



## **EASTER 2021 - PART 3**

### **Christ's Resurrection: Why It Matters for Eternity**

**Pastor Mike Fabarez**

We'll look at you here risking life and limb to be at church. I am so proud of you. (audience cheers) This is an awesome thing. We're here for us to remember a man that lived in Israel 2,000 years ago. And if you think about it, I mean, he never traversed more south than Egypt. He didn't travel further north than Syria, contained within just a few decades in Israel, just within a few hundred miles. And yet his impact has been global. His fame has traveled around the world. It's sustained 2,000 years later. That's a big deal. A big deal. It's a big deal. It's why people like me continually publicize him. We advertise him. We talk about him, we promote him, we celebrate him. That is what has been happening. And it is something that has sustained this movement, at least humanly speaking, because we keep promoting a man from Israel 2,000 years ago who is more than a man.

Matter of fact, that's the assertion of the Christian Church, that he's far more than just a man from Israel who went around teaching and doing good things 2,000 years ago. Matter of fact, the more you understand the nature of the assertion of the Christian Church for the last 2,000 years, the more you look at this thing that we're celebrating this morning, the resurrection of Christ, and think, well, of course. I think the more you understand who he is, the more, you know, obvious this thing becomes.

I mean, think through some of the things that Jesus said, even when it was heating up and they started to threaten him. He said things like, "Well, yeah, destroy my body and in three days I'll raise it up." I mean, that's quite a response to feeling threatened, right? I mean, it's one thing to say I know karate or, you know, I'm packing heat, you don't want to mess with me. But he says, "No, you kill me and I'll raise my body up in three days." I mean, that's just a major assertion. And unfortunately, we don't view him, I think, the way that we ought to. And I've got, you know, my career to blame because I think a lot of modern preachers just, unfortunately, have continued to look at Christ within the context of that three decades and 2,000 years ago in those 300 miles and they say, "Well, here is the Jesus who we're presenting to people, this itinerant rabbi and he did good things and he rose from the dead. Isn't that amazing that he was dead and now he's alive?"

And I'm thinking, well, wait a minute, if you really think about the nature of who Christ is, the more normal this is. He's not just some helpful, compassionate, you know, kind of cool guy that we should all kind of rally around. He's something far more than that. And the more we rightly understand the nature of Christ, then I think the more we're able to sit across the table, so to speak, with him and engage in what he's calling all people to engage in, and that is a relational contract. I mean, he is. I mean, the Bible calls it a covenant. But this covenant relationship we're supposed to have, I can't really know what kind of relationship I'm supposed to have with this person. I won't know the terms of the contract if I don't know who I'm dealing with. I've got to know something about this person that God has asked me to give not only my attention to, but my life to. Who is he? Who really is he?



And then why does it make such natural sense to say, well, of course, if he died, he's going to rise? As a matter of fact, the resurrection itself, I think you need to think more of a personal restoration of this person we call Jesus Christ than it is a physical resurrection. Is it a physical resurrection? Absolutely. It is a physical resurrection from the dead, but it's a personal restoration. And by that I mean, Christ was not returning to who he was before he died. Follow me now. He's not returning to who he was before he died. He's returning to who he was before he was born. There's a difference there, right? Who were you before you were born? I mean, no one. Right?

I mean, you are contained in time and space and God put you in this place on planet earth and that's where everything started for you. That's not where everything started for Christ. I mean, the constant refrain in what not only what Jesus did, but what he taught about himself kept reminding us that he preexisted. Matter of fact, this time on earth, we call it the incarnation, where he took on human flesh and dwelt among us. Before that, though, there was this entire reality. Matter of fact, when he's being attacked by the religious leaders of the first century and they start talking about Abraham, he says, you know, "Before Abraham was born, I am." You start thinking, well, we need to correct him a little on the grammar. That's not how you should say that. But he's making a very clear point that back in Exodus, when Moses is having this conversation with God at the Burning Bush, God says "I am," he presents himself that way. "I am." Matter of fact, the word Yahweh, the proper name of God, is a form of that verb "to be." "I am." And he's saying, "I am." That's how they worship him in heaven. "I was," "I am" and "I am to come." I mean, that's the idea, "Who was, who is and who is to come."

And here is this one that we gather to celebrate and in particular on this day, the resurrection of that one and you need to think about the fact that this was the end of his earthly ministry, we call it, which should presuppose in our mind that he existed before this and he existed before this in a very different way. As Philippians 2 says, he existed in the form of God. "Now, he didn't regard equality with God a thing to be hung on to," to be grasped. "But he emptied himself and he was found here on earth in the appearance as a man." So when we think about the resurrection as we ought to on a day like this, you ought to think about the fact that it is a restoration of who he is. It is a personal restoration to who he was before.

When you were going to enter into a contract and you're going to a whole different experience thinking through this relationship with someone that I'm saying you need to have a relationship with, because he's not the one that you picture sitting at the Last Supper table. And he's not the one hanging on the cross. He's not the one that you might picture teaching the crowds by the Sea of Galilee. Matter of fact, when one who knew him really well and had plenty of meals with him had an encounter with him after the resurrection on the Island of Patmos, John, the beloved disciple, he was floored, literally. He dropped down on the ground as though dead when he saw the resurrected Christ. Now, that is a picture that I think we need to get clearly in our minds so that we can understand this whole thing regarding his earthly ministry, why he came and then the resurrection that simply restored him to who he was before.



