

Harris Creek Baptist Church  
Jonathan Pokluda  
Series: I AM  
April 9, 2023

The Resurrection and The Life

John 20:11-18

**Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher"). Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.**

He is Risen. Let's go! He is risen, indeed. Indeed, He has. My name is JP, Jonathan Pokluda. If we haven't met let's change that. I have the privilege of serving the staff here for the hundreds of you in the commons right now. Thank you. I'm sure as you were coming to Easter service, you didn't think you'd be sitting outside the auditorium, but we're grateful for your patients with us out there.

I'm from a small town in south Texas and when Monica, my wife and I—we have three kids—and we were there visiting my family. We went to my mother's church which is an even smaller town, about 150 people, country church, at the side of the road behind it is a cemetery. We were there visiting for Easter, and they had an Easter egg hunt. The Easter egg hunt was in the cemetery, which is weird, but it's just kind of how you do it in small towns. So, the kids were looking for Easter eggs amongst the tombs and in middle of the cemetery there was this one grave unlike all of the others. It had this really tall wrought iron fence around it. It looked kind of Gothic and specific and there were no graves around or near it, but they had grown all around it. As the kids were kind of searching for Easter eggs they got enthralled by this tomb and they were younger at the time. They were all just kind of awed and their imagination took over as they began to try to figure out who this person was, in this cemetery in Meyersville, Texas. One of

them said well, it must be the king of the city here. Then another one said no, it's a princess, she's royalty and she died, and they buried her. Another one was like certainly it is royalty. They came up to me, they found me, they ran over and they said, "Daddy who was buried there?" I looked up and sure enough right in the middle of the cemetery there's this huge grave with the big ornate fence. I thought I don't know what that is and so we all went to find my mom, and we said, "Mom, who is it?" My mom's family, the ones that have gone before us, are all buried there, my great grandparents are there, my grandparents are there. So I said, "Mom who is that?" Like why are they so special? And she said, "Well, in the olden days when you had lived a shameful life, they wouldn't bury you with everyone else they put you outside the cemetery. So that person was somebody that did something shameful and when they died, they put them outside of the cemetery and their family came and put a fence around the tomb, around the grave. What happened over time is all of the other graves began to grow around it as the cemetery grew and grew it swallowed it. So now it's kind of the centerpiece" And I thought that's what this day represents.

We celebrate Easter today. So that's what this day represents. That the shameful become royalty. That Jesus takes those who are dead in our sin and He adopts us through His death as sons and daughters and we become heirs and heiresses to the throne. Now I want to be clear, I'm not teaching that you have the opportunity to respond to the gospel after death. Quite the contrary, you and I, we have until the day of our tomb, until the day of our death, to respond to what is called the gospel, the good news, that Jesus Christ died for our sins. Today we celebrate that He raised from the dead and if we trust in Him, we become the sons and daughters of God the King, the Creator of the heavens and the earth. What is happening, and what we celebrate on this day, is an undoing of the curse of death. This is how JRR Tolkien says it. "Everything sad is going to come untrue. And it will somehow be greater for having once been broken and lost."

Cemeteries are a great place for reflecting that if you live a really good life here on earth under the sun, then in the end, you get a rock with your name on it, that someone may visit once a year for a little while. But if you have trusted in the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, you will not die but have eternal life. You will be with God forever and ever and ever. And it's why we fist pump on a day like today. We raise our hands, and we sing songs and we celebrate and cheer because Jesus is the resurrection and the life. If Harris Creek is your church home, we've been traveling through a series called I Am where we're looking at the seven I am statements of Jesus. Lots of people have lots of things to say about who Jesus Christ was or is. Jesus Christ said a lot of things about himself. So, we looked at those phrases he said. Things like I am the bread of life. Things like I am the light of the world. Things like I am the gate. Things like I am the shepherd. Things like I am the Way the Truth and the Life. No one gets to the Father except through me. Things like I am the true vine. Today we're going to go back to

John chapter 11. If you want to turn there in the Bible, the New Testament second part of your Bible you go Matthew, Mark, Luke, and then the fourth gospel, the Gospel of John, and you turn to chapter 11. That's where we'll start at least.

