

Series: Corinthians, a Church in Progress

Sermon #7: A Certain Faith

1 Corinthians 15

Dr. Matt Cassidy – April 18, 2022, Easter Sunday

Good morning, everyone! Whoo, we've got the band back together! It's good to see our auditorium so full. Thank you for joining us on Resurrection Sunday. I think you'll be glad—or you already are glad you did.

Let me tell you a fun story. Tim Hansel, an award-winning, best-selling author, wrote about one Sunday he went to church on Resurrection Sunday. And his pastor told a story about the power and the wisdom of little children.

The story is about this little boy named Johnny. And Johnny had a fatal disease and he didn't have much longer to live. And that disease itself kind of prevented him from really understanding any of the assignments he had in school and keeping up with that. During the Easter season his teacher said that she wanted everyone to come back next week and bring an Easter egg and put something inside that egg that would represent the meaning of Easter to them, whatever that would be.

So, the next week came about, the assignment was turned in, and the teacher was nice and opened each one of those eggs and described what was in it and gave great feedback to each one of those children. One of the eggs was empty. And she just assumed that it was Johnny and that he didn't comprehend the assignment. So, she was moving on to the next subject matter, and Johnny's hand went up and he said, "Well, teacher, you didn't tell anyone about mine."

And she said, "Oh, I'm sorry, Johnny. I thought you just didn't understand, because there was nothing in the egg."

And Johnny said, "That's the point! There's nothing in the egg. The egg is empty. Empty egg, empty tomb. That's the meaning of Jesus and the resurrection."

He is risen! He is risen indeed!

Within six weeks Johnny passed, and inside his casket were twenty-seven empty Easter eggs. His class learned the meaning of Easter that day. He is risen. He is risen indeed.

And Easter isn't just about hope. It's about a certain hope. It's not like a sentimental hope that we aspire to, but it is actually a hope in a promise given by someone who is trustworthy in their promise-giving. And then—here's the part that I want us to see today—it's validated over and over again so that we can enjoy the certainty of that promise, the certainty of that hope.

There's no better time for hope than right now. In a recent health survey of the entire country, it was revealed that the life expectancy has actually decreased three years in a row for the first time in about a hundred years. And here's the point—it's not because of cancer or heart disease. Those diseases have actually gone down in their fatality rate. But rather, it's what they're calling *diseases of despair*. And they name them. In summary, it's some kind of chemical abuse, whether it's alcohol or opioids, or suicide itself. And the studies have shown that in the last twenty-eight years what they're calling deaths of despair have tripled.

In other words, we and our children are living lives that don't have hope. Marriage rates and child birthrates have gone down significantly because, as sociologists have concluded, people are living without hope, and so, why bother? Why get involved?

And then Resurrection Sunday comes in and says, *Oh, there's plenty to hope about*. Resurrection Sunday is this attack on the diseases of despair. There's no room for despair. And here's why. This certainty of hope is because Resurrection Sunday is built on the foundation of Jesus Christ and His resurrection. It is not an appeal to pragmatism. It's not an appeal to sentimentalism. In the history of the Church, when followers of Christ were hiding with their families in caves; when they were being generous with their resources; when they were giving forgiveness in ways that were expensive; when they were standing on a pile of wood waiting to be martyred, no one said pragmatically, "How's that working?" Or sentimentally: "Do you feel a buzz? Are you feeling the peace of God in this moment? No? Just fear?" Yeah, probably.

Devoted followers of Christ have followed Christ, not for sentimental reasons, not for pragmatic purposes, but rather based on a single, verifiable, historic event. That's what keeps Christians going. And it's the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And if you just give a passing glance at history, whether it's in the Bible or outside of the Bible, on the history and the proofs of the resurrection, you'd come to the conclusion that God is trying to make a point in this resurrection. He's trying to make something very clear. And it's not just that Jesus rose from the dead. As the author of history, if He was writing this as some kind of ultimate suspense or mystery ... I just want you to know, if you look at the evidence, there's too

many clues. There's too much evidence. It's an open and shut case. There's no mystery to the mystery of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And when you see that, you have to back up one more step and say, *But why would God do it that way?* Why the overwhelming evidence in the nature of Jesus' death and the publicity of it, the placing of Him in that particular tomb, the fact that it was sealed with a Roman guard. And then Jesus presented himself to so many different audiences over about a forty-day period of time.

