

Resurrection Reality
“I Told You So”ⁱ
April 17, 2011

Let's pray together.

God, I want to offer up this time to you. I think that maybe some of us walked in this morning needing to see that drama, hear that song, because we're maybe in a place where we're just not strong, we're not able to walk in the way that you've asked us to. So, God, I pray that as we go through this time that you would just give power to my words, that your Spirit would speak to us and do things that only You can do. Encourage us, that we really can walk by faith. We ask that in Jesus name, Amen.

As Brad said, today we're continuing in our

series Resurrection Reality. Actually, this is our third week in this series and what we're doing (for those of you who are just joining us) is sort of a "fast forward" in time to the events of Easter Sunday. And we're doing that because typically we spend several weeks leading up to Easter focusing on the Cross and then we only take one week, Easter Sunday, focusing on Jesus' resurrection ... and then we move on to something else because, well, the holiday is over and it's time to move on.

But this year, I felt like we should maybe reverse that. So we're spending four weeks on the resurrection of Christ and one week on the Cross of Christ. And that actually isn't happening on a Sunday – that's this Wednesday evening. As Brad said, we're doing this Tenebrae Service as a way of remembering what Jesus did for us as the events led up to the cross. And I know we all

have busy schedules, but it would just be so awesome if everyone who calls NHCC home would carve out about an hour and 15 minutes Wednesday from 7-8:15 and just come to a service of remembering what happened to Jesus leading up to the cross. I think it will be good for your soul, good for my soul, so I hope to see you here.

Now, today we're going to look at a fascinating passage of scripture – Luke chapter 24 – which could be called the ultimate “I told you so” story. Actually, there are four stories in this which we'll get to in a minute but, first, let me ask you ... have you ever had a negative “I told you so” experience? Maybe someone told you something and you didn't really take them seriously and as a result you now have a scar (maybe physical or maybe

figurative/emotional/spiritual) because you didn't believe them – you didn't trust what they told you.

One of my earliest memories of my grandparents on my dad's side was being at a bowling alley at about the age of four. My grandparents were big bowlers – they were in a league, they had their own ball and the bag and the shoes; they were really into this – and for some reason I was spending the night with them so they took me to the bowling alley on league night. And I just did what four year old boys do – I just started running around. I had all this energy. And my grandmother said, "Ricky, stop that running. You're going to get hurt!" (By the way, don't ever call me Ricky. That is not permission – I'm just telling you what happened).

So I listened to Grandma and sat down and

watched them bowl. But, as four-year-old boys tend to do, I soon forgot what I was told. And I was up and running. Back and forth I went from one lane to the other until SMACK – I ran into the back of one of the seats.

Now, you know how the seats in a lot of bowling alleys are that hard molded plastic? And they have that little edge rim around the back side? That's exactly what I hit first with my forehead. And it split open. (Not the chair ... my forehead). And blood was everywhere.

What I remember next is a couple of firemen bandaging me up (the firehouse was right next door) and then my grandma saying ... what do you think she said? "I told you so. I told you not to run."

And to this day, I still have the scar, right here on my forehead.

Of course, there are also *positive* “I told you so” experiences – like, when someone didn’t really believe in you or didn’t think you could do something and then you put your heart to it, your effort to it, and you succeeded anyway. You just want to say “I told you so. I told you I could do this.” Positive experience.

Well, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead on that first Easter Sunday, is a huge “I told you so.” But before we can see that we have to go back and see *the story before the story* where Jesus gives his disciples three not-so-subtle hints as to what was going to happen on Easter Sunday.

Three Not-So-Subtle Hints

The first hint is recorded in Luke chapter 9. Beginning in verse 18 it says ...

Once when Jesus was

praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?" They replied, "Some say you're John the Baptist come back to life [because John had been executed by Herod a few months earlier]; others say you are Elijah the prophet [who has kind of been reincarnated]; and still others say that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life (you're amazing and people know it)."