Jesus said, I am the resurrection in the life now we skipped this one so that we could talk about it today on Easter Sunday where we celebrate the resurrection. If Jesus did not raise from the dead, then he should be deemed a lunatic. Someone that walked around the earth and said things like, "I'm a loaf of bread" (audience laughs). "I'm a light, I'm like a lamp. I'm a gate. Look at me. I'm a gate. I'm a little teapot" (audience laughs). No, but if he raised from the dead, then he could have the audacity to say I am God in the flesh and we should lean in and say "I've never seen anybody to do that before. So, if you can raise yourself from the dead, if you can die and resurrect three days later, then I'm listening to whoever you say you are. I'm leaning in and I want to understand it." If you're here and church isn't really your thing, it's not a part of your weekly occurrence, you participate in Christianity under the traditions that you're aware of. What I want you to know is we've kind of gone all in on this reality that Jesus raised from the dead. If he hasn't, then my whole career is a complete and total waste of time and people's money. We waste Easter doing things like this, getting dressed up in pastels and it's just like a really bad family reunion if He hasn't raised from the dead. If He hasn't raised from the dead and then there's really no hope for us and we waste every Sunday morning going to a place like this and really every morning reading stories from the book and history thousands of years old. But if he has been raised from the dead. If he hasn't raised from the dead, the apostle Paul, the Holy Spirit through him, writes this in 1 Corinthians 15, **And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.**

But if he has raised from the dead, if we do have the hope of eternal life, then what Jesus is doing is reversing the curse. He's undoing the brokenness that is in our world. And what I want to argue with you, for just a few minutes that we have together, is that he invites us into that. We have a role to play in the undoing. So that is the application for the believers in the room, the Christians, the Christ followers in the room, I want to show you from the text that we have this role to play in the undoing that Jesus is currently doing. So, as we talk about him being the resurrection and the life I want to talk about how He is reversing the curse. I'm going to be in John 11, as I said, and we're going to see how; the world is not as it should be, how Jesus is the answer, and how we have a responsibility.

Now because we don't have time, I really want to spell this out for you, so you're not confused. We're going to look at two resurrections today; we're going to look at the resurrection of Lazarus first because that's where Jesus spoke the words, I am the resurrection and the life and that's in

John 11. Then we're going to go to John 20 and look at the resurrection of Jesus, the one that we celebrate today on Easter. In between there, just to make things complicated, I'm going to wedge in the creation story, and we're going to go to Genesis one and two and we're going to do all of that in about 15 Maybe 20 minutes. So, lean in, listen, try to follow along.

I'm going to start in John 11. What's happening in John 11 is you have a sibling group; Mary, Martha and Lazarus. These were brothers and sisters. They were Jesus's friends. Jesus spent a lot of time with them. They kind of adopted him as one of their own so, they would hang out. Mary, Martha, Lazarus, Jesus, all friends. Well, Lazarus has died. Now we didn't know anything about his illness, so it probably came upon him quickly and violently and took his life. Jesus has moved on from the town of Bethany in his ministry and he just caught word. "Your friend Lazarus died." And so, he's going to say we have to go back there, but his disciples, the followers close to Jesus, are going to be like, we can't. Remember they tried to kill you when we were in Bethany and he's going to be like, but we must because I've got work to do. Through Lazarus death. Let's go. And that's where we pick up.

Martha is going to meet him at the border of the city. **"Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died."** That's a statement of doubt. So, he's dead, now you can't do anything about it. **"But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."** That's a statement of belief of faith. I trust you. **Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."** Martha answered, **"I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."** Statement of doubt. Can't do it today, though. **Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"** **"Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."** Statement of great belief. They go and get Mary. Now, this is Mary of Bethany. There's some controversy around this. I personally believe it's also Mary Magdalene, but there is some disagreement there. Verse 32, **When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."** Can't do anything about it now. **When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied.** And then John, chapter 11, verse 35, you have the shortest verse in the New Testament. **Jesus wept.** Jesus moved with emotion. He weeps. Why did he weep? He is about to, and spoiler alert, he's about to raise Lazarus from the dead. He knows that. I mean, that's why he stated his reason for going there. I'm going to raise Lazarus from the dead. This is what's going to happen. He's told Martha, this is what's going to happen. He knows

that that's what's about to happen, but before he does, he stopped, and he weeps. Why? It's like before he fixes the problem, he shows deep empathy for the problem knowing that he has the solution for the problem.

Husbands great lesson here in the text, okay. No elbows right now. But let me just say it again before he fixes the problem, and even having the solution for the problem, he shows deep empathy for the problem. At least at face value, that's what seems like is going on here, but I think it's actually more. My first point is the world is broken.

### *1. The World is Broken*

The world that we live in, the world that we walk and experience is not as it should be. It is broken and I believe that is why Jesus weeps because he's looking at death that should not be. People should not get sick. People should not die. This is not God's first desire in the beginning when he created the heavens in the earth. So now we're going to pause right there in that story, and we're going to go back all the way to the very beginning.

