

the gospel of

# JOHN

all intents and purposes

## John: What Jesus' Resurrection Reveals to You

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### John 20:1-18

Good morning, Doxa. This morning we're going to be reading from John chapter 20, verses one through 18.

Now, on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early while it was still dark and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, they have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they have laid him. So Peter went out with the other disciple and they were going towards the tomb. Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came following him and went into the tomb.

He saw the linen cloths lying there and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple who went and reached the tomb first also went in and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes. But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. And they said to her woman, why are you weeping? She said to them, they have taken away my Lord and I do not know where they have laid him. Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

Jesus said to her, woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking? Supposing him to be the gardener, she said, sir, if you have carried him away, please tell me where you have laid him and I will take him away. And Jesus said to her, Mary. She turned and said to him in Aramaic, Rabboni, which means teacher. And Jesus said to her, do not cling to me for I have not yet ascended to the Father, but go to my brothers and say to them, I am ascending to my Father

and your Father, to my God and your God. And Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, I have seen the Lord and that he had said these things to her. This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Well, good morning everyone. That's it? It's Easter. I thought the 11:30 would be loud. Hey, he's risen. He's risen! This is great news, right? We get to celebrate this name Jesus, today. This is big for us. Jesus. Jesus. He's had many names so depending on the culture and the history, you've been a part of-Jesus, you can call him Yahawashi, you can call him Yeshua, you can call him whatever, Jesus. You can call him these different names, but they all mean the same thing. It all means that our Lord Savior Jesus Christ has risen from the dead and represents something so big for us. Jesus, Jesus! He's risen. Caught you sleeping! All right, you gotta be ready. It's the last service of the day. You gotta be ready.

Hey, listen, we throw a party every year called Easter. And it's to celebrate this good news, this good news that Jesus has risen from the dead. And now this name Jesus has influenced by the way, regardless of where you find yourself today, Christian or not, every person to walk the face of the earth. This name has done that in some form or fashion. Because of Jesus, and those that have claimed to follow Jesus over history, so much of our history evolves around what Jesus has done and who he is. Now, for instance, as an example, this year is 2023, right? Or as my six-year-old would say, it's two thousand and twenty-three, right? And next year will be two thousand and twenty-four. And have you ever considered, and maybe you know already just exactly what we're counting back from. What are we counting away from? We're not counting away from the Persian Empire or the Roman Empire. We're not counting away from Gandhi or Martin Luther King or the Reformation, or even the year of Muhammad, or the year of Joseph Smith, or even the year of Abraham. No, we're not counting away from any of those things. We're counting away, we are 2023 years away from the year of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This bible, this book here, written by God and for his people, is the most published book in human history, published 22,000 times more than the next closest book. It's huge. And if you like to read, you're welcome, the printing press was literally invented to print Bibles. But maybe you don't like to read and you love movies. Maybe you hate movie adaptations. Maybe you hate Hunger Games or something like that, and you would rather read it, okay? Maybe that's your story. If you like movies, the first long movie ever crafted was actually a story about the life and passion of Jesus Christ. Reynolds Price, a non-Christian novelist, he makes an interesting case in a Time magazine article that labeled Jesus Christ the person of the millennium. He says this, it would require much exotic calculation, meaning someone would have to really fudge the numbers to deny that the single most powerful figure, not merely in the last two millenniums, but in all of human history, has been Jesus of Nazareth.

So Christians believe Jesus is a big deal. We believe he is a massive deal. But why? Well, all because of this big thing we're celebrating this morning called the resurrection. This is a big deal. We believe that Jesus Christ literally rose from the dead. Not like some, you know, ancient Greek myth that he rose from the dead, but no, we believe he actually literally bodily

resurrected. You see, there's something in us all that makes this meaningful to us because Christian or not, we all deeply have a sense that the world is not the way it's supposed to be. We all feel that in our gut, right? Because there is sickness, there is sadness, there is injustice, there is division. There's even death in this world. And we all feel it, don't we? We all know it's true. And any time something in one of those natures happens, you know what we don't say? Ah, this doesn't seem like a big deal. Not a big deal. It's just natural selection. It's the way, it's nature taking its course. Sure mom died or Gram-Gram died, but it's no big deal. We move on. Life's life. Do we say those things? No. What do we do? We grieve, we cry, we get angry. We get frustrated with the world. We get sad, we get lonely, we get hurt. We're ashamed of the things we've done.