If we can understand that, I think we can rightly relate to him and it starts with that. I want to give you a passage of Scripture that comes on the heels of the text we studied last week. It's found in John Chapter 12 that if we could understand these few sentences in the red letters of the gospel of John and say, "I know what Jesus is saying here," then I think we've got it. We can figure this out. We can say, "OK, I get who you are, I understand who I am, and then I understand what the transaction is that you're calling for every person on the planet to make."

So turn in your Bibles, find this passage, if you would, John Chapter 12. I'd just like to look at verses 23, 24, 25 and 26. That will only take me four hours to preach through those four passages. The person who brought you warned you. Right? How long this takes. The ham will wait. I'm kidding. It will not be that long. Matter of fact, this will be the shortest sermon of the year, potentially, until I think of other things off-script to say.

Four verses. If you look at the context, if you found a worksheet, perhaps you grab one of those coming in or you downloaded the digital one, you'll see I've got a little context there because on the heels of what we studied last week, the Triumphal Entry, we've now got people coming to Jerusalem from all over the world. The Hellenized world, a lot of Greek people who had an interest in Judaism and they're coming to Jerusalem and they find Philip, who is a Jewish apostle, and yet he has a Greek name that he goes by. So the Greeks find him and they say, "We want to see Jesus." Talking about advertising and publicity. He's already doing a lot of that for himself and everyone's wanting to come and see him. Matter of fact, the verse that we ended on last week, you can see just above this in verse 19, it says the whole world was going after him. At least that's how the Pharisees saw it, because they thought we need to do away with this guy and put him in the basement. And then like, we can't all of our work to put him down isn't working. Everyone's going after him. And they want to know who is this guy? Who are you? The one who's raising people from the dead. Who are you?

Well, here's his response to all this attention, and he gets right to the heart of the matter. Look at verse 23 in John Chapter 12. I mean, I can't really get past this first verse without saying there's so much here for us to understand regarding who he is. Jesus answered them, verse 23, and said this. "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." Do you have any friends that speak about themselves in the third person? That's kind of annoying you would think. Well, who do you think you are talking about yourself in the third person? He talks about himself in the third person for a very specific reason. He calls himself the Son of Man because that's supposed to trigger in the mind of all these faithful Jewish adherents, including even the proselytes who are coming from other nations, to say, well, listen, you've been studying the Old Testament, right? You understand the prophecies of the Old Testament. At least you're familiar with phrases like the Son of Man in the Old Testament prophets, including a very important one. He's going to pull together in the end of this little paragraph about the fact that all people in the world are supposed to serve the Son of a Man.

That's what Daniel Chapter 7 says, because all authority is given to this one called the Son of Man standing before the Ancient of Days in this scene in heaven, where God the Father gives all authority to the Son, "all dominion is given to him." He's supposed to then run "a kingdom



in which all people, all nations, all tribes, all peoples are supposed to submit to him and follow him," and then we're going to have a copasetic kingdom and it'll all be great. But it starts with recognizing that the Son of Man is the one in charge. And it says here in this passage, "the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."

Now, put a pin in this for a second because you think, OK, what does that mean? Does it mean that he's going to glorify God in his death? Well, that is true. Matter of fact, he starts talking about that in verse 27. There's going to be a glorification of the Father because the Son does what he is called to do. More on that in a minute. But we need to think about the fact that this little detour into earth is simply an out-of-step reality, if you will, for Christ. Christ is not like this. He's not like someone walking around on the planet having to find a place to sleep, having to go to a well and have water for refreshment and needing meals every day. That's not who the Son of Man is. The Son of Man transcends all of that.

As a matter of fact, let's go forward a couple of chapters to Chapter 17. Scroll all the way down to John Chapter 17, where Jesus is praying to the Father and he puts it super clearly here in this passage. In John Chapter 17 as he prays to the Father, he says this. I mean, let's just get the whole context, what I'm really zeroing in on verse 5, but in verse 1 it says Jesus had spoken these words. "He lifted up his eyes to heaven, he said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son,' not that I'm going to glorify you in this act, which, of course, he is. But you're going to glorify me now. "Glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you." So we're talking about something that's going to happen here in the future. "Since you have given him," speaking of Daniel 7, "authority over all flesh," which is the problem in the world. Most people don't see that Christ is their authority, but that is the contract he wants to make. But you've got to rightly understand who he is.

"He's given him all authority over all flesh, to give eternal life," for those who recognize that authority, "to all whom you have given him." There are people in the earth that are distinct, they're called out. That's what the word, by the way, "church" means, "Ecclesia," "called out," this called out group within the world and those are going to be the people the Father gives to the Son and the Son is going to be the leader of those people, the king of those people. And those people now are going to be able to relate to the Father and have the honor of the Father and the gifts of the Father and the eternal life that the Father wants to give those people. But all those people need to be under the Son. They need to submit to the lordship of the Son. They need to see his authority.

He says, "And this is eternal life," verse 3, "that they may know you." I'm the conduit. "I'm the way, the truth, the life. No one is going to come to Father except through you," the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you've sent because you can't know God without knowing Christ. I know that's a very popular thing to think that every religion is basically the same. We're all trying to find this infinite spirit in the sky, get through Muhammad, Buddha, Hinduism, whatever. The Bible's very clear, only one way because there's only one Christ, there's only one to whom all the authority is supposed to be and that is bound up in the person of the Son.