"But what about you?" Jesus asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Peter answered, "You are the Christ. You are the Messiah who is supposed to come from God. You are the savior of Israel, the Son of the Living God."

And Luke tells us that at this point,

Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone.

*And then he said, "The Son of Man [a way of referring to himself] must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."
Luke 9:21-22 (NIV)*

Now, it's interesting, notice that Jesus didn't say to them, "Well, you know, guys, I'm kind of looking down the road a little bit and I might have to suffer at some point ... I might even have to die ... I'm thinking that maybe I'll have to give my life as a sacrifice." What did he tell them? "*I must suffer; I must die, count on it, and then I will rise on the third day.*"

Is there anything not clear about that? No, it's like "don't touch the stove, it will burn you. Count on it. Don't run in the bowling alley, you'll hit your head."

But, just in case the disciples missed it, Luke tells us that less than 10 days later Jesus does an incredible miracle – he casts a demonic spirit out of a boy – and Luke tells us that ...

While everyone was marveling at all that Jesus did, he said to his disciples, "Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man [referring to himself] is going to be delivered into the hands of men [I'm going to be turned over to the authorities]." Luke 9:44 (NIV)

The second not-so-subtle hint of what's going to happen: "I'm going to die."

But this time, Luke adds this really interesting comment, he says,

But they did not understand what this meant [even though they had heard it before, they did not understand what this meant]. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it. Luke 9:45 (NIV)

Now, when Luke says it was hidden from them, I'm not sure that he means that "God supernaturally blinded them to what Jesus was saying" though sometimes God does hide truth from people who have no interest in truth. Instead, I think what hid the meaning of Jesus' statement to them was their own preconceived idea of how it was all

going to play out, how it was all going to go down when the Messiah came and now that he *had* come in Jesus ... in their minds, it was only a matter of time before he did what the Messiah was going to do – he was going to deliver them from their enemies – the hated Romans – he was going to set up the throne of the Kingdom of God on earth in Jerusalem.

And they're thinking, "Israel will be the greatest nation in the world." "And all of us will get to be the cabinet of the new regime. We'll get to be in the inner circle of power."

They were so fixated on this that they couldn't hear the part where Jesus said "I'm going to die." They were afraid to ask about it because, you know how it is sometimes if something doesn't stack up with what you already believe, and when you hear something a bit different you kind of go,

“Well, I just don’t want to go there.” I think that’s what was going on there.

Now, the thing that does need to be said is that what they believed about was going to happen *had* been foretold by the ancient prophets of Israel. They didn’t just invent that on their own. There *is* a day coming when God is going to break into history and He will set up the Kingdom of Heaven on this earth. *But ...* Jesus was giving them a *new* piece of information – he was saying that before it could happen, he would need to die and rise again as the savior and king. But they were so locked in to what they had already perceived and how they had read the scripture, they just couldn’t hear it. It was hidden from them.

In fact, they missed it so badly that one of the most bizarre and illogical things you’ll ever read about in the Bible happens next.

Check this out:

An argument started [after Jesus had said 'I'm dying. This is going to be really ugly'] an argument starts among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven when Jesus comes to set it up . Luke 9:46 (NIV)

He had just told them, "I'm not going to set up the Kingdom – I'm going to die!" And they're sitting there arguing about what rank they're going to have when he's on the throne in Jerusalem! It's crazy.

Ok, one more part of the "story before the story;" one more not-so-subtle hint as to what will happen – this one from Luke chapter 18 verses 31-34.

Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled.

And from what we know of what they were expecting, they were probably thinking, "GREAT!!! It's Passover; three million people will be in Jerusalem. It's going to be this huge thing and in the bible it says that that's where all things are supposed to take place when the Kingdom comes."

And then Jesus continues and he lays out a vision, again, that is the exact opposite of what they're thinking.

"We're going to Jerusalem and there the Son of Man will be delivered over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him and spit on him;

they will flog him and kill him. [Speaking of himself in the third person] On the third day he will rise again [I will rise again].” Luke 18:32-33 (NIV)

Can't get any clearer than that!