You know why we feel this way? It's because of this thing called sin. Maybe that's a new word for you. Sin. S-I-N. Sin is the idea that we all essentially miss the mark, right? Think about it like a target. In the center of the target is the bullseye. That's the perfect way to live. And you and I, we're way over there. We're not even close to hitting this mark. This is where we say, we do, or we think some things that hurt God, hurt other people or hurt ourselves. Now I know it's getting into the afternoon and maybe you're getting ready for lunch, but I do have a question for you. Who here, by show of hands, feels like they've done something that has hurt themselves, hurt other people or hurt God? Yeah, most of us. Okay, great. Congratulations, you're a sinner. Okay? You're a sinner. So am I. We're all sinners.

Now sin can be done by us, but it also can happen to us. Now, who here has been hurt by somebody else's actions, thoughts, or words? It's happened, right? We're bumping into each other. It hurts us. For those of you that love technology, think about sin as an inherent glitch in our operating system. It's in all of us and it makes us feel like something just isn't right about the world. We all feel that no matter what you believe about anything in regards to God.

Do you know the first human beings ever created, brought sin into this world? They brought sin into this world, so we sense this hard thing. Now we've all inherited it in the same way we inherit skin color or hair color or eye color. We all inherent this idea that we miss the mark, that we sin. It's all in us. It's embedded in our DNA. There is no way you can just not sin anymore. It's impossible. It's in us. And as a result, we experience and feel separation from God and constantly feel like the world's not the way it's supposed to feel. Constantly feel that way, but God, however, was not content to let people die in their sins and not content to remain broken off or separated from the people he loves most. You understand? So, while the cost of sin means we should all die, and by the way, the reason you die is because we all sin-if there were no sin, there would be no death. But in fact, because we sin, we die. Because of this, God is not interested in us being separated from him. He does not want us to pay the cost of what death is and what it means.

So he sends his only son Jesus, into the world to live a perfect life. And you know what Jesus does when he gets here? He heals the sick. He gives sight to the blind. He helps the lame walk. He shows us what a world could look like if people live by their ethics of peace and joy and love and goodness and kindness and volition and intentionality, and if things like sickness and death

and envy and evil were all eradicated from the world. He shows us what it looks like. But as you may or may not know, if you know the story of the Bible; the story of the Bible is that God's own people have him executed. Not just angry Romans, although angry Romans did participate, his own people, the nation of Israel, the people he came to save, had him killed and strung up on a cross, murdered, and then buried. But the wages of sin is death, right? And the reason we all die is because we sin and did Jesus sin? No, because he was the perfect, son of God, death could not hold him. And he resurrected from the dead three days later saying, whoever would believe in me would not have to pay the penalty for their sin. My death, my unjust death, the blood shed would be the cost paid for your sin. I would take your sin and your loss from you, put it on me on the cross and give you back my perfection. That way when you go up here before God the Father at the end of time and you walk up to stand in account for all the things you've done, you go humble and you say, I'm nothing, my actions mean nothing, except that Jesus Christ died for me. And God will look upon you and go, that's right. You're made perfect. Welcome home, thanks to Jesus.

It's nothing you did. You didn't come more righteous to church. That's not how you make yourself right with God. You can't make yourself right with God. The only thing you can do is humbly submit to the story that Jesus has given us. Either you pay for your sins or he does. And you get to choose. You see, it's because of Easter, it's because of this resurrection that all who would believe in Jesus, we all get an opportunity for new life, don't we? We all get an opportunity to be something new. We don't have to be known by the wrong things that we've all done. And by the way, some of you carried in the hard things that you've been doing, on your shoulders as you walked in this door. And you think, man, there is just no way God's going to just accept me. And you're right. He won't. That's why he sends Jesus to the world to remove that burden off of you. And you can let that fall off. You can let it fall off right now. It's because of this resurrection that we have an opportunity for new life. We don't have to be known by the wrong things we've done. And by the way, you don't have to be known by all of the hard things that have happened to you, all of the shame and guilt and hardship that's been placed on your shoulders. Maybe you walk around living like that is who you are. And let me tell you something, not in the kingdom, it's not. You can be made clean before Jesus, if you believe in the resurrection. We can have eternity with God in the next life but hear me, peace and freedom and joy in this one too. This is not a waiting game, waiting for glory. You actually can live with a supernatural contentment.