God Wants Us to Be Certain of Our Hope

Why? Here's why. Because it is the nature of God to know how frail our human souls are; that we desperately need not a hope, but a certain hope. He wants us to be able to go back to something that we can appeal to our reason when our emotions are volatile. There are significant consequences for being a true follower of Jesus Christ. It's life and death. Sometimes it has to do with prosperity or poverty. It's certainly heaven and hell. So, God doesn't want us to be hoping in hope; He wants us to be hoping in something certain.

And so, the kindness of God, the mercy of God, looking at someone like me—"O ye of little faith"—He says it's not about how much faith you have, but it's what you have your faith in. And what you have your faith in is going to be evidence spread wild like wildflowers—they'll be everywhere all the time. Today we're going to look at this certainty of our hope that's found in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. ² By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. ³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scripture.

The most influential words ever written in human language are found in 1 Corinthians 15. The whole chapter is dedicated to the resurrection of Christ and its logical consequences. It starts

like this: “Now, my brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word that I have preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.”

The certain hope that we have is an appeal to this historical event, that Jesus Christ lived like no one else had lived. He taught in ways that no one else taught. People could not figure Him out. They couldn't put Him in a box to keep Him in. They didn't understand Him in many ways. He never wrote a single page of His own thoughts, and more has been written about Jesus and His teaching than about any other human that has ever existed.

And the most confounding part of His life is that He went into death willingly, without struggle. And people didn't understand that. And the Jesus movement? The moment of His death, His crucifixion, “It is finished,”—the Jesus movement was finished ... utterly, completely, and totally done. And then three days later something happened that resurrected the Jesus movement. And the disciples would say that what resurrected the Jesus movement was the resurrection of Jesus, the Messiah. That changed everything. It changed the world. That cross radically changed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is the Roman symbol of humiliation and powerlessness and failure. And now it is the greatest symbol of hope that adorns more headstones than any other symbol all over the world. It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Tim Keller is a pastor in New York. He says, “When people tell me that they once were believing Christians but now have rejected it all—I often ask them (after listening to them for quite some time) why they originally believed that Jesus rose from the dead and how now they have come to decide that He was not raised from the dead. And when I ask them that question, they usually say, ‘That's a very good question.’”

Four Responses to the Validity of the Resurrection

Here's what I want to look at today. I want to look at four responses for rejecting the resurrection. And I want to look at those purposefully—not just historically and factually, that the resurrection happened, but more importantly, what was behind God's method of doing it in

such a manner. What is He trying to show us in the way that He wrote and scripted this resurrection story?

1. The Swoon Theory

The first objection to the resurrection is what is called—this has been going on for two thousand years—the “swoon theory.” And the swoon theory is the belief that Jesus didn’t actually die at the crucifixion, but rather swooned. He was concussed, He fainted, He went into a coma. And then when He was in the cave and it was cool and He was being left alone for these two-and-a-half to three days, He was resuscitated and got better and then escaped. That’s the theory.

Here are the problems. There are obvious problems here. One is the belief that He didn’t die. The Roman soldiers that would have been in charge of His execution were professional killers. It’s what they do for a living. They’re quite good at it.

The Cake Boss knows the difference between, I don’t know, buttercream and fondant, right? Roman soldiers know the difference between dead and alive. They had to be certain. And that’s why, even in the crucifixion story, when things were taking too long they would break the legs of the victims and then they would suffocate; or they would spear them in the lungs to see if they had in fact suffocated or drowned. That’s kind of the way you die. And they had done that with Christ. He was graveyard dead. That’s what these men do. And they had done that.

