

**HE IS RISEN, NOW WHAT?
THE APOSTLES CREED - Part 3
Dan Burrell**

Good morning Life Fellowship. Well, it is good to see you and to welcome back many of you. I know this has been kind of a day that many have marked will be the day that they kind of break free from the curse of the pandemic and celebrate resurrection Sunday. It is certainly different today than it was last year whenever we were completely online on Easter Sunday. And I know there are many hundreds of you that are still watching from home. I know there was someone watching the early service from Maine, and I know there were others from Vietnam watching as well as from several other foreign countries. And if you are watching online we look forward to meeting you someday or seeing you back here whenever circumstances change. But to all of you who came back on this Sunday to celebrate resurrection day in the Lord's house, welcome and we are glad to see you.

When we look around we can see a lot of new faces and the fact is even over the last year we have added quite a few new members to the church like folks that have moved in from out of town. And there are some folks here that this feels like home for you and you are back hoping we are seeing the end of the pandemic. So you may want to take some time this morning and get re-acquainted and we look forward to seeing you more in the future. Certainly this has been an interesting year by every definition.

We are in the middle right now of a new series. One of the hallmarks of our church, one of the founding values and principles that we use, is something that we call ancient future. Every year we do a series that kind of looks back on our past in terms of the history of the church and emphasizes a different aspect of our church history. And by church I mean, in this case, the family of God, the body of Christ, the called out assembly. And so in years past we have done a variety of things. We actually looked at great art, we looked at aspects of our doctrine, and this year we are looking at the Apostles Creed.

The Apostles Creed is a historic creed. It is a statement that was agreed upon by the leaders of the church early on within the first couple of hundred years after the death of Christ that kind of encapsulates the core doctrine of the church. There have been revisions; in fact there are several different versions of this. We have chosen one that most closely aligns with us. But what we have started doing during this series is looking at it line by line, and as part of that we also say it together. So as we being this morning on Easter Sunday, resurrection Sunday, I would like to ask you to join me in saying the Apostles Creed together.

So let's look at the Apostles Creed now. *'I believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and borne of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to hell, the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in*

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the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.'

Today many all across the country are regathering on this day of renewal, a day that is important in the church calendar. Again in ancient future what we do is we understand that we live in the 21st century, we live in a contemporary culture, and many times aspects of our corporate gatherings reflect that. We have some pretty good music from time to time and we also use technology. Like I said there are people that are literally watching this service right now as it unfolds all over the world. So we embrace the future, we embrace the modern; we are not living lives that are unaware of the facts that history changes and progresses and so forth. At the same time we believe that it is important to be anchored in fundamental truths, to be anchored to orthodox doctrine, to be anchored to things that we will never compromise on for the sake of acceptability, or for the sake of fitting into the culture.

These are essential truths, and embodied within the Apostles Creed you will find these central truths. There are other aspects that we will visit, there are different parts of what is sometimes called liturgy, even the words like vestibule or sanctuary, the different things that we say in church that have spiritual significance. We will talk about those in the future. We have talked about art and in fact in the future we will actually talk about the architecture of the church, such as stained glass windows which were the earliest versions of illustrating Bible stories so to speak through which much doctrine and much church history was taught.

So these are all parts of a balanced church. We don't want to forsake the past, nor do we want to neglect the present, and we have to be aware of the future. So ancient future is part of why we are doing this series on the Apostles Creed. And today we are on that part of the Apostles Creed that speaks of the fact that Jesus rose from the dead. Last week Pastor Ben talked about the suffering that Jesus experienced under Pontius Pilate and how He was crucified and died.

In fact last week Pastor Ben and I did a podcast on the phrase, '*He descended to hell.*' That is one of the phrases in the Apostles Creed that is disputed by some and looked at in different ways by others. We don't take a firm position on it; we just show you the different aspects of it so you can draw your own conclusions. And so I would urge you to listen to Life Talks this week and you can find it on our church webpage or you can just Google Life Talks and it will come up. So please listen to the one that will be released this week where we discuss that. I think you will find it fun to listen to and also maybe just kind of debate among yourselves where you think Jesus went when He was in the grave for those three days.