"I've glorified you on earth," he says, "having accomplished the work that you gave me to do." This is the end of his earthly ministry. Now note this super carefully. "And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence." Right? He's going to leave the earth, he's going to go up and be enthroned at the right hand of the Father, "with the glory...." Think about that word. The greatness, the acclaim, the power, the majesty, "that I had with you before the world existed." So what were you doing before you were born? What were you doing before the world existed? Nothing, because you didn't exist. The Son of Man to whom all the authority has been given and everyone should serve that Son, that son has existed before the world existed and he was glorified in this greatness. And unfortunately, we keep picturing him as this traveling itinerant rabbi in Israel. Can we? Sure we can. Should we? Only if we understand the rest of the picture.

It'd be like you constantly thinking of some great, super strong, very successful NFL football player. But the only thing you keep thinking about is him at his seven-year-old birthday party at the park where he had cake frosting all over his face. You go, "Oh, look at him. He's so cute. I love him. He's my favorite football player." OK, but that's not who he is, like now. That's not the guy. The guy that you love, this football player, and that you admire and you respect, he's this massive football player. And all you can think of him at the park with frosting on his face? Now, did that happen? Yes. Was that a good thing? Sure, ask his mom. That's why we took pictures of it. It's a good thing. But it's not who he is.

It's the inverse of someone getting to know you only by looking through your wedding photo album. Let's reverse this. Maybe they even actually got a link to the video and they watched the video of you at your wedding and they've analyzed every frame of it. They are students of you. They've looked at your picture. They've drawn pictures of your pictures. I mean, they are so into you. And I say, hey, you want to meet that person? And then I take them to your house, wake you up at six in the morning to answer the door and say, "Here she is." And he's going to go, "Whoa, that is not who I thought it was."

If I take someone to meet you after all day working in the garden and sweaty and dirt all over you, and I said, here's the guy that you've been studying in the tux. See, it's inverted because this is the glory and the greatness of Christ for eternity on both ends, and then he comes to earth for just a few decades and all we can see now is him in that humble state. All we can see is him in that actually humiliated state because that's what the Bible says in Philippians 2, "He humbled himself." He got to the place of a kind of humility and shame of being crucified on a cross, naked, stripped, beaten, swollen face. There's your majestic Son of God who we read about during our worship in Revelation Chapter 5.

That's not how heaven recognizes him. Now, that's not how you're going to recognize him, and that's not how he was recognized a billion years ago. He was worshiped as a person of the Triune Godhead for all of eternity, and now after his earthly ministry is over, he said, "Now return to me the glory I had with you before the foundation of the world." That's who I really am. Now, did he have little reminders of who he was during his earthly ministry? Sure, they were called The Miracles. It's like when anyone can suspend natural law, that's kind of a big deal and you must be more than just a man. And then there was one little scene, one little



scene where he said, let me show you the photo album, and he pulled back his humble humanity. It's called The Mount of Transfiguration. And just for a little while, here he is showing up with Elijah and Moses and it's like, whoaaaaaa! And the apostles said, "Man, the clothes were whiter than any launderer could launder them. And there was some kind of majestic expression of the greatness and glory of Christ. Peter, James and John fell down and they're like, wow. And it was like, OK, let's get back to work.

The exception is his earthly ministry. The norm is this eternal glory, and you've got to know that. And part of his plan was to lay that aside temporarily and then get back to the prestige of majesty and glory and you just need to understand that. Number one if you're taking notes, "Understand Christ's Prestigious Plan." And it was always for him to be adored by angels and served by people and the center of the universe. He's not your helper. He's not your butler. He's not your life coach. He is the center of everything. And all authority, all dominion, look it up for yourself in Daniel Chapter 7, is given to the Son of Man that everyone should serve him. He should be the center of your life. He should be the center of history. He should be the center of everything because he IS the center. And one day God's going to wrap up this little period of rebellion on the timeline between Genesis 3 and Revelation 19. He's going to deal with all that and then we're going to get back to the way things ought to be.

That's the good news of the gospel. How can God be so good and powerful and all-knowing if all this evil garbage in the world exists? It won't for long. No one's going to be saying that a million years from now. They're all going to be like, wow, I can't believe that God put up with that rebellious earth for as long as he did. And you're going to be looking, as it says in Revelation Chapter 5, at the Lamb, that everyone is bowing down before, strange statements about the seven spirits of God, probably these angels from Revelation Chapter 8, where they go out into the earth and all this picture of the 24 elders bowing down and everyone saying, here's where all the praise and glory and power and dominion go. And everyone's going to recognize that.

Colossians 1 says that, "He is the image of the invisible God." When you think about Jesus Christ and going to celebrate his resurrection, how do you think about him? Think about the resurrection as a restoration to who he is. And then you think, of course, I can't believe that Christmas is not really hailed as a more significant holiday than Easter because I can't imagine that he would come to earth and be found in the appearance of a man. And that's the amazing thing, that he would be so like humbled by becoming a human being. Now, when you're saying, OK, it's over, now he's going to go back. Now, you say, "Oh, finally." I mean the angels are like, "Finally."