But let’s just assume that He was in a passed out, coma situation. He had been beaten for hours, He was required to carry the cross to Golgotha until He couldn’t. Then He was pierced in both hands and His feet and then hung on that cross for hours. Then He was stabbed in the ribs. All signs of death. There’s more. Then in the burial description in John’s gospel, it says that He was wrapped in about seventy-five pounds of myrrh and aloes—they kind of made a cocoon for Him. They laid Him to rest.

He lay there Friday and all day Saturday, and then Sunday He just sits up and then somehow gets the wrappings off. There’s more—wait. Then He has to get out. On this tomb there’s a stone that is rolled from downhill to uphill into a socket. It’s like a disk, a manhole cover. And He would have had to push that up the hill, because the evidence shows that it went back up the hill. And pushing this disk up the hill would be like you or I rolling a Suburban over on its roof uphill. After doing that He defeats the Roman guards.

There's still more to the story. Then He shows up, after having done that, to His disciples—He appeared to many people—and He presents himself as all better. And He's going to convince them that this is the resurrected body. My plan today was to show you before and after photos of UFC or MMA fighters, even just showing you the winners. And it was graphic and I thought I'd get in trouble because the kids are here. I've got a paper cut from four days ago that still has a scar. And Jesus is going to show up and say, *This is how good it's going to get, people*. I don't think that's going to happen. I just don't think that's a legitimate expression of what happened. That was not a resurrected—

Application

Here's the bigger point. If there was no resurrection, there's no certain hope. And when I talk about a certain hope, I'm talking about a certain hope of our forgiveness. It's directly tied to it.

1 Corinthians 15:17-19

And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have died in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

This is Paul speaking, the same chapter, verse 17: “And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have died in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.”

So, if there's no resurrection and there's no forgiveness, can you see? No wonder God, in orchestrating and using His sovereignty, goes through all of these extravagant expressions of details into His death. It's not a pun, but there's overkill in this overkill. He could have just tripped down some stairs to die, but no, God portrays Him in front of everyone, having this severe beating and punishment and public display.

And why? Because God is demonstrating the cost of our sins against the holiness of God, and He wants us to be certain that they're paid for. God is showing us in this kind of death so that we will have a certain hope for our forgiveness.

Colossians 2:13-14

When you were dead in your sins ..., God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; He has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.

Look how it's tied together in Colossians. "When you were dead in your sins ... God made you alive in Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; He has taken it away, nailing it to the cross."

Nailing it to the cross ... So, spiritually speaking, Jesus' hands were not empty when He died. They were full of these scripts of accusations and proofs against our moral crimes against the holiness of God. He's holding onto those and they are nailed to a cross. They are killed and done with when Jesus is killed.

And how this shows up in our lives is when you find yourself saying to yourself (or maybe a loved one says to you), *Forgiven ... do you have any idea what I've done?*

And the Lord God Almighty responds, *Do you have any idea what I've done? Did that method of death miss some bill that you need to pay still? I want you to have certain hope of your forgiveness of sins because of all that took place and all that I gave you in the context of evidence that your debt is repaid.*

So, even today, how about you walk out of this auditorium, shoulders back, head held high. You have a priest that is going to go before the Holy Father and say, *He's with me*. And we know that because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

2. Theory of the Wrong Tomb

The second claim that people have when they say that Jesus didn't rise from the dead because they know how important it is, is that people went to the wrong tomb. Oops, wrong address.

Now, again, this one's a little difficult to actually grasp if you understand what took place, because that tomb that Jesus was buried in wasn't like at Arlington National Cemetery

where it's just rows of headstones or places to bury people. It was a designated tomb. It belonged to a man named Joseph of Arimathea. It had a Roman seal and a guard on it. I don't know if you've been to any cemeteries, but they don't have guards. So, it'd be pretty easy to find the one where Jesus was buried—He's the guy with the soldiers out front. And why do they have soldiers out front? Because Jesus said, *You don't have power to hold me down. Death has no power over me. The love of God sent me here and the love of God will resurrect me in three days. I'm seeing you again.* And so, to make sure that He stayed where they put him, they put a seal and a Roman guard on it.

