

Easter 2021 | David Baumgartner

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[0 : 00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church. Knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. What a beautiful day it is, isn't it?

I love this time of year. Spring has finally arrived. You've got flowers that are in bloom. And you've got that lingering smell of bacon in the air. I wore my special tie today in case I get food on it. No one notices it, so I really appreciate that. But even more so, this is a very special morning because, as you know, we are joining millions upon millions of people all around the world today celebrating the greatest event in human history.

What am I talking about? How about that huge Cardinals win over the Mets? How about the Blues victory? Yeah, taking them on to the next set of trials.

No, I don't think it's any of those. Today we're celebrating the day that Jesus rose from the grave. Amen. Amen. And just like the children declared for us, He's the risen one.

[1 : 15] It is done. Sin and death are overcome. Now, if you go around the world with that message, I will tell you that there are many who will disagree with that.

They will say something like, I believe that Jesus was a good teacher, but that's all He was. In Matthew's account, on three separate occasions, Jesus told His disciples, I will be put to death, and after that, I will rise again from the dead.

About 20 years later, the Apostle Paul was looking back on that event. And it says in 1 Corinthians 15, let me just read it for you, that Jesus was buried, and that He was raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, that is Peter, then to the twelve. After that, listen to this, He appeared to more than 500 brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now. Then He says, some of them have fallen asleep.

But think about that. All of those people who saw the resurrection, saw Jesus come in a life again, you can go and check them out yourself.

[2 : 30] Go ask them. Some people will say, Jesus was just a good teacher. Some people will say that those stories that we read about in the Bible, that those were just fabricated by Jesus' followers to promote some agenda that they had.

Again, friends, that's not true. Not true at all. Those who wrote the biblical accounts paid a very heavy price for their claims. Some of them died by very cruel means.

Eleven out of the twelve apostles died a martyr's death. Only John lived to be in an old age. And you know what happened to him? History tells us that he himself was boiled in oil.

I think it's really hard to understand why so many people would be willing to die if it's just a hoax. Just think about that. Friends, it's not a hoax.

And we have every reason to celebrate. This morning, I would like for us to focus on what Jesus' resurrection means for us today. It seems to me that, and here's why I want to focus on this, it seems to me that every passing week I hear about someone new who's been told they have a life-threatening illness.

[3 : 52] Maybe you yourself know someone in a similar situation. Oftentimes, it's in situations like these that causes people to ask those big questions in life.

Why is there pain and suffering? Why, if there's a God, why doesn't he do something about it?

Friends here this morning, I want to tell you, God did do something about it.

And it's the truth that we need to hear from God's word. What does God say about these matters? That's because the resurrection of Jesus, it changes everything.

It changes everything for us. And this morning, I would just like to mention three ways it does that. But first, let's go to the Lord in prayer. Remember to thank him for today and to place our hearts before him.

Heavenly Father, we are so grateful for this very day that we can celebrate with the millions and millions of people that you rose from the dead.

[4 : 56] Thank you, Father. Thank you, Jesus, for all that you have done for us. And we ask through the ministry of your holy word and the power of your spirit that our eyes would be opened to more and more of what you have for us.

Let us see wonderful things in your word that we've never seen before. Let us leave here, this building, as a people who would be changed from within.

We ask for these graces in the name of Jesus. Amen. So I ask again, what does Jesus' resurrection mean for us?

If you have your handout, please follow along with me. The first one is this. Through Jesus' resurrection, you and I can be forgiven. Jesus, speaking of Jesus in Romans chapter 4, Paul said that Jesus was delivered up because of our transgressions and he was raised because of our justification.

Now we learn from the Bible that the second person of the Godhead, Jesus, became a man and we celebrate that at Christmastime. At the prime of Jesus' life, we find that he was delivered up to a cross.

[6 : 16] We might ask, well, why did he do that? It's out of grace and love for us that he bore the penalty of humans' sin, of humanity's sin.

Some people may ask, well, what's sin? That's not a very popular word today. In the Bible, sin is described in a variety of ways. You might want to listen to this. Error.

Sin is called error. It's called missing the mark. It's called trespasses. It's called transgression. Sin is called iniquity, injustice, rebellion, wickedness.

The key thing is that these are offenses against God and that's what separates us from a holy God. Since God's the ultimate expression, expression of perfection and holiness, we may say that sin is anything that goes against his desire for you and me.

Sin causes a condition of guilt and guilt requires justice. And at the cross, Jesus satisfied justice.

[7 : 29] And his resurrection from the dead proved that very fact. because of the resurrection, it shows that the father accepted Jesus' sacrifice.

And through faith in him, all those who believe are justified. All of those who believe are declared righteous in God's court of law.

The significance of this, friends, is staggering. It is. Life begins anew, just like what we sang about. Eternal life begins at the moment of faith.

Jesus said in chapter 5 of John's gospel account, Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and does not come into judgment but has passed out of death into life.

Even Peter himself would say in his first epistle, praise be to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his great mercy, he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

[8 : 44] I want you to notice here, it's called new birth. It's not just an addition to our old life, something that you just tack on like a post-it note.

