

North Summit Church
Hebrews 13:20–25
Easter Sunday 2026

He Lives: A Resurrection Benediction

Introduction

- This Easter morning we are wrapping up our series in the book of Hebrews - and ends with a benediction. This is a word that we often use in the church but we often don't talk about what it means. By the time we get to the end of a service, we are already mentally reaching for our coats. We treat it like a polite closing remark signaling the service is over.
- But in the ancient world a benediction was nothing like that. The word itself comes from the Latin: to speak well, to declare good over someone. A benediction was not a wish. It was not a hope that things might go well.
 - **It was a pronouncement of reality**, a declaration of what is true about the people who receive it, grounded entirely in who God is and what God has done.
- When the high priest of Israel lifted his hands over the congregation and spoke the Aaronic blessing — **“The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you”** — he was not asking God to consider doing something. He was declaring a covenant reality that was already true. He was pronouncing over God's people what God had already spoken over them.
- And here, at the very end of this letter — after thirteen chapters of some of the most sustained, rigorous, tender pastoral theology in all of Scripture — the author does the same thing. He does not just sign off. He gathers everything he has argued, everything he has warned, every promise declared, and presses it into a single sentence. A benediction.
- **A declaration of what is true because Jesus rose from the dead.**

We have been on a long journey together through the book of Hebrews.

And now, thirteen chapters later, we arrive at the end. This was always the plan to end on Easter Sunday. To celebrate together what is true—to celebrate the reality of reconciliation between God and man, and the gift of eternal life—because of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 13:20–25

“Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. I appeal to you, brothers, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. You should know that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom I shall see you if he comes soon. Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those who come from Italy send you greetings. Grace be with all of you.”

The Only Name That Fits This Morning

- Of all the names the author could have chosen to address God in this closing prayer, he chooses this one: **the God of peace.**
- The background is the Hebrew word shalom. And shalom does not simply mean the absence of conflict.
 - Shalom means wholeness. Completeness. Everything in its right place.
 - Everything functioning as it was designed to function. Creation and Creator in proper relationship. The restoration of everything the fall shattered.
- The God of peace is the God who is actively, decisively, and relentlessly making whole what sin has broken. He is in the business of restoration.
- **And here is what we need to understand on this Easter morning:** what God does in the resurrection of Jesus is not a last-minute plan. It isn't a side step. It's what the whole Old Testament narrative was always pointing towards.
- Six centuries before the first Easter Sunday when Christ walked out of the tomb as Lord of all Creation, God made a promise through the prophet Jeremiah. When Israel was on the edge of exile, when everything was collapsing around them, when the old covenant had clearly failed to produce the heart-level faithfulness God desired, God spoke through Jeremiah and announced that something new was coming.

Jeremiah 31:31–34

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and

they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

- Notice the three things God promises in the new covenant that the old covenant was not designed to deliver.
 - **First, the law written on the heart** — not on stone tablets kept in a box, but internalized, belonging to the person from the inside out.
 - **Second, unmediated relationship with God** — not secondhand through priests and prophets, but direct access to the living God himself - through Jesus Christ.
 - **Third, full forgiveness** — not the year-after-year covering of sin through animal sacrifice, but the permanent removal of it. I will remember their sin no more.
- The author of Hebrews quotes this passage at length in chapter 8, and again in chapter 10, precisely because it is the Old Testament's own testimony that the Levitical system was always meant to be temporary.
- God himself announced that a new covenant was coming. And the God of peace who raised Jesus from the dead is the same God who made that promise to Jeremiah. Easter is not a surprise. It is a fulfillment. God said he would do this. **He did it.**
- The author chooses this name—the God of peace—for a community that is under enormous pressure.
 - They have been drifting. Some have been hardening. Some have been looking back toward the old covenant because it felt safer, more familiar, less costly than following Jesus into an uncertain future.
 - They have lost property. They have endured public shame. Their world has been complicated by the name of Christ.
- And the author does not close this letter with: "I hope things get easier for you."
 - **He says: the God of peace is at work.**
 - The God of restoration has not abandoned his project.
 - The God who makes all things whole is not finished with your story.
- Whatever you walked into this building carrying this morning — whatever burden, grief, fear, or exhaustion came through those doors with you — hear this on Easter Sunday of all Sundays: the God of peace has not forgotten you.
- **He has been faithful to keep every promise he made.** He is not going to stop now.

