

# “Fearing the Risen Son”

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**Series:** *Easter*

**Bible Text:** Mark 16:1-8

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## **Christ Presbyterian Church**

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Our text this morning as we explore, think, and dwell on the glory of the resurrection this morning comes from Mark's account, the Gospel of Mark. It's printed there in your bulletin. You can turn there in your Bible as we prepare to hear the word of the Lord. As we do, I just want to preface it with this. I was reading an article last week in which the author said this. The public's trust in institutionalized religion is at a low point and perhaps the lowest it has ever been in this country. While many shun specific beliefs, religions, or denominations, people still want to feel equipped to handle the stress of life. We want to be able to find a sense of calm no matter what the circumstances are. We need a source of clarity, calm, and fortitude. So even as the world's belief in religion specifically wanes, this author was making the case that we are still a people who are in a search for calm. And we want to feel equipped, they said, to handle the stress of life. And so what they were highlighting is the rise we have seen over in the last decade or so that many, many people now are turning to the philosophy of Stoicism. Self-control, self-mastery, discipline, resiliency, and specifically an increasing interest in the meditations of the Roman emperor and the Stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius. You don't need to know a whole lot about him to know one of his more famous quotes. He writes,

“if then when you arrive at last at your final exit, resigning all else, you honor your governing self alone and the divine element within you if what you dread is not that someday you will cease to live, but rather never to begin at all to live.”

And it has been popularly shortened and frequently quoted as every man dies, not every man truly lives. You've probably heard that before. Fully alive, grabbing a hold of the good life. No regrets, no missed opportunities at all is what we're looking for. No could haves or would haves or should haves left at the end of the day, that somehow this life will slip through your hands with so many unfulfilled desires, so many unmet expectations that what he is saying is that should be our greatest fear, that you'll die with so many dreams unfulfilled.

And so perhaps ironically on a day full of celebration, I want to talk to us. I want all of us to press in a bit to think about what exactly our fears are. Is this true? Is this really our deepest fear? Is not truly living the greatest fear we all have?

Or is it, as I'm going to make the case this morning, much more like a mask that we wear? It's a distraction. It guards our hearts and minds from wrestling with what it is that we actually fear the most. Perhaps not the fear of death, not the fear of never living, but in reality the fear that there might actually be another life beyond our death. So let's read this passage together with that in mind.

*Mark 16:1-8 When the Sabbath was passed, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb and they were saying to one another, who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb? Looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back. It was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side dressed in a white robe and they were alarmed. And he said to them, do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth who is crucified. He has risen. He is not here. See the place where they laid him, but go, tell his disciples in Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him just as he told you. And they went out and fled from the tomb for trembling and astonishment had seized them. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.*

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Let's pray together.

*Father, on this incredible day of celebration, Lord, we gather together not only in this place, Lord, but around the world for those that are in Christ Jesus celebrating the truth that for those that know you, for those in who you know, Lord, they will not experience death, Lord, but pass from this world to the next in the blink of an eye, Father. And we gather this morning with that central truth in our mind. Lord, as we look at Mark's account of this miracle, Father, I pray that if there is anything that I say today that is false, that it would simply fall away, that it would just be forgotten, Lord, but what is true, this resurrection, this cornerstone of our faith, Lord God, Father, that that would become more real today than it has ever been before, that you will press that down into our hearts, Father, that it will have real impact, real change, that this will not just be a theological discussion, Lord, but one in which time touches eternity, that you would gather here with us in our midst, Lord, that we would see your son high and lifted up so that we might look more like him. Father, would you do it? In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

So I thought for a while in the weeks leading up to today that what I might share this morning is one of my moments of greatest fear. If I were to ask you this morning if you could think for a moment, I don't want you to go too deep into this. I don't want to lose you there, but probably for most of us there is a moment in time. There is a moment in our life in which we can point to in which we said, yes, that's the moment. I remember the moment where I was more scared. I was more afraid than I'd ever been in my life, and I don't know what that moment was like for you, but what it was for me is that in that moment almost everything in my peripheral just sort of went blurry, and the only way that I can describe it is that my brain was simultaneously on fire and completely dark. It's like I could not think a thought. It was that quintessential moment, right, of a fight or flight, and all of the neurons in my brain were just exploding at the same time in this voice, this internal voice that just said move, move as fast as you possibly can.

