

Death Defeated!

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Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0 : 0 0] Father, we all come here in all sorts of different states of mind and heart. Maybe some of us pretty excited and pumped, some of us depressed, some of us here maybe against our will, wishing we were somewhere else.

But Father, we're all together, and we know that only you can bring your word home to our heart with grace and power. And so, Father, we ask for that. We ask that the Holy Spirit would bring your word to our heart, to the depth of who we are, that secret place at the center of whom we are, that you would bring your word to our heart and just bring the gospel to us.

And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. I'm not a particularly brave guy when it comes to physical things.

But about, I don't know, maybe I was trying to figure out exactly how many years ago, but it doesn't matter. Let's say it was eight years or ten years ago, and we lived in our previous house. It was on my day off on a Wednesday afternoon. And Louise and I were in the house, and all of a sudden, our neighbor, whom we'll just call Sue, because I almost said her name, but we'll just call her Sue.

As you know, if you come here, I call all women Sue and all guys Bob, just to keep things simple. And anyway, Sue comes knocking on the door and ringing the doorbell, very, very concerned and very distraught, because as she pulled up with her car into the driveway, she could see that her front door was open a bit.

[1 : 3 1] And the reason she was so distraught is that the kids were still at school and her husband was out of town, like out of the country. And we all know this, if you come home and your door is open, no good thing can be involved with that.

No good thing can be involved when you come to your house and the door is open. So she came and rang our doorbell, and she wanted me to go in the house with her.

Now, as I said, I'm not a particularly brave guy. I haven't thrown a punch since I was in grade 8, and that did not go well with me. I did not come out the better of that encounter.

But, you know, it's one of those things, I felt like saying, why don't we just sit outside, we're better still in our house with the door closed while the police come. But she wanted to go in the house and clear the house.

And I had to man up. So I got an aluminum baseball bat. What would you do? I got an aluminum baseball bat, and I went to the door, and I yelled, we're coming in, because I don't want to actually see them.

[2 : 3 6] I want them out of the house if they're still there. But you had that sense when you opened the door that there's probably nobody in the house. So you push the door open. I yelled that we're coming in. And, you know, don't mean any harm, which is an odd thing to say when you're carrying an aluminum baseball bat.

But that was for my protection, not to actually do anything with it. And then I went and cleared the house. And, of course, there's nobody in the house. And she'd had some jewelry stolen.

And she closed the door. She waited for the police. And she was very grateful. I share that story because it helps us to understand something which many people have puzzled over in this first account, this early account of the resurrection of Jesus.

So if you get your Bibles and turn with me to John chapter 20, you'll see how this story helps us to understand something that goes on in the gospel text. And it's John chapter 20.

And for those of you who don't have Bibles, as you can see, the words will be on the screen. But there's something about having your own Bible, by the way, and maybe being able to make notes as you follow along. And just before I start reading the Bible text, just to sort of clarify something which is really important for us to understand.

[3 : 49] And that's this. I mean, it looks sort of funny now because it's in a, you know, I have a fancy Bible. It used to have a bit of goldish stuff at the edge and all that, which is now gone. But really, what we're looking at right now is literally, literally, it's one of the four ancient biographies of Jesus.

A biography written by an eyewitness and also bearing eyewitness testimony. He used other eyewitnesses and written at a time when many, many, many eyewitnesses were still alive who could have put their hands up and said, John, you got that all wrong.

That didn't happen or that didn't happen. Lots of people could have disagreed or contradicted, wrote their own books. And these are one of four ancient biographies. And they're written, John's Gospel in particular, I don't, I forgot to ask somebody who takes Greek, but it used to be when I was trying to learn Greek, the Greek in John is so simple you begin with John.

That's where you begin reading John because it's so simple. It's written a very simple, direct, not flashy style. And it's an ancient biography that goes back to eyewitnesses. In fact, you might be interested to know that it, in fact, has unparalleled continuous manuscript evidence from the ancient world until today.

So you can be very, very convinced that what you're reading is what this ancient eyewitness wrote in the form of a biography. And what's just happened before we read this, if you went back and back or listened online, is that in very simple language just before this, John records Jesus' death.