Now today we are focusing on an indisputable fact, it is an absolute hallmark of the Christian faith; it is something that makes Christianity unique among all the faiths of every existence in the world and that is this – our God, our Savior has risen from the

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dead. He supernaturally conquered death that awaits every person who has ever been born. Jesus conquered the grave. And so today as we do that, I want to just kind of emphasize some things about that.

You know last week LifeWay, which is one of the leading Christian publishers and also a group that does a lot of research, published the findings of a national survey in which they discovered that sixty-six percent of the American population believe in a literal supernatural resurrection of Christ from the dead. I have to tell you that when I saw that I was frankly a little surprised. Much of the research that we have today shows that we are a nation that is moving away from a Christian foundation that was part of our very culture from the onset of the founding of this nation.

While I would never say that we were a Christian nation, we were definitely founded on Judeo Christian principles. And you can find throughout our founding documents the influence of the Word of God and the belief of the Bible on our founding as a nation. But it also does not take someone who is particularly an anthropological expert to see that the change that has been taken place over the last few decades of us moving away from that historical and traditional position.

So when the research said sixty-six percent of people who are in this country believe in a physical, literal resurrection of Christ from the dead, I frankly was a little surprised. Particularly in light of the fact that another set of research that came out within the last week or ten days said that fewer than fifty percent of the people in the country were actively part of, or engaged with a local church. So in other words they weren't members of a church, they don't attend a church regularly or they don't identify as a member of a particular congregation. Some may say they are spiritual or they are a Christian, whatever that may mean to them, but fewer than fifty percent of the population identify with one specific church or denomination.

So I am thinking there is quite a disparity there because of that fifty percent you have everything from any kind of religion, it doesn't necessarily have to be a Christian religion. It could be a cult, a foreign religion, or a lot of different things. So my question when I thought about that is – how can someone believe in the literal resurrection, the bodily resurrection of Christ and still not identify with the family of God. Some might identify with Jesus Christ as Lord, some might identify with the body of believers, the called out assembly, the people who Scripture very, very clearly tells us to whom we should we attached - what is the difference and why did that happen.

And that gap is something I kind of want to address this morning as we look at the topic – so He is risen, now what? Where do we go from here? He is risen – what should happen next? So I want you to look with me if you would in Matthew Chapter 28 and we are going to read the account that Matthew recorded. You know there are four gospels and each records the life of Christ from four different perspectives, and we kind of get four different angles. If you mention any topic in history you can often get different

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perspectives based on the background and the experiences of those who observed it. And some of that is true in the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Matthew has a very detailed account that I enjoy. I enjoy the ones in John and the others as well, but the Matthew context shows us some things I want us to focus on this morning. So let's read Matthew Chapter 28 and verses 1 through 10. The Scriptures says: *“Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men.*

But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, as He said. Come see the place where He lay. Then go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead, and behold, He is going before you to Galilee; there you will see Him. See, I have told you.” So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell His disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshipped Him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”

I want us to look at this passage carefully this morning, and I want us to look at the response of those who were there at the first resurrection when they realized that something had occurred that was extremely out of the ordinary, something that even though Jesus Himself had foreshadowed it multiple times, they didn't quite realize until after it occurred.

It was early in the morning, the sun had not fully risen, there was probably still a damp fog across the Garden as Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came walking to the tomb. And as was the custom of that day they would often visit the grave in the early part of the day. They would put fresh flowers, fresh ointments, or fresh herbs at the door of the grave as a symbol of respect, and as part of the tradition and the culture. So they were going to do what was a rather mundane, a rather routine thing. They certainly weren't going expecting to find an empty tomb. They weren't going expecting to see an angel. They weren't going expecting anything out of the ordinary; they were just doing a routine duty; something that millions had done before them and they would anticipate that others would do after them in other settings and in other situations.