And that moment for me is hard to revisit, but I can tell you this. It involved the prospect of losing someone that I loved more than life itself. And I'd be willing to bet that in this room for almost all of us, for every single one of us, that there's a time in your own story when you ever experienced a fear like that. It also involved either the potential loss of your own life or the loss of someone you love more than life itself.

And so what I want to do today is talk about fear in two different ways. I want to talk about our fear of death, and I want to talk about our fear of the resurrection. That's it. Those two things, which might sound ironic, right? On a day of so much celebration, we need to address the fact that without ever getting able to talk about the resurrection, we must face death, right? Death always comes before resurrection. It's a reality for every single one of us. In fact, all of us have a hard time thinking about it, let alone talk about it. As one author said, our persistent fear of death is what keeps us from an ability to endure silence as a world, as a culture, as individuals, that we surround ourselves with constant distractions and noise because we do not want to be confronted with the certainty of our mortality. To sit with that fact, as the famous line from one movie goes, we all realize this, that on the long enough timeline, the survival rate for everyone drops to zero. And it's this dark reality where our passage opens today,

the fear of death.

That's the reality because Jesus the Christ, Jesus the long awaited Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary and Joseph, Jesus the son of God is dead. We are told in the opening of the passage that

*when the Sabbath was passed, Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James and Salome brought spices so that they might go and anoint him.*

Those first few words there, when the Sabbath was passed, important words because what it's telling us, what Mark is telling us, in other words, as soon as they possibly could. The reality of their situation is that on the Sabbath, they could not conduct any kind of work, even the anointing of a body. And furthermore, if they were to have touched a dead body that would have been ceremonially unclean, they could not have gone to temple and worshiped. So they waited, but only as long as they absolutely had to. We're told very early on the first day of the week when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. As soon as they possibly could, they were there.

We're told about three women go to the tomb where the crucified body of Jesus was buried. They are Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James and Salome. Sometimes Salome, depending on who you're listening to say that word. Mary Magdalene was one of the most faithful followers of Jesus and a woman that we are told in the gospels, what Jesus had done, she had been a faithful follower of Jesus Christ and when he first meets her, he actually casts seven demons out of her. Mary the mother of James and then Salome or Salome, most likely the Greek version of the Hebrew word Shalom. She is a somewhat infamous mom in the gospels. We were told earlier in the gospels that she's the one, she has two sons, James and John. They

are disciples of Jesus and she's the one who went to him and says, when you come into your kingdom, when you come into all of your power, will you let my sons sit on your right and your left, these positions of power? That's her, and according to tradition, she is Jesus' aunt or aunt, however you say it.

All three of them were followers of Jesus. They had traveled with him faithfully throughout his earthly ministry. They had contributed financially to his needs. They were all present at the crucifixion and all present when every single one of his male disciples except John had abandoned him. So days have passed since Jesus' death and these were long days and we are not told in the text what happens in between, but we can imagine. We've lost people before. Days that were filled with silence, probably insomnia, certainly mourning, plenty of confusion.

You know, my own stepfather died in our kitchen. I was 13 years old. He was 44 and any of you here today that have ever lost someone close to you, you know what that experience is like. The only way that I can describe it and others have as well is surreal, right? It takes a long time for our minds and our hearts to catch up with each other, with the reality of what has happened and there's tons of confusion and I remember the days especially after sometimes months where you would be out in the world and it would strike you that everything should not continue on as it is, that it looks bizarre to you, that people are going about their business, that they're going to work, that they're going to grocery shop, that they're laughing, that they're having fun, that they're going to movies. You sort of just want to scream at times and say, do you not know what has happened? Everything has changed.

Certainly some of that was happening, and so these three women are looking for some sort of closure, and so with their grieving hearts, they gather together, they go out, they purchase the anointing oil and when the sun has risen, they set out to do the only thing that they can do now, to honor their fallen leader.

And I'll mention this from the silence of the passage. One woman who is notably absent from this group is another famous Mary, Jesus' mother. Where is she? I think it's not difficult for us to imagine. Again if you've ever lost someone close to you, you know that distorting feeling. It's disorienting. This numbing mix of disbelief and anger and sadness and denial and all the stages of grief that each one of us go through at different times and at different ways, that's going on in each one of these women's hearts but a parent who loses a child is a very different kind of pain, isn't it? A different kind of loss.

It's a famous line in the orphan's tale says, a wife who loses a husband is called a widow. A husband who loses a wife is called a widower. A child who loses his parents is called an orphan. There is no word for a parent who loses a child. That's how awful the loss is.