But, again, Luke adds:

*The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about.
Luke 18:34 (NIV)*

Four Short Stories

Now, you got the picture? With all of that in mind let's look at Luke 24 – which is the story of the first Easter Sunday, actually, four stories, each with the same punch line: “Why is this such a surprise? Didn't you listen? I

told you this was going to happen.”

The first story is found in verses 1-10, where it says that a group of women (among the disciples of Jesus) go to the tomb on Sunday morning to anoint Jesus' body for final burial. It says,

They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

While they were wondering about this ...

“hmmm, what is going on?”

... which, based on what Jesus had told them all along, is a rather strange response. You would expect their response to have been, “Yes! Just as he said. Hallelujah! He has risen from the dead!” But, it says,

While they were wondering about this ('what the heck happened here?') suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them.

In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!"

Luke 24:3-5 (NIV)

"Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' "

And then Luke says,

Then they remembered his words. Luke 24:6-8 (NIV)

So, they run back to the hideout where all the other followers of Jesus are (remember, the Romans had killed Jesus and the disciples feared they were next so they were hiding out) and tell everything that happened to the apostles and to all the others.

Now, Luke does an interesting thing at this point.

He writes ...

It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. Luke 24:10 (NIV)

Remember, at the beginning of this story, he says that a group of women go to the tomb,

but now Luke points out that three very reliable women are among this group; three women who are heavy hitters; three women who have gone through difficult times with Jesus and had proven themselves as much as any of the men. So, with the credibility of these three witnesses, you'd think everyone who heard their story would buy in ... which brings us to the next short story in Luke 24, which pastor Larry Osborne calls "*11 guys who wouldn't listen to a woman.*" Still happens today, right?

Luke writes ...

But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense.

Nonsense ... but nonsense that fit exactly what Jesus had told them would happen to him.

So – and this part is almost comical.

Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb.

Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened. Luke 24:12 (NIV)

Jesus had told him at least three times what would happen. Then the women came and reported exactly what Jesus had said would happen. And then he says “duh, what happened here???”

Why was this a surprise to him? Jesus had told him. It’s the ultimate “I told you so.”

The next story picks up right after this, with two guys who had been followers of Jesus

walking down a dirt road. They lived in this little village of Emmaus about 7 miles away from Jerusalem. Apparently they had been in Jerusalem at Passover and had watched Jesus die on the cross. Then, like the rest of Jesus' followers, they hid in fear from the authorities. They hunkered down on the Sabbath (because you can't go anywhere or do anything on the Sabbath), and then, on that Sunday morning, just like everyone else, they heard the reports from the women, then heard that Peter had checked out the tomb and found it empty.

But, in spite of all of that, in their minds, "This deal is over. This Jesus thing is done with." ... so they left for home. Discouraged and heartbroken, they were walking down the road and discussing all of this with each other when ... according to verse 15 ...

Jesus himself came up and

walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him.

Again, it's not clear if God blinded them, spiritually, or if somehow Jesus was resurrected in a body prepared for eternity, and maybe just looked a little bit different than the way we look now. Or, maybe, as had been the case several times before, they just were not expecting anything that didn't fit their preconceived notions. In any case, Luke writes that Jesus comes up to them and asks "you guys look kind of sad - what are you talking about?" And they're amazed, "How can you not know why we're sad?"

"Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

"What things?" he asked.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "The chief priests and our rulers handed him over (to the Romans) and they sentenced him to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel (we had hoped he was the Messiah).

And then the part that, again, is almost comical.

And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body.

They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our

companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.” Luke 24:15-24 (NIV)

And the guys are whining about this! It's exactly what Jesus had told them would happen, but they were walking away in defeat!

Luke says, at this point,

Jesus said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?”

And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. Luke

24:25-27 (NIV)

Now, it says in the English translation from the Greek that Jesus said, "How foolish you are and slow of heart." And that really sounds nice and all Bible-speakish. But literally what Jesus said to them was "you dimwits! What are you thinking? How could you be so clueless after all I've told you?"