[5 : 22] And one of the things we looked at last week is the way the text emphasizes time and time and time again that Jesus died, Jesus died, Jesus died, his body, and the handling of the body.

And the very significant thing that the guarantor of the death of Jesus was Roman soldiers. It wasn't Jesus' disciples who said, took him down from the cross very, very quickly and hurried him away and said, by the way, he's dead, he's dead, he's dead, just leave him alone.

No, no, no, the soldiers guaranteed that he was dead. And ancient historians record that there's only one known case. There were, I don't know, hundreds of thousands, maybe millions of crucifixions.

Only one recorded time that somebody did not die as a result of crucifixion, apart from what's going on right here. And by the way, in this story, he does die, right?

That's what the story is telling. So there's only one person in all of history recorded who did not die as a result of crucifixion. And now the story continues. Now on the first day of the week, that's what we would now call Sunday, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early while it was still dark and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

[6 : 32] That's the point of my story that I began with, right? In those days, the custom was that they'd hollow out, make something like a cave where there was limestone, a small hole and a bigger inner chamber with different things.

And to cover it up so that animals wouldn't go in and people wouldn't steal the bodies, they'd roll a very heavy stone in front of it. And Mary knew that there had been a very large stone in front of it and there'd been Roman soldiers. And she comes early in the morning.

She'd been held up because of the Sabbath of being able to do more for the body. And she probably was thinking something like, I can't imagine the state two men would leave a body in.

It's probably terribly wrapped and they didn't apply the spices the right way and all of that stuff. And so she's there. And as soon as she comes up, she doesn't have to go inside the tomb to know that something bad has happened.

Why? Because when you come home and your door is open, something bad has happened. Okay? And you don't know, she didn't have an aluminum baseball bat. That's why she didn't go in.

[7 : 32] I don't know. But you don't go in. So what she does, well, we find out what she does. Verse 2. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, they have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they have laid him.

By the way, that little word we is part of how you can see that all of the different accounts of the resurrection morning, how they balance. Mary had been there not just alone, but with other women.

But she's the one who goes to Peter and John, probably two reasons. One, because Peter's a little bit of a leader. And second, Mary, the mother of Jesus, is with John. And so she wants to go and tell the people that have Mary with her that this has happened, that something terrible has happened to the body of Jesus.

And so she goes and she finds Peter and John, and then we see what happens. Verse 3. So Peter went out with the other disciple. And by the way, it's almost everybody agrees that John, the apostle, is the writer of this.

And he's very, he writes this in a way that's for two reasons. He never refers to himself. He refers to himself as the other disciple, and probably for two reasons. One is a self-effacing way, and also to try to make himself just another guy.

[8 : 55] He's no different than Dave or Ann or Dick or Don or me. We're just a disciple whom Jesus loved. He's just a disciple whom Jesus loved. And that's how he describes himself.

I'm just a disciple that Jesus loved. And so back to the text. So Peter, verse 3, went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter.

That's John, outran Peter, and reached the tomb first. And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came following him, and went into the tomb.

He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded up in a place by itself. And just sort of pause here.

This is all very, very, very significant, what's happened. It's very, very significant. You see, what we saw last week, or if you go back and read John 19, you'll see that a very, very wealthy man who's been a secret disciple of Jesus comes and asks for the body of Jesus, and he takes another man who up until then had been a secret disciple of Jesus by the name of Nicodemus, and these two very wealthy men, they do something.

[10 : 13] They buy 75 pounds of spices. That's enough to bury 100 people. What they're doing is they want to profoundly honor Jesus, and they take the linen cloths, they take this mixture, but the thing about the mixture is the mixture is very, very sticky.

It would be like taking a whole pile of spices, mixing it with honey, putting honey on the cloth, and then wrapping Jesus up in several layers of the cloths with this honey and spice.

Very, very sticky. You can just well imagine. And so nobody who's going to steal the body, there's two types of people who would have stolen the body.

I guess there could have been some people who wanted to do some mischief, maybe play a trick on the disciples to make them think that Jesus had risen from the dead, or maybe the religious authorities or the secular authorities wanted to make sure that nobody could do anything to try to steal the body and claim that Jesus had risen, although there already was a Roman guard out in front.