Genesis chapter one, verse one. **In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.** then one verse two says something really interesting. I don't know if you've noticed this before, but it says the Spirit of God hovered over the and it says the earth was formless and empty. It was formless and empty. So God is hovering over something that has no form, and it's void. There's nothing in it. So what does God being God begin to do? The Creator God begins to form, give shape to it and fill it. He separates the land from the water and the upper expanse from the lower expanse, the sea from the land. He raises up mountains and he's shaping the earth like Play-Doh and He begins to fill it. Because it was formless and empty. He begins to fill it with oak trees and maple trees and bradford pears and all kinds of grasses and flowers. And then animals, rhinoceros, giraffe, elephant, monkeys, and then he gets to us. And he says, let us make mankind in our image. Male and female he created them and he asked us to do something. The earth was formless and empty. God began to form and fill. God creates us in his image like him. And he says this, **God bless them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number fill the earth and subdue it."** Now mankind made in my image. What I want to do is take this job that I've been doing and pass it on to you. I want you to begin to give land shape and I want you to begin to fill it. Be fruitful in number. Fill the earth and subdue it. Subdue it means to work it and shape it. So, he passes that responsibility on to us. He says, hey, when everything is right in the world, it's a beauty and a perfection that you've never even experienced or come close to. Every best you've ever had here is second best, at least. And he says, I'm passing this on to you. We can commune with God, we talk to him and he answers us. We experienced Him and His presence. He said, oh by the way, don't eat from the tree the knowledge of good and evil, and they're like what? And with a bite, with the crunch of a fruit, creation, as you know and

understand it, is fractured, in the most tragic of ways. Now things hurt and hearts break and babies die. Our lives have a dash in between two dates and cemeteries are necessary. No cemeteries in heaven. But here, cemeteries are necessary. This is what he says in Genesis chapter three, now this the result of the fall because a sin, **I will make your pains and childbearing very severe with painful labor you will give birth to children.** So now the feeling to be fruitful and multiply is going to hurt. Then he says in verse 17, **cursed is the ground because of you through painful toil, you will eat food from it all the days of your life it will produce thorns and thistles for you and you will eat the plants of the field.**

Now the forming is going to be hard. The subduing it's going to be really difficult. You're going to get exhausted. You're going to come home from work exasperated. **By the sweat of your brow, you will eat your food until you return to the ground since from it you were taken.** Now death is a reality. Our lives under the sun are temporary. Cemeteries are necessary. This is why I think Jesus wept. Do you want a greater example of this? A reminder that the world you live in is broken, turn on the news.

Just last week, six people died in a school shooting and we're sad and we're grieved, and do you know what the subconscious thought that we have in the back of our minds. Another one. It's another one. It's another one. And marriage it's hard, all of them, they're challenging. Relationships are hard. Every now and then I meet someone and they're like, no marriage isn't hard, it's easy, man, we're just great, we get along great. Oh, you just got married, oh that's sweet (audience laughs). Newly married that's fun. Child rearing, difficult. It's mixed with worry and fear they're going to go the wrong way or something's going to happen to them. We don't know if we should hover close or step back and we don't know if we're doing it right. Everything is fractured by this fall and death. We go to funerals. There are cemeteries. There are fields on Earth with rocks on them with people's names on them serving as a reminder that we can no longer converse with them, talk with them, hug them, kiss their neck, be with them, talk stories through them, to them, from them. The greatest reminder that the world is not as it should be is the fact that that I have a desire in me to do things that are harmful to me. To look at things and to watch things and to go places and to be with people and to experience the desires of a flesh that I have in this broken world. To do stuff that's actually harmful to my existence because the world is not as it should be. But Jesus came to undo the brokenness. That's my second point.

