know. And all the other disciples in the room, they all say, you're crazy. Girl, you're crazy. They don't believe. And you don't see it in John, but if you go to Luke's Gospel, Matthew's Gospel, Mark's Gospel, you see the doubt of all the disciples. And then in Luke's Gospel chapter 24, we don't have time to go there today, but just to let me recap the story, you've got two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

Jesus again risen from the dead appears to them and he's like, what's up, guys? And they're like, we're so sad. And Jesus is like, why so sad? And they're like, Have you—are you living on another planet? I mean, we thought Jesus was the Messiah. We thought he was going to rise from the dead. We thought he was going to overthrow the Romans. We thought all things were going to be new. We're going to be ruling and reigning with him. And everybody's going to be like Jesus is so great, but instead they said crucify him, crucify him, and then they actually did it.

The Romans killed him and they buried him and we're like on the run and life could not be worse. And he's like, Wow, that's terrible. You know, that's so sad. And then he begins to explain to them from the scriptures how this was supposed to happen, guys. The Old Testament, the Messiah, suffering servant, Isaiah 53. He began to explain from the scriptures how everything pointed to Jesus. And when Jesus closed the gap between their understanding and the facts, the scales fell from their eyes, and they believed. And Jesus tells them the same thing he told Mary.

He said, go and tell my disciples that you've seen me, that I'm alive, and I'll meet you in Galilee, and I'll ascend to the Father. And so they get excited. They go home. They go to the Jerusalem disciples who are again locked in a room, fearing for their lives. You've got a handful of believers and a room full of doubters. That's where John picks back up in chapter

20, verse 19. They're struggling to believe. Why are they struggling to believe? Because of the gap, not between the facts and their understanding, but because of the gap between their experience and their expectations.

In chapter 20, verse 19, when it was evening of the first day of the week, the disciples were gathered together with the doors locked. Because they feared the Jews. Now why are they afraid of the Jews? Because they think they're next. Again, they thought Jesus was going to be King of kings and Lord of lords. They thought Jesus was going to establish an earthly political kingdom and everything would be awesome, but instead they crucify Jesus. So they're doubting not because of the gap between the facts and their understanding. They're doubting because of their experience versus their expectations.

You can think of it this way. One doubt is primarily intellectual and one doubt is primarily emotional. One doubt's because of what's missing in the head, the other doubts because of what's missing in the heart. They are hearing Mary say that she saw Jesus. They hear these Emmaus disciples say that they saw Jesus. They see John saying, I didn't see Jesus, but I believe anyway, because I'm the one he loves. They see and hear all that, but I'm sure they were saying to themselves, Shh, guys, be quiet. You know, you're crazy.

Have you been drinking already? You know, what are you smoking? I'm sure they were trying to put water on the fire, and then Jesus actually shows up. And he addresses their doubts. Jesus came, stood among them, and he said to them, peace be with you. He addresses their anxious hearts, afraid of what was about to happen. And then having said this, he shows them some evidence. He showed them his hands and his side. And so the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Then Jesus said to them again, peace to you.

Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I also send you and then he breathes on them, says, receive the Holy Spirit, and then he commissions them to go out and make disciples. Again, when they see Jesus, he tells them, go and tell. So what do you see here? You see two types of doubt, and you see Jesus respond to both types. One type of doubt is intellectual. There's a gap between the facts and the understanding. The other kind of doubt is emotional. There's a gap between the experience and the expectations.

Both of us or all of us struggle with either of those kinds of doubt, maybe a combination of both at different places and different times. Jesus responds to the intellectual doubt with a demonstration of the evidence. He says, look it's me. I'm alive. Here's the holes. Here's the wounds. He demonstrates evidence for the intellectual doubt. And then he speaks a word of comfort. He speaks a word of peace for the emotional doubt. Peace be with you. I love those four words. Those are the four words every anxious heart needs to hear.

When you are doubting because there's a gap between your expectations and your experiences, a lot of times your anxiety around that unanswered question creates all kinds of

other anxiety around all kinds of other questions. You think to yourself, well, if I can't, if I got Jesus wrong with ABC, how am I to kind of have confidence in Jesus with XYZ? And so you become very anxious and worked up and afraid, and it starts to cripple your life. And to those anxious hearts, Jesus comes on the scene and he says, peace be with you.

It's okay. I'm here. It's not what you're afraid of it being or becoming. Look. That's how Jesus responds to doubt today. He responds to doubt with the demonstration of evidence. Sometimes it's interesting. Sometimes I hear all kinds of stories in the Middle East of Jesus appearing to Muslims in visions and dreams. We also have historical evidence in front of us today. There are great arguments for the existence not only of God, but for the resurrection of Jesus. I'm going to share some of those a little bit later. There's evidence for the intellectual doubters, but there's also comfort and peace for those who are doubting emotionally.

