

Man in the mirror Birkey – I'd love to start with a camera shot of the mirror – and my reflection... I'll have my back to the crowd, but talk to the audience through the mirror. Let's try to set up that shot. I know it will be a darkened mirror... that makes the point well.

I am looking at the man in the mirror. Literally.

And Michael Jackson – clearly one of the greatest artists of the 20th century – makes you ask a great question. When you look at the man in the mirror, what do you see? How do you self-evaluate? I know I see a few more wrinkles, hair greyer than ever, a couple more pounds... but I have found if I take my glasses off, it's much better!

It made me think...about that whole idea of change. Like, if I went back to my 18-year-old self and looked at that man in the mirror, what might I say. And I think of a single word. **Hedonism**. I just wanted to have **fun**. I was brand new on the Weston 3 dorm at the U of I, free from my parents for the first time and my goal was to maximize **pleasure**. I liked competing... so I joined the volleyball team. I was experimenting with partying because that is what I assumed would bring me the most fun. I actually liked learning – school was always a fun adventure for me. I really, really liked girls... but trust me, you would not want me to be dating your daughter at the time because I was incredibly selfish – really a Hedonist. It was all about maximizing pleasure while minimizing pain.

I wonder – how about you? If you were to do the honest evaluation of the Man or Woman in the mirror, what might you say? Exhausted? Codependent? Addict? Anxious?

And this is convoluted by a huge factor. The Apostle Paul was an ancient missionary who was writing to some friends in the Greek city of Corinth. And he makes this interesting mirror quote.

For now we see only a reflection, as in a mirror, but then we will see face to face. 1 Cor 13:12

In the ancient world, mirrors were not nearly as clear as they are today. Mirrors were made in Corinth but were more like highly shined Chrome than our flat mirrors. In the best-case scenario, a mirror is backward and we view it back to front. But in Paul's world, it was also like looking in a carnival mirror. Distorted. Warped.

This is our self-perception. We see ourselves, but not perfectly. Our images are distorted. Of ourselves, of those around us, and of the world. They are not totally broken, but they are scratched, marred and dented. They are cracked. They are the mirror you pick up at goodwill, not Nebraska Furniture Mart.

So, true confession about me here... I love to believe an image that is not true. I love to project an image that is better than I really am. More handsome, young, adventurous, athletic and popular than reality! And don't we all do that? We carefully dress up for Easter, put together Easter eggs and baskets, snap a pic and put it on Instagram. But it is all a caricature of the reality of our lives.

Lets note that the original image is good... **Genesis 1:27. So God created humans in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. NRSVU**

When God made people, he made us beautiful. Intelligent. Self-aware. Moral. Capable of self-reflection. Capable of LOVE. This is what it means to be created in God's image. But we are also his image to the rest of the world. We are commissioned by him to represent him to creation. A lot like ancient Gods had their statues that represented them to this world, so the real God has people who are his representatives – his image bearers to this world.

This should make you stand a little straighter and walk a little taller. Say it out loud “I am an image bearer. I represent God to this world.” And our commission is to run this world the way God would care for creation and tending to his diverse beauty. And treating every other human with the dignity and love that behind every pair of sparkling eyes is a person made in God's image and of inestimable value.

But the truth is, we have messed it up, haven't we? We haven't cared for the planet. Garbage fills our waterways. Chemical pollutants destroy our land. Deforestation is at crisis levels. And, as far as other people, abuse is common, wars are tragic, divorce is rampant, crime and injustice are despicable. And not only is this world tainted, but our perception is part of the mess.

Now, I like in the Man in the Mirror song, that MJ is sober about the problems of this world and that he says change starts with changing yourself. But the prescription to “Take a look at yourself and make the change” falls short. Because we can make incremental changes through discipline and vision and habits. But we need more than that. We need a revolution. Because we see in part, we are marred, we have partial information. That is why Paul says:

For now we see only a reflection, as in a mirror, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. 1 Cor 13:12

It begs the question, what does he mean by “Then”. When will we see undistorted – like fact to face. When will we know not only in part, but fully.

But HOW. How do we get unstuck? How do we get our mirror unscratched and unwarped? The truth is, we need a revolution. A revolution based in reality. A supernatural change in the present based on a supernatural fact of the past.

And you know what I am talking about – the resurrection of Jesus. 2,000 years ago, Jesus of Nazareth walked around our planet claiming to be God. Audacious. But he backed it up. Boom – healing a blind guy. Boom – jaw dropping teaching. Boom – walking on water. Boom - taking a man with a withered hand and having him stretch it out – perfectly healed. But the one that sealed the deal is when he said to his enemies – his friends – and whoever was listening – I’ll be killed and then on the third day rise from the dead.

His disciples would go home and debate. “What does he mean he will be killed and rise from the dead?” This time Jesus was not talking mystery. He was being literal.

And after three years of public teaching and healing ministry, he was captured, put on a farce of a trial, beaten, and crucified. But this was just the setup. And all day Friday and all day Saturday you could feel the depression deepen and the tension mounting. What would they do now that their master had died and their hopes with him?

Friday was defeating, Saturday was depressing, but Sunday, Sunday was downright dumbfounding and definitely dazzling. Because Jesus was not in the grave... the tomb was empty. The guards ran in fear. The stone was rolled away. This 1000+ pound rock was no longer in front of the tomb. Long before Michael Jackson, this was the first rock and roll.... And the disciples began to believe that Jesus really was alive... and never would die. And it CHANGED their LIVES. They went from Cowards to Communicators. From Wrecked to World Changers. And after a dozen live appearances by a risen Jesus, about 5,000 people became his passionate followers.