His prestigious plan is to be the center of everything, and that is what he is going to be. As a matter of fact, it says in Philippians 2, after talking about his humbled state that then he will be enthroned again and "every knee will bow in heaven, under the earth, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." He's the king. He's the boss. He's in charge. "To the glory of God the Father," and it will glorify the Father. Son of Man is going to be glorified, which is looking forward to his resurrection. He glorified God in all that he did, but he himself would be glorified when he was resurrected and ascended to the Father.



Back to our passage, John Chapter 12, look at the next verse. It speaks in verse 24 about his purpose. What did he come to do? "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you," look at verse 24, John 12, "unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." A simple agrarian illustration of a seed. You got one, you put it in the ground, it's done, it's over. You can't do anything with that anymore. And then all of a sudden it germinates, grows up and you've got this giant plant, this tree. That's how Jesus talked about the Church, talked about the kingdom of God being like from a mustard seed. It's tiny and then all of a sudden it grows and it's gigantic and all the birds nest in it and it's a huge thing. That picture of the growth of the Church, of people bowing down and worshiping Christ and recognizing that he's the boss, the Lord, all of that, it starts with this seed. The picture here is that I'm going to die, which is the whole point of me coming is so that I can die and from that then multiply this crop of human beings. And that's the point.

He dies so that he can have more than just himself be the Son of God and the glorified one, because that's the whole promise that you have been talking about and you've heard about your whole life. And that is that, "Hey, you become a Christian, you become a child of God, and you get to go to heaven and have all this stuff." If you know the biblical terminology, you go from being justified to glorified. And so I want to be glorified. I want a resurrected body. I want to be there. I don't want to be punished for my sin. And so all of that is the promise of this contract. But it wouldn't have happened unless he came and did what he did. Why is the detour to be so humiliated here on earth? "Well, because I had to die. The contract is I had to deal with the sins of the people." And in that sense, and this is an important word, we read it up on the screen here from Revelation Chapter 5, he had to "ransom people for God." That's the only way he can create a kingdom with these priests to God who directly relate to God is if he buys them, purchases them. Number two, if you're taking notes, jot that down. You need to "Realize that Christ Died to Purchase Us." That's what he came to do.

I talked about my parking space and backing in and all that last week. Let's just say as I pulled out of my parking space, I clipped a Prius on the way out after I parked so straight into my parking space. I got out to look at it and there was the taillight on the ground. And I was like, "Oh, man, I got to be really careful." So I backed up. Then I ran into this Corolla that was on the other side of me and I said, "Look at how I bashed that, the hood crinkled." I was like, "Oh, that's terrible." So I was looking back at that as I was pulling out and then I scraped this Tesla, the door just completely crumpled. And then some rich guy was here for some, I don't know, counseling appointment and he had his Ferrari parked right by the driveway. Then I ran into that. It was horrible. And so I hit those four cars in the parking lot, but you'll be happy to know that as I finally got onto the street on Columbia here and I felt like, ahh, I said to myself, "Man, I'm really sorry." And I drove to Del Taco and I had lunch. I left some damage in the parking lot. But I'm sorry. How are you feeling about that? "Well, you know. If it were my Lamborghini or my Ferrari, I would feel bad about it." I bet you'd feel bad about it if it were your Prius. Not that any of you would drive a Prius, but let's just... it's an illustration. (audience laughter)

Now, the damage I caused to cars in the parking lot as I pulled out, you know that being sorry about it doesn't change anything. I mean, you might say, well, that's a nice thing that you feel bad about it. It's not like going, "Good. I'm glad I did that." But if you said, "Wait, wait, wait," you run down Columbia, you say, "wait, Pastor Mike, stop. Dude, look at the damage you did. You need to deal with that." And if I say to you, "You know what, I know guys who have run into a lot more cars than that, and I am sorry. Can I get you anything at Del Taco?" You're going to go, "Well, no, your attitude is not right about this. You need to fix your attitude because, you know, those things are going to cost to repair them. So you need to come back in here and deal with that. I mean, let me go in the office here, figure out whose cars these are and you need to pay for that." If I said, "Sorry, I spent all my money on my car, I don't have any money, but I am sorry and I know people that have done a lot more damage than I have." That doesn't fix anything. See, the problem is the word "ransom," purchase, is that there is a price that needs to be paid. Why did Jesus come? Because he had to pay the price for your moral damage. I know you can say like everyone says, "Well, I know people who have run into a lot more moral obstacles than I have." OK.

There's a Pharisee once who went up to worship on the Temple Mount and he saw someone there who was like the king of the demolition derby. He bashed into so many things morally. He was a tax collector and he had the gall to go up to worship at the same time the Pharisee did. And the Pharisee looked at him and said, "I am so glad I'm not like him. There's a real sinner right there." And it says all this tax collector could do was beat his chest, he wouldn't even look up to the sky to pray. And he said, "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner." It's the first time that Jesus employed the word "justified," paid for. It's been settled. He said, guess which one of these two went home justified? I mean, it's the one that has to recognize the problem and say, I need to pay for this and I can't pay for this, I need someone else to pay for this. Contrition.

