

# Christian Fool's Day?

Hardin Baptist Church on Resurrection Sunday. What a beautiful day here in God's house. Thank you so much for being here. I think you realize today is April Fool's Day. Now I don't know about you, but I've had my prank ready for days and days and days. This is one of my favorite days of the year when I actually get to prank play jokes on people, and here's my prank. I was going to get early, early this morning, (I've been thinking about this for days) I was going to call Randy, and I was going to say to Randy, "Randy, Brian Maness called me just a few minutes ago and all of our cows are out and they've wandered all the way back to Holland Cemetery Road! Randy, it's Easter; I'm ready to go to the 7:50 service and I can't go get them in. I need you and LeAnn to quit doing whatever you're doing and get to the backside of the farm. They're already to Holland Cemetery Road, and if you don't get them soon, we're going to be in big, big trouble. Randy, I'll see you later!" And then I was going to hang up. I was going to give him a few minutes to get awake, get his clothes on, get to the shed to get the Polaris out, and I was going to wait two minutes and call back and say, "April Fools!" Does that sound like a good prank? So I get up this morning, and the sermon's done because I had to preach Thursday night, so I just get waiting and waiting for it to get to daybreak. I had my prank all ready, so I dial my phone; it rings and it immediately goes to his voicemail! That's not good! So I immediately dial again and this time it's ringing. It's ringing. It's ringing. It's ringing. I'm ready to tell him what I'm going to tell him, but again he doesn't answer; it goes to voicemail. So I dial LeAnn and she doesn't answer! I've sent two texts that say: PLEASE CALL ME ASAP! Can I just say it's a good thing the cows didn't get out this morning, amen, or we would have been in big, big trouble? Wow! Happy April Fool's Day to everyone.

Do you realize that April Fool's Day probably started, historians say, because Pope Gregory the 13<sup>th</sup> changed the calendar in 1582? Most of the

Catholic countries of Europe adopted what's called the Gregorian calendar in 1582 because Pope Gregory changed the Catholic countries from the Julian calendar, which had been in effect in the Roman Empire since 46 BC, to his new calendar. See, he had an Italian scientist who realized that the Julian calendar was off each year by eleven minutes with the solar year.

Therefore, since the Nicaean Council in 325 AD had mandated that Easter be celebrated in the church on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring Equinox, Easter, because the Julian calendar was off, was getting farther and farther and farther away from the Spring Equinox. So Pope Gregory wanted to get Easter back where it was supposed to be. He wanted the seasons to start when the seasons were supposed to start, so therefore they adopted the Gregorian calendar, which, as a matter of fact, is only twenty-six seconds off each year to the solar year. Which means, if we all live to 4909, under the new calendar we would have actually added one new day to the calendar.

Now you realize that the protestant countries were very, very slow to adopt the Gregorian calendar. They were afraid that by adopting the Gregorian calendar that it might slow down the protestant reformation, therefore most of them continued to use the Julian calendar. See, the Gregorian calendar changed New Year's Day from April 1<sup>st</sup> to January 1<sup>st</sup>. People in the city quickly adhered to the new calendar, but for the folks living out in the country, especially in the country of France, it took them a long time to get the news. So the first year, they didn't even realize they were under a new calendar, so on April 1<sup>st</sup>, they got up and celebrated the beginning of a brand new year! When the folks in the city heard that the folks in the country were still celebrating New Year's on April 1<sup>st</sup>, they looked at them as being fools; thus, the adoption of April 1<sup>st</sup> as April Fool's Day. England did not adopt the new Gregorian calendar until September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1752. Get this picture; the English people went to sleep on September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1752, and the English Parliament mandated that England change, as a nation, from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar. So when the folks woke up the next morning, it was September 14<sup>th</sup>! It really was. They lost eleven days. Historians say there were riots in the street, there were massive protests for the English government to give the people back their eleven lost days. Benjamin Franklin had another angle. He said, I quote, "It was

quite pleasant for an old man to go to sleep on September 2<sup>nd</sup> and not wake up until September the 14<sup>th</sup>. I had a really good night's sleep."