But when they got to the grave all of a sudden everything changed. And I want us to look at that. The first thing I want us to look at is this - there was a realization by those who visited the tomb that morning that a supernatural event had occurred. A supernatural event had occurred. I want us to focus in on the supernatural aspect of the resurrection because we live in a culture; we live in a society that almost demands that there be some kind of natural explanation for everything we see. That there has to be a logical reason,

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there has to be some explanation as to how this occurred. But you know when you start talking about someone who was dead that came alive then all of a sudden you go into a whole new realm that invites quite frankly disbelief.

I don't know about you but every once in a while I will see one of these guys on the Internet or I will see a guy when I am flipping through the TV channels and I will see some late night preacher or evangelist type who are usually not my particular cup of tea. Maybe you think that kind of sounds weird since I am a pastor, but I am definitely not into particularly the style of some of the folks that are on TV. But every once in a while curiosity gets the best of me and I will hear someone say something like this, *'It was a supernatural miracle that occurred when I was in this country and this guy came to life again.'* And when I hear that I don't know about you all when you hear stories like that, but I am like, *'I am not swallowing that. He really wasn't dead. You have to be making this story up. This is something you heard from someone who heard it from someone else.'* I just don't believe that. Now I realize I am a bit of a cynic, and I realize I am rather skeptical. But I have to tell you that I do not believe that there are people around today that are going around and raising people from the dead.

But this one we just read in Matthew – I believe! I believe this one! But can you imagine honestly that there are many, more than sixty-six percent, who would look at this story and not believe it? Over the years there have been all kinds of theories. There were theories that the Roman soldiers spirited Jesus away, that someone had bribed the soldiers and they took His body and hid it. Or there was a theory that Jesus wasn't really dead; He was merely in a coma or unconscious. There are all kinds of theories that others have used to in some way explain away a supernatural resurrection.

But here is the deal – this was a supernatural action. This is what distinguishes Christianity. Even Atheists talk about the fact that this was extraordinary. I was trying to discover what the Atheists thought about the resurrection and I read last week on an Atheist website an amazing explanation of it from someone who shouldn't even believe in the resurrection. He made the case better than some Christians I have heard make the case for a resurrection by simply saying, *'Some Christians believe this based on this evidence.'*

This Atheist said this: *'This is the most compelling argument I have heard on a supernatural resurrection. Consider the fact that no other disciples, save for John, (and he wanted to dispute whether John was there or not), who was at the crucifixion. That at the moment when Jesus died, He had been largely abandoned even by one of His closest disciples, Peter, who had denied Him three times. The disciples disappeared and weren't willing to be associated with Jesus. They didn't want to take the risk of being crucified alongside of Jesus. So they were at best a distance away, except for John according to the gospel of John, but he was there to kind of be a support to Jesus' mom. But something happened to take these eleven disciples, who Jesus called brothers, Judas being out of the picture by then; but something changed to make these eleven men not*

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only re-identify with Christ, not only did they meet Him, did they see Him, did they speak to Him, but they spent the rest of their lives preaching His gospel under the threat of imprisonment, beatings, social ostracization, and eventually all except John were executed.’ And this Atheist said, ‘This is the most compelling argument there is that something supernatural occurred because people don’t die for lies, and certainly not eleven men who spent their entire lives preaching the gospel of Christ.’

Now folks, I want you to understand everything that we read about the Scriptures screams that this was a supernatural intervention by God Himself. There was an earthquake, there were angels that appeared, and there was a huge stone that was moved away from the opening of the tomb. And here is what I really love about it, because it is like I get this picture of this angel jauntily sitting at the top of this huge stone and saying, *‘I see you have come to see the tomb. Why don’t you go right on in and you will find that He is not there.’* The angel became a tour guide at that moment.