Everything in this passage reveals to us that they were in no way, shape or form, expecting, anticipating, even mildly hoping that they were about to see a miracle. Nothing in this passage suggests that they were going to the tomb of their dead friend Jesus. They had spices to anoint his dead body. They were concerned as they were walking on the way. Who's going to roll away

that huge stone? Their full expectation in this passage is that when they show up, they are going to find Jesus as they had last seen him, dead in a tomb. That is what was on their mind that day, death. Not just the death of their friend, but of their mentor, their rabbi, their Messiah. It was the death of the long awaited dream that God had been promising for centuries, that he was going to come. He was going to send a new king who was going to sit on the Davidic throne for all of eternity, that all of Israel's enemies were going to be crushed, that God was going to usher in the golden age, the millennium. The kingdom was going to finally come, peace, security, provision, wholeness, what the Hebrews call shalom.

We can't help but wonder as they walked to the tomb that day, did they feel like fools? Did they feel betrayed? They feel lied to, dejected, hopeless? Were they in despair? Perhaps. We know for sure they felt the deepest pains of sadness and loss. It was not only had Jesus died, but he was murdered, and they witnessed it. He was tried. He was convicted as an innocent man. He was murdered at the hands of the state. He was stripped naked. He was tortured. In the most publicly humiliating way, he was brutally murdered in the view of the public, crucifixion on a wooden cross. Friends, death is dark.

The Bible doesn't try to protect us from that truth. It is not the way things are supposed to be. Even if it comes peacefully to somebody in their sleep, it still feels wrong. It leaves a void. It is like an open wound for us, and yet death still comes, and we are absolutely powerless to stop it, aren't we?

We take our supplements, we exercise, and we try to lose weight through fad diets or drugs and try to stay as young for as long as we can. We color our hair. We join a gym. We track our calories. We try to make sure we get enough sleep, but still it comes, which is precisely why we fear it. It is the one thing beyond everything else that we surely do have no control over, and we know it.

One of the most surprising books in the last year that I read was one by a non-Christian author, Sebastian Junger. That name is not familiar to you. He also wrote *The Perfect Storm*, which was later turned into a movie, and he had a near-death experience, a lifelong atheist, and has written about that extensively, but he has this near-death experience, and it changes him. His book is his journey as a reporter, as a researcher, to sort of explore this truth. What if, what if there is a life after this life? And at one point, he concludes this way. He says, eventually, you'll be all alone with doctors shrugging because they run out of things to do, and the person you really are thumping frantically in your chest, the successes and catastrophes and affairs and hangovers and genuine loves and small betrayals and flashes of courage and the river of fear running beneath it all, and of course the vast stretches of wasted time that are part of even the most amazing life, and then he says, everyone has a relationship with death, whether they want one or not. Refusing to think about death is its own kind of relationship. Ignore it if you want. Block it out of your mind. Don't ever talk about it. Don't ever think about it. That's its own kind of relationship, isn't it? It'll drive you in all sorts of different paths in your life. Thinking about it all the time or never thinking about it at all, he said, take your pick. You still have a relationship with death.

And it's important because these three brave women don't shrink back. They don't. Despite their grief, despite their personal pain and loss, they get up at sunrise, and they travel to this tomb of their fallen Messiah to anoint his body with spices, and they need to find someone to roll away the huge stone and face this heartbreaking task. If you think about it for a moment that they're going to walk into this tomb, confront again the dead body of Jesus, and then they're going to physically touch it, anointed with oils.

This practice of anointing the body of the deceased, it is a distinctly religious practice. It was a way in those days to very much honor the fact that there was a belief that every person was made in the image of God. It was holy work. It was sacred work, and specifically for the Jews, it carried with it as well the tangible hope that signified the fact that they believed in the resurrection of this body, but they didn't need their spices that day, did they? Instead, all the fear of death that had gripped their hearts that week, it melted away, but interestingly enough, it melted into a different kind of fear, didn't it? The fear that he was actually alive. Verse four, we're told,

*and looking up, they saw the stone had been rolled back. It was very large, and entering the tomb they saw a young man sitting on the right side dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed, and he said to them, do not be alarmed. You see Jesus of Nazareth who is crucified. He has risen. He is not here. See the place where they laid him, but go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him just as he told you, and they went out and fled from the tomb for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone for they were afraid.*

Of all the possible emotions, all the possible reactions to the resurrection, why are we told in so many different ways that for these three women, their initial response to the news that Jesus was alive was alarm and trembling fear.