And then Luke says that Jesus goes on to explain it all again. They arrive at Emmaus and they invite him to eat dinner with them. And as he breaks the bread with them, suddenly they realize that they had seen this before because they had seen *him* before. Their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and Luke says at that point *he disappeared from their sight*.

And so, even though it wasn't safe to travel at night, they decide "we need to get back to

Jerusalem to tell everyone that it's really true – Jesus is alive!” So they head back to Jerusalem.

And when they get to Jerusalem, they find the apostles and everyone else at the hideout and *these folks* are now saying, “It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon Peter.” Then the two guys from Emmaus tells what just happened to *them* and everyone is celebrating together, and it’s this big party ... which brings us to the final short story in Luke 24 ... which is something we might call “the ultimate surprise party.”

You know, at most surprise parties, the goal is to freak out the guest of honor when he comes into the room. Well, in this particular surprise party, the guest of honor freaks out everyone else in the room.

While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

Luke 24:36 (NIV)

Now, again, a little thing to ponder here, that sounds like another one of those spiritual Bible phrases. When you see that you envision Jesus with long hair wearing a bathrobe saying in a reverent and holy tone "peace be with you."

But in that day this was just a normal greeting, kind of like the way you and I say "hey, what's going on? How you doing?"

So, really what's happening is they're all celebrating and Jesus kind of just appears and says, "hey, dude. What's going on?" Luke says when he did that, they were startled and frightened because – after all that had happened, after all that had been

reported, after all that Jesus himself had told them previously – they still thought they were seeing a ghost and not a real, live person.

So Jesus says something to the effect of “Well, you know, ghosts don’t eat – so you got any pizza?” And since they didn’t have pizza back then, they give him a piece of broiled fish and he eats it.

Then he says ...

He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”

Luke 24:44 (NIV)

“And this is what is written:”

“The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the

third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations (not just the Jews), beginning at Jerusalem.”
Luke 24:46-47 (NIV)

In other words, Jesus says, “I told you so.”

What We’ve Heard (and Don’t Believe)

So, why was all of this such a surprise to those women who went to the tomb on Easter Sunday morning? Why was this such a surprise to the eleven guys when they came back and said what they had seen? Or the two guys who were walking down the road to Emmaus? Why was it such a surprise to everyone at the party?

Because they'd heard what Jesus had said, but they'd already made up their minds

about how God works and what God does. So they heard the words out of Jesus' mouth but didn't believe that He meant what he said. They really didn't trust him.

Now, we could stop right here this morning and say let's take an early exit and go out and beat the Methodists to lunch, or whatever, and what we would have done this morning is to have listened to a story about a bunch of dimwits who lived 2,000 years ago who didn't take God at His word; who didn't walk by faith. We would have looked at their hearts and said, "Wow, how could anyone be so blind?"

But instead of doing that, what I want to do in the time we have left is to take this story and use it as a mirror to see *our* own hearts and to see that after 2,000 years not all that much has changed in the human condition. See, we think we know how the world works, we

think we know how God works and when God lays down a ton of not-so-subtle hints that “No, you were wrong”, it goes right over our heads. We hear the words but we don't believe He means what He has said.

“What do you mean by that, Rick? What has God said that we've all heard but don't always believe?”

I could talk about that for hours – just examples from my own life – but I won't. Instead, I want to give you just four examples of things that I see and hear all the time – not just with you all but in my own life and in the way I think. These are chronic things that Christians, and even people who aren't Christians, believe. We've heard God say this, but we don't believe that He is telling us the truth. We don't believe He means what He says.

Four things - Here's the first one.

1. "Heaven comes *later* – not now."

God has told us that Heaven comes later – not now. And, of course, we all know this intuitively because whenever someone dies, what do we say? You hear people at the funeral say, "He or she is in a better place" (even if they're not). We say, "Well, you know, he really loved golfing, so he's up there on the heavenly greens." Or, "They are finally in a place where there is no pain and no suffering."