Or it could have been, which is the more common thing, which it could have been grave robbers, because all of that aromatic spice would have been worth a lot of money. And I know it sounds unbelievably gross that somebody would steal a dead body, scrape everything off, all the expensive spices, put it in a jar and resell it.

[11 : 36] Yuck. But they did things like that. Okay? And so they did things like that. And so the thing that you could see, though, is that it's going to be an unbelievable mess.

Nobody would have done it right there. They would have just grabbed the body, all nicely wrapped up, easy to carry, I mean, relatively easy to carry, taken it somewhere else, and then at their leisure, either, you know, just scraped off the spices and the linen and dealt with it and then just disposed of the body somewhere else.

But what they saw was that it was tidy. The cloths were there, and it was tidy. There would have been a separate, like a handkerchief that went over Jesus' face to sort of, as sort of a way of, you know, it's just like we do, and you want to honour, you know, when somebody has died, you pull the blanket over their head, and you could well see that while you might do all sorts of stuff to deal with the body, you want to handle the head, the face, in a different type of way.

And so there's a napkin. Still would have had some of the honey and all on it, but, or not honey, the myrrh and aloes, but it's sticky like honey. And that, though, is not just sort of crumpled up the way a thief would do it and thrown in the corner.

It's folded. It's neat. And the grave is empty. And it doesn't make any sense unless there's been a resurrection.

[13 : 08] And that's what we see very, right next. And remember, remember when I say that this is an eyewitness biography. This is an eyewitness biography. You can go and do a little bit of research around all of the battle around this, and let me tell you, there have been some of the smartest people in the world over the last 150 to 200 years to try to discount that this is an ancient biography of Jesus.

And I can tell you they don't succeed very well. You can go do the research yourself. They don't succeed very well. It ultimately comes down to a basic, I'm going to say it, well, I'll talk about it a little bit more in a moment, what it comes down to.

But what happens next, so it's verse 8. Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in and he saw and he believed. This next sentence is a bit hard to translate into English.

For as yet, they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. And basically, what they're saying is this, is that John, and it's not entirely clear because of the grammar about what's going on with Peter, but basically, John realizes that a resurrection happened.

He doesn't really have the proper categories to think about it because the Bible hasn't come home to him and Jesus hasn't appeared to him and the way Jesus is going to open the scriptures to help him understand what's just happened.

[14 : 26] But John goes, he sees the stone is rolled away, the soldiers are gone, and nobody would leave the grave clothes like that. And even if they were still left there, they'd be sticky, like they'd be filled with debris.

You can just imagine trying to remove something like honey in a dusty cave and then trying to even put it back in the rocks would be filthy. It just doesn't fit. He believes.

He just believes. And then verse 10, then the disciples went back to their homes. And I, for a long time, I've been thinking about this a lot over the years, of course.

The reason they went back to their homes is they don't want to still be there because they're thinking to themselves, the Romans are going to come back at some point in time, the temple police are going to come back at some point in time, and if they see me here with no body, I'm in trouble.

And as well as that, what can they do? The body's not there. Jesus is gone. So they go home. Makes a special sense if you remember that Mary was probably back to where they went.

[15 : 34] They wanted to go and tell the mother of Jesus about what had happened. So just sort of, you know, pause here for a second. If the story just ended here, it would just be a mystery.

like a locked room mystery. I love reading lock, I love reading mysteries, I love reading thrillers, and I like locked room mysteries. You know, they're very, they're fun to read. I find them fun to read.

It would just be a locked room mystery. What on earth happened to the body? It would be just lots of, yeah, it would just be odd. But here's, um, remember I said that, um, for almost 200 years, a lot of people with very, very high IQs and lots of degrees after their names and who speak lots of languages have done a concerted effort to try to undermine that this is, in fact, an ancient eyewitness biography.

And, um, and at the end of the day, what it comes down to, and I hope I'm not offending anybody here who believes all those things, but it comes down to a basic prejudice. They don't want to look at evidence, they just hold at a deep level of faith, at a profound level of faith, that there is no God and because there is no God and because I believe in science and because there is no God, then therefore, this cannot possibly be an ancient biography because it involves something like a resurrection.