Who Brought Again from the Dead

- For thirteen chapters, the author has built his argument. Jesus is superior to angels. Superior to Moses. Superior to the Levitical priesthood. He entered the real sanctuary — not the copy, not the shadow, but the heavenly one.
- He offered himself once for all. He always lives to make intercession. He sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high.
- **Every single one of those claims has the resurrection underneath it.**
 - Not one of them is possible if Jesus is still in the tomb.
 - And yet in thirteen chapters, the author has never once named it directly. He has argued around it. He has built upon it. He has presupposed it at every turn.
 - But has never said the word — not until now.
 - **Not until the very last sentence.**
- It is as though he has been saving it for this moment. And now:

“Who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep.”

- The Greek phrase here is worth unpacking:
- Literally: having led up from among the dead. Led up. This is shepherd language.
- The great shepherd who laid down his life for his sheep — who entered the valley of the shadow of death on their behalf — was himself led up through that valley by the God of peace.
- And in being raised, he became the one who now leads his flock through that same valley and out the other side.

John 10:11

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

- Psalm 23 says the shepherd leads his people through the valley of the shadow of death.
- But the shepherd language in Hebrews 13 is not simply a warm image drawn from Israel’s pastoral culture.
- It is a direct fulfillment of a specific promise God made through the prophet Ezekiel to a people who had been abandoned by their shepherds and scattered.

Ezekiel 34:23–25

“And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the

LORD; I have spoken. I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild beasts from the land, so that they may dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.”

- Notice that Ezekiel calls this promise “a covenant of peace.” The same words that open our benediction this morning: the God of peace.
- This is not a coincidence. The author of Hebrews is drawing a deliberate line from Ezekiel’s promise to its Easter morning fulfillment.
- God promised a shepherd-king in the line of David who would gather the scattered, feed the hungry, and establish a covenant of peace.
 - **And God raised that shepherd-king from the dead.**
- The shepherd who was struck down — who entered the valley on behalf of his flock — has been led up from among the dead.
- Every sheep who was scattered by sin and death, every prodigal who wandered into far countries, every person in this room who has ever felt utterly lost: the shepherd has been looking for you. And he is alive to keep looking.
- Ezekiel said it would happen. **The empty tomb is the proof that it has.**

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

- This is what Easter is. Not simply the happy ending to a terrible story. Not merely proof that Jesus was who he claimed to be — though it is certainly that.
- **Easter is the death of death itself.** The shepherd went into the darkest place ahead of his flock. He came out the other side. And he is calling back to us across that valley: follow me.
 - He is the way, the truth, and the life.
 - He is the way of our redemption because he walked it fully.

By the Blood of the Eternal Covenant

- Notice how the author holds the resurrection and the cross together in a single breath. He does not say the God of peace raised Jesus in spite of the blood — but by the blood of the eternal covenant.
- The resurrection is the Father’s vindicating declaration that the sacrifice was accepted. The debt was paid. The offering was sufficient. The covenant is now established forever.
- **And again, this was not an improvised solution.** Seven centuries before Jesus was crucified outside Jerusalem, Isaiah saw it coming. In what is perhaps the most stunning prophetic text in all of the Old Testament, the suffering servant is described with a precision that reads less like prophecy and more like an eyewitness account written after the fact.

Isaiah 53:4–6

“Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

Isaiah 53:12

“...he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.”