And by the way I do not think, and you have heard me rant on this before, that this angel looked like a beautiful woman. Angels are masculine and there is no description of angels having wings and looking beautiful. I don’t know what the angel looked like but I have to imagine he might have been kind of scary. They certainly weren’t expecting an angel to be there that morning. There were guards, Roman centurions, the big burly Marines of their day, and whatever they saw was so fantastic that they passed out like little girls. I mean they were literally just lying there on the ground passed out. What was going on? I will tell you what was going on. God Himself interjected Himself into the natural world and said, *‘He is risen. He is risen. Death has no victory here. Death has no power here. Death has no authority here. He is risen.’*

And folks, if you believe that it ought to change what is next in your lives. This is not something ordinary. This is not something you see every day. Several years ago there was a dear lady in my church that had passed away. She left young children behind and when I went to spend time with the family they were in just utter shock. It was a horrible tragedy. I asked them to let me go to the funeral home with them because I knew it was going to be so difficult for them. There was a funeral home right down the street and when we went in I was just braced because I knew they were going to be very emotional. There is just something about the finality of death and seeing your loved one like that is just a hard thing. Some of you have gone through it and you have experienced it with family members or friends that you love, so you know it is a hard thing.

And when Mary and the other ladies came toward Jesus’ tomb their hearts were heavy. It was very difficult for them. But when I went with this family who had lost their mother the husband looked down into the face of his wife and he smiled. And I thought he must be in shock. But he looked at me and he said, *‘You know what, it just dawned on me that she is not here. This isn’t her. I know where she is and this is just the shell she left behind. I know exactly where she is.’* And that moment of sadness and

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shock that I had anticipated turned into a moment of joy and a moment of peace for them because when they saw her body they knew she was not there.

And when those ladies came to Jesus' tomb they were expecting to see a body and they were expecting to mourn. But the realization came that there wasn't even a body there that day because he was risen. He had conquered death. And the joy and the relief and everything that was a part of that was going to give them hope that would change their future and ours.

The second thing I want you to realize is there was a reaction and it was of shock and awe. The time when all of this became clear resulted in several minutes of sheer chaos. And I have a vivid imagination and I like to write and describe things but I can't imagine what those first few moments would have been like when the resurrection dawned on them. You have women running away, you have disciples running toward, you have soldiers fainting and when they wake up they only want to get out of there, and you have angels perched upon the stone. There is just all this chaos going on and then all of a sudden here comes Jesus. Can you imagine the shock that must have been there that morning?

And you know the resurrection is shocking. It does require us to spend time thinking about what we believe about the natural world and to be confronted by someone who does not have to play by the rules. God does not have to play by the rules. Do you know why? It is because He wrote the rules, He made the rules, and he can change the rules any time He wants to. He was the victor over death. He was the creator of all natural laws. And as surely as He could create them, He could bend them, He could ignore them, He could challenge them, and He could change them because He was not bound by them. He was risen indeed.

So there was this period of shock and awe. I ask you this morning if you have lost your awe of the resurrection. Have you lost the power? Have you lost the impact of realizing that of all the religions in the world that have ever existed, or will ever exist, that the bottom line is that none of them claim this kind of power? None of them have an example of a god who loved them enough to die for them, or a god who was powerful enough to raise himself from the dead. That is the unique hallmark of Christianity.

The third thing I want you to know is there was a period of reflection and consideration. Jesus appeared and He brings order and calm to the situation. Again, can you imagine the chaos? You have fainting soldiers, soldiers that are running away, women who don't know what is going on, so there is chaos. And Jesus just brings about calmness and a focus. He wants them to calm down and to understand that He has something for them to do. First of all He tells them to look at Him to be sure He is not an illusion but that He is resurrected and real.

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I was watching people as they came in for the first service today and then the second service, and again I can't tell you how good it is to see some of you that I haven't seen in a while. There are many folks that I haven't got to meet yet and Ben, the rest of our team and myself are looking forward to doing that soon. And I remember so many Easter Sundays when my kids were little when we would get up early in the morning and do the Easter basket hunts. It would be difficult getting them dressed for church and tearing them away from their baskets. They would be bouncing out of the car high on candy as they made their way up to the church.

And I watched some of you with your kids as you walked in this morning and they were having a good time. But as you came in you knew it was time for us to focus on the meaning of worship. After a chaotic year, after a year that none of us envisioned was going to unfold the way it did over the last 12 or so months, I think we need to pause and we need to have a moment of reflection. We need to have a moment where we consider why we are still here, what God has done, and what He would have us to do next. I think it is appropriate we are in church today, a year after the pandemic hit, right as spring begins to unfold before us, with a fresh opportunity to do God's will.