It's not that they look at the evidence, but that their prejudice overwhelms their ability to actually look at the evidence. And one of the things here, sorry, a bit of a time out, time out, a bit of mercy, geek moment, okay, geek moment for certain geeks.

[17 : 24] Nothing in a, no miracle and nothing in this story contradicts science. Science, here's the geek moment, science to operate has to work with something called methodological naturalism.

And what that means is that science says we're not going to look at prayer and angels and spirits, all we're going to look at what the natural processes are that allow us to explain things. It's called methodological naturalism and it's central to science being developed.

But many scientists go from methodological naturalism and a Christian can be engaged with that as well. In fact, that's what you want. If you go to one of the scientists here in the room, it was an engineer or something and you want to know why your DVD isn't working or why something's not working, you don't want them to say, well, a demon is invaded your mechanism.

You want them to say, no, no, no, it can't be a demon, it has to be something else, okay? Find what it is, it must be a loose wire or something's broken. So we want our scientists to use methodological naturalism but what happens is people, scientists think that somehow or another methodological naturalism implies philosophical naturalism which it does not.

Philosophical naturalism which believes that there's only, there's no God, there's only matter and energy and movement. That's a faith. That's a faith.

[18 : 47] There's reasons for it, there's reasons why it's not true. It's a faith. And this story doesn't violate anything in science but it does if this is true, sorry for the graphic detail for young children, it is a dagger in the heart of philosophical naturalism.

It is a dagger in the heart of philosophical naturalism if this evidence is true. And so many people, what happens when they look at this, they don't even examine the fact that they're committed to atheism.

they're so deeply committed to atheism they disregard the evidence. That's end of my geek moment. Back to the text. So what happens? If it's just an empty tomb, it would be a puzzling mystery.

So what happens? Well, let's look. Verse 11. But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb and as she wept, she stooped to look into the tomb. Now pause here.

This is actually a really important thing. If you look at all of the resurrection accounts, this is something which cannot be overemphasized. Right now, as Mary is looking into the tomb and she's crying, she has the exact same view of Jesus and his death as Herod who mocked him, as Caiaphas and Annas and the religious leaders who hounded the authorities to death until he was put to death.

[20 : 10] She has the exact same view of Jesus as Pilate and all of the Roman soldiers. She has the exact same view of Jesus' death as Judas. She is no different than any of them. She has the exact same view of Jesus' death as Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris.

Jesus is dead. Now, everybody else might be happy about that. Judas isn't. He's committed suicide.

It's driven him to suicide. But she has the exact same view as all of them and that's why she's weeping and that's why she just wants to find the dang body so it can be treated with some reverence and respect because she loved this man.

She didn't love him in an erotic way. She loved him. In fact, part of the reason she loved him, I'll explain that in the very next little bit which is right here verses 12 and 13.

And she saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had lay and one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, Woman, Why are you weeping? She said to them, They have taken away my Lord and I do not know where they have laid him.

[21 : 24] Now, you see, some people right now, I can just, I, one of my friends at Starbucks at this point in time if I was reading it to him, he would just reach over right now, he would close that Bible and say, George, angels, mythological, legend, okay, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, I would just say to him, that's your faith in philosophical naturalism not looking at the evidence.

The reason Mary Magdalene loved Jesus so much is that she had been possessed by seven demons and he had cast them out. That's what the Gospels tell us.

She had been delivered from seven demonic beings who had possessed her and she loved Jesus. She trusted him with her life after what he had done for her. And now she comes and she sees angels.

The Bible teaches not that everything that people say about angels is true but the Bible reveals that angels exist. And you need to go to the Bible to understand what angels and demons are really like but we'll get to that again in a moment.

So she has this conversation with the angels. They're inside the tomb. They just are there. In verse 14, having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing but she did not know that it was Jesus.

[22 : 45] The text doesn't say why but maybe she heard the sound of a foot on the gravel. Maybe there was a bit of a shadow that passed in the room. But she would have been in darkness.