Now, we don't have a lot of time this morning, but for those of you that are not followers of Jesus, or maybe you see yourself as like, let's call yourself a casual follower of Jesus-maybe you pop in at Easter, Christmas and Mother's Day. That's what I did when I grew up. And that's great, happy to have you. Or maybe you're here and you feel like you are a Christian, maybe you're actually not. Or maybe you're here and you are a Christian and you need some reminding. Regardless of where you find yourself, there are a few things that I want you to know that God wants you to know. Okay? There are a few things. There are three things that God wants you to know before you leave this morning.

Here's the first thing. God welcomes people of all sorts and kinds into his midst. Let me tell you something. Many people think God only wants a particular and especially religious type person to engage him. If I'm religious, if I'm good, if I'm righteous, then God will accept me and then I will be sort of "free" to be a good Christian, right? But here's what you need to know. While you might think God's only after a particular sort of person, you need to know that God's after you too. He's specifically after you. He's not just after the sort of person that might believe in him in some sort of nebulous idea. He's actually specifically and literally after you, individually. You're not here for any other reason other than that. You need to know that he's after you too. No matter how bad you think you are, no matter how lost you think you are, and no matter how apathetic you think you might be in your faith, or if you even consider yourself faithful, you need to know that God's come after you.

How do I know? Well, let's look at the story. Let's look at chapter 20, verse one. And if you don't have a Bible, that's okay. They're going to be on the screen. But if you do, you can open up to verse one in chapter 20. It says this. Now, on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. It's a very heavy stone to be rolled. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, they have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they have laid him.

Hmm. So Peter went out with the other disciple and they were going towards the tomb. Fast forward with me to verse 11, but Mary, it's Mary Magdalene again, stood weeping outside the tomb and as she wept, she stooped in to look into the tomb and she saw two angels in white sitting there where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. And they said to her, woman, why are you weeping? Why are you weeping? She said to them, they have taken my Lord away and I do not know where they have laid him. Having said this, she turned around and she saw Jesus standing, but she didn't recognize who he was. Jesus said to her, woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?

Now, Jesus could have appeared to anyone first after his resurrection. Couldn't he have? I mean, you would think the first obvious choice is like Peter, James and John, this inner circle of his disciples or maybe all 12 disciples. Why not to his closest friends? Why didn't he find the religious and moral teachers in the area? Because think about it, if he goes to the Sanhedrin, he finds the religious rulers, Caiaphas, the high priest. And what he does is he tells them, hey, listen, I know you killed me. Clearly, I'm alive. I'm back. I'd like to streamline this whole process. I need 500 witnesses real quick. I'm going to perform a few miracles. I'm going to teach you a few things and then I've got to get up to heaven. I've got a six o'clock with God the Father coming up soon, right? He doesn't do that. He doesn't do that.

Who does he appear to first? A woman named Mary. Now we first hear of Mary in Luke chapter 8 where we see she was, get this, possessed by demons. She was under demonic possession. And we don't know a lot about her except that in order to be possessed by demons, you've got to have a lot going on in your life. You've got to have a lot of sin, a lot of baggage, a big past, and certainly no understanding of who God is and what he's done for you. Now, this should hit

us all very, very, very hard with what we're trying to say with a woman. Because here it is, if you were looking for a way to cook up the resurrection story, you would not appear to a woman first. Because in the ancient days, 2000 years ago, a woman was not a viable form of a witness. You would need a man, preferably a wealthy and prestigious man. But Jesus doesn't care about the way you prove something is true. He appears to whom he wants to and he finds a woman with a challenging past and no religious background or status. That would be the first person he appears to.