The fourth thing is that there was a charge to go and tell others. After all the chaos, and then after a period of quiet, there was a job to be done. Remember what the Scripture said in verse 9, "***And behold, Jesus met them and said, 'Greetings!' And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshipped Him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee.'***" That is what they were to do next. And we have stuff to do also.

I know for a lot of people this year beyond the pandemic has been a confusing year. It has been a difficult year. It has been a year when some of you may have lost your jobs, some of you may have lost loved ones, for others it has just been a tough year because of all the uncertainty and the changes in our culture. Can we agree that there has been a lot of change, and very little has been good over the last year. So much conflict, so much turmoil, so much pain for so many. But yet we are here, and His church, the called out assembly, has a job to do. We have an opportunity that unfolds before us. We have a hope that lies within us that is unique and quite frankly were it not for that hope I would be in deep despair today. Without that hope I would be reeling with confusion.

And I have to tell you that even with that hope there have been times when I would be okay with finding a little place up in the mountains with my wife that just has one road leading to it, and we could just kind of disappear. We could live quietly; have a little garden, maybe a couple of chickens and go to Walmart once a month. Just kind of drop off the grid so to speak and there is a lot that appeals to me in that. Except for this – I have a charge, I have a calling, and I have a mission. And so do you. And that mission doesn't mean we withdraw, that mission doesn't mean we retreat, that mission doesn't mean we give up, that mission doesn't mean that we shutter the windows and just escape

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from the conflict and the turmoil. That mission calls us to go and tell, go and share, go and make a difference, go and carry out the Great Commission.

There will be plenty of time for rest and all those other things, but we have a task to do and one of the missions of the resurrection message is that we have been called to do like the two Marys' and the disciples were to do, we have been called to do what every generation of the church has been called to do, and that is to go and share the gospel. We are not supposed to be political change agents, we are not supposed to be economic powerhouses, we are not supposed to be entertainers, we are supposed to be missionaries of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Wherever we go, we need to use the tools that God has given us. If He has given us money, use that tool. If He has given us a talent, use that tool. If He has given you the ability to speak multiple languages, use that opportunity. But wherever we go, whatever we do, with whatever we possess, the message that Jesus gave to His disciples and the early church in Jerusalem is the same message that He gives us today and that is to go, to go and to get involved.

Another thing I notice about this passage is there was a reunion of joy and worship. And I love this part about it as well. Notice what it says again in verse 9, "***And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshipped Him.***" In the first service I stood in my usual spot while the Worship Team was singing and in this service I stood in the back until the very last song and just enjoyed the worship. I enjoyed listening to you sing, I enjoyed seeing hands raised in praise; I enjoyed watching the choir and the praise team. Some of the musicians were having a good time, weren't they? And there was just this sheer physical joy this morning. Now some of it may have been because it is Easter, and some may be because it was just good music, but I think a lot of it was just because we were glad to be back home, glad to be with the family of God, glad to be in this place.

And that ought to be something that indeed energizes us. The disciples had gone through a lot of confusion. They didn't know what to expect, they were hurting, they were probably a little embarrassed about deserting Him at the cross, and all of a sudden they heard, '*He is alive.*' And what did they do? They ran back to the tomb to be as close to Him as they could possibly be, and then they gathered together and they worshipped and fellowshiped with Him. And folks, I hope you experience that joy today. And if you don't have that joy, if you don't have that desire, let me ask you to examine your heart and ask yourself 'why?' What is broken, what is missing where you no longer crave that fellowship that is part of being family?

The last thing is this – there is a promise of more to come. In verse 10 it says: "***Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."***" Jesus was going to withdraw for a little while and then He would come back and they would see Him periodically. At certain moments He would inject Himself back into the story before He finally ascends into heaven. And even then He promised He would come again. And folks, that is the wonderful thing about Christ, that He lives with us today, He lives in our hearts through the Holy Spirit and there is

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more to come. We aren't finished because as long as we have breath in our lungs God has something for us to accomplish for our good and His glory. And when we live out the promise of the resurrection, when we live out the purpose that God has assigned to each one of us, when we fulfill the calling that God has challenged each of us to perform, it will change our spirit and it will change our heart.