It would have been bright outside. And this is actually once again very important evidence because you see she just sort of glances at him. Verse 15, let's read that.

Jesus said to her, Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking? Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him and I will take him away.

Just sort of pause. She's in the room. It's echoey. We don't entirely know why she didn't recognize Jesus' voice very well but she's in a small cave and he's speaking through that. But one of the reasons she wouldn't have thought it was Jesus is because she knows that Jesus is dead.

And the thing about man, and this is something which we all have a basic sense of, he's a healthy, strong man. He doesn't look like he's had nails driven through his hands and nails driven through his feet.

[23 : 44] He doesn't look like he's been lashed 39 times so terribly that the bones of his back were probably exposed to the air. He doesn't look like he's had crown of thorns.

He doesn't look sick or broken. He looks like a strong, normal male. But six or seven weeks ago when there was this terrible, terrible ice storm, between the services I drove somebody home and as I was just over there I fell on the ice and I fell really hard.

I can't remember a time in my life I've fallen so hard. Like it stunned me. And as soon as I'd fallen I knew that it was not good. In fact, I was worried I would be able to get up.

And I must have bruised or broken at least three ribs. My shoulder was very sore and my knee was sore. And I got up and I came in and Owen and Anne who were at the door they didn't know anything about me but as soon as I came in they said, are you alright?

Are you alright? Because they have a basic sense. I don't know if it was my skin color or whatever but I don't look right. I don't look right. And Mary, you know, so we all have that basic sense.

[24 : 57] Somebody doesn't look right. They've been hurt in some fundamental way. They just, there's maybe something about the way they move or stand. But Mary looks and she sees a gardener. Somebody who's a laborer not somebody who's deeply hurt.

And you might say, well why didn't she talk to the guy longer? Well, come on. Just be realistic. Two angels this way? A gardener that way? Which way are you going to look?

Be honest. I'm looking at the angels too. I mean, gardeners come and go. How often have you seen two angels? You look at the angels, right? So there's a bit of a sense.

She says something and she goes back. And then, in verse 16, yeah, verse 16, Jesus said to her, Mary.

She turned and said to him in Aramaic, Rabboni, which means teacher. For Christians who've been reading the gospel, one of the things you know in John chapter 10 is there's a famous story that Jesus is the good shepherd and he calls his sheep by name.

[26 : 05] And you can't read this without, if you've read the whole story, that will go instantly into your mind. And whatever it is, amongst other things, how on earth would a random gardener know her name? But as soon as this guy says her name, now she turns and she realizes and recognizes the voice.

the grave is not just empty because the body had been stolen. Jesus is fully alive and standing there.

If you look in my blog this week, I give a concise list of reasons, historical and other reasons why it is that the resurrection of Jesus is true. And he's alive.

So verse 17 and 18, she comes out of the tomb, obviously, and Jesus said to her and she starts to obviously cling to him, just grab him.

And Jesus said to her, do not cling to me for I have not yet ascended to the Father but go to my brothers, my brothers, the people who had abandoned him, his disciples, go to my brothers and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father to my God and your God.

[27 : 23] And Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, I have seen the Lord and that he had said these things to her. Now, sort of what does this all mean to us?

We sort of have to bring this home a little bit. I know I'm an old guy and I know that it can be very dangerous when old guys talk about pop music.

So, like, just give me a little bit of grace, okay? But, a couple of weeks ago I was at the supper table with my wife and two kids and we're listening to Magic 100.

And on Magic 100 a Lauren Daigle song comes on. And, I don't listen to the radio that much but it seemed like any time I was in the car, whether it was listening to Hot 89.9 or Magic 100 or whatever the other ones were, I'd hear this Lauren Daigle song on.

And that's not what's so surprising but Lauren Daigle is a Christian performer and the Magic 100 guy says, we're going to listen to this Lauren Daigle song, You Say. Some of you know what that is as soon as I say that.

[28 : 27] And then it said the number one song in Ottawa this week again. And I just looked it up as part of the sermon preparation. It's been on the number, it's been the top 20 in Canada for 39 weeks.

39 weeks. The fifth most uploaded or downloaded whatever the right word song is on Apple Music if I read the statistics correctly.