This was earthshaking – literally and metaphorically. Because if Jesus could rise from the dead, it would affect every single human being. It could be the turnaround for every throwaway, the life for the listless, the delight from the depressed. It is the ultimate comeback story that could become the foundation for every person to have a turnaround.

But can I tell you a secret? The resurrection is bigger than Jesus. He was just the first. Here is how Paul described it to his Corinthian friends.

51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For the perishable must clothe

itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. 54 When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

55 "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

OK... this is so cool to talk about. I don't know about you, but with each passing day, I am more aware of the mortality and perishable nature of this old bod. I show up at VASA and am reminded to be kind to my body... it's not 25 anymore. Stuff is breaking down and more is coming. But there will come a day when in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, I will be changed to immortal and imperishable. The whole temporary nature of life, the 80 year timeframe... just goes away. So now, the horizon of existence goes on for me – not just 25 years, but 25000, 25 million.

Because Death has been swallowed up in victory. Death is not an end date, but a portal of transformation for a renewed body and a multidimensional experience.

And the transformation starts today. Yes, there will be a revolution when the return of Jesus happens, but there is a mini revolution today. One of our people who experienced this revolution is **ROSALIA. Check out her story.**

Rosalia is not the same person she was when she walked in. **Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, [a]we will also bear the image of the heavenly. NASB** 1 Corinthians 15:49 She is a new person. Originally, she was an earthly person... decaying flesh and bones, human nature, earth bound and death cursed. The stained garment or cracked mirror. But now, she carries in herself the image of the heavenly. She is changed and she will be changed!

And I am not the same person I was when I went to college. In my freshman year, I met Jesus. I was religious before that, but there is a difference between being religious and following Jesus. That semester, after a binge barn dance evening that wasn't nearly as hedonistic and I imagined, I was confronted with my hypocrisy. I gave up my desire to self gratify and gave myself to Jesus unreservedly. I trusted his death on the cross to pay for my sins. And my life drastically changed. My thoughts, my words, my priorities, my life... everything was his. And whatever he wanted me to do for a vocation, whoever he wanted me to date... I was going to trust his ways more than my ways.

And can I just say something a little weird. When I stopped pursuing my own quality of life, my quality of life went up. Way up. I had this deep sense of meaning and purpose. My life

was aligned with the universe. My friendships went deeper. My education was more robust. I took more joy in competing – and loving on my teammates as we did it together. And most of all... I got to know God. And I learned to pray. And his spirit lives in me to this day.

I know that if you are new to CCC, I am just a middle-aged minister. You have never seen me as anything different. But I want you to know... and my friends can testify... I am a changed person. God's life flows in and through me to others around. I don't say this to brag, because it is not me. It is Christ in me. My character is changed. My selfishness is changed and my in-laws are very happy that I dated and married their daughter.

The resurrection is a quality-of-life revolution. Not in the “you can have it all American style” format. But in the “You can know God, live his spiritual life, and have his resurrection power course through your veins. You can be more loving, more moral, more meaning, more peaceful and more alive because of Jesus. And... you can be in that place that Death has no place in your life and no victory in your future.

At Easter, we love to offer that same deal that Jesus offered and Paul talked about. A relationship with God now that changes your self-perception, your world-perception, and your ability to be connected to the Divine. Some of you have been to Easter's here and made a decision for Jesus. Others have been following Jesus for a long time. But every Easter, God is just working in a special way in people's lives that gets a new group to a place where they just want to make Easter Sunday the day that they change their life.

This invitation is for people who want to newly follow Jesus. It could be someone like Rosalia who has a strong felt need, even desperation. It could be someone like me who is finding the hedonistic life is not all it is cracked up to be. Maybe you are a kid and you want to come forward and have a moment you say “I said “YES” to Jesus on that day! Or maybe you are a Senior... and you are realizing there are not a lot more laps before the old ticker gives out... and you want to trust in the one who promises that death will have no sting.

So here is how we are going to work this thing. If you want to say yes to Jesus today, we are going to have you write your name on a mirror down here. It is a symbol that we are gaining the image of Jesus inside of us as we trust in his death and resurrection. **Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, [a]we will also bear the image of the heavenly. NASB** When you do, there will be some of our teammates to high five you and give you a Bible. We do this because this decision on stage is just a first step. We are here to walk you all the way from today until your heavenly encounter. We are your new family and are here for you!

“If you are joining us online today you can text your first and last name to the number on the screen **(402) 915-3212 Lets make this a name bug, not a lower fourth.** we will have

someone in a Yellow Shirt walk on stage and write your name on a mirror. So anyone you see with a yellow shirt represents someone joining with us online today and their commitment to follow Jesus." Then come in any time and we will give you that same new believer kit everyone else is getting.

Also, we are going to be flowing this direction on stage. And that direction in the room. So, balcony, go across this way to the stairs and back up those stairs. And main floor, across this way and then back.

So if today is your day to claim the cross and resurrection of Jesus for yourself, to trust him fully and live his life instead of yours, then don't hesitate. If you want to drag your mom or a friend to come with, that is totally legit. But we have a couple of songs now, so make your way to the front.

Song

Exhortation

Song

Prayer