Today is April Fool's Day, but it's also Easter. It's also Resurrection Day. These two days have not coincided since 1954. Does anybody see my dilemma? I mean I tried to prank Randy. Today's the day when most of us are a little bit skeptical of what folks might say. We're just on guard because when we hear something that sounds unbelievable, we just have that tendency to think *hold it; are you playing a prank on me*, especially if you've already been pranked earlier in the day. Do you see my dilemma? I'm just wondering today if there'll be anyone here who really might not trust what Bro Ricky's saying, even though it's Resurrection Sunday. Did you know it might be possible for some people today to look at this day, not as April Fool's Day, but as Christian Fool's Day? It does kind of sound foolish, doesn't it; to believe a man who died and three days later came back alive?

Let's stand together and open our bibles as we're going to examine Paul's letter to the church at Corinth, and reassure ourselves again that we are not foolish, but actually wise to believe what we believe about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. I pray if you are here this morning for your first time to check out Hardin Baptist Church, maybe your first time to check out the Christian faith, maybe you're just a little bit skeptical, maybe you're wondering if this message is true, it's almost as if this is a national holiday in Christian countries, I pray you'll listen and listen to what the Apostle Paul says concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This today could actually be not the beginning of a new year for you, but actually the beginning of a new life. This morning at 10:40, I get to baptize my dad, who got saved last weekend, and on Easter 2018, I get to celebrate my dad's new life in Jesus Christ. Let's look at Scripture and see what the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 15:12-19. I just ask you to hold your bibles open as you take your seats in just a moment. We read out of the ESV version here at Hardin Baptist Church.

## Scripture

***"Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied."***

(Prayer)

Father, before we take our seats and we sit down at Your breakfast table this morning on Resurrection Sunday, we thank you for the truth of the gospel. Father, we thank you for the truth that we've experienced because most of us here have experienced firsthand this changed life that the good news of Christ brings to us. Father, we pray right now and pause just a moment to ask You, if there's anyone here like my dad who has sat in church services his whole life and he didn't understand it, he didn't get it, that today would be the day. If there's anyone like him, I pray that they be humbled and be willing to admit, "I didn't know." Father, if there's someone here for the first time, or someone who's been investigating the claims of Christ for months or years and they just haven't come to a point of faith yet that today would be the day that they would turn from sin and put their faith in Christ and receive this brand new life that He makes available to each one of us. Father, for those of us in the church, just prepare us to live confidently in the truth of the gospel. Father, may today just be a reassurance to us. Father, we praise You and we thank You. It's in the precious name of Your Son we ask these things, for you to anoint us, amen.

Paul is writing to the Corinthian church that he had preached to earlier, and he realizes that they are living in a culture; they are living in a town, where there are many that question whether or not there is a resurrection from the dead. So, you have a group of people who believe Christ has risen from the dead, but they're living in a culture where many do not believe the dead rise. So Paul makes this statement to the church: you do realize if the dead don't rise, if there is not a resurrection of the dead for the dead, then Christ has not been raised from the dead. In other words, He's still in a Palestinian tomb. Then Paul draws six conclusions about this. He says if Christ has not been raised from the dead, our preaching is in vain. Your faith is in vain. We are misrepresenting God when we tell people that God raised Jesus from the dead, because if the dead don't rise, God didn't raise Him from the dead like we're telling everybody He did. Then he repeats his logic again. Do you get it? If the dead don't rise, then Christ has not been raised, and if Christ hasn't been raised from the dead, you are still in your sins. Those who have fallen asleep in Christ, they have perished. They are not with God; they're gone. Then he says what has to be one of the saddest things; and if in this life only we have hope in Christ, of all the people on the planet, we are the most pitied. We're pitiful...wow. That's a downer, amen. I could just feel my spirit getting depressed as I list those six consequences of the truth if Christ has not been raised from the dead.