We know, intuitively, that Heaven comes later, but we also know it because God makes it clear from the very beginning of the Bible. In fact, if you want to understand what the Bible is all about, it's really very simple.

- Genesis (the first book of the Bible)

chapter 1&2 tells us "God made it all. It all belongs to God." Whether you want to say it's literal or figurative, it doesn't matter. God made it all. That is the point of the first two chapters of Genesis.

- Genesis 3 says "here's why the world we live in is all screwed up." This is why things don't work the way they should. This is why relationships break down. This is why bodies break down. This is why there seems to be a curse on the world. Genesis Chapter 3.
- 98% of the rest of the Bible says "here's how you live in a screwed up world." It's going to be screwed up – that's what 98% of the Bible is telling us.
- Then the final 2% says "here's what God's going to do to fix it" later when the Kingdom of Heaven is fully established on this earth, and when Jesus returns as the King, not the savior.

That's it. The Bible in a nutshell. The message could not be plainer – “heaven comes later, not now” ... but we really don't believe that.

Rick, why do you say we don't believe it? Of course we believe it.

I say we don't believe it because even though we've heard the words, whenever we experience hell on earth, what do we say? - “why God? How could this happen? Why have you allowed this terrible thing to happen to me? Or to someone I love?” We're shocked and angered when our experience in this world is not heaven.

I think one day some of us are going to stand before God in Heaven and say “I'm really glad to be here, Lord, but I'm really confused about what happened back there. Why was

my life so hard? Why was there so much pain and death in the world? Why was there so much injustice everywhere, particularly with me? How come you let that happen to me? Why did you let them get away with doing that to me?"

And Jesus is going to say "I told you so! I told you ...

- In this world you will have tribulation but be of good cheer for I have overcome the world.
- The world hates me; don't be surprised when it hates you.

I love how the Apostle Peter expressed this to the followers of Jesus he was leading after the resurrection of Jesus:

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something

strange were happening to you. 1 Peter 4:12 (NIV)

Heaven comes later, not now.

And this morning, I think Jesus might say to some of us "Why are you getting so worked up about what's happening to you? Why are you letting your circumstances steal your joy and your faith? I told you this is how it would be. So trust me and follow me because it won't always be this way. You can believe that."

I think the second thing that God tells us that we hear but we just don't believe is that ...

2. "You reap what you sow."

You reap what you sow. What you do is going to come back to you in some way or another. How you treat others is how you are going to be treated. You know that Golden

Rule thing? Jesus said, "do unto others as you would have them do unto you." And we say, "What a great suggestion. Wouldn't it be nice if everybody in the world would do that? Jesus, thank you so much for giving us that suggestion." But, really, what Jesus is saying is, "No, no, no. It's more than just a nice suggestion. That is how it works." What you do, what you plant in your life, what you plant in your family, what you allow to dwell in your heart and mind is going to eventually come out in your life. So, be careful what you allow to get planted in your life or your family or your business. Count on it.

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man (or woman) reaps what he or she sows. Galatians 6:7 (NLT)

Now, just to be totally complete on this, that could be a good thing or a not-so-good thing. If you plant good stuff in your life,

guess what's going to happen, good stuff is going to come up. If you plant bad stuff, it's going to be a bad thing. Paul writes,

Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life [just to be clear about what that means, in the Greek it's the word Aionos. It doesn't mean length of time, like eternal length, it means "the quality of life that God himself lives" So, if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap the quality of life that God himself lives].

So, what does it mean to sow to please our flesh? I think it means doing whatever you want without any regard for what God says. Just live like God doesn't exist and doesn't have any ownership over your life, like God

doesn't have any care in how you live your life. Just do whatever feels good to you in the moment because you deserve it. You deserve this, whether it's illicit sexual pleasure, bursting out in anger, gossiping, envying someone else, being self-centered, causing dissension, getting drunk, becoming a co-dependent martyr, spending all your money on yourself and your own little circle ... you do that, and you will reap destruction in your life, in your family, in your business, in wherever you plant.