Let's talk about the fear of the resurrection.

Having heard the news from the angel, Mark tells us these three women fled from the tomb. That's a unique word that they fled from the tomb. They ran away from it. Not that they just took off running. There's other words for that. They ran away from it, escaping, and as they did, they were told one thing, go and tell. That's what this angel, this supernatural being commands them, go and tell, and then Mark lets us know instead that they said nothing to anyone because they were afraid.

Afraid of what exactly?

What are they so afraid of?

First, perhaps most obviously, fear of the supernatural, friends. Let's be honest. They saw a miracle, and we don't every day. A miracle by definition is out of the ordinary. By definition, it is uncommon. By definition, it is rare. The laws that govern the universe, they were not only

suspended, friends, they were actually reversed. The normal law of entropy, it's turned back on itself, and instead of slowly decaying in the cold tomb, what happens instead is that Christ's heart begins to beat, and blood begins to fill his veins again. The neurons in his brains begin to fire, and so fear is an incredibly understandable and human reaction, and in fact, I would say this, and scholars have pointed it out as well. It's the kind of detail in the description that actually adds credibility to the story. This is how I would react. This is how you would react, fear.

That always scares us when there are moments in time where the material world we inhabit almost has for a moment pulled back for us a curtain, that we are told in not so many terms that the spiritual world is alive and real, and we get to see it. That scares us. It scares me. It scares you. It always scares us. We, all of us, are skeptics of the miraculous, every single one of us. Now, some of us perhaps more certainly than others, but all of us at some level are skeptics, aren't we? I mean, we are. We're recipients of the scientific method. We are, all of us, living. It's the air that we breathe in a post-Enlightenment age. This is what we have been taught.

If you cannot explain something or reproduce it by using the scientific method or in a laboratory somewhere, it's not to be believed.

That's the normal way things work for us, and yet the most important things in our lives, the very things that make life worth living, they aren't on the periodic table, are they? That's the tension that we live in. We would like to think that we're incredibly logical people, and yet we wrestle all the time with things that can't be seen and touched. Scientific method is, it's a glorious tool as far as it goes.

It can tell us how human life begins, but it cannot tell us why.

It can tell us something of the miracle of the way that DNA works and cells form and the way that we can grow as human beings and where life is conceived and started. It can tell us all of those things, but it cannot tell us anything about the love that a parent has for a child.

It can tell us the great mysteries of why it is specifically that someone died. But I'll tell you this as a pastor, the scientific method is useless when you're sitting in the hospital room with the person who has just lost somebody they love.

It is ill-equipped most certainly to help our finite minds grasp the work of an eternal God when he breaks into our world and unveils for us eternity.

Secondly, and more importantly, it's not just the supernatural that frightens, but perhaps most of all, its implications. What does this mean?

I recently heard an interview with the famous psychologist and popular author and speaker, Jordan Peterson, many of you familiar with him, and he was talking about the Gospels and he was talking specifically to the interviewer about this very thing, about the crucifixion and the resurrection, and he said this, and if you've heard him, you can hear his voice in your head. He

said, "it is deeply mysterious and dramatically peculiar, and it is not understandable from the purely rational perspective, and yet it seems to be right. Then he says, and I don't know what that means, but it is a terrifying thought, that's for sure." Crucifixion and the resurrection, we can't approach it from a purely rational perspective, but it seems to be true, and if it is, he says, I can't tell you all the implications. I don't know exactly what that means, but I'll tell you this, it's a terrifying thought, that's for sure.

Why might the reality of the resurrection terrify us? The apostle Paul tells us in his letter to the church at Corinth, he says, if there is no resurrection, if Jesus did not walk out of that tomb, he says this, he says, our preaching is in vain, your faith is in vain, and you and I, we are still sitting in our sins. There is no hope. Furthermore, he says, if there's no resurrection, then those who've fallen asleep in Christ, they've perished. He's saying, they're just dead, they're gone. It's over. There is no tomorrow for them. But he also says, if in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.

Friends, that is exactly how so many of us live, isn't it? Day to day, week to week, our only concern being our next meal, our next drink, our next vacation, our next house, our next possession, our next job, our next lover, walking around like lifeless zombies, you're on a constant hunt for our next dopamine hit.