## *2. Jesus Came to Undo the Brokenness.*

Jesus came to undo the brokenness. In Jesus's ministry, everywhere that Jesus goes, there's an undoing of the curse. There's a reversing of the curse happening. Now I can give you just real examples of this just walking through the gospel. Sick people are made well John chapter four. Blind people can see John chapter nine. Deaf people can hear Mark chapter seven. Mute people

can speak Luke chapter six. Paralyzed people can walk John chapter five. People with shriveled up limbs are restored Luke chapter eleven. Here we have Lazarus and he's dead. He's at the cemetery and watch what Jesus bringing the kingdom of God to this situation. Watch what he does. Verse 38, **Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance.** <sup>39</sup> **"Take away the stone," he said. "But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days."** She's like, I know you can heal the blind, the deaf, the mute, the lame, but it's going to stink. **Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."** When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, **"Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."** Jesus's ministry when Jesus walked on the earth, it was a commercial, everywhere he went for the kingdom to come. That in the kingdom of God everyone sees and everyone hears and everyone tastes and you can run, jump and leap. No one is sick. There is no pain, no broken heart. No hurt. Just beauty. Just perfection in the kingdom of God, the one that awaits us, right. So where he's going he's just showing you a commercial. He's like, look at this commercial for the kingdom that you belong to. You are an ambassador, a representative, let me just give you a glimpse, a small taste, a little flavor, of the kingdom that is to come.

What's interesting about this story, what stood out to me, what got me thinking, this week is Lazarus, he's going to die again. If you ever thought about this, like Jesus is going to leave and he's going to die again. And that would be the weirdest thing ever to experience that because you would be like totally on guard. You'd be like, is this time for real? You know, you'd walk to him and be like are you really dead. I don't know. You're at the funeral and you're given the speech right? And you go back up and you're like, kind of dust the one off like "Hey guys, this is what I said last time. Okay. I'm just going to read it again, if that's all right." You know, and you're just like, What do I do? Just run the play back? We've already been here. We've done this once. You better believe they're going to mourn differently with a greater hope that they're going to see their brother again because they know what Jesus is capable of. He's undoing the brokenness in the world. It's what Jesus is currently doing. It's what he did when he was here, and he's still doing it.

I'm going to show you through his church, but he's undoing the brokenness in the world. You've seen this right? Disney is good for something. They've shown us this in nearly every Disney movie ever made. Whether it's Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, we can go Encanto, Coco, we can go Cinderella. There's a curse on the land. I'll just go Snow White. Okay, there's a curse on the land. Curse on the land. There's somebody, a protagonist, an aggressor, an enemy, has put a curse

on the land and so people are sleepy, they're dazed, confused. The world has turned a grayscale and depression. The beautiful flowers have wilted back to shriveled dead vines. There is no sun. There is no springtime, there is no warmth, no pleasure. And this prince charming comes into the picture to lift the curse with a kiss. She awakens and all of the sudden that greyscale turns to bursts of colors. The sun rises and birds chirp and the shriveled-up vines bloom into beautiful flowers again and people sing and there's joy in the land. The curse has been lifted. Everywhere Jesus is going he's lifting the curse. He's undoing the brokenness in our land.

So today is the greatest evidence that we have of that curse being reversed, the brokenness being lifted. The day that we have the audacity to call good when our God died on a cross. We believe that was a payment for our sins to set us free from sin and death, the law of sin and death. That the price was paid that you don't have to pay for your sins. Listen, every sin is paid for. Every sin is paid for either in eternity or on the cross. Every sin is paid for either in hell or on the cross and God in His kindness gives you the option. He says you choose where you want your sins paid for. I love you so much that I'll pay for them. Or if you reject my payment, then you can pay for them, but that's not what I want for you. I don't want anyone to perish but everyone to come to eternal life, to repentance.

So now travel with me to the empty tomb. Jesus he's died on the cross. He's been placed in the grave. Peter and John go to see him. Mary's about to walk up. And this is what happens. Verse 11, **Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher"). Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.** My third and final point is Jesus invites us into the undoing even the doubters.

### *3. Jesus invites doubters into the undoing.*



The Gospel story of Jesus, it's a deep well, it's both simple, and it's always giving, and also complex. Something that stood out to me this week is how much doubt Jesus's followers had. They were with him all the time. Some of them constantly around the clock. Others of them in seasons with him. Every waking hour they saw him do these miraculous things. If we start in John chapter 11, the disciples, those closest to him Jesus is like, "We have to go back to Bethany." They're like "We can't. They're going to get us. I mean, we know that you can speak to storms, and we know that you can walk on water, and we know that you can heal the sick and the blind and the deaf and the lame, and the mute but what are we ever going to do? They're going to get us." He gets there and he's like "...". They're like, "God, Jesus, if you would have just been here, but you can't do anything now." Don't we always do that? We always think it's too late for God. Like, what's he going to do *now*? And then, you know, he's like, "Okay, man, roll the stone away," and they're like, "No, it's going to stink." I mean, all the while he's telling them what he's going to do. And they're like, no. They're like, "We believe you. We trust you, but I don't know. You sure you know what you're doing?" Isn't that like our faith? Like God, I trust you... kind of. God, I believe in you. You're going to do something great... I hope. I really hope God, I really hope you do.