That's just this week. 39 as of this past Monday. There was number 10 in Canada. 39 weeks on the top 20. But the thing about it is I thought, well this is a Christian song. Like, how is it that it's so popular on secular radio?

And then I thought, oh you know what it probably is? It's probably one of those Jesus is my boyfriend Christian songs. You know what those Jesus is my boyfriend Christian songs are?

It means, oh I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you. You're so beautiful, you're so wonderful. And it never actually says Jesus, right? So it could easily just be somebody talking about their boyfriend or their girlfriend or their husband and their wife.

[29 : 28] And I thought, well it's probably just, but I seem to remember some of the lyrics, I didn't think it fit. So, so here, you know, give me some, give me some grace. Here's the lyrics. I'm not going to do it all and I'm, you guys when I come to it can do the ooh, ah stuff, okay?

I was joking beforehand, I could have had Amy up here and I could have just gone like this to Amy and then she could have done it for us because she can sing and I can't. But here's how the, here's how the lyrics go. 39 weeks, Christian song, non-Christians, obviously, if it's in the 39 weeks in the top 20 in Canada, Canada is a profoundly secular nation.

But listen to these lyrics, it's very puzzling. I've been really puzzled as to what is happening when non-Christians listen to this song and sing along with it and keep wanting it to be played.

It goes like this, I keep fighting voices in my mind that say I'm not enough. every single lie that tells me I will never measure up. So right away, you can, it's, I think it's well sung but I'm an old guy but I, you can see why people like this song.

I mean, that's a very, very common experience, isn't it? That we struggle with voices in our head that say that we're not enough, that we'll never measure up. But it continues on. Am I just more than the sum of every high and every low?

[30 : 47] Remind me once again just who I am because I need to know. Ooh, ah, or something like that. And then it goes on and you can see why this is very popular, right?

I mean, this is a very common experience of feeling that within us. Christian and non-Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, Atheist, and then it continues.

You say I am loved when I can't feel a thing. You say I am strong when I think I am weak. You say that I am, you say I am held when I am falling short. When I don't belong, oh, you say that I am yours.

Now just pause here for a second. And it goes on, I believe, I believe, oh, I believe, what you say of me, oh, I believe. Now you see, if you're reading the lyrics, the official lyrics, you can see that she does something which is grammatically unpopular right now, which I always do, which is to capitalize the you and the your, that she's obviously referring to God.

If you look at the written lyrics, she's referring to God. But when you're just hearing it, that's not clear. It could just be, is it her mom? Is it her dad?

[31 : 54] Is it her boyfriend? Her husband? Is it her best friend? Is it her kid? But then the song takes a very, very puzzling turn. And this is what, this is what I think makes me really wonder what's going on in the song.

The very next two lines are the only thing that matters now is everything you think of me. In you, I find my worth. In you, I find my identity.

And can you just skip down the next bit? Skip that, next one. And then look after that. She says, taking all I have now, I'm laying it at your feet.

You have every failure, God, and you'll have every victory. And the God there doesn't mean anything because a couple of years ago when I was taping my radio show, I had the guy who sometimes produced the three guys on the radio.

And I joked that I like to listen to the show because it was so religious. And he looked at me and said, you're kidding. I said, yeah, because everything is, oh God this, oh God that, oh God that. It's like a deeply religious show.

[32 : 56] He's talking about God all the time. And he thought it was pretty funny. So, you know, for the average person, just to hear, oh God, doesn't mean anything, right? It's just, oh God, I can't believe that that happened. So what is, like what's on earth going on?

Like on one hand, you can see from this song that it's, it's talking about something which is a very, very persistent problem of the fact that we have these voices of doubts.

I'm a failure. I'm a nothing. I'm a complete and utter, like, you know, reject. I'm hopeless. And we have these thoughts. Many of us here, we don't even want to share it with very many people.

Maybe our closest friend that we have these things that go on in our head, these deep accusatory conversations. And so this woman is giving voice to all of that. And she's giving voice to it in terms of, for many people, it's just as if, but you believe in me.