You know, Jesus has a pattern of this in the whole Bible. This is the story-Jesus chooses the downtrodden, not the mighty. He finds the people that are broken and lost. Jesus chooses the ordinary. You think you have to be extraordinary to be in God's midst. You've got to be some like gold wearing preacher with like nice shoes on and you're this and this, or you've got to be a wealthy person, or you've got to be Justin Bieber or somebody in order to get to God or whatever. That's not how it works. God's not after those people.

God chooses the faceless and the ordinary. He chooses those who are stuck in their sin. You've brought something here today, haven't you? We all have. You brought something. Guess what? God's not waiting for you to get rid of that out of your life before he is willing to engage you. He'll actually come and meet you where you're at and then remove it from you. That's his plan for you. He chooses those who are stuck in their sin and he chooses the broken and the lost and the weak and the marginalized. That's who Jesus appears to.

If you've come here today thinking that your God, if he is real, is a distant abstract idea that you need to pursue with piety and formality in order to be welcomed or accepted by him, you'd be wrong. That's not the God of this Bible. No. And if you've been told otherwise, I'm sorry. That's called cold, hard religion and cold, hard religion is the belief that if you do good, look good and act good, God will love you. If you do good, look good and act good, God will welcome you to his family. But that's not the gospel of Jesus. In fact, Jesus says, you don't do good, look good and act good and then I'll love you. He says, you do good because I already do love you. I already love you. The story of my resurrection is that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Not that we got ourselves ready to go. All right, God, am I good enough? Speaking of demonic, that's what that is.

God wants you to know something else this morning. If you're here, and you're not a Christian, you're new, maybe you feel like you're a casual Christian or maybe you just need a reminder of who you are. God says this, when you embrace his resurrection, you will no longer have to rush off to go make yourself matter. And I know there's a lot of that going on. There is something deep inside us that wants all of us to matter and belong to people in a society. We want that. We long for it. We want people to see us and to feel us. We want that connection. That's why belonging is something we feel like we were born with, ingrained in our DNA. This is why our community and homes and churches and schools and neighborhoods matter so much to us. We want that. But what if along the way you were living your life, you were made to feel by somebody or someone or something internally, maybe even, like you don't matter and belong as you are. What then?

Well, you do what all Americans do. Well, if you don't matter to anyone, you've got to go rush off to make yourself matter. You've got to go prove your worth and your contributions to the world. You've got to get a good job, go to a good school. You've got to take on a bunch of debt to impress a bunch of people you don't even like, get a nice house, update the kitchen, buy the new car, go into debt, wear the nice shoes, cook the right food, impress the spouse, have the best profile online, have more followers, likes, comments and views. We all might then, if that's true for us, which I think most of us it is, manage our relationships like contracts, feeling like we need to hold up our end of the bargain. That's called performing by the way, in order to be loved. Dance for your supper. Dance for people to love you. Play the game.

You know, I actually think this is why we all live such rushed, busy and distracted lives in America, especially here on the Eastside. We're all so busy and rushed and distracted. Many of us are here at the 11:30 because it was a crazy morning and I missed the 10:00, right? That's how it works. We're very busy. This is why we work so hard in our jobs and schools. This is why we buy stuff, travel to places, posting online, so at least one person will reciprocate all of the hard work that I've put in to matter with, "Oh, that's nice. Oh, I like that. Oh, maybe they're not such a bad person. Or you know what? They could afford that marble and that granite countertop, maybe they're not so bad." That's what we look for. And you know what the result is to that in your heart, and you know it's true, I don't have to tell you, I'll just name it for you. The result is a break-neck, hurried pace of life that leaves us exhausted and stressed out, overstimulated and anxious.

Wouldn't it be great to live free of the concerns of other people knowing that you already do matter? Wouldn't that be great if you didn't have to go rush off to make yourself matter because you knew deep down, I'm so content because I already matter. One of my favorite things about Jesus is, if you're hearing this story, one of my favorite things about him is how unconcerned Jesus is with hurrying up to meet other people's expectations. Like I just want that so bad.