Now, let's remember the context. Paul is writing to the church at Corinth, but when he starts the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter, he reminds them that he's reminding them of what he preached to them. Now this is important, especially if you're not a believer yet. If you're here this morning and you've come with a friend, or you just happened to show up because you believe this could be Christian Fool's Day and you just wanted to witness us Christian fools celebrate the resurrection of Christ, please get this. Paul says I'm just delivering to you what was delivered to me. Does everybody get that? Paul's not making this up. Something was given to him, and the thing that was given to him he is giving to the Corinthian church, and he gave it to them three years earlier in 52 AD. He's now writing in 55 AD, and he says what I gave you is the gospel. He says you're standing in the gospel and you're being saved through the gospel. I love that. You and I owe our identity to the gospel, amen. But not only do we stand on the solid rock of

the gospel, Paul says we're being saved by the gospel. Now usually in the New Testament, when the Apostle Paul, or New Testament writers, put salvation in the continual tense, they're not talking about the past tense of justification where we're made right with God the moment of faith in Christ, but he's talking about the sanctification part of salvation, the ongoing part, the part that starts at the moment of justification, and does not end until the glorification. This is the part of salvation where you and I, as we continue to receive the Word, as we continue to receive the news, as we continue to grow in our faith, we actually move farther and farther away from the image of Adam, and more and more into the image of Jesus Christ, amen. Wasn't it glorious to look in the mirror this morning and realize, wow, I'm not who I used to be! I used to look like Adam, but now I just get glimpses; I'm looking more and more and more like Jesus. I love to see my family and realize, whoa, how we used to would have acted in that moment, but now after years of being saved, we have a reaction that's far more like Christ.

Then he just delivers the gospel. Now watch this; normally when you and I quote the gospel and define the gospel, we tell everybody that the gospel is the good news of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That's what we tell people, and we believe it with all of our heart. But listen; that's not what Paul says the gospel is. I mean that's part of the gospel, but it's not the whole gospel. It's not the really, really good news, because that's what the word, gospel, means, good news. Look how Paul defines the gospel in verses 3-7. What did he deliver to them? Christ died for our sin, according to the Scriptures, and He was buried, and He was raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures. That's where we stop. Paul didn't stop there. He says this; and He appeared. When you count the numbers of the people that Christ appeared to in those forty days between His resurrection and His ascension, Paul lists over five hundred and thirteen people that Jesus Christ appeared to. That's the gospel, amen.

Now, some people say Christ did not get up on that third morning, because the dead don't rise. We all know that. Now I hope you're getting what Paul's doing. What Paul's basically teaching here is this; the resurrection is essential to Christianity. Please raise your hand if you believe that. If you're

here this morning and you're skeptical, if you're here this morning and you've been listening to the church say what the church has been saying but you haven't come to the conclusion yet that Christ has been raised from the dead, please listen to me. The resurrection is essential to Christianity. I want to answer this question this morning; why is the resurrection crucial to Christianity? Here's the answer, because it validates the claims of Christ and the church about His death. Please let that sink in. If you haven't believed yet, please listen to me. If the resurrection of Christ actually happened, then everything Jesus said about His death is also true. Now if there's not a resurrection, then what He said about His death is a lie.

Do you remember what He said about His death? He had been telling His disciples since the midpoint of His ministry that He was going to Jerusalem, He was going to be crucified, He would be buried, but not to worry, on the third day He would rise again. They just dismissed it. They just didn't get it. They just couldn't comprehend that. Does everybody agree the disciples didn't get it? So the last night when He's instituting the Lord's Supper during the Passover Feast, He takes that bread and tells them this is His body, which is broken for them. Then He takes that cup and He lifts the cup up, and before He passes it around during the Passover meal, He said, "This is My blood of the new covenant which is poured out for many for the remission of sins. I say unto you I will not drink of this fruit of the vine until that day I drink it new with you in My Father's Kingdom. Drink you all of it." Does everybody get it? How do we know that His blood, being poured out under the stress of a Roman crucifixion removed all of our sins? Because on the third day, God raised Him back from the dead.