See, when you think other people are worse sinners than you, guess what, you're right, but it does not matter. It is no excuse for you not paying for these things. You think, "Well, I can't pay for them, right? How can I pay for all these things, really morally? Am I going to go back all the way to my childhood and start somehow making reparations and repairs and payments and some kind of a penance for all the things I've done? I can't do that." No, you're right. You can't. There are certain sins, there's no amount of money, there are no amount of good deeds that will ever correct any of that. You're going to have to have someone else pay for it. That's the whole point. Christ didn't come for the weekend to die, he came for an entire lifetime so that he could store up all of this human morality, do everything right, and then to die on a cross, to be treated as though he were the one that bashed into all those cars. And the Father took out the payment on his Son. It's a very unpopular doctrine these days. Sorry, someone has to pay. I know what people are saying as they look from across the street. "Well, you know what? If you were a really nice guy, you wouldn't need payment for any of that."

I've said it many times, but if I were running to be a judge here in Orange County and my slogan was "Vote for me and everyone goes free." I would get a lot of votes from the jail, but I wouldn't get a lot of votes from the people in this society because they know that's not justice. If you're going to be a good judge, you have to be a just judge. You can't let everybody go.





Well, let's let everybody go who's bashed into more cars than four. No, how about under three? No. You're going to have to realize that every sin, it requires a payment. That's why the first starting point with understanding the greatness of the Son of Man is critical, because if you really think about it, as Psalms says, how can another man redeem another man? Right? How can a person die in redemption for someone else? How can that be? I mean, there's no price that you can even put on that.

If Christ died for one person, you might say, well, I guess if he's a really righteous man, you could exchange one righteous life for an unrighteous life. But how is it that Christ can save me and you? And not only that, how about people from every tongue, tribe, and nation? Well, the Bible says, it's much like me coming to the impound lot to get your car out for parking violations. If I say I want to trade this car for that car, well it better be a car that's of greater worth than that car. And you got your Prius there in the impound lot and I pull up in a Prius, I might be able to get one Prius out for one Prius. But if I roll up in my Lamborghini, my blue Porsche Carrera, my red Ferrari, I bet I could get out a few Prius'. Right? Because the infinite worth of Christ on a cross is able to say, "I paid for your sins, I paid for his sins. I paid for her sins."

We got to understand who Christ is. If you understand the greatness of Christ, the prestige of Christ, and that he only came to lay that aside for a while simply so he could purchase people and then go back to that prestigious place, well, then you'd get it. You'd start to say, I understand it now. He came to die in my place. Which means you need to recognize that you needed the payment. Too many people in this day are not even interested in seeing themselves as sinners because they're constantly comparing themselves to worse sinners. I get it, you're not the worst sinner. I understand that. But you've got a problem and it needs to be paid for. Christ came to do that.

Verse 25, here's the transaction. Are you with me? John Chapter 12 verse 25. You say, "OK, what do I got to do? Walk aisle, raise a hand. Can I do it when everyone's heads bowed and eyes are closed? Is it a form to fill out? Can I recite a prayer? Do I have to go to a camp? Do I have to shave my head? What do we need to do? How do I do this?" Verse 25 and 26. "Whoever loves his life loses it, whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." Huh? What? Let's just think through that verse before we get to verse 26. "Whoever loves his life loses it, whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." "Hate my life? This is a great Easter sermon, Pastor Mike. Do I have to hate my life? What is the nonsense here?"

When you were a little kid, I bet at some point you said to your parents, "You hate me, you hate me." You were a little brat, right? You said that. "You hate me." And, you know, when you said that, you said that when you didn't get what you wanted out of your parents. If at 4:30, you wanted a plate of chocolate chip cookies and you went for the cookies in the cookie jar and you laid them out for yourself and your mom walks in and she goes, "No, you can't have those. Can't have those. Put them back." Whining! And if she made a big deal of this and she spanked you for it and put those cookies right back and said, "You do not defy me on this." You might get just insanely angry. And you might think, "You hate me."



Not getting what we want is akin to that. If I say, look at verse 26 now, I'm going to now be the servant of the Son of Man, which is the whole contract in Daniel 7. The people are supposed to serve him and then he represents them before the Ancient of Days, the Father. "If anyone serves me, well then you've got to follow me," and do what I say, "and where I am, there my servant will be also." I'm about to go be glorified. You can be glorified too, and you can be in this place where you're not paid for your sins. And guess what? It'll be really good. The Father will honor him. I mean, you get all the blessings of God, the one who's being served will become the servant and serve us. There's the biblical parable that Jesus told. At one point, the one with all the wealth, all the power, all the beauty, all the authority will take up, it says, the clothing of a servant and will start to serve his servants. That sounds good. But I got to hate myself, I can't love my life in this world?

If I say I'm going to follow Christ, and I know he doesn't want me to have cookies before dinner, so I'm going to choose now to shift the battle from an external authority to saying I internally buy this, I'm in it, and now I am going to do what the master says, then all of a sudden the battle shifts to the inside. Now, it's like you could say I guess if someone were watching the internal battle, "What, do you hate yourself? Just have a cookie." Well, that's what you're doing, you're getting in the way between you and what you want, and it looks like you don't even like yourself. And to be in a place where you give up what you want so that you can follow the instructions of someone else, that looks like self-loathing and self-hatred, because most people are going around saying, well, you should do whatever you want. Christianity says, I got to do what Christ wants.