Look at verse three of our passage. It'll be on the screen. It says, so Peter went out with the other disciple and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first and stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came following him and went into the tomb. And he saw the linen cloths lying there and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in, and he saw and he believed.

Now first, it's hilarious how the writer of this gospel, John, decides to write into the gospel story how much faster he was than Peter. I mean like if you were looking for the ultimate Trump card to like nail your buddy, like I got this guy. Like guess what? I'm going to write into the gospel that's going to last for a few thousand years that you're slow. You think he lost that bet somewhere along the way and was like, now everybody knows you have two flat feet. Either way, that's brutal. Perhaps more importantly though, Jesus apparently in this setting, he's

resurrected. He's not there. And what did he do first? Did he go rush off to go save the world? Oh, hey, I've got to get going. Hey, listen, Mary, I've got to run. Five hundred people are waiting for me. I've got to appear. I've got that dinner coming, I've got to run. I'm busy. No time. No. He peacefully arises. He decides to unwrap his face cloth. He sits peacefully, takes a few breaths. He folds the face cloth and sets it next to him. And why is that included here? Why is that here? He peacefully rose and decides to unwrap his face cloth.

This is convicting for me and I think it will be for you too. When you believe the resurrection of Jesus, you don't need to go rush off and be all stressed out to make something yourself. You see the resurrection in its nature, believing the resurrection means you already are something, automatically. You are a child of God. You're loved. You're adored. You already matter to God because he died for you. And what's the rush anyway? We're off running around doing a bunch of stuff. Maybe you're thinking you don't understand, I've got an 8:00 AM meeting. I've got soccer three times this week. Such and such is coming for dinner. Tuesday I've got that zoom at four o'clock. You don't understand, I'm really busy. And yet Jesus' demeanor is an example of the pace that all of us will live at in the new kingdom of God if we believe in the resurrection. And why have you over-committed by the way? Because that's what it really is. My guess is, like we've said, somewhere along the way you were told that you don't matter, and you don't belong and you've got to go prove it. That's why when Tom Brady was asked about his Super Bowl runs, they say, Hey Tom, you have seven Super Bowls. What's your favorite Super Bowl? He says the next one. Something to prove. But a belief in the resurrection means, friends, you already matter to God. You already matter.

Last thing God wants you to know this morning, it's this. If you haven't paid attention to anything, this is your chance. God calls you by name, specifically by name. Specifically by name. I don't want you to leave here this morning believing that the story of Jesus is not sort of specifically for you. The facts of the resurrection aren't just intended for, I don't know, a select few people who sort of believe that the Christian ideology is the way they choose to live. And I'll choose a different way to live. And what's good for you is good for you. And what's good for me is good for you. No, no, no, no. This isn't a truth. This is the truth. But it's not just an abstract truth, it's a truth specifically for you. If you're here and you're not a Christian, I'm going to tell you something. I want to tell you something specifically. You're only here because God ordained it. You're only here to hear this specific message because he wanted you here. We believe in autonomy all we want but let me tell you something. The Bible says that God holds the oceans of the earth in his hands. He's not interested in playing mind games, philosophical mind games. He's here because he wants you here. He calls you specifically by name. And the facts of the resurrection aren't just intended for people who call themselves Christians. This story's for you. I'll prove it to you.

Look at verse 12 in chapter 20. And she saw, this is Mary Magdalene again, two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, woman, why are you weeping? And she said, they have taken away my Lord. I do not know where they have laid him. Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there. But she did not know it was Jesus. And then Jesus said to her, woman, why are you weeping?



Whom are you seeking? Supposing him to be the gardener, which man, brutal. She said to him, sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him and I will take him away. Then Jesus said to her, Mary. Then she turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni" which means teacher. Verse 18, Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, I have seen the Lord and that he had said these things to her. There's this wonderful moment I want you guys to understand and imagine where Mary, a woman who had no religious background and has a troubled past, is a marginalized citizen in her community, and is there waiting and longing to be with Jesus, and he is gone she thinks, but then Jesus shows up to her and he shows up in such an ordinary way that she doesn't recognize him. It's only until Jesus calls her by her name, Mary, that her eyes are open to the reality that he is there to share this moment with her.