Did you know there are people who don't believe the resurrection is crucial to Christianity? What I'm going to tell you, you are not going to believe. When I reminded my wife, she said, "Ricky, that's not true." I witnessed it. When I graduated from Midcontinent Baptist Bible College, because I was raised in a conservative church, pastoring a conservative church at that time, and I had graduated from that conservative Bible college I basically had the choice of going to Southern Seminary in Louisville, or going to Mid-America Seminary in Memphis. Mid-America Seminary is where most of my

professors were educated and they were encouraging me to go sit under the ministry of Dr. Gray Allison and Mid-America Seminary, but I chose to go to Southern Seminary because at that time, Southern was very liberal. I wanted a liberal seminary education. I didn't want to hear again what we conservatives believe the Bible said. I wanted to be exposed to what the liberals thought about the Bible, so I headed out to Louisville. I'll never forget one of the first classes I took at Louisville was a life of Christ class. I sat under Dr. James Blevins, and I enjoyed that class. He would divide the class into study groups. The study group that I got put into had to study the resurrection, and at the end of the semester, we had to give a report about the resurrection. So we had been studying the resurrection, we were getting our class report ready when all of a sudden on the last day, Dr. Blevins walks in and he says this to us. There are seven of us at a table, and he says, "Hey guys, before you give this report, I just want to remind you because you may not know this, but they just discovered the actual bones of Jesus in a Palestinian tomb. They did the DNA research and it's a match. It's Jesus of Nazareth, He did not rise, He's dead and been dead for 2000 years." Then he looked at us and said this, "Before you give this report, does this shake any of your faiths?" I'm contemplating what he just said, and it's not April 1<sup>st</sup>. Then he turned to this young man, and the young man said, No Dr. Blevins, that would not shake my faith." I'm still trying to process the question because in the back of my mind I'm thinking I've been to Southern for two semesters and I've not met a liberal, but I think I just met my first liberal. Then they go to the second person. Let me preface this by, at that time, Southern was known for its social work program. So we had many men and women who were there, not to get a theological education to go into ministry from the pulpits of churches or the mission field, but to do government social work. So they went to the second person and the second person said no. They went to the third person, and the third person said no. Now it is my turn. I said, "Dr. Blevins, before I answer, let me ask for a clarification. Would you state the question again?" He stated the question again, and I said, "So you're telling me they actually found the bones of Jesus, they've done the DNA match, it's Jesus and we know factually that He did not rise from the grave." He said, "That's right." I said, "Yes, this shakes my faith. I'm not giving a report



about the resurrection. As a matter of fact, I'm not finishing seminary; I'm going home and I'm resigning my church and I'm going back to farming. If this isn't true, then I've believed a lie." Then they went to the next man, and he said yes, it shakes my faith. Then the last two people answered no. I'm sitting there thinking I'm in a class where only two people out of seven believe the resurrection is essential to Christianity. Dr. Blevins just got up and he walked out of the room. He got to the door, and when he got to the door, I said, "Dr. Blevins, before you leave and I leave seminary, can I ask you a question?" He said, "Sure Ricky." I said, "Dr. Blevins, they've just discovered the bones of Jesus in a Palestinian tomb and they did the DNA match and they've discovered it's Jesus. I've just got to ask you as a seminary professor, does this shake your faith?" And with a grin on his face, he said, "Yes, it shakes my faith and life you, I'm leaving seminary if it's true."