We're all conditioned that way. When you're a little kid, adults got down on one knee and said to you, "Oh, Johnny, what do you want to be when you grow up? Where do you want to go to college? What do you want to major in?" Christianity says, wait a minute, that's really not the right question. I mean, really, we're so conditioned to say I'm going to live my life and do what I want. Christianity says, I mean, if you want to start saying this to your kids, "Hey, what do you think Christ wants you to be when you grow up?" I mean, that's really the concern is what do I decipher God would want me to be. Hey, what college do you think God would want you to go to? Hey, what major do you think Christ would want you to study? See that's a deference to saying, well you, what you want? Well, it really doesn't matter. What matters is you learning what Christ wants because he really knows better and if it's no cookies before dinner, well, then I guess we don't have cookies before dinner. Is that going to be hard? It's an internal struggle and it is hard. The flesh battles against the Spirit. We understand that.

But we're committed to it because anyone who is going to serve this person and be honored by the Father and be where the Son is in a state of glorification, we're going to have to follow him. And that looks like taking your life and laying it here and saying, "OK, what really matters is what God wants for my life." And a lot of you say, "Well, can't I just believe that he existed? Isn't that what the Bible says? Believe in Christ." If you think to believe in Christ means you ascent to the truth of the fact that he historically existed, you've missed the whole point when he calls you to trust him and follow him. And that's why he says things like this. You haven't seen it probably on any gospel track. "Hey, you want to be a Christian, hate your life," but



that's what it says. Hate your life. You got to really trust that this is a good bargain, a good deal, and again, it goes back to the first point, which is the real challenge. Do I view Christ as a high enough person, authority, someone who is the greatest? Because if I do, then all of a sudden this becomes a good exchange, my life for his life.

If I said to you, you worked across the street at NeoGenomics, for instance, the building across the street, and we're out here at a taco truck in the parking lot, we start to talk to each other and I say, hey, "I want you to come work over here across the street, work for us." And I imagine if you went to school for that job at NeoGenomics and, you know, you had all these references and you worked for, you tried, you were in competition to get the job, you got the job, it would be, you know, really hard for me to all of a sudden in a conversation over tacos to say, "Hey, come, come work across the street." At some point, it would get around to, I am sure, "How much does it pay?" Right? And if I said, "Well, don't worry about it. Matter of fact, I'm just going to give you a company credit card, put everything on the credit card because everything in the corporate account is yours. Come and just leave that... Go and just give notice and walk away from that job."

As a matter of fact, Jesus even tells a story in Luke 14 about people who just want to spend time cleaning out their desks for a couple of weeks. "Stop. Follow me, if you're going to follow me, leave that alone and come and follow me." You've got to trust that I got a lot in this corporate account. And if you're just saying, "Well, I really want the credit card to have my name on it." The point is you have to now come across the street, work for me, and if you work over here in this business, all of a sudden now the wealth of this business becomes yours. But you're going to have to tell your parents that that thing that you went to college for, you're not even doing that anymore. That the place that you worked so hard and celebrated on LinkedIn that you got that job? Guess what? Now you have to tell everybody, "Now I'm working across the street." Where? "At a church." I mean, it's going to be embarrassing. Trust me, it's going to be embarrassing. You're going to have to go through this whole rigmarole in your mind of, well, now it's about something else, someone else. It's about exchanging what's in my wallet for what's in his wallet. You better be convinced this is a good thing. As a matter of fact, Jesus says, "You got to count the cost."

Luke 14 says think about it, count the cost. Don't jump into this without considering and calculating the cost. And as I say, number three on the outline, you need to "Give Up This Life To Gain the Next." If you're going to be in the next life with the honor of God and the presence of Christ, you better count the cost and that's what the Spirit has gone out into the world to help you figure out you. Are you ready to do this? What do you have left? I don't know. What are the actuarial tables say? I don't know. I mean, you don't know how much time you have left. But how much time? What I'm saying to you is Christ is now confronting you again this morning on Easter, everything left in your life, can you say, "I'm now going to exchange it for eternity? I will take Christ," but I got to give up this life. And there's no halfway here. No halfway.

That means you look at everything you have the day you become a Christian, you say if Christ asks for it, it's his. If he wants me to change my job, I change my job. If he wants me to



move to Idaho, I move to Idaho. If he wants me to somehow change something about anything, how I dress, where I go on vacation, what I do with my money, I'm there to say Christ is Lord and I've exchanged my life. And some people might say, "What? Do you hate yourself?" As a matter of fact, there are days you might say, "Do I hate myself?"

But that exchange is what it takes and he says count the cost and here's the problem. If I'm preaching to a bunch of people in a war-torn country with no money and a bunch of refugees and we're all sick anyway, and I got up and said, "Hey, exchange this life for the next one," I'd probably get a lot of people to make an easy choice. "OK." They'd still battle with the moral issue of do you really think I'm wrong before God, they'd struggle with sin and guilt and all that. But if I said, "Now Christ needs to be in charge, hate your life." They'd go, "Well, I already hate my life, so that's easy." The problem in preaching in Orange County as you all sit there in an air-conditioned room with a padded chair and nice clothes on with decent cars in the parking lot, is that you have to say the same thing they would have to say. It's just that you probably love your life a lot more than they do, and that's hard.

And in Matthew 19, Jesus showed this in a very vivid example to the apostles when he brought this rich young ruler, rich and young, ruler. He looked good, had money, had authority, had prestige and Jesus says, "Great. Do you want to follow me? Leave it all behind." Now, that's the contract in our hearts that has to happen. I'll prove it to you if you want to write it down, you can look it up later. Luke 14:33. Jesus says, "You have to, no matter what goes on on the outside of your life, give up everything." So giving up everything he says, "Now, I'm going to call you on that. I want you to sell everything you have, follow me and come join this band of disciples. I know they gave up their fishing nets. You give up your lawyer attorney office and you come and follow me." And the rich young ruler went away sad, it says, "Because he had much wealth." "And Jesus turned to the disciples and he said, 'How hard it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, how hard it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.'"