I will be honest with you and tell you that there are a lot of things about pastoring I absolutely don't like. I don't like a lot of things about pastoring. I don't like worrying about budgets and I don't like worrying and trying to make sure that we are on the right side of all of the laws. People tell me that I am really good at administration and I am happy you think that but I hate it. Do you know what I love? I love preaching, I love teaching, and I love putting my arm around someone and saying, 'Let's pray.' I love doing communion, and we had a beautiful communion service on Good Friday. It was just a sweet time and I love remembering about the blood of Christ that was shed for us.

And I love baptisms. I love the public testimony of the baptism of the believer. I love discipleship and seeing the lights come on in new Christians. I love when my college students come over to my house on Wednesday nights and we open the Word of God and they ask questions and I hear these young sharp minds come up with things I never thought of. I love that we have the chance to live a life that has significance and meaning and purpose that begins and ends with our obedience to the gospel. No one has gone to their death bed and said, '*Man, I wish I had made another ten thousand dollars.*' No one says, '*I wish I had worked a little more overtime.*' No one says, '*Man, I wish my house had one more bedroom, or my boat had had more horsepower.*' No one says that at their deathbed. But I will tell you what we do say, '*I wish I had spent more time living in truth. I wish I had spent more time with my family, sharing the gospel, building relationships, and the things that matter for eternity.*'

Folks, one of the messages of the gospel, the message of the resurrection is don't waste the resurrection, don't waste your time, don't waste your gifts, don't waste your talents, but share them. Yes, I have to do administration, I have to do the budget every year, we have to have meetings, and we have to plan because church services don't come together without lots of meetings. We had meeting after meeting after meeting just to prepare for today to make sure we were ready for it. We have to do those things. We have to have jobs. We have to have a place to live. We have to have a vehicle to drive. We have to have all those things, but don't let the busyness of life keep you from the importance of the calling.

And the calling that you and I have is to live out the gospel every single day. We must be very careful that we don't become too busy working out the details with the mundane administrative task of existing in this life without giving thought to the hope that we have in the gospel, the promise we have of being with Him, and the joy that comes with seeing lives that are transformed by the truth of the God. Let us walk out of here, let us walk out of a tomb of apathy, or a tomb of disbelief or a tomb of

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discouragement, and let's walk out into the sunshine of victory knowing that God has a plan of action where the best is yet to come. (*Applause.*)

So what is our call to action? In closing let me share this with you. Number one, and this is important and I don't want to just brush over it – do not embrace the idolatry of naturalism. Do not embrace the idolatry of naturalism. Now all you folks in here that are like twenty-four years of age and younger, maybe you are still in high school or college, I want you to listen to Pastor Dan for just a moment. I want you to pay close attention because we see this everywhere. I don't like to talk about a lot of my educational background because I have to tell you that I am not impressed with it. But I have been to school a lot. My doctorate is real. I have set under professors from Harvard, Yale, Cornell, and from the University of Miami. I have set under some really educated people, and notice I am not saying smart people, I am saying educated people, and there is a big difference.

I want you to know this, I respect education. I am glad you are in school and you need to stay there because it is a good thing. But don't buy everything they are selling. Don't do it. (*Applause.*) You are smarter in some aspects than your professor, and I want you to know that because a person who refuses to believe in the supernatural is closing their mind and closing their heart to important truths. I teach college classes and I love it and it is important to me. I am a busy guy and people ask me why I picked having college students for my Life Group. They wonder why I didn't pick people my own age. Well, I really didn't want to have a group of people who have all their stuff together because I don't always have all my stuff together.