Please hear me church, if you're an unbeliever and you're wrestling with is this true; it's the foundation of Christianity! It's what sets Christianity apart. It's what makes us different from all the religions of the world. It's what makes us different from all the peoples of the world, because here's what we believe; we believe Jesus said what was true when He said this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the remission of sins. So when He went to that cross and was executed by the Romans, He was pouring out His blood before God. His blood wasn't being spilled by Roman soldiers; He was taking it into the very presence of God, offering as a sacrifice for our sins! On that cross, He said, "It is paid," and He died. But when He died, He believed there was enough value in His blood, His life being laid down, that it completely brought forgiveness of sin to you and me, and then He died.

I don't know if this has happened to you recently, but our community is changing. I can go to Duncan's and I can order me a cheeseburger, plain, with nothing on it, and I can get me a water, and if I decide to pay with cash instead of my card, when Cathy tells me how much it is, I can just start giving her money. She just starts taking it off the counter and she starts putting it in the cash register, and she will wait there until I give her all the money. But that doesn't happen when I go into the bigger

restaurants in this area that don't know me. I mean just the other day I had to order something very simple, I think it was \$8.67, and I didn't want to use the card. I reach in my billfold, I lay \$8.00 down, and the young girl keeps looking at it. It's just lying there. I'm fumbling in my pocket to come up with some quarters, dimes, nickels, and pennies to pay the extra .67 and I'm just kind of wondering why she isn't picking up the \$8.00. Then it dawns on me, she doesn't really trust that I'm going to give her the .67. I don't say anything, but I lay the \$8.00 down and then I lay the quarters, dimes, nickels, and pennies down and then all of a sudden, when it's \$8.67, do you know what she does? She picks it up and she puts it in the cash register.

Oh please get this; on the cross, Jesus laid down His life as payment to the Father. How do you and I really know there is enough value in the blood of Christ to pay off our sin debt? You know, don't you? Three days later, God reached down and raised Jesus back alive. When He raised Jesus back alive, it validated all the claims of Christ that He came to make us right with God. Without a resurrection, our faith is in vain, our preaching is in vain; we're misrepresenting God. We're still in our sins! Those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. And of all the people on the planet this morning, we are celebrating Christian Fool's Day, and we are to be pitied!

But look at verse 20, "But in fact, Christ has been raised." Now I don't know about you, but that struck me strangely this week. I think most of you realize that if you've come in the past to Hardin Baptist Church you know that usually on Easter morning, Resurrection Sunday, Bro Ricky preaches from one of the gospels. I can't remember using 1 Corinthians 15 in a long time. Paul didn't say I believe Christ has been raised. And Paul didn't say I think Christ has been raised. Listen to this; Paul said, "But in fact, Christ has been raised." Can we explore another question this morning? Please, if you don't believe yet, if you're still wondering, still gathering information, this is crucial; why does Paul factually believe Christ has been raised from the dead? Because when you bring fact in, that changes things. Does everybody agree? You know what the fact is, right. Christ died; that's a fact.

Did you know when I was in Bible college there were Jesus seminars, and there were Jesus groups? Many skeptics didn't even believe there was a Jesus, but then suddenly we discovered that Josephus, a Jewish historian, Suetonius, Tacitus, and other historians all documented that there was a Jesus of Nazareth. So now, everyone agrees Jesus died. What do you do with dead people? You bury them. Now some people would say yeah, but maybe He didn't really die. Ok, let's do this experiment. Let's take you outside, let's beat you with thirty-nine lashes that take all of the hide off your body, and beat you to within an inch of your life. Then let's bring you back inside, let's mock you, play with you, and put a crown of thorns on your head. Let's put a robe back on you, let's spit on you, let's beat you, let's mock you, and then let's walk you outside again and put a big old heavy beam of wood on your back. Let's take you and lay you down on the ground and drive nails in your wrists, drive nails in your feet, and let's hang you out in the hot sun for six hours. You'll only get a little relief when the sun refuses to shine. Let's watch you for six hours. Every time you give in to the weight, it cuts off your ability to breathe, so you have to push off with your legs just to breath. Then let us watch you go into a coma, swoon, and your air be cut off for hours, so that when the Roman soldiers come by, they don't even break your legs because you're dead. But one Roman soldier wants to make sure you're really dead, so he takes a spear and rams it into your side, and your blood pours out and water pours out! Then we embalm you. Then we put you in a tomb and seal it! He died, and He was buried. But here's what the gospel said; He didn't just die, He died for our sin, and He was buried, and He was raised on the third day...and He appeared.