As I preach to a bunch of people who are rich, I'm telling you this, I have the hardest job this morning preaching to an upper middle class, well-to-do, comfortable society where all of you feel pretty secure. You don't sleep with a shotgun across your lap, you're not on life support. You're here with enough money to make it through the week. You have clothes in the closet way more than you wear, you got enough food in your gut to fuel you for a long time. That's who I preach to. And I'm saying this. You've got to be willing to give up your life, which means that Christ has to take charge of it. And you're saying in a contract, as you sit across the table from the Son of Man who is possessing all glory and is in charge of all things, he's saying, "Great, let's exchange my life for yours." You better be ready to say that he is worth exchanging my life for.

There was another man who was amassing wealth in the Bible. Jesus told a parable about him, and he put all of this stuff up and said, "I'm going to work really hard when I'm young so I can have everything to rely on, everything in the silos to rely on when I'm old." And we don't see this very often, but you see Jesus saying that God says about him, a pretty disparaging phrase, he says, "You fool." Now of course it's because, again, God in that parable is going to



call him right then on his life, "From this very night your soul is required of you," just as you were saying I got to figure it out.

You do have no guarantee for tomorrow and everything you have that came to you through a hard-fought battle, it can leave in a second, you know that. All it takes is running into one moral car in the parking lot to drain everything you have, whether your health or your money or your relationships can all be gone tomorrow, including your life. And Jesus said, as he says in Luke 14, you better be ready to "hate your mother, your father, your sister, your brothers and, yes, even your own life." Hate? What are you talking about? This is what I'm talking about. That no longer does this become the priority, no longer is this the controlling factor of what's important for me. What's important for me is not my life. As a matter of fact, the book of Revelation talks about his followers saying "they didn't love their life, even unto death." It's like if it cost me everything.

If Christ wanted you to go be a missionary in another country and it became clear through the study of Scripture and the circumstances of life and the council of godly people, would you be able to say, "Yeah, because all of it was laid on the altar the day I became a Christian sitting there in 2021 at an Easter service, I said, 'God, you are God. Your Son is the king. He has authority, he has authority over me. And I'm going to follow you.'" Whoever loves his life will lose it, because that's where a lot of people are. "Well, I love my life too much, I love being in charge too much. I love my sin too much." Well, it doesn't look good for you.

But, if you're willing to hate your life in this world, because, trust me, you'll be loving it in the next. Well then you'll keep it for eternal life. "Anyone serves me," are you in that category of the servant of Christ? Well, then "Follow me." And guess what? "Where I am, there my servant will be also." Well, he's going to a state of glorification and the Bible says, First Corinthians 15, we will also be glorified. Romans Chapter 8, same thing, "we'll be glorified." And if anyone serves me, man, good days are coming. "The Father will honor him."

It's going to be a whole lot better than you think to have the Father honor you. And I know you play this game in your mind. I played it, everyone has played it thinking, "Well, can't be that severe. I mean, God must be OK with me, even though I'm not all in. You know, it's fine. I mean, my mom still kind of likes me, I'm sure God likes me. It's OK. Not going to die and he's not going to say get away. He's a loving God, he's a forgiving God. I didn't do what he said and I heard it clearly in his word. I just think he's going to be OK with me anyway." You want to gamble with your life on that?

That's what you think, but here's what Jesus said. You say, "Well, I don't even know if that's what Jesus said." Well, then let's talk about that. I mean, we can deal with that. You don't think this is an accurate record of what Jesus actually said? We need to figure out if it is. If it is, then here is the truth and you need to respond to it. Are you ready to take your life in exchange for his? Then you get eternity. You get the honor of the Father. "Nahhhh..." What would your excuse be?



One of your excuses right now may be, "Well this doesn't sound right. I heard this wasn't a loving church and I can see it. It's not loving. Where's the love? Where's the love?" Here's the love: that he would even do it. How many Internet stories do you read about people seeing people being beaten up or whatever and they walk right by, no one wants to get involved. You stopped for a half-gallon of milk on the way home at some convenience store, you see someone go in there and hold people up, it goes wrong and they take a knife to a lady's throat and they're holding them hostage. What are you going to do?

I know you say, "Well, the right thing because you're made in the image of God," you say, "Well, I should do something to help." But then you going to think, "I might get cut. I don't know. I might get hurt. I don't want to get involved. I need to help that lady but who knows at what personal cost will that be? That's not very good stewardship for me to get involved." I know how it works. And so it is it that you can find videos of someone just yesterday morning on a news story about people watching some woman get beat up in the street and everyone standing there going, "Oh, well, OK," walking by, going, "Oh, really stinks to be her."

When we are getting beat up because of our own sin and we will be for eternity, "While we were still sinners," Romans 5, "Christ died for us." The amazing price paid for you when he could have stayed in the comforts of heaven and yet he said, "I'm going to come and live the life they should have lived and then I'm going to die a death they should die and then be punished by the Father. I'll be treated like the sinner that they are so that they could not have to incur the judgment for their sins."