There's a sense in which Jesus will actually manifest himself. He'll reveal himself to you in a tangible, concrete way and say, it's okay. I'm here. And I understand. And so their doubts are assuaged. Everybody except one person. And his name is Thomas. Old doubting Thomas, wouldn't you like to be known for the greatest mistake of your life? I think Thomas is awesome. I think he does—I call him the courageous disciple, not the doubting disciple, but you know everybody else loves to hate. So doubting Thomas wasn't there. And he picks up in verse 24 about his doubt.

Thomas called Didymus or CSB calls him the twin. Didymus just means the twin. I heard somebody say called him T. Diddy the other day. I thought that was funny. Of course—oh, he did—he got arrested, so maybe it's not as funny as what it used to be. But Thomas called the twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples were telling him, We've seen the Lord. So they're excited, but he's not. He said to them, If I don't see the Lord. If I don't see the mark of the nails in his hands, if I don't put my finger in the mark of the nails, and if I don't put my hand into his side, I will never believe.

You got to feel for Thomas, right? I wasn't there, guys. And y'all didn't believe before Jesus showed up, and I'm not going to believe until Jesus shows up. I'm sure he changed your life. I'm sure you're excited. I'm sure it was awesome. But I wasn't there. He's what I call a begrudging believer—and some of you may be kind of wired this way. You know, great. Jesus did things for you. Jesus saved your life. Jesus saved your marriage. Jesus saved your world. Wonderful. He didn't do it for me. I prayed; God didn't show up.

I asked God; he didn't come through. And that's why you doubt. Just like Thomas. Now I'm not saying Thomas is exactly there. But he's struggling to believe. And he makes these demands. If I don't see it with my eyes, if I don't touch it with my finger, if I don't put my hand into his side, I will never believe. If I don't have happen for me what happened for you, then it must not be real. He's a begrudging believer. A begrudging believer—to begrudge

someone means you're envious of what happened to them, and unless and until it happens to you in the same way, you're kind of holding it against them and you're not playing the game.

And what we're going to see is Jesus address Thomas's doubt because he is gracious and kind and he has doubts. For those of us this morning who are begrudging in our faith, I think he will address your doubt as well, because Jesus is gracious and kind to begrudging believers. So look at what he does in verse 26 it's one week later, seven days go by, seven days later, as SpongeBob would say. His disciples were indoors again, and Thomas was with them. And even though the doors were locked, they're still afraid Jesus came and stood among them and he said, peace be with you.

Same thing he said earlier. And then he said to Thomas, Put your finger here. It's almost like he read his mind, even though Jesus wasn't there when Thomas originally said it. He says, put your finger here, look at my hands, reach your hand and put it into my side. Don't be faithless, but believe. Then Thomas responded to him, My Lord and my God. And Jesus says, because you have seen me, you have believed. But blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe. So Thomas sees Jesus and his doubts just disappear.

And you notice he doesn't do what he said he had to do to believe. He doesn't like put his hand into the side and put his finger in the nail. He just falls to his knees and says. My God, my Savior, it's true. Now I think the reason I want us to focus on Thomas before we close out our service today is because I think he teaches us a lot about how to deal with doubt today. Because everybody doubts. Everybody doubts. How do you deal with your doubts so that it doesn't cripple you?

One of the things you see from Thomas, I'm actually going to show you three things. One of the things you see from Thomas is that he doesn't reject his doubts, he doesn't kind of suppress his doubts. He embraces his doubt. He embraces his doubt, but he does it in the context of Christian community. So when you doubt, embrace your doubt in the context of a Christian faith community. The reason why people check out of Christian community when they doubt is because they think, well, if I don't believe this, I can't be here.

If I don't believe what they believe, why would I go to church? Why would I attend the small group? I'm struggling. Since I'm struggling, I need to go. And nothing could be further from the truth. Do you notice how it emphasizes in the text it says Thomas was with them? Seven days go by. Everybody's super pumped, excited. We saw Jesus, we saw Jesus, we saw Jesus, woo-woo woo. And he hasn't seen Jesus. But he doesn't leave. He doesn't check out. He stays there. Seven days he stays there struggling with his doubt.

And that's what you should do You should put yourself in the community. Now, why do I say that? I say that because certain doubts can only be answered from a place of being inside the

circle, not outside the circle. Certain things only make sense when you're looking at it from within the community of faith. Number two, people are going to support you and walk with you and love you through your doubts if you'll stay in the community of faith. Especially at this church, I hope our church never becomes one of those churches where you have to like pretend that you're okay or pretend to believe something that you're struggling to believe.