Here's what Paul believed; dead men don't appear to people. Tell me you believe that. Is that not universal fact? If I go to Murray State University and go to any department at Murray State University, and I say; do dead men appear? Everybody is going to say, no. But here's the truth; five hundred and thirteen plus people saw Jesus, who died and was buried. They didn't see Him rise, but they saw Him appear. Does everybody hear that? Listen to me; this is not a made up story. If this were a made up story, there would have been a sunrise service. I think it's neat we have sunrise services, and there wasn't a sunrise service in the life of Christ!

Christ told them He was going to rise on the third day, and you thought the church would have got there at midnight, amen! And they've been waiting. They knew like we knew when sun was going to come up. Can you see it? The sun is starting to peak up, and they are going ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one. HE'S ALIVE! HE'S ALIVE! HE'S ALIVE! Yes, He's alive just like He said. No, in the words of Andy Stanley, "Nobody expected nobody," so no one was there. The Roman soldiers that did witness it trembled and fell as dead men, and then went and told the authorities, who bribed them to say the disciples stole the body. The disciples go to the tomb and they think somebody else stole the body! I could understand this is not factual if He appeared to His mother first, amen, mothers will believe anything about their sons. Listen to who He appeared to; Caiaphas, who denied Him three times. He said I don't know the man, and Christ appeared to him, then to the twelve, then to more than five hundred at once, Paul said. Did everybody get that? Five hundred different people saw Jesus, all at the same time!

I read where somebody said they were hallucinating! They were smoking some powerful stuff, amen! Is it possible for us to share hallucinations? No, hallucinations are individual things, just like dreams. Get this picture; I'm having a great dream, I wake up, wake Celisa up and say honey, dream this dream with me, and she goes back to sleep and dreams the dream I dream. You say Bro Ricky you're crazy! That's right; it's not possible. It's not possible for five hundred people to hallucinate about Jesus. He who died and was buried and actually got up, appeared to over five hundred people, and Paul says as he's writing to the Corinthian church where there are skeptics, he says; listen to me if you're skeptical this morning, listen to me if you're not a believer yet, Paul said check it out; most of them are still alive, and only a few of them have fallen asleep. I love how the early church talked about death. Mammie died...no, Mammie just fell asleep October 22<sup>nd</sup>. She fell asleep. Tell me what happens, what's the expectation when somebody falls asleep? They'll wake up. This event so changed the life of the church that they didn't view death as death; they viewed death as falling asleep. Out of those five hundred plus people, there are only a few that's fallen asleep. Most of them are still alive, so you can go ask them and they'll tell you. They didn't see Him rise, but they saw Him alive.