That's love, and then that when you trust him, you become in the status of a child of God. Now you're not eternal, you didn't exist for eternity, but here you are now becoming children of God. Right? First John 3. Right? "What love the Father has lavished, bestowed upon us that we should be called children of God." We get to be that even though you ran into so many moral cars in the lot. I mean, we don't even know them all. You know the secrets of your own heart and you can have all that forgiven. But you do have to exchange your life for his.

You say, "I thought it was about believing." It is, that's what belief is. Belief is trust. The word in the Scripture is to trust him. I'm trusting that if I entrust my life to him, then I get his righteousness and therefore I'm acceptable to the Father. And I'm telling you today, today's the day. You're feeling the conviction. Today's the day. Today is the day to make that right.

I read a story this week about a man in China, South China, near Hong Kong, and there's this river there, a famous river. The people would get their kayaks and kayak on it in little canoes. A family of three was on a canoe, it tipped over and they were clearly struggling. They didn't know how to swim. And a guy was there walking his two dogs on the banks of the river. And he went in, just instinctively went after this family, didn't take his clothes off, didn't stripped down, didn't take his shirt off, just ran into the water and worked to save these three people. Other people saw the commotion, they kind of followed in after, but he was the one who actually got them up from that mess, was able to start pulling them back to shore. Other



people took over and got the family in. But he was the one who led to the center of that of that river and brought them back.

Well, in all the commotion of getting this family, including this kid, up onto the shore of the banks of this grass-laden bank of the river, they look back and realize that he had struggled, the guy who went out to save them, in the middle of all this, particularly getting tangled up somehow with the other people who were out there and he goes under and he drowns. They pulled his limp body up onto the banks of the river. And he's dead. Right? Poetically given his life to save those three people.

And the only reason I'm reading a translated story from South China was not because some guy saved three people in a river and gave his life. I suppose if it happened in South County, we might read of that in the paper. But the reason it was in the paper is because the family that was saved walked right past this guy when all the commotion about him dead on the side, they walked toward their car to the parking lot, got in and drove away. And as they were starting to drive away and get in their car, people said, "Don't you even care? This guy just gave his life for you." And the translation in the article that I read said they said, "He is none of our business," as they got in the car and drove away.

I can only tell you that because you don't want to make the transaction here with God, it wasn't just some guy walking his dogs who was willing to die for your life. This is the majestic Son of God who we read about during worship, who's being hailed by angels right now in heaven, who was willing to take on human flesh, live among us and suffer and die, a pummeled face by Roman fists, thorns on his head, nails through his hands and feet to be hung and strung up naked on a Roman execution rack so that you wouldn't have to not have the honor of the Father. That you would be freed from the condemnation of your sins. And some of you are saying, "None of my business. I just came because my wife made me come on Easter." What are you doing?

Now, if it's all baloney, great, I get it. Because the greater the claim the more polarized the options. You only get two options here. If what I'm saying is true, you can dismiss it as "those guys are crazy. They've made a God out of this teacher from the New Testament times. Or you're going to have to say, "Well, I guess I got no choice. I've got to give my life to this person." There's no in-between. If I said Jesus was a good teacher, like a lot of people do, and I blame my generation of preachers for making him into this very cool, you know, helper of life. But if he's really the Son of God and he really laid aside his glory to save you, well, then you really only have two choices. You can call us crazy, you can call him crazy, you can say this is all a myth, but you got to completely reject it. Stop sending your kids to Sunday school because this is a crazy thing that we're teaching. But it's the truth. I'm convinced of that. So are millions of other people. It's why we're still celebrating, promoting, advertising and publicizing this man 2,000 years later.

And his return to his glory, the resurrection, is a thing we celebrate today, but it's a reminder to us of how valuable this life is that was given in exchange for yours. Now, you can't be halfway about this. I would encourage you this Easter morning to put your trust in him.



Let me pray for you right now. God, there are people here that have heard this message countless times. I would pray for them right now that they would not gamble with their lives. For whatever we've got left to look in our wallets, so to speak, of our riches, our plans, our dreams, our comforts, our convenience, the years we have left, and to say, "Nahhh, I want to hang onto that." God, let us remember the words today that if we love our lives, we'll lose it. Help us instead to be willing to say, even if it looks like I hate it, I'm going to give my life up, I'm going to give it away to the Son of Man, and therefore I will gain eternity. I'll be where Christ is and I will receive the honor of my creator, which is an unthinkable, humbling act of grace.

So I pray for real repentance and faith in the hearts of people here today to repent, to turn from their life of running from this truth, and that they would put their whole confidence and hope in the Lord of lords. God, let us submit humbly to this Christ who gave his life for us and eternity hangs in the balance. The hinge of eternity comes down to who this person is and the contract of what real faith and real repentance looks like. So I pray there might be some here today who in their fight, they stopped struggling against the gospel. They stop being like Saul of Tarsus, who was kicking against the goads. Let the family of God grow, I know that's why you came Jesus to die, to yield a huge crop so that there'd be lots of sons of God, lots of daughters of God. And so, God, we ask that the family might grow here today. Do that work among us, God, and if we are Christians, let us recognize it as Christ gave his life for us, we owe him everything as the old hymn said, "Love so amazing, so divine, demands our life, our soul and our all." So let us step it up this week to live for you.

In Jesus name. Amen.