This will always be a safe place for you to question your faith. To say, I don't this doesn't make sense to me. I'm stru I'm struggling here. What are the answers to this question? Truth, if it's true, doesn't have any place to hide. There should be good answers for your questions but ask them from within the community of faith, not outside of it. So don't isolate yourself. Doubt your embrace your doubts. Just don't isolate yourself when you're doubting. Embrace it in a community of faith. Just like Thomas did. The second thing is Thomas questioned his doubt.

Another way to say it is you need to doubt your doubts. Why do I say you need to doubt your doubts? Because all doubt, doesn't matter what kind of doubt it is, all doubt is really just faith by another name. All doubt is you need to question your doubt as though it's an alternative faith commitment. Think of it this way. If I was to doubt that the chair in front of me could hold me up I'd say, look at that measly little chair, and look at m I'm a big old boy, and there's no way that little chair could hold me up.

Well that's me doubting the chair, but I'm doubting the chair from a place of conviction. I'm doubting the chair from a place of faith, and the faith that I have right now is in the floor. Is in the stage. I'm doubting from a place of faith in where I'm standing, and that's how people doubt Christianity Your doubt is coming from a place of faith in something else. So some people say, well, I can't believe in Jesus because you know dead people don't rise from the dead. Well, that's an interesting faith commitment.

You believe that the universe is purely material and physical and that there's no way that a God could exist or that metaphysical realities might exist. Do you have good reasons for that belief? Have you ever examined the evidence for that belief? Is it as strong as you think it is? Some say, well, I can never believe in Jesus. I would never give my life over to Jesus because you know those Jesus people they're you know crazy and I don't need that. You know my life is together. I don't have any like mental health issues.

I'm, you know, I got money and a family, I've got everything I need. Well, that's a you're doubting from a place of conviction that you are better at running your life than Jesus would be. That your life could not be any better had you had Jesus in it. Well, what are your reasons for that belief? Are they good reasons? Could you point to the evidence that you have for why you believe that to be true? You know you're doubting. It's easy to tear something down. In other words, it's not so easy to examine your own convictions to see if they're worthy of your faith.

So you should doubt your doubts. You should really question, is what you believe true and is it justifying your doubts? In Jesus. So you embrace your doubts in the context of community. You doubt your doubts just like Mary and Thomas, all of them should have doubted their doubts. The evidence was there. They could have seen the explanation, but they rejected it because they weren't critical thinking. Finally, you need to drop your doubts that have unreasonable faith conditions. And this is what you see Thomas do when Jesus shows up. He reads Thomas's mind.

He says, I know what you've been saying. And Thomas doesn't say, you're right, and I better, and I'm going to show you. No, he doesn't do that. He says, My Lord and my God, I don't have any demands. How could I have any demands in light of what I've now seen? And the reason I think that's pertinent to some of us who are struggling with doubt today, especially as it relates to the resurrection, is because some people say, I don't want to be a Christian because I don't like Jesus' views on this.

I don't want to be a Christian because Christians believe the Bible is true and the Bible supports X, Y, or Z. And that may be true. Jesus may have views that contradict yours on sexuality or divorce or whatever. But that question has nothing to do with the main question. The main question is: did Jesus rise? And if Jesus rose from the dead, then your disagreements with Jesus about secondary matters are just that. They're secondary. And you don't need to have unreasonable demands that unless Jesus agrees with me on politics or unless he agrees with me on marriage and sexuality, then I'm never going to believe in the resurrection.

That's a silly thing to say. It has nothing to do with the most important fact. Did r Jesus rise from the dead? If he literally rose from the dead, listen think of it this way. If Jesus decided I'm just going to show up. I'm going to show up when you get home from church, I'm going to eat dinner with you and be like, for real, I'm here. Would you be like, well we need to talk about divorce because no you wouldn't say that You say, my lord, my God, it's real.

And that's the only reasonable response if God raised Jesus from the dead. All the other questions can be settled later. Here's another way to think about it. You don't have to have strong faith for your faith to save you. Faith does not have to be pretty or polished or without questions. It just has to be connected. And connected to the right source. Think of it like a light switch. I got this illustration from Tim Keller, who's got a lot of great illustrations. When you have a light switch, it doesn't matter if it's gold-plated or bourgeois or all fancy.

The only thing that a light switch must have is it needs to be connected to the source of power. So long as it's connected to the source of power, when you flip on the switch, the current will flow. So it is with your faith in Jesus. It's not that you need a strong faith. You don't need a pretty faith. You don't need a life that's all cleaned up. You just need to believe

enough to say I'll commit to Jesus. I'm in. And if you'll do that, he'll do the rest because the power's always, always been with him.