Reflection is not the strong suit of most Americans. Let's be honest, right? We love pleasures of life. We love social media. We love the pursuit of dreams and goals. But hear me, they distract us from the deep reality in our hearts that we know this world is not all there is. There must be more than dying to live and living to die. The Bible says in the Old Testament that God has stitched eternity in our hearts. And so that we feel this sense that there must be more for us than just our own existence. We feel a creator-sized hole in our chests and we mask it all day with food and addiction and pleasure hoping that if we're not quiet, it'll just go away somehow. Let me tell you, it's always waiting for you. But for all of us, even though we long for God, he'll often show up in small things and he's so kind and so subtle, just like Mary, we miss him. Feels too ordinary.

But then one day, one day, maybe in your worst moment, maybe in a moment of celebration, maybe when someone is sick in your family, and hear me, I know someone is sick. Maybe when a job is lost, or a job is taken, maybe when the kids just get so hard, you just throw up your hands and go how is anybody supposed to do this? Maybe in the midst even of a sermon like this, God shows up to you and he cries out, Mary. He calls you by your name, Mary. And he awakens you to himself. And all of a sudden everything that you believed about God was so subtle you missed it. But when God calls you, you're like, oh, the sunrise makes sense. The mountains make sense. The ocean makes sense. The earth makes sense. The look in my child's eyes makes so much more sense now that God has called me and I can believe the resurrection and know I finally matter. I'm not just here cosmically, stardust bumping into other stardust, and when I die, nothing happens. There's more to life.

For many of you God's calling you right here in this very moment. You might have thought you didn't matter to God. Maybe you thought you didn't matter all that much to him, if you did matter. Let me tell you something, you do. You do. And he wants you to respond to him in a way that acknowledges him. So when he finally opens his mouth to you, maybe right here in this moment, maybe in some other moment he says, Mary, and you turn around and you go, teacher! Rabboni! My Lord, my God! I thought you forgot about me. I thought this world was meaningless. I thought my anxiety was never going to lift. You're here.

I went away for eight days not too long ago. And I couldn't use the phone and it was crazy. But I went away and I was spending time with seven folks who are all therapists, but none of them

were Christians. And in fact, I know this because at varying times during their shares, they said, I hate Christianity. I hate God, or I hate pastors, which puts me in a precarious spot, right? So, I'm a little afraid, but people weren't very excited about God. That's okay. I love that community. I love to share what I believe and what other people believe. And I think it's great that we can have our stories bump into each other.

But there was one point where we were told we needed to meditate together and spend some time quietly reflecting on whatever. And I pull out my big Bible and it's a bigger one than this. And I'm reading it because I'm going to meditate, how I'm going to meditate. Like I meditate on the word of God, okay? So pull it out. And as we're kind of doing this, four of the people, four of the eight, they get up and they leave. So they walk out and say, we're not going to do this anymore. We're going to go for a walk. This is too much. So they walk out.

So it's me and three other people and none of them are Christians. And we're sitting in this room, it's not a big deal. And I'm just reading my book and there's this one girl, she's from Texas and got like a country accent. She sounds...I don't know if that's offensive to you if you're from Texas. I don't know. It was like that. And I'm reading my book and in the middle of it, about 15 minutes into our meditation, she says, "Eddie." And I'm thinking, oh no. Like what is she about to do? Like what did I do wrong this time? And she says, if there's anything in that book that you think would be helpful for the group, would you share it?

And I thought, I got some things! We could be here a while! How much time do you have? And so I quickly am like, "yes, Lord." I flip to Luke chapter 15, and I read her the story, I read the group the story of the Parable of Lost Sheep. This is a story where Jesus has, or the shepherd rather, has a hundred sheep and 99 are righteous and good. And one of them is the lost sheep who wanders off. And Jesus says, heaven rejoices when the lost sheep is found by the shepherd more than if the 99 had stayed. And she's like, oh my goodness. She's in tears and there's an emotional moment. And she says, am I the lost sheep? And I said, we all are the lost sheep.