We've all seen these packages labeled new and improved, right? That just means that it's the same old junk, it's just put in a box and repackaged.

No, not with God. He gives us a brand new life. He offers each one of us a chance to start over. A life with meaning.

A life with blessings. Here and now. A life that's been forgiven. Isn't that wonderful? Consider this. I'd like you to consider, what if there was no resurrection? What hope would there be for us? What hope would there be for mankind? Paul says in his first letter to the Corinthians, if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless.

[9 : 48] You're still in your sins. And then he says, and those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. Wow. For us, whether or not we know it, everything hangs on forgiveness.

Everything good in our lives starts with forgiveness. I say this first, friends, because if God holds our sins against us, and remember, all of us have sinned, right?

If he holds our sins against us, then really, there's no hope of anything. There's no hope of receiving anything from a holy God. Why would a holy, just God allow, even invite, a sinner like me into his very presence?

God's presence may not be all that important to people when you talk to them, until they get some bad news. And you know what? That's okay. Because God can use that too. Through the resurrection, we find forgiveness. Isn't that good news? It is good news. This is a quote from a guy named Robert Rayburn.

[11:03] He's, in 1982, he was the founding president of Covenant Theological Seminary. He says this regarding these truths. These truths are the rope. They're the life ring that for a drowning man.

He says that these truths are the ladder that allows a person to escape a burning house. These truths are food for those who are starving. These truths are water for those who are parched. We can be forgiven. Secondly, because of the resurrection, we need not fear death. I know many of you know, a friend of mine recently received this bad news about having inoperable cancer. By the way, he knows that I'm talking about him today. And he will tell you, don't feel sorry for me. He says, I've got a great future ahead of me.

And personally, I find his reaction in all this to be really uncommon, but I also find it refreshing. And I'm not surprised because Jack used to be part of a group called Jesus Freak Ministry.

[12:19] The fact is, friends, most people don't really, they don't like to talk about these kinds of things. Isn't that true? Disease, death, those topics are avoided today.

I think the only ones who are willing to talk about them are those in the mortuary business. And that's because, you know, we call them undertakers. Kind of a bad name, isn't it?

They take you under. But, here's a question, why do so many people avoid that topic? I think the biggest reason is fear of the unknown.

Friends, God has given us His holy word. And we can read the very words of someone who has died and come back to life.

You could say, Jesus could say, been there, done that. Listen to what I have to say. God gave us His word and we can read these very words.

[13:19] So, let me ask you, what does the Bible tell us about death? Well, here's the first thing. Eventually, each one of us must face the inevitable. That's called death.

Frequently, the Bible describes physical death as being asleep. We already saw that in a verse. And that's because it resembles that very thing. A person's eyes are closed.

But, in actuality, the real you, the real person, the person's inner soul, inner spirit, is not asleep. In actuality, they're actually conscious, consciously aware.

And that leads to the second point. When a person dies, a separation occurs. Death means separation. The spirit, the soul of a person, leaves his body and goes somewhere else.

Now, the believer's soul and spirit goes to where Christ is. And this is known by several names in the Bible. It's called heaven. It says in a scripture that Paul went to the third heaven.

[14:30] It's God's dwelling place. In another place, it's called paradise. Jesus said to the thief, truly I say to you, you shall be with me today in paradise.

Christ. Theologians call this the intermediate state. And it's a place of inexpressible bliss. And that's because that's where Christ is.

And so, each believer can look forward to this. Therefore, physical death is just a portal that'll take us into the very presence of Christ himself where Christ is seated.

right next to the, at the right hand of God the Father. In a sense, when a believer dies and goes on to this intermediate state, we can celebrate this.

It's not like the funeral of an atheist where it said, he's all dressed up and has nowhere to go. Maybe you've heard that before. If your sins, here's the main point, if you, if your sins are forgiven, you don't have to fear death.

[15:39] Amen. It's a great truth there it is. Now, if there's an intermediate state, then that means there's another promise that's awaiting us. And what is that?

It's through, through the resurrection of Jesus, we are promised a future glory. Jesus' resurrection guarantees that all who belong to him will share will share in his resurrection.

How do I know this? Well, again, we look at what the Bible says. Paul says in 1 Corinthians, but now Christ has been raised from the dead. And notice, he's the first fruits of those who are asleep. In other words, Jesus was the first to enter heaven in this new, glorified body. And in this passage, Paul is comparing Jesus' resurrection to that Old Testament celebration known as the first fruits.

You might want to write that verse down. It's in Leviticus 23, verses 10 to 20. This is where a token amount of the first picked grain would be offered or presented to the priest.

[16 : 57] And they did this to teach two things. The first one is this. It's a way of thanking God for everything that comes from him.

What a great thing to teach. But secondly, it was also a promise or an emblem that would mean that there's something to follow.

And what would that be? More grain. Because God provides. There's a very fascinating passage in Matthew's gospel account.

If you have your handout, you might want to look with me on this. It's in Matthew 27, verses 50 to 53. It says this. And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.

Okay, so Jesus died at this point. And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. It goes on.

[17 : 56] And the earth shook and the rocks were split. Now listen to this. The tombs were also open and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised and coming out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection.