Now, the problem with this whole thing, and maybe part of the reason we don't believe this is because sowing and reaping (that little cycle) doesn't usually happen overnight, so a lot of us hear this and we say, "I don't know about this – it sounds like maybe God is just trying to scare people. It sounds like maybe you're trying to scare people because that's your job as a

preacher. I don't know if it works this way for everyone."

But, Jesus says, "Yes, it does."

And I think one day some of us are going to look back at our lives, or our families or our businesses and we're going to say "God, I don't get it - what went wrong? What happened here?" And Jesus is going to say "you sowed to please your own flesh and so you reaped destruction in your life. And, I told you so. I gave you a warning."

Of course, as I said, this principle can also be a good thing. Sow to please God's Spirit – put him first in your life, trust him and obey him even when it doesn't seem to make sense, even when it seems so out of step with the culture, even when your flesh screams out for you to obey *it* – sow to the Spirit and reap the kind of life God himself

lives: a life of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

But again, even in that kind of sowing and reaping, it doesn't usually happen overnight, which is why Paul goes on to add this little statement, he says ...

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a (good) harvest if we do not give up.

Galatians 6:8-9 (NLT)

Keep at it. Keep living God's way and even though it's not Heaven yet on the outside, circumstance wise, you can experience a taste of it on the inside. That's what Jesus meant when he said that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand: it's near and it's now as well as being far and later. And, He wasn't talking about "oh, that means now you're

going to have pleasant circumstances." He was talking about the condition of your soul and your heart and your emotions.

And I think there is probably going to be a group of people to whom Jesus says one day, "You could have had that in your life. You could have had the life of God in your own inner being. You could have reaped a harvest of goodness and blessing, but you gave up too soon. You stopped planting the good stuff. Why did you do that? I told you so."

Ok, two more things we've all heard but don't really believe or trust. God has made it very clear that ...

3. If you don't forgive you're not forgiven.

Well, why do you say that Rick? I say it because we pray it whenever we pray the

Lord's Prayer. "Forgive us our debts/trespases/sins as we forgive others."

I also say it because Jesus said it, just as clearly as He said "I must die and rise again."

Here's what he said:

"If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins." Matthew 6:14-15 (NLT)

If you don't forgive, don't fool yourself, you're not forgiven.

Now, we've talked about this before, because forgiveness is a pretty complex subject, and we've talked about before that what Jesus intended here is not a

prescription. He's not saying, "God's keeping a ledger and you've got to do this forgiveness gig in order to earn God's forgiveness and favor." We know that it's impossible to do that. That's why Jesus had to die on the cross. We can't do anything, we can't forgive enough times to earn our forgiveness. That's not what Jesus is saying.

Instead, this is a *description*. What Jesus is doing is describing forgiven people. Jesus is saying that forgiven people forgive and if you're not the kind of person who has it in you to be forgiving then you're probably not among those who have truly been smacked in the face with the reality of your own sin, been humbled to the depths of your soul and got down on your face before God and said, "Oh God, what a sinner I am. Thank you so much for sending Jesus to forgive me." Because people who have experienced that in their life – people who have experienced

forgiveness from God – they're different. You're just different on the inside. You have the capacity to forgive other people in ways that are sometimes even shocking to yourself.

And just to be clear, I'm not talking about now you have the capacity to forgive when the offender apologizes, "Okay, I'll forgive you because you apologized." Or, now you find out and understand why they did what they did and all that, and it's excusable. That's not forgiveness. If I forgive you for something that's excusable then I'm not really forgiving; it's not the same thing. I'm just doing what I should do; I should let you off the hook because you had every good reason.

Now, forgiveness is a complex subject and I don't have time to go into the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation and

restoration. But there is a difference. Forgiving someone doesn't mean you have got to have them over for Easter Dinner or become your best friend again or even their spouse again. It means you let go of the debt that they owe you, whether it is real or perceived; you let go of the physical or emotional pain that they owe you. You don't extract revenge from them, even though you have the right. You don't talk them down to other people.