I don't know if you realize this. But now in John chapter 20. I mean, they come up to an empty tomb guys. The tomb is empty. Jesus repeatedly said on the third day, I'll give you the sign of Jonah. He was in the belly of the whale for three days and then he raised I'm going to destroy the temple and come back in three days. In three days, I'm going to raise to life. I mean, multiple times. He's like, "Hey, disciples, listen, here's what's going to happen. I'm going to go to Jerusalem. They're going to kill me, okay? I'm going to be put in a tomb and I'm going to rise back to life, okay?" Now it's three days. He's not there. And nobody's like, of course, he's not there, he told us this would happen. They're like, where is he? Where did he go? Where have you put him? Where have you taken him? Mary's talking to Jesus and doesn't even realize. They never even for a second think oh this is him. And I don't know if you put this together, but that whole Lazarus thing that was just a few weeks ago at the most. Like you would think someone would be like oh yeah he raises people to death like surely that's what he's going to do. Like, not one person in the Gospels is looking for Jesus. Oh, he's going to come back guys. Hey, have faith. And in fact, Thomas, who spent a lot of time with Jesus, he's like, I don't believe it. They're like yeah no, he raised from the dead. He was like, no, no, this is what he said. **But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."** A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. **Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"** You would think the whole walking through walls would be enough. But he's so patient, you know? **Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and**

**believe.”** What a word. Stop doubting and believe. **Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”** Jesus is so kind and so compassionate, so tender and so patient with those who doubt. In fact, that’s the group of people that he’s going to build the most powerful force the world has ever seen, the church. His hands and feet to continue the process of the undoing. I don’t know if you realize but he, but he shows up as a gardener. It’s like he’s taking us back to the garden. He says, Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you’re looking for? Thinking he was the gardener. Now it’s possible, that’s just mistaken identity. That it’s irrelevant that John would add that detail, but a lot of scholars think that’s important. I mean, brilliant minds like the likes of NT Wright and many others that have written commentaries that you read. In fact, my friend Jordan Rayner, says this, and I love the way he puts it, “Scholars suggest that by including this detail of Mary mistaking Jesus for the gardener, John is contrasting Jesus, the “Last Adam”, with the First Adam and Genesis two. Fast forward thousands of years, and here at the resurrection, God is inaugurating a whole new world. And the Last Adam is choosing to appear as a gardener as a symbolic way of saying that he is planting heaven on earth once again. And just as the First Adam had his bride Eve to help him cultivate the first creation, Jesus, the Last Adam has his bride, the Church, to help him cultivate the final one.”

In the beginning, the Earth is formless and void, and the Spirit of God hovers over it and begins to form it and fill it. And creates man in his image and says I want you to continue to form and fill the earth. So, he passes that responsibility on to man, mankind, humans. He has it now and he goes, “Okay, I’m going to fill the earth and subdue it I’m going to be fruitful and multiply in it.” And God’s like, “Don’t eat from that tree.” And he’s like, “I won’t...” And the world as you know is fractured. Jesus shows up on the scene, and he starts putting it back together, starts collecting it, and picking up the pieces. Building it back as it should be, these commercials for heaven. Then he ascends to be with the Father and He passes on the responsibility to the church. He says, I want you to finish what I’ve started, bringing heaven to earth. I want you to finish what I’ve started. There’s this responsibility that we have that I don’t know if it’s been clear to us in the scriptures what we are to do. So, what does it mean? If you’re in a position of leadership, it means you remove drudgery, you bring pleasant things to situations and experiences, you make them joyful. If you’re an artist, you create the most beautiful arts for the glory of God. You take blank canvases and you put colors on them that bring about life that people are inspired to want to know your God. If you write songs, you write the best songs. Beautiful poetry as acts of worship, to God, the Creator of the heavens of the earth. If you plant a garden, plant the best garden. Grow beautiful fruit and share it with your neighbors. Whatever you do, do it to the glory of God. Work at it with all your heart as if this the Lord Jesus Christ you’re serving. That’s what it means to represent the kingdom. As you raise children, you raise them up to know the Lord. So, as they grow older, they will not depart from that path. In your marriage, you work to

reconcile disagreements to show the world what it looks like when two people are surrendered to the spirit putting their own selfish desires aside to serve one another. You invite your neighbors into your home so they can experience it. As commercials for the kingdom in the same way, wherever Jesus went, there was a commercial for the kingdom. Wherever his followers go, they display the kingdom to a broken world. They're putting it back together. They're fixing it and that's what we do. As we do that, like Mary, we go out into the world and we say, "Come and see our resurrected Lord. He died for our sins, and He raised from the grave." So, if you do not know Him, if you have not surrendered your life to Him, there is a greater responsibility placed on your shoulders today just because of where you are.