And she's like, that's so nice. That book you're reading, the Bible, it's so beautiful. The first thing I'm going to do when I get home is I'm going to go buy one of those. I love the pages. And I said, oh, well if I offer you mine, would you take it? And she starts crying. And she's like, "yes!" So I stand up and I walk over and I hand her my Bible. It's a really nice Bible. Got to get another one. And she takes the Bible, and she rubs the pages, and she turns the pages, and she rubs, and she reads, and she's, "Wow, you've given me such a precious gift."

Later that night she disappears. The next morning we come back, and we all have our share moments from our meditation reflection. And she starts to do her share. And she knows everyone's sort of not excited about Jesus. And she says, I just have to pause for a second. Eddie gave me a Bible last night and he told me to read the book of John because all the other gospels will tell you what Jesus did, but this one tells you who Jesus was. And I read it last night in my room and I think I had an experience with God that I don't know or understand. Something happened. And then she looks at me and she says, thank you Eddie. She's right. It is a precious gift.

The story from Genesis to Revelation of God's people rebelling against him and him still dying for them on their behalf and rising from the dead is a precious gift-that the resurrection could become a reality in her life and it could become a reality in your life.

There is not a more important decision that you can make than to acknowledge the hole in your soul, that you turn your back to the hard things that you've been doing, the brokenness, the sin, the rejection that you've been doing, and give your life over to the one who does make you matter and belong. Because the shepherd is willing to leave the righteous sheep to go where the wild things are and go find you. Some of you thought you were just coming to church on Easter today because someone invited you and you're going to go to brunch after. And maybe you will and I hope your brunch is great. Or just lunch at this point, whatever it is.

One time when I was 19, I walked into a church when I first became a Christian thinking the same thing-that I was just going to go to Easter, get some donuts for free and some coffee and then head out and go get something to eat. But you know what I did? What happened? Instead of just going in there and enjoying myself and leaving, my life changed. The way I saw the world flipped on its head and I could never go back, that the resurrection of Jesus Christ really happened and really mattered for me. I could never go back.

Friends, consider this moment permission to allow your life to change and begin living for something far greater than you ever could have thought. And everything in you is telling you right now that this isn't the moment that you do this. That there's lawyers in your gut and in your stomach saying, and in your head telling you, oh, I don't know about that. I mean this isn't it. You've got stuff to do. I mean, think about all the meetings. This isn't the time you give your life to Jesus. And I'm telling you right now, the Holy Spirit is saying this is it. It's time to turn your back on the way you've been living and give your life to something far more and far greater. You've been playing around for a long time and God is so patient with you. But today's the day. Consider this permission to allow your life to change before God. You don't have to live any longer like you don't matter and belong because in the resurrection, you do matter and belong. Let's pray.

O Lord, I pray for my friends who find themselves far from you today. Not because of you Lord, but because they've chosen that. And that's okay, and you've been patient. But will you let them know right now by the power of the Spirit that you love them and that you've heard them, their cries, and their sadness, and depression, and anxiety and shame and that you've come for them. And some of them have been living by what mom and dad said or what the spouse said or what somebody else said or their boss said, and they're living under a roof of condemnation that they're not something valuable and they don't matter and they don't belong and they should just be quiet. But God, you haven't said that to them. You come to free them from shame. You unshackle the shackled. I pray for my friend Allie that I got to hang out with, that that book would matter to her. That she would see something special in that and she would give her life over to you knowing that the shame and the guilt that she's riddled with can be taken from her in the resurrection. And I pray for all my friends that are here that feel like, hey, I am a Christian, what do I do next? Well, you've got to go share the good news. Would you

empower them by the Spirit? Would they go out and bring more friends into our midst and in their midst and invite them to coffee shops, and restaurants, at our homes to tell them that the resurrection happened and it's real and it matters for them. We love you. We praise you, and we give you all of our thanks in Jesus' good name we pray, Amen.