I like college students and that is why on Wednesday nights they come over to my house. And here is what I want to say to all of you because I hear this from my young friends who are still in high school and college, *'I am having doubts. I hear science and then I hear things at church like the flood and the resurrection and miracles. But I am told to follow the science, trust the science. And it creates angst and confusion in me.'* And here is what I want to say to all of you who feel that. *'Good. It should, because science does not have all the answers.'*

Now I know that there is probably someone sitting here that is ready to get to me on that. Come right ahead, because I have to tell you a lot of the things that I learned when I was in college twenty-five/thirty years ago getting my doctorate, a lot of those things have now been completely debunked. They are not even teaching that stuff anymore. It has changed, it is different, they have moved on. New research changes every day. And I can't wait to see when research says that bacon is good for people with diabetes. (*Laughter.*) Someone gave me Peeps this morning. Death by Peeps is where I am heading. (*Laughter.*) I have to be honest and say that I did have one Peep in Arizona with my grandkids, but that is the only one since January, and if you know me, that is a big step for me. But a heart attack will do that for you, so I am off the Peeps and I am off

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the bacon except for the one piece I sneaked this morning from the Choir ready room. I must be Catholic because I am confessing all my sins.

I will say this to you, science is not absolute. They used to believe the sun rotated around the earth. But I will tell you what is absolute and that is the one who designed science, the one who wrote the rules, the one who put everything in place. And every honest scientist will tell you that they don't have all the answers. Every honest scientist will tell you that they are still learning and exploring. And I will tell you that every honest scientist will have to reach the conclusion that they will never learn it all. You know why they will never learn it all? It is because no man will ever completely understand God. Who is the designer behind the design? Who lit the fuse of the big bang? Who was there before it all began? And if you don't honestly consider and answer those questions, then you are not truly intellectually pursuing the truth.

So I say to you, and I want to reassure you because I know a lot of you have had doubts. Sometimes we old folks have the doubts too. Some might say, *'I don't want to ask these questions because it will upset God.'* Do you honestly think those questions are going to upset God? Do you think those questions never occurred to God? That God has never heard those questions before? Do you believe God doesn't know what you are thinking right now? Ask away. And then have the intellectual curiosity to search for the answers and don't leave any stones unturned, because the stone that was rolled away that Easter Sunday is just one demonstration of the authority and the power of God.

I never worry when people ask me questions. I am actually worried when they don't. And I challenge all of us to not embrace the idolatry of naturalism. There is a supernatural God who exists outside of our ability to comprehend Him. And from time to time over the course of humanity and the course of time itself, He has chosen to interject Himself as only He can do into the affairs of the universe. He did it at creation. He did at redemption. And He will do it again in the future. God matters and you better figure out what to do with Him.

The second thing is this – acknowledge the fickleness of our own apathy. Acknowledge the fickleness of our own apathy. The reality is that we live in a fickle generation of apathy, and every generation does. We have to fight against our own version of apathy. In my opinion and you might want to buckle your seatbelts for this one, if the pandemic has done anything it has revealed the apathy in the church around the world in general, but specifically in the western world. I am concerned that we have lost our sense of urgency, we have lost our sense of wonder, we have lost our appetite for worship, for community, for instruction and for missions. We have been satisfied with tuning in and laying out and running on idle. We have grown comfortable and complacent.

And I would challenge all of us today to remember to look into the empty tomb anew and become inspired with the miracle of the resurrection. We need to look at the

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bloody Christ and become re-inspired at the horror of our sins and the price of our salvation. It is time that we touched the nail scarred hands of our Savior and to be moved by the incredible love and sacrifice that He gave to us. It is time that we put off our apathy and put on enthusiasm, *entheos*, in God. That is literally what the word means when you say enthusiasm.

When you know God, when you believe God, when you trust God, when you are built on the Word of God, you will have a passion, an urgency, a focus, a mission, an intentionality in your life that will not be thwarted by a pandemic. It will not be thwarted by setbacks. It will not be thwarted by opposition. The same disciples that were in the Garden on that morning would go out and revolutionize the world with the power of their message which was this – ‘*We serve a risen Savior, He is risen, He is risen indeed.*’ And the world has never been the same. We are thankful for that and we cannot afford apathy.

Number three – revisit the wonder of the miracles. Do you believe in miracles? I mean really believe it? Do you believe in the Virgin birth? Do you believe in the resurrection? And do you believe that Christ is coming again? If you really believe in the wonder of miracles you know that nothing is outside of the scope and interest, privilege and opportunities of God Himself. And so we can minister in confidence knowing that we do not fight for victory; the victory has already been won. We fight from victory and we are part of how God is unfolding it in the universe.