- **The chastisement that brought us peace.** Isaiah used the word shalom — the same word behind “the God of peace” in our text.
- The pathway to shalom ran directly through the cross. The blood of the eternal covenant is not a theological concept invented after the fact to make sense of a failed messiah.
- It is the fulfillment of a promise written into the bones of Israel’s Scripture: the suffering servant would bear our iniquities, pour out his soul to death, and make intercession for transgressors.
- **He bore the sin of many.** And he makes intercession for the transgressors — present tense. Isaiah saw both the cross and the ongoing intercession of the risen Christ in a single prophetic breath.
- The author of Hebrews has been unpacking that single breath for thirteen chapters.
- **This is the eternal covenant** — not the Mosaic covenant that required renewal year after year, sacrifice after sacrifice, because the blood of bulls and goats could never actually take away sins.
- **The eternal covenant is sealed by the blood of the one who now lives forever,** who holds his priesthood permanently, who always lives to make intercession.
- **Because he lives, the covenant holds.** Because the covenant holds, the inheritance is secured. Because the inheritance is secured, there is nothing left to fear.
- The entire argument of this letter — every chapter, every warning, every promise — rests on this fact: the tomb is empty.

- And the author saved naming that fact for the benediction because a benediction is a declaration of what is real. And this is the most real thing in the universe.

What the Resurrection Means for You This Morning

- If you have been carrying guilt this week — if your conscience has been running through the list of what you have failed to be and failed to do — the resurrection is the Father’s public declaration that the blood of his Son is sufficient.
- He accepted it. Fully. Finally. Forever. Your guilt has not been managed or covered temporarily. It has been addressed by the only sacrifice that could address it, and the empty tomb is the proof.
- If you have been afraid of death — your own death, or the death of someone you love, or the kind of death that happens when a life falls apart around you — the resurrection is the proof that our shepherd has walked the valley ahead of us.
- You do not enter it alone. You enter it in the footsteps of the one who has already been through it and come out the other side.
- If you have been weary from following Jesus — if the journey has been longer and harder than anyone promised, if the cost has been higher than you expected — the resurrection is the declaration that the God who raised Jesus from the dead is not finished with your story.
- **He does not start something he does not complete.**

Equip You with Everything Good

Hebrews 13:21

“...equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

- Now look at what the author prays for in light of the resurrection.
- He does not pray for their circumstances to change. He does not pray for the persecution to end or the pressure to lift. He prays that the God who raised Jesus from the dead would equip them with everything good to do his will.
- The Greek word for equip comes from a root that means to mend — as in mending a fishing net that has been torn.
 - To bring something broken or incomplete back to its full, functioning, intended condition.

- The same word appears in Matthew 4 when James and John are mending their nets by the sea. It means to restore what was damaged. To complete what was unfinished. To bring something to the state it was designed to be in.
- The God who raised Jesus from the dead is actively engaged in this same work in everyone who belongs to him.
 - **Not just for us — the author says working in us.**
 - The same power that raised Christ from the dead is at work inside you. Present tense. Ongoing. Not a one-time event but a continuous reality.
- And once more, we need to see that what the author is describing is the fulfillment of something God promised long before the first Easter morning.
- **Because this is the pattern of the entire letter:** God said it. God did it. And every time we read the Old Testament through the lens of Christ, we discover that what we are living in has roots stretching back through the centuries.
- Centuries before Christ came, Ezekiel announced not just a new covenant of peace — but a covenant that would accomplish what the old covenant never could: transformation from the inside out.

Ezekiel 36:26–27

“And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.”

- I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.
 - This is not self-improvement. This is not a better motivational framework or a new set of disciplines to try harder with.
 - This is God himself taking up residence inside his people and producing from within them the obedience that the law demanded but could never generate.
- This is exactly what the author of Hebrews is praying for in the benediction.
- **Working in us that which is pleasing in his sight.** Not you working hard enough to please God from the outside. God working in you, from within, by the Spirit, to produce what is pleasing in his sight. The same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead — Romans 8:11 tells us — is the Spirit who now dwells in those who belong to Christ.
- Ezekiel saw it. Jeremiah promised it. Isaiah paid the price for it in prophecy.
 - **And the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus has delivered every word of it on Easter morning.**