If they went to the wrong tomb, the Jesus haters would go to the right tomb, find the body, and they'd have a parade all over Jerusalem. And in that second the Jesus movement would be dead forever. If there's no resurrection, the claims of Christ are invalid. And any of us that believe and have faith in those claims are miserable.

1 Corinthians 15:14-15

And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. ¹⁵ More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that He raised Christ from the dead.

Look again—Paul's arguing this—I'm not: "And if Christ has not been raised"—because they went to the wrong tomb—"our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God"—we're lying about God--- "for we have testified about God that He raised Christ from the dead." If that's not true, then we're lying.

But the resurrection of Christ is true, and so, therefore, the claims of Christ are true. And those claims are audacious. Jesus says, "I am the way and the truth and the life." And He says, "No one comes to the Father but through me." How dare you say something like that? He says, *Well, wait ... I'll prove it. I'll be raised from the dead.* He showed that claim to be true in His resurrection. It's outrageous to claim that you're the only way to the Father, but it is more outrageous to overcome a crucifixion and death. And that was the whole point. It's for you and me, at least for me—"O ye of little faith." When I start to believe there's really one way to have eternal life, I'll say, *Well, there's this one man that said that and He's the one that rose from the dead. And there's so much proof to that fact.*

3. The Theory that Jesus' Body Was Stolen

There's a third way people respond when they believe His resurrection is not true—that the disciples stole Jesus' body --- the Jesus'-body-was -stolen theory. The disciples came in at night and they took Jesus' body away, maybe when the soldiers were sleeping.

There are problems with that. One is when we say “Roman guard” in the New Testament, it's not a guard, it's not one person. It's four soldiers that could hold off a hundred men for an entire day. This is part of the Roman Legion. It is the most powerful fighting elite team in that part of the world, and frankly, for almost five hundred years. If one of the soldiers in this Roman guard failed to do their job, they would be killed. They'd be burned alive. And that's the soldiers.

The people that were said to have kidnapped the body of Jesus were a band of fishermen and an accountant. So, we got that. And they overpowered this elite fighting force? It's not likely. But they were sleeping. If they were sleeping, they'd be killed. So, it's unlikely they were sleeping. So, if they were sleeping, you still have to move that stone. And it's going to take more than twelve to do it, but you're rolling that Suburban up a hill—*Shhh, don't wake anyone up*. It's unlikely. I'm just saying, it's unlikely.

Matthew 28:2-4

And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. ³ And his appearance was like lightning, and his garment as white as snow; ⁴ and the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.

Not only is it unlikely, but in the biography of Jesus in Matthew's gospel, he says this is what happened on that morning. It's not quiet. “And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it.” I love that. “And his appearance was like lightning, and his garment as white as snow; and the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.” □

Application: God Shows the Power of the Resurrection

Look at this show of power. Look at the power that's taking place here. Why does God do all this to resurrect Jesus? He could've just done a *Star Wars* / Yoda type thing, you know? No, no, no, He's going to do this: a severe earthquake, lightning angel, garments of white. I love that he's sitting on this stone and to these Roman guards he says, *What's up?* Boom—down like they're dead. Or ... *Boo!* I don't know what he said. It doesn't matter, right? They're just ... [snaps].

Ephesians 1:18-20

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know ... ¹⁹ His incomparably great power for us who believe. ²⁰ That power He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms ...

Why would God do it that way? Why would He make it happen this way? Here's why. In Ephesians chapter 1 it's about power. "I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know ..." a certain hope. "... His incomparably great power for us who believe. That power He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at the right hand of the Father in the heavenly realms ..." that's in us now.