Friends, the apostle Paul says, if there's no resurrection, that is exactly how you and I should be living, exactly.

If there is no resurrection, we can all go home, and Hobie and I have got to look for a different job. This is a sham. This is just one big show. We're just fooling ourselves. There's no point to any of this.

If there's no resurrection, there is no judgment, there is no afterlife, there is no heaven, there is no hell, because there is no God. Furthermore, if we, who have dedicated our lives to him, we should be the people who are pitied more than anyone else in the world. We're fools, he says.

If there's no resurrection, we are the fools. We're the fools for denying ourselves, for sacrificing so much of our time, energy, and resources, missing out, as it was, on a much, much simpler worldview, where my job and yours is to get up every single morning and do whatever it is I can do to make myself happy.

But, he says, and this is what scares us.

If Christ is risen, then it means that he was not merely a good teacher. He was not just a moral God. He was not just one prophet who came and gave us a way, another way, a different way, a similar way to get to God. He was not a spiritual guru, and he wasn't just a good example for us.

If Christ had risen, then what he said was true. This word is true, that Mark's account is true, that no one comes to the Father except through him, that there are no other gods before him, that he really is King of Kings, that he is Lord of Lords, and if that is true, it means, quite simply, I am not. That's a terrifying thought.

Perhaps more terrifying, if the resurrection is real, then the death he died, that horrible, unjust crucifixion, it actually was the final sacrifice that paid the penalty. For all of my rebellion, for all of your rebellion, our hatred of God, you and I at our very worst, our deepest secret, our worst moment, the me that only I know and pray to God you will never know, me, you, all the way to the bottom. The debt that you and I could never pay was finally once and for all canceled.

And friends, if that is true, then here's the most terrifying thing of all for us, that the reality is if the resurrection is real, that same Jesus who died on a Roman cross, who walked out of a Roman guarded tomb, now he comes to every single one of us and he says, you were bought at a price. Your life is not your own. Take up your cross. Come follow me.

It is the frightful invitation that if the resurrection is true, then you and I quite simply must die in order to experience it. Not only a physical death later, but at a very real sense again and again throughout the gospels, a spiritual death, a death of my personal identity, ambitions, dreams, everything that I have built my world around outside of Jesus, everything that I have turned to for hope and salvation and my own justification, he says, you got to lay it down.

If the resurrection is true, there is only one central truth. He says, it's me. I am the way. I am the truth. Come and follow me. The old you must die and must be born again.

Let me tell you a little bit about what this looks like, practically speaking. I've been meeting with a young man for the last couple of years mentoring him. He's a new Christian and several weeks ago he came to me and he said, you know what I'm still struggling with? He says, my past, my guilt, my shame, me at my worst moment, he says, I know all these truths, the things we've been walking through for the last two years and I'm a new creation that I've forgiven by God that he has paid the penalty for me, he said, and yet what keeps coming to my mind constantly, all the things that I've done in my life that I have a really hard time believing, is that forgiven? Is that forgiven? What about that? And I said, well, let me ask you this. I said, when you think of those moments in your life, your former self, I said, what is that guy's name? He said, well, what are you talking about? And I said, well, let's give him a name, right? You've been born again. You're a new creation now. I said, let's talk about who is that guy? And he said, all right. He said, when I was at rehab, they used to call me white chocolate. I said, fantastic. I said, can we spend a few moments praying for white chocolate? And he agreed. And so we prayed for him.

We thanked God for him in all the different ways that God had allowed suffering and his rebellion and his confusion and his self-hatred, all of his self-harm, to finally bring him to the end of himself.

We thanked God that in his mercy, he reached down into the depths of that pit. And even though he was kicking and screaming, he pulled him out.

And we thanked God that he did not overlook his failures. He didn't merely overlook his sin, but he paid for them, all of them.

We thanked God for his death so that the young man sitting in front of me could be resurrected to a life where sin and death had no more reign over him.

Friend, I'm concerned of this. That is the real death that we're afraid of, isn't it? That's the real death we're afraid of. It's the death of the illusion that

I am the king of my own kingdom,

that I'm the sum of all of my accomplishments, all of my possessions, all of my status,

that I am the family I am building or the family I dream to build, or whether or not I ever have a family at all,

that I am somehow my career, my bank account, my physical beauty, or on the other side of the coin,

that I am nothing more than just my addictions or my diagnosis or my family of origin or me at my worst moment,

that I am my greatest achievement or the thing that brings me the most shame.