- This is the cooperative nature of sanctification that Hebrews has been pressing toward all along. God is not standing at a distance waiting to see how you do. He is working in you that which is pleasing in his sight. Your transformation is not primarily your project. It is his project. You are cooperating with what he is already doing.
- And the author tells us what the goal of this equipping work is: **“that you may do his will.”**
- The point is not simply that you would feel better about yourself, or that your inner life would become more orderly, or that you would achieve some state of spiritual understanding.
- **The point is that you would actually live.** That the life of Christ, poured out in the resurrection and worked in you by the Spirit, would produce something visible. Fruit. Love. Service. Faithfulness. Courage. Generosity. Obedience.

The Whole Letter in a Single Prayer

This is where the five warnings of Hebrews were always heading.

- **Do not drift** — because you have been equipped with everything good.
- **Do not harden your heart** — because the Spirit of the living God is actively working in you.
- **Do not remain spiritually immature** — because your great high priest is making you complete.
- **Do not shrink back** — because the righteous live by emunah, by faithful trust in the God who raises the dead.
- **Do not refuse the voice of the one who speaks from heaven** — because he is the great shepherd, and he is calling you forward, not backward.
- The resurrection is not just the ground of our hope. It is also the power of our obedience. Because he lives, we can live differently.
 - Not through sheer determination. Not by trying harder. But by the same power that raised Christ from the dead, working in us that which is pleasing in the sight of God.

The Gospel That Makes All of This Possible

- **This Easter morning I want to speak directly to anyone here who has never truly received what this letter has been declaring from the very first chapter.**
- **The whole of Hebrews is an argument from supremacy:** Christ is superior to everything. He is God’s final word. He is our great high priest who entered the heavenly sanctuary with his own blood, once for all. He always lives to make

intercession for those who draw near to God through him. And this Easter morning, the resurrection is the proof that every word of that is true.

- God raised him. The sacrifice was accepted. The eternal covenant is established. The shepherd lives.
 - God announced through Jeremiah that a new covenant was coming — one that would write his law on human hearts and remember sin no more.
 - He announced through Ezekiel that a shepherd-king would gather the scattered flock and establish a covenant of peace.
 - He announced through Isaiah that a suffering servant would bear the iniquity of us all and make intercession for transgressors.
 - And he announced through Ezekiel again that his own Spirit would take up residence within his people and cause them to walk in his ways.
- Easter morning is God's public declaration that he has kept every single one of those promises. In Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, every word God spoke through the prophets has come to pass.

2 Corinthians 1:20

“For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.”

- The invitation that runs through every chapter of this letter is the same invitation that echoes through every Easter morning. It is the same word that has been spoken since Hebrews 3: today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart.
- **Draw near.**
- You do not have to clean yourself up first. You do not have to manufacture the right feeling or make yourself worthy of approach. The entire point of a great high priest who entered the heavenly sanctuary by his own blood is that he makes you worthy.
- You do not make yourself ready to come to him — you come to him, and he makes you ready.
- If you have never put your trust in Jesus Christ — if you have been carrying the weight of a conscience that will not let you rest, searching for solid ground in a world that keeps shifting — this is the ground:
 - **God raised Jesus from the dead. The blood of the eternal covenant has been accepted. The great shepherd is alive, and he is calling.**
 - **Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart. Come.**

Conclusion: Grace Be with All of You

- The author closes with personal words. Timothy has been released. Greetings come from brothers and sisters in Italy. The community is named and held. And then the final word of the entire letter:

“Grace be with all of you.”