It's never been with you. So when you reject Christianity, reject it for the right reason. John closes his gospel saying this: Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, but they are not written. In this book, but those that have been written have been written so that you may believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. The truth is, Jesus is here this morning. He has made his presence known, not in a physical way, but in a way that's undeniable.

And he has given evidences and facts so that you might believe. I mentioned some historical facts earlier. We don't have time to go into all of them. But we have what they had. We have historical evidence that Jesus was crucified. We have historical evidence that Jesus was buried and the tomb was found empty. Again, not Bible evidence, other outside historical evidence that is agreed upon by atheists and Muslims and everybody. They believe he died. They believe his tomb was found empty. Everybody believes that his disciples sincerely believed and preached that God raised him from the dead.

So you've got to explain those three facts that are all in this passage. Some say they are hallucinating, some call them liars, all that stuff. Well l liars make poor martyrs. Most liars don't die for what they believe in, and every single one of Jesus' disciples died. Proclaiming He's risen indeed. So take your doubts, put them underneath the fact. And let Jesus bridge the gap between the facts and your understanding and take your anxieties and your unanswered questions and your fears and let Jesus bridge the gap by speaking words of assurance and peace.

We don't have to settle that today. What we need to settle today is do you believe. That I died for you, I died for your sins, and that I was raised so that you could have life in my name. Don't reject Christianity because you disagree with the ideas. Reject Christianity because you don't want the person. Reject it for the right reasons. But no, when you reject the person, you're rejecting the new life that is in his name. And I don't think anybody here this morning should make that mistake. So as we bring our service to a conclusion, here's how I want us to respond.

I think every one of us in this room fall into one of four categories. So on your connection card on the back, there is a box, number six, or no, number five. It says which best describes your relationship to Jesus today? And I want you to check the box that best represents where you're at. So maybe most of you would say, you know what, I already have a relationship with Jesus. But I'm struggling with doubt and I want you to pray with me, pray for me, and you can list that prayer request.

We're also going to have counselors down here at the front who'd be happy, more than happy to pray with you. I think a lot of you are probably right here You know, I prayed a prayer when I was a kid, but I didn't know what it meant to follow Jesus, and I have not really known what that looks like until today or maybe last month, but I'm ready to start a relationship with Jesus. And I need some help. I want to know what that looks like. And so if you would check letter B, then I want you to check that box.

I want to begin a relationship with Jesus. Some of you may say, I'm not quite ready to begin, but I do want to talk about it. I want to learn more. I need tell me more about those historical facts. Show me the show me the receipts. Tell me more about how Jesus thinks about X, Y, and Z. You maybe want to consider it, but you want to talk to somebody. Or you would say, I don't intend on making this decision because I know what I'm rejecting and I'm ready to reject it.

And that's fine. I just want you to be honest about where you're at. Because if you're not here and you'd more likely be here, then maybe this morning all Jesus wants you to do is to start a conversation about your barriers. Because you may be rejecting him for the wrong reasons. So would you do that right now? Just check the box. And then at the end of the service, we're going to take up a an offering and you can just put that in the offering plate and it can be a record of your decision.

If you check that second box or third box, I'm going to ask you to come down to the front and pray with some of our prayer counselors so that there's a public way of testifying, Jesus, I'm responding to you. Now, Jesus isn't up here, these are just prayer counselors, but Jesus is in the room. Amen. And because he's in the room, one of the ways of professing faith in Jesus is by publicly saying, I want to respond to you and so there'll be counselors down here to pray with you. I also want you to consider coming down here to the front.

If you'd say, you know what, I'm struggling. With not doubt personally, but I have a loved one who's struggling with doubt. And I want to pray with them. I want to pray for them. And there'll be some people down here to pray with you about those things. You may be struggling with doubt, not about the resurrection, but with God's goodness because of the suffering in your life. And you want someone to pray with you and for you about those things. Here's the truth. It's okay to be a doubter. Jesus loves doubters.

He's gracious and kind to doubters. But you've got to let him address your doubts in the way that he desires to do so. And so as he works in your heart, would you respond to him? As the Lord leads. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this time and your word. We thank you that you're a God who knows our weakness and you know our doubts and our struggles. You have condescended to us in the person of Jesus so that you could meet us where we are with what we're struggling with.

In a way that is gracious and kind and merciful. And so we pray we wouldn't be people who reject what you're inviting us to participate in this morning. But that we would be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and that we would respond in faith so that your kingdom could come and your will could be done in our hearts. And in our church family. And we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. I'm going to ask you if you'll stand just to make it easier for people to get up and move out if they wanted to pray.

And you can respond to the Lord where you're seated, or you can respond publicly if the Lord leads you to do so.