I want you guys to know that's available to you. And people still have encounters with the power of the Spirit in their lives to this very day. Billions of people have been addicted and powerless. And then they are introduced to Jesus Christ and through that they become powerful. People that are alone and lonely are introduced to the fellowship of Jesus Christ and now they can be alone without being lonely. People are bored and they don't know their purpose in life, and then Christ gets hold of their soul and they are on an adventure of power-packed, adrenaline-filled events. People are bitter and they cannot overcome some things against them, and they're introduced to this power of this Holy Spirit and they are able to forgive. Billions of people over the centuries have been exposed and enjoy this power. People in this room--- I have to---anyone can if they are followers of Christ.

The powerful display in the resurrection was to demonstrate that we are able to conquer, enjoy, persevere, thrive, one day at a time if we surrender our lives to the power of the Spirit. That's what He's trying to show us.

4. An Abundance of Witnesses

1 Corinthians 15:4-7

... that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that He appeared to Peter, and then to the twelve. ⁶ After that, Jesus appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have died. ⁷ Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸ and last of all He appeared to me also.

The fourth thing has to do with the many witnesses who saw the resurrected Jesus Christ. Let me show you ---this follows that first set of scriptures that we read at the very beginning (verses 4-7): “ ... that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the scriptures, and then appeared to Peter, and to the twelve, and after that Jesus appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have died. And then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all He appeared to me, Paul.”

Paul's writing here and saying --- he wrote this within twenty years of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And he's talking about eye witnesses to the resurrected Jesus Christ. And He's saying—it's kind of obvious that he's naming names—Peter and some of these other apostles. He's fundamentally saying, *Look, if you don't believe me, there are five hundred plus people that you can talk to that are still alive today.* Legally we would say this is beyond a shadow of a doubt. This resurrection story is truthful.

Here's the thing—it has consequences. If we believe in the resurrection and the resurrection is not true, then any sacrifice, any gift, any cost to us is folly. Not my words --- Paul's.

1 Corinthians 15:32

If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus with no more than human hopes, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”

Here’s what he said: “If I fought wild beats in Ephesus”—and I think he did—“If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus with no more than human hopes, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised,” *then I’m living for me.* “Let us eat and drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die.””

If there’s no resurrection, I’m going to live like I am a mammal and nothing more. But this certainty of the resurrection says that there’s another way to live; that in fact, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, that body, was a template for our future resurrection—what we might look like in the future.

1 Corinthians 15:20

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have died.

Look what he says back in chapter 15: “But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have died.” He’s the first look at what we’re going to see later on. And so, these last visions of Jesus are pictures of our future selves. Because the last visions that we have of people that we love are quite often the darkest, aren’t they? When the people that we love and we respect and have honored, maybe our whole lives, find themselves victims of some illness that’s taking away their vitality and their intelligence and their personality and you’re just watching them waste away, that’s the way we remember them. Or even our young ones—when they die they are covered in tubes and their face is either inflated from various medications or emaciated. And then there’s the casket.

That’s how we end? That’s not what this says. This says we get a new body. And this body right now is just a shuck. Like Jesus said, it’s like a seed that falls on the ground and dies and opens up. If He were here in Texas, He’d say, *This body is like an acorn. It’s going to get*

planted and when it gets resurrected it's going to look like one of these two hundred-year-old oak trees out here in our courtyard. And I want to make sure you understand that so that you have a certain hope. And I'm going to expose this resurrected body to five hundred plus people over forty days. I want them to all see what a two-hundred-year-old oak tree looks like, because all they can see is a bunch of little scattered acorns. And to this day all across the world on headstones are crosses. And those are certain hopes of a future resurrection when they get a new body. And the last time you saw them—they're not going to look like that. No. God wouldn't allow that.

Tim Keller writes this. "When people tell me that they were once believing Christians but now have rejected it all, I often ask them (after listening to them for quite some time) why they originally believed Jesus rose from the dead and how they came to decide that now He has not."

It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ—historical, verifiable, validations of a promise from a reliable promise giver who understands the frailty of human faith and says, *I'm going to have to run up the score for you guys—so that in your moments of doubt, you'll believe. You'll have a certain hope.*

That cross is a hinge of all human history. No icon has changed more lives than that.