Now, if it's factual that He died and He was buried, and now He's alive, you have to draw the conclusion that between death and burial, somewhere in there He rose from the dead, amen. I hear somebody say hold it, Bro Ricky; here's where you've missed it, this is a legend! No, we know historically that the Apostle Paul was a real person and that he really wrote to the Corinthian church in 55 AD, and he had preached to them in 52 AD, but his first missionary trip was in 44 AD. He's just preaching something that's been handed to him that he's handing to them. Now when did Christ die? Christ died in 30 or 32 AD, so it's twenty years later. But in 44 AD, twelve years after the fact, Paul is already preaching what he's now writing about, but he preached it to them two years earlier. He's just preaching what he's been handed, so the question is when was this handed to him? Do you remember when he wrote to the church at Galatia? He told them about after his conversion to Christ, he went into the desert for three years, didn't talk to anybody, came back out of the desert, and went straight to Jerusalem. When he got to Jerusalem, he went straight and talked to Peter for fifteen days and then he met the half-brother of Jesus. That's the only two people he talked to. Do you know when that meeting was? It was in 40 AD. Paul was saved three years earlier in 37 AD. Five years after the resurrection of Christ, Paul was saved, went out in the desert for three years, came back home, and when he came back to Jerusalem, Peter handed him what's considered a creed. Now this is important, scholars believe this is the oldest creed of the New Testament. What's a creed? It's when the early church got together and they nailed some things down; this is true. What's true? Christ died for our sins, and was buried, and on the third day rose again, and He appeared. Christ died for our sins and was buried, rose again and was seen. Christ died for our sins and was buried, and on the third day rose and was seen. I bet you could almost say that, amen.

Did you know historians say it takes one hundred and fifty to two hundred years for something to become a legend? Two generations have to tell the same story, and then the third generation when they start telling it, it starts to become legend, but it takes one hundred and fifty to two hundred years for something to become a legend. Paul was given something eight years after he got saved! This will stand any credible examination anyone

in the world can put against it. Christ died, was buried. He was raised. He appeared! In fact, Christ has been raised! Here are the ramifications; Christ has been raised, therefore our faith has been counted for righteousness. Our faith was not in vain. The moment we put our faith in Jesus as our Lord and Savior, God brought us into a right relationship with Him, amen! This morning, if you'll believe for the first time, you can be made right with God! Catch this; and we are not still in our sins because of faith in Jesus Christ and because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ we have been forgiven of all of our sins, past, present, and future. All of our sin, every sin you've committed, every sin I've committed, and some of them have been horrendous, they've been heinous, they were all nailed to the cross with Christ. And God judged Him for our sin and we've been forgiven, but we're not just forgiven, we're free from the power of sin! Right now, we are being saved from sin! Amen. The dead in Christ, they have not perished! I think Billy Graham nailed it when Billy Graham told the world, "One day you are going to hear I have died, but don't believe it. On that day, I'll be more alive than I've ever been." My mother fell asleep, and at this moment, she's more alive than she's ever been! She's in the presence of the Lord, and all of our loved ones who believed in Christ have fallen asleep in Him, and they're with Christ at this very moment at the right hand of God!

Therefore, our preaching has a purpose. We are actually representing God when we say that God raised Christ from the dead. Listen to me; Christ had the power to rise from the grave, but He did not rise on His own from the grave. He stayed in that Palestinian tomb until that third morning when God the Father raised Him victoriously from the ground. It was God who raised Jesus. Can I just say this? Of all the people on the planet, we Christians are not to be pitied. We are to be most envied. I am not only forgiven, I am not only free; I have a future. One day we are going to take this body and going to put it back in the ground, and when it goes into the ground, one day at the last trumpet...see, last night I went to sleep expecting to wake up this morning, so I set my iPhone to a certain time and when that iPhone went off I got up. But I didn't really; I turned it off and snoozed for fifteen more minutes. Why do you think the Bible says there's going to be a divine alarm clock for all of us believers? When Jesus

comes back again, there's going to be a shout, there's going to be a cry; there's going to be the last trumpet sounding. And when that trumpet sounds, the dead in Christ shall rise first, amen, and if that was to be this afternoon, I will have missed it; no, I won't, I will be changed in a moment in a twinkling of an eye! We don't believe this because the Bible says so. We don't believe this because we fear death. We believe this because it's factual. Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead, and if you don't really believe that, just look at me and look at some of you. We used to be self-centered and pursuing our own thing, and now we are pursuing life after God and we are looking more and more like His Son Jesus Christ all the time. That can happen to you. I know you think you can't break sin's hold. You can. You can.