And death means nothing less than confessing and letting go of whatever it is that you have turned to for your salvation, apart from the only one who actually can and will.

You know, in my counseling sessions with people, I'll often ask them this. I will say, tell me a bit about what it is that you dream about. And then I'll ask them to tell me about their nightmares. Reality is, is in both instances, oftentimes what we dream about and what gives us nightmares is built almost exclusively on what is transitory. It is what I can feel. It is what I can touch. It is what I can lose. It is what I think I have control over. It is all about the here, the now, one life.

And friends, what Paul is telling us and what the women who fled the tomb that morning trembling and afraid are telling us, the resurrection changes everything, absolutely everything. The resurrection reminds us that whatever it is that our greatest hopes, our greatest dreams are, do not set your heart on it. Do not set it in a place where moth and rust can destroy it because something that no eye has seen and no mind can conceive is in store for those who are in Christ Jesus. Don't settle for less than that hope, he says. And in our nightmares, the resurrection changes everything. The resurrection gives us an eternal perspective that no matter how great the loss of love or financial ruin or even life itself, this is not the only life we will live.

For at the trumpet's blast, the Lord will return. The dead will be raised and our mortal flesh will be glorified into the immortal. And we are told, and we will be with the Lord forever.

If that does not change what you fear the most, I'm not sure what else will. The resurrection changes everything.

And I'll close with this one story, perhaps one of the most greatest known skeptics who was forced to wrestle with this very claim. Is the resurrection real? Did it happen? Was a professor of English literature at Oxford, Cambridge, named Clive Staples Lewis, better known as C.S. And in his book specifically on miracles where he wrestled with this central question, he said this,

“an impersonal God, well and good. A subjective God of beauty and truth and goodness inside our own heads, better still. A formless life force surging through us, a vast power which we can tap, best of all. But God himself alive, pulling at the other end of the cord, perhaps approaching at an infinite speed. The hunter, king, husband, that is quite another matter. He says there comes a moment when people who have been dabbling in religion, man's search for God, suddenly draw back, supposing we really found him. We never meant it to come to that. Worse still, supposing he found us. The hunter, the king, the husband, and most frightening of all, alive. Not only alive, but willing day in and day out to offer us, his creatures, the only truly unbelievable offer that when we come to the end of our rope and we find that our greatest fears might actually finally be coming true, when the fear of death and regret and failure close in all around us, that we can fall on our face and with the most sincere cry, simply say, Jesus Christ is Lord and I am not, save me, save me. At that moment, Christ says he will send his very spirit to come, to dwell inside of you, the same spirit who raised him from the dead in you.”

Friends, I don't know how many of you are here for the first time visiting. I don't know how many of you here are skeptics yourself, how many of you are perhaps the least bit interested in what we're talking about, but I will say this, I know you're here and you're here today, and for whatever reason in his providence, in his sovereignty, God has you here to hear that message and that very prayer can be your prayer today, right here, right now. It's that simple that if God is working in your heart right this very moment, I say respond. I simply say respond to that. Join us as a people who proclaim today that he really has risen and he has risen indeed.

And for those that have bent a knee to King Jesus, for those who have let themselves be taken down by the hunter, the king, for the one who has looked upon Jesus and recognized the fulfillment of every desire they have ever had and the fear of every death they have harbored, for those people here again today, right now in this place, the words of the angel to the women and now to us, *do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. He has risen*, and today he says you can have the assurance that you will be raised too. Let's pray together.

*Father God, what a glorious truth, almost too much for our minds to comprehend. We confess that, Lord, that we are finite beings, now would you come to us with such great and glorious truths when, as we say, Lord, time touches eternity in the very real sense that all of human history now divided by this act, Lord, of you pouring the spirit of life into your son, raising him from the*

*dead, Lord God, and now offering the same to us, that we as a people, Lord God, we confess to you, we believe, help our unbelief. We believe, help our unbelief, Father. Let us live by the gift that you have given us, Father, that we be a people transformed, that we would leave from this place as those walking by that very spirit that raised Jesus from the dead, coursing through our own body, Lord. Father, we pray today, Lord, that if you're on the hunt in this place, Lord, as you are, Father, that you would work in the hearts of those for which today is the day for them to respond. We pray these things in the powerful, resurrected name of our King, Jesus. Amen*