Number four – testify to the transformation of the gospel. When you see a resurrected Savior you will never be the same. The Apostles were never the same. The Peter that had just denied Christ would eventually die for Him. Only John was found at the foot of the cross. The Galilean throngs that had lined the streets of Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem the week before were nowhere to be found and yet eventually the church would form in Jerusalem and 3,000 would be added in a single day. A movement took root that spread out across Jerusalem, the diaspora occurred, revival broke out across the Roman Empire, it impacted the Greeks remaining empire, and eventually all but one of these disciples would die for what they believed and had seen. The gospel transforms. The resurrected Savior changes lives. It did then and it will do it today. There is no power in heaven or earth that can thwart the plan of God.

And the last thing is this – refuse to bow to unbelief and unbelievers. Refuse to bow to unbelief and unbelievers. I believe that if many people in this room live a normal lifespan, I don’t know that it will be me but it will be many of you, that you are going to face the day when you have to make choices about whether or not you will continue to live out your faith. If a pandemic rattled you, can you imagine the full weight and force of governmental authority and what it might do to you? Maybe you think, ‘*Hey, we live in America.*’ Well, America is changing. I will tell you that I received an email this morning from someone in Myanmar where they have bands of soldiers going through villages wiping out entire villages that are Christian in orientation identity.

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Someone that sat in one of my classes in Myanmar a year ago is now dead at the hands of authority. Now again, I am not trying to create drama for the sake of drama, I am just asking this question – what will it take to get you to stop living your faith? What will it take to get you to deny Christ? I will tell you that if you had really seen the risen Savior, the answer to that question is ‘*Nothing.*’ The answer is ‘*Nothing.*’ The disciples traveled the world, they were beaten, persecuted, maligned and eventually murdered but they had seen the risen Savior, and they knew that it was well worth it. Why should we be any different? We are no more special than the disciples. What if we are called to pay a price? Maybe it is someone laughing at us, maybe it is someone putting us in jail, maybe it is something somewhere in between. But my question is this – do you believe deeply enough that you are willing to pay a price for your beliefs? That is the question that is best asked now so that we can get it settled before the real day comes.

You are probably thinking this was kind of heavy for an Easter service. Well, this isn’t an Easter like every Easter, is it? It is one where we are coming back together. It is one where our world is in chaos. It is one where there is uncertainty where there was previously certainty. It is one where there is a lot of hurting people in turmoil, brokenness, unrest, arguing, and where people are just cranky right now. But we have an opportunity to quietly worship, to quietly celebrate, to quietly but boldly say, ‘*He is risen, He is risen, He is risen.*’ Let’s say that together: ‘*He is risen, He is risen, He is risen.*’

And this morning if you can’t say that, may I urge you today before you even get in your car and drive home to settle that. Last Sunday at the end of our service Pastor Ben said, ‘*If you don’t know for sure you are going to Heaven, will you go over to the Prayer Room and someone will be there to show you how to become a part of the family of God.*’ There was a gentlemen who had moved here from up north and had been visiting this church since September, and he went over to the Prayer Room and said, ‘*I want to know.*’ And before he got in his car he trusted Christ as His Savior. I met him yesterday at our Bible Study. (*Applause.*)

Now my question is this – are you next? Do you feel Him calling you? Wouldn’t it be great for the rest of your life to be able to say, ‘*The day that I gave myself to Christ was the day we celebrated the resurrection after the pandemic.*’ I believe God is calling you if you have not done that and formed your relationship with Him. So we are going to sing one more song and I know you are anxious to get home to your honey baked ham, but no, please wait because this is much more important. So as we sing I want to urge you to go to the lobby and turn right to the Prayer Room and Pastor Ben and his wife will be there to talk with you. Just simply say, ‘*Pastor Ben I want to know for sure that I am going to heaven when I die. I want this to be the day that I am resurrected from the heart.*’ And before you go home, you can be part of the family of God. Wouldn’t that be a great way to celebrate Easter?

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The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.