The Gospel plain and simple is that Jesus God in the flesh, God's own Son came to this earth lived a perfect life. He never sinned. He wasn't deserving of punishment, so the punishment he received was the one that you deserve. See, you sinned against an eternal God and your sin, your grievance against the eternal God, requires an eternal payment. You can pay for it yourself in eternity or an eternal God can pay it on your behalf. That's what happened on Easter. God wrote the check for your sins. On Easter Sunday that check cleared it. It was deemed good, giving you the hope of eternal life that you don't have to die in your sins.

In summary, I just beg you to believe that if you haven't. With all I am, I would effort to compel you. I will skip lunch with my family. I'll stay here as long as it takes to have any conversation you want to have and do the best I can to answer any question you may have. So that you would come to know that God.

In summary, the world is broken, Jesus came to undo the brokenness, and Jesus invited doubters into the undoing. Just as I realized this week, there's no cemeteries in heaven. There's no need for them. The band is going to come up right now as I just say this to you for a moment. As I realized there's no cemeteries in heaven. I realized that the work of the church, that is Jesus's people, not this building, but those of you who've trusted in Christ, you are the church, the work of the church is helping people work through their hurts and their healing. To help heal their hearts in the same way that the Spirit of God does, He does it through us. That we minister to people, that we love them. There's an amazing ministry here, Monday nights, that I get to see happen all the time, through the ministry of regeneration. That people are experiencing real and true healing from pain they've had in their lives. So, what I want to do is I want to wrap up our time by you hearing, my friend, Brennan's story and how God did that in his life and then I want to have him Brennan himself, lead us in worship to that amazing God who beat the grave. Would you watch this (Video begins to play).

Brennan: You know, as a child my environment was just so inconsistent. My parents separated when I was two years old. My mom being a single mom, she would leave me with my

grandmother, who unfortunately would go into like schizophrenic spells and she would think that the television was telling her that everybody in our family was dead, and she would express that to us as young children. When I felt like things were getting kind of out of control or dangerous, I would go lock myself in the closet and like play my guitar, you know, for hours on end. I don't think it was necessarily suicidal thoughts at that age as much as just like a desire to die. When I was 10, through upward basketball, we got invited to go to church and I heard a full presentation of the gospel. And I knew in that moment that the thing that I felt that was missing from my life was Jesus. You know, middle school, high school, music was everything that I was about, and I had a youth pastor at that church that you know, saw something in me I didn't even see it myself. He started asking me to lead worship on a regular basis for the youth group there. Even throughout all that, there was depression, but it would be fleeting, you know, momentary thoughts. I feel like I had a really good solid community around me in those high school years. And so, when I got to Baylor, like all that was evaporated, and being on the spectrum, you know, relationships don't come very easily for me. I was suddenly thrust into this new environment, not just with you know, no community I felt like surrounding me but also these immense expectations that come with music school. You know, it just started to push me into isolation, and I started to spiral because, you know, because I wasn't healthy. If you're the person that's always five minutes late to class you smell like you haven't showered people around you start to distance themselves from you. But when you're in a dorm room, you don't really have anywhere to go or to hide and so I resorted to going out to my truck and you know, sleeping in my truck in the Dutton parking garage. I eventually get to this place where you know, the scholarship is going away and the enemy just, you know, sowing these seeds of doubt in my mind. My upward basketball coach, you know, one of his favorite verses was Jeremiah 29:11, **For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and to give you a hope and a future.** I couldn't see a hope or a future. I wanted to cease to exist, like I wanted to completely disappear. And so, in my mind, I was like, well, I'm going to go jump in the river. And so, I started filling up a backpack with rocks and started walking towards the McLean stadium bridge. When I was walking there, there was like an ornate like flowered cross and zip tied to it is this little cardboard sign and it said **For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and to give you a hope and a future.** It just instantly, like in that moment transported me back to that place of being 10 years old and, you know, my basketball coach, cared so much for me, speaking those words into my life and having me memorize those words onto my heart. I just realized in that moment, like I mean, God was telling me wake up, like, you don't have to do this. Jesus has a heart for you and loves you and He wants you to have fullness of life in Him, not death.