I love what Max Lucado writes about the cross: "That cross rests on the timeline of human history like a compelling diamond. Its tragedy summons all sufferers. Its absurdity attracts all cynics. Its hope lures all that are searchers.

"History has idolized and despised it, gold-plated it and burned it, worn it as jewelry and trashed it.

"History has done everything to this cross but ignore it. How could you ignore such a piece of lumber? Suspended on its beams is the greatest claim in history. A crucified carpenter claiming to be God on earth. Divine. Eternal. The death-slayer. Never has timber been regarded so sacred.

"It is no wonder that Paul called the cross event the core of the gospel. It's the bottom line and it's sobering: if the account is true, it is history's hinge. Period. If not, the cross is history's hoax."

So, what about you? A hinge or a hoax? What does that cross mean? It cannot be ignored. If you choose today to let Jesus Christ and that violent death be the payment for your sins and crimes against God so that you might have perfection in Him—you inherit His righteousness—if

you trust in that today, you can receive the power of the Spirit, the forgiveness in Christ, and the fellowship of enjoying a relationship with the Father here in this life and in the next for eternity. You just have to ask. Just say, *I'm going to move my trust in my own good deeds to placing my trust completely in those acts of Jesus Christ, His death and His resurrection.*

I would love for you to make that choice today. If you do, it would be wonderful if you told someone about that, maybe someone who brought you, someone at the welcome center, or connect with us online so we can help you learn how to live out this supernatural power of the Spirit that was demonstrated in the resurrection of Jesus. We have that.

To those of you who have trusted Christ, I am here to remind you that it is a certain hope. It's not a sentimental hope. It's not a practical hope. It's a hope that drives us.

1 Corinthians 15:58

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

And here's how Paul ends chapter 15 when he's talking to believers about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Knowing all the logical consequences for that, He says this: "Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

Jesus said, *Whoever gives up their mother, father, sister, brother, house, acreage—* whatever you, quote, "give up," Jesus says He'll pay back one hundred fold. Never once does Jesus say, *Sacrifice for me.* He always says, *Invest in my claims to be true.* You'll be glad you did.

And so, what Paul is saying here is, "Stand firm." Stand firm in every act of service to His local church, for example. Whether you're helping park cars or serving children or in adult ministry, if you're a single parent and you're doing what you've got to do to get your children here, you stand firm. Keep doing that. He says, "Let nothing move you." Let nothing move you in your commitment to purity in a culture that has gone insane. Let nothing move you in your

acts of generosity in uncertain financial times. That's what Paul said. Because the resurrection's true, the claims are true, the evidence is scattered far and wide, he said, "Give yourself fully."

So, if you up and sell everything and move to some remote part of the world to tell people about the resurrection of Christ—not just the history, but all that it says about the nature of God and His love and the power and the honor that's received in becoming a Christ follower—he's saying, "Give yourselves fully to that." Because it's true.

Resurrection Sunday is true. Paul said somewhere else, "I consider that this present suffering is not worthy of comparing to the glory that's afforded to me later in this next life."

Resurrection Sunday is about this: Jesus Christ is risen. He is risen indeed.

Would you join me in prayer?

Dear God, in Your mercy and in Your love for us, in Your knowledge of how weak our faith can be, You demonstrate Your love by causing this substitutionary death payment in such a grand and spectacular way that we can keep going back when our emotions are volatile, when the costs seem unbearable. We can go back and say, But it's true. And it happened. And I can't back my way out of this. And so, therefore, I will stand firm. I'm not going to let anything move me. I'm going to give myself fully to the claims of Jesus Christ and the Spirit's call to obedience.

Lord, I'd ask that this Sunday, this Resurrection Sunday, would be a Sunday of confirmation of a certain hope—the hope and the many promises that You've given. And You're a great promise-giver because You're a great promise-keeper.

Lord, I'd ask that the new followers of You today would experience the joy of having Your Spirit live in their souls and give them the courage to do whatever is next. We praise You this day for all that You have done. Lord, let our lives be an offering back to You.

We pray this in Jesus' name. And everybody said, Amen.