And they went into the holy city and appeared to many. Have you ever seen that? What's going on here? There's really very little information that we have about this other than what's here.

But the wording actually suggests that a small token, number of saints, rose from the dead as a demonstration of Christ's power over death.

Notice here, it says that it was after Jesus' resurrection they went into Jerusalem and appeared to many. Most theologians believe that Matthew saw this in some way as a foretaste of what will eventually happen for all of us.

What a great thing that is. Jesus was the first human being to be raised like this and all of those who are in Christ will eventually follow him.

[19 : 13] Isn't that great? You might ask this question, what kind of bodies will we have at that point? Well, there's numerous passages here. I picked this one again out of 1 Corinthians.

Look with me. There's one glory of the sun and another glory of the moon and another glory of the stars for stars different from star in glory.

So also is the resurrection of the dead. Listen to this. It is sown a perishable body. It is raised an imperishable body.

It is sown in dishonor. It is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness. It is raised in power.

Amen. How exciting that is. When will this happen? When will this become a reality? This will happen at Jesus' second coming.

[20 : 10] Look with me again. 1 Corinthians chapter 15 beginning in verse 51. Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, for the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable and we shall all be changed.

For this perishable must put on the imperishable and this mortal must put on immortality. how wonderful that is.

When Jesus comes again, that will be an event like no other and we can look forward to that. At his second coming, the intermediate state ends and the souls and the spirits of the believers will be clothed with these new bodies just like Jesus has.

Glorified, indestructible, immortal, fit for eternity. And how long is that? Long time.

[21 : 20] Yeah. All of this because Jesus rose from the grave. It's the only religion, only system of beliefs that teaches this.

Muhammad didn't raise from the dead. Buddha didn't raise from the dead. Only Jesus. Jesus raised from the dead. And brothers and sisters, that's cause for celebration. It's worth singing about. It's worth dancing about. It's something to shout about. Amen? It is. There's a story about this minister in England, William Sangster.

Maybe some of you have heard of him. He lived in the 50s. He was diagnosed with this neuromuscular disease. and it just progressed in his life. Toward the end of his life, his legs became useless.

His voice was completely gone. And on Easter morning, he wrote, just a few weeks before he died, he wrote this letter to his daughter.

[22 : 22] And this is what the letter said. He said, it's terrible to awaken on Easter morning and have no voice with which to shout, he is risen.

But then he said, how much more terrible it would be to have a voice and to have absolutely no desire to shout about it. Why?

He's true. I agree with that. We have every reason to shout. Without the resurrection, we wouldn't have much to say to anybody, would we?

No, no hope. There would be no encouraging news from Bethel Community Church. We'd have no reason to exist. We could talk about the St. Louis Cardinals.

I think there's some fans in here. We could talk about the Blues, the hockey team. Sometimes they all give us something to celebrate. But here's a question.

[23 : 21] What has lasting value? What has such a value that it'll take you on beyond this world? Beyond what this world has to offer?

You know, you never hear someone's last word say, boy, I wish I knew my baseball stats better.

No. Because of Christ's resurrection, we can celebrate.

He demonstrated his power over sin and death. Did you know that that resurrection power is available to you and I today?

If you don't believe me, believe what God's word says. Paul says in his letter to Ephesus, this is his prayer for us. Look with me. It's a prayer for you and me.

And he says, I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened. In order that you may, one, know the hope to which he has called you. Anybody here can raise your hand to that?

[24 : 24] How about secondly, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people. Yeah, we've heard about that today. And get this, his incomparably great power for us who believe.

That same power, that power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at the right hand in heavenly realms.

Isn't that amazing? That's the kind of power I want. That's the kind of power. If you and I are looking to lead a different life, to have a life that impacts other people, a life that points people to Jesus Christ, what is our mission statement?

Knowing Jesus and making Jesus known, there's the power to do that. I want to invite the musicians up at this point.

All of us came here today for different reasons. Some of you came out of tradition. Maybe some of you came because you wanted to enjoy a good breakfast.

[25 : 36] Again, thanks guys for that. Some of you came because a friend invited you. Regardless of the reason that you came, I don't think you're here by accident. I believe that God actually brought you here today.

Perhaps you needed just to be reminded of these truths, that these accounts in the Bible, they're true. They're not fabricated. They're historically true.

Maybe you needed to be reminded that God takes sin seriously. You know, he does. He does take it seriously. So much so, that he sent his one and only son into this world to suffer and to give his life for it.

Maybe you're here today just to hear the simple message from God where he says, you know what? You matter to me. Everything about your life, I've been watching, and you matter to me. God says that. He rose from the dead. He's the risen one. It is done. Sin and death are overcome.

[26 : 52] If you know that your sins have been forgiven, celebrate. Celebrate like no other.

Have a good meal with your family, with your friends. enjoy the weather. Enjoy the cardinals. Enjoy the blues while it lasts. Rejoice in the Lord.

Tell others what the resurrection means to you. Encourage them. Walk in the victory that Jesus has purchased for you and I.

If you're not sure of where you stand with God, please don't let another minute go by. Ask somebody. Talk to someone about it.

Ask somebody. Talk to someone.