Now, I think that one day some of us are going to stand before God and we're going to say, "God, I just don't get it. I look back at my life and it seemed like all of my life I was filled with this pain on the inside. People mistreated me and I just felt like I could never get beyond this stuff. I never felt totally free. And honestly God, I never felt like You totally accepted me."

And I think Jesus is going to say to some of us, "Why is that surprising? I told you so. Remember what I said about you forgiving and being forgiven, living as a forgiven person – how the two are linked? You never felt freedom in your life, you never felt acceptance in your life because you never forgave."

OK, one more thing and then we'll be done. One more thing that I think God says to us that we hear but we don't want to believe ... and this one is very personal to me right now in my life. I think God says to us,

4. It's not all up to you. Wherever God guides, God provides.

You know, we come to those places in our lives where we go, "I think God is laying out the bread crumbs for me and he wants me to go down this road. And it scares *the dickens* out of me to think that I'm going to

do that. And, how in the world *can* I do that?" And, I'll just share with you honestly, I look at our church and I look around and I think - we need more seats. I think it's pretty clear that we need more seats in here. So, I think, okay, what we're going to do is expand this building because we need to reach more people for Christ. We need to become a church that plants churches. But, this economy is so terrible. People are scared - "Are we going to have a job tomorrow?" and, "Rick, are you crazy? Have you lost your mind?" How am I going to get all these people to see this? And Jesus is saying, "It's not all up to you," because wherever God guides, God provides.

- Be confident of this, Paul writes, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. (Philippians 1:6)

- For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose. (Philippians 2:13)
- Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)
- I can do everything through Him who gives me strength. (Philippians 4:13)

We hear those words, and we say, "Yeah, Amen. Amen." But I think there will be a day when some of us stand before Jesus and he will say, "I tried to lead you down this road. This is where I wanted you to go. Why didn't you believe me? You didn't listen. But, I told you so."

Conclusion

Anyway, I think you get the point here. And, I think it might even be wise, this week, to sit down and spend a few minutes in your own life and ask, "what has God said to me that is very clear and I'm hearing it, but I'm not believing it?" It just flies over your head. You know, you look back at the people 2,000 years ago and you think, "How could they miss it?" But you look in the mirror, and you say, "How am I missing it?"

**So, let's get it straight this morning;
let's nail it down:**

When God makes a promise, it's kept. He will do it.

When He gives a warning, it's not an empty threat. There is a real danger. You *will* get hurt.

That means that you and I actually can

choose whether our "I told you so" moment is going to be a high-five celebration type of experience. "Yes, it really happened! Yes, God, You said this and I trusted you, and Wow!" Or it can be a shaking the head, "I told you so – why didn't you listen to me?" kind of experience.

It all depends on whether or not we take God at his word. The high-five experience comes to the one who believes and follows. The shaking head comes to the one who says "God couldn't really mean *that*, could He?"

Yes, He could. And He does.

Let's pray.

1. Help us understand that you mean what you say; that you fulfill your promises, your threats are not empty.

2. Pray for people who have been checking out NHCC and Christianity ... you have not yet stepped over the line of faith to give him all of your life. That is what he calls for. The deal is "I will forgive your sin. I will adopt you. I will come and change you from the inside out. Follow me and do what I say and you will not be the same. But it's all on one condition: that you trust me and give me your life."

If you haven't yet done that and you want today to be the day ... just pray w/me. "Lord Jesus, would you forgive my sins, adopt me, change me. I trust you to do those things, so I give you control of my life."

if you prayed that would you let me know somehow. put your name and email or phone number and we'll contact you to

encourage you.

As our band does the closing song for us, our ushers will come to receive the offering. And, I won't go into it, because we're out of time, but this is another of those areas where God makes a promise: "Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together will run over into your lap. For with the measure that you use, it will be measured unto you."

Endnotes

¹ This message is modeled after my message "I Told You So" from 4/20/03 & Larry Osborne's message "I Told You So" from 4/16/06