- Charis. The unmerited, unearned, overflowing favor of God through Jesus Christ. Not “good luck.” Not “try harder.” Not “I hope you can hold it together out there.”
- Grace.
 - The grace that Jeremiah said would forgive iniquity and remember sin no more.
 - The grace that Ezekiel said would replace the heart of stone with a heart of flesh.
 - The grace that Isaiah said would fall on the one who bore our sorrows so that we could be healed.
 - The grace that appeared in the incarnation, was poured out at the cross, and was vindicated and unleashed in the resurrection.
- **This is how you are sent from this place.** Not with a checklist. Not with a new standard to live up to before you can return. With grace.
- **Because that one word carries everything else inside it.**
 - In grace is the blood of the eternal covenant.
 - In grace is the intercession of the great shepherd.
 - In grace is the equipping power of the God who raises the dead.
 - In grace is the unshakeable assurance that what God starts, God finishes.
- So hear this benediction today — not as a polite ending to a service, but as a declaration of what is true about everyone who has drawn near to God through Jesus Christ:
- **The God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant — may he equip you with everything good to do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ. To him be glory forever and ever.**

He is risen!

Go in that grace.

Benediction Prayer

Father, we stand this Easter morning not because we have cleaned ourselves up or earned our way into your presence, but because Jesus, our great high priest,

the great shepherd of the sheep, has opened the way with his own blood. We thank you that you raised him — that the tomb is empty, that the shepherd lives, that the eternal covenant stands.

Equip us now with everything good. Work in us that which is pleasing in your sight. Make us people who live by faithful trust in the God who keeps every promise he has ever made.

And for anyone in this room who has never drawn near — let today be their today. Let them hear your voice through this word. Let the grace of the risen shepherd call them home.

To Jesus Christ, the great shepherd of the sheep, the fulfillment of every promise, the guarantee of the eternal covenant, our great high priest who always lives to make intercession — be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Small Group Discussion Questions

1. The Resurrection That Changes Daily Life

The author of Hebrews saves the only explicit resurrection statement in the entire letter for the very last sentence — but the whole argument rests on it. Christ's priesthood, his intercession, the eternal covenant, his ongoing equipping work in us: none of it is possible if Jesus is still in the tomb. The resurrection is not simply something we celebrate annually. It is the living reality on which the entire Christian life is built.

The sermon reminded me that the resurrection is not just the ground of my hope but the power of my obedience. Where in my daily life am I living as though Jesus is still in the tomb — carrying guilt he already paid for, living in fear of things he already defeated, or trying to change through sheer effort rather than through the power of the one who is working in me? What would it look like this week to actually live from the resurrection?

2. God Has Been Faithful to His Promises

The sermon traced four Old Testament promises that find their fulfillment in the resurrection of Jesus: Jeremiah 31 (a new covenant written on hearts, sin fully forgiven), Ezekiel 34 (the shepherd-king who gathers the scattered and establishes a covenant of peace), Isaiah 53 (the suffering servant who bears our iniquities and makes intercession for transgressors), and Ezekiel 36 (the Spirit placed within God's people, causing them to walk in his ways). Easter is not a surprise ending — it is the fulfillment of a promise centuries in the making.

Which of these four Old Testament promises is most personally encouraging to me right now, and why? How does seeing that God kept these specific promises across centuries of history strengthen my confidence that he will be faithful to keep his promises in my own life?

3. Equipped from Within

Ezekiel 36:26-27 promised that God would remove the heart of stone and put his own Spirit within his people — not to help them obey from the outside, but to cause them to walk in his ways from the inside. The benediction in Hebrews 13 is praying for the fulfillment of exactly this: God working in us, by his Spirit, that which is pleasing in his sight. Transformation is not primarily our project. It is his.

Where in my life am I still trying to produce obedience to God through effort and willpower rather than through the Spirit who is working in me? What would it look like to cooperate with what God is already doing rather than straining to produce it myself?

4. Grace Be with All of You

The final word of the entire letter — after thirteen chapters of argument, warning, and pastoral pleading, and after tracing the fulfillment of centuries of prophetic promise — is grace. The unmerited favor of God through a risen Jesus who always lives to make intercession. Grace is the only basis on which anyone can draw near. You do not earn access to God; you receive it through a great high priest who has already made the way.

Is there a way I have been keeping myself at a distance from God — waiting to feel more worthy or more put together before I approach him? Am I running to my great high priest in my weakness, or am I running from him? What would it look like for me to simply come to him this week — in whatever state I am in — and let his grace do what I cannot do for myself?