You don't say these things. You say different things. But then when all of a sudden she says the only thing that matters now is everything you think of me and you I find my worth and you I find my identity and every one of us would say, time out, honey.

[34 : 00] Don't say that. Your boyfriend will let you down. Your dad will let you down. Your mom will let you down. Your teacher will let you down. Terrible thing to say to you people who have very young, adorable kids.

Your kids will get over and they will let you down. Like I just so puzzled that this song is so profoundly popular in Canada.

Like what's going on with people? So here's how this all sort of connects with this great story. If you could put up the first point, that would be wonderful. Almost 2,000 years ago, just outside of Jerusalem on a spring morning, and historians, because there's two ways of dealing with how the many instances of the Bible intersecting, the four ancient biographies intersecting with secular, pagan, Jewish history, they know that it was either the year 30 or the year 33 in April.

Of 30 or 33. One of those two. Some prefer 30, some prefer 33. Both work. But almost 2,000 years ago, just outside of Jerusalem, on a spring morning, because he had risen from the dead, his grave was found empty.

The grave clothes were laid there. The stone was rolled away. He was then seen fully alive by Mary and later by many others.

[35 : 26] This truth validates and vindicates who Jesus is and all that he said. This historical truth validates and vindicates who Jesus is and all that he said.

Validates and vindicates. That's why, you know, when I try to talk to my friends who believe in paranormal forces and they say to me, why do I privilege the Christian account? And I try to say to them, listen, amongst other things, is, you know, if Jesus really did rise from the dead in the way he did, he predicted he was going to rise from the dead and all that other stuff, then that validates and vindicates.

Jesus says the Bible is true. You believe the biblical account of these things. You believe their account of what angels are and what demons are and what's right and wrong. It all comes out of that.

If Jesus predicted and prophesied his death, his burial, his crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection, he himself says in Matthew and in John that his resurrection will be a sign, an indicator, a pointer that what he has said is true.

And I think that's a completely and utterly and massively reasonable response. If it happened, it's true.

[36 : 48] It validates it. But some of you might say, okay, so yeah, yeah, yeah, you know, Jesus is alive, Elvis is alive, big deal. It's just like a curious fact. But no, that's why what he says is so important, if you could put up the next point.

Jesus ascended to the Father to be with you with love and affection, with grace and power. Jesus ascended to the Father to be with you with love and affection, with grace, and with power.

You see, that's the whole significance of it. Jesus wasn't saying like, oh, yuck, you're a woman, you're touching me. No. The greatest honor is bestowed upon Mary Magdalene as the apostle to the apostles, the first one to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

What he's saying to her is, listen, I am going to the Father and because I am going to the Father, I can be with everyone. This morning, I can be with the Christians crying and mourning in Sri Lanka because their loved ones were murdered.

And I can be with Christians in Ottawa and I can be with Christians in Nairobi and in Beijing because I have ascended to the Father, because I am no longer limited to this physical body which is now going to be with my Father, in heaven for all eternity.

[38 : 02] I can be with you. Don't cling to me and hold on to me in terms of just, it's just going to be me and you, Jesus, and my apostles, this small, privileged few.

I ascend to the Father to be with you. To be with you with love and affection, with grace and with power, which is why Lauren Daigle can say, I just want to listen to what you have to say to me, Jesus.

That's why she can say that. Listen, my identity gets beaten up and wrecked all the time. I get harsh words from my boss. I get harsh words from my husband or my wife.

I don't have a husband and a wife. I wish I did. I get harsh things from my kids and friends and it can be really hard for me just to remember who I am and I have these voices in my head, but you are with me and you love me with love and affection.

If you could put up the last point, that would be great. And only the truth of the gospel makes your unconditional self-giving and surrender to Jesus a reasonable and desirable goal.

[39 : 11] Begins as an act but it's always a goal. To say to the Lord, I lay down my mask, I lay down my defenses, I lay down my high tower, I lay down everything, I give myself to you and I surrender and I surrender unconditionally.

It's really hard for me to surrender unconditionally but help me to surrender unconditionally to you and then I thank you that you take me even though I can't really do that entirely but you take me as your own and I give myself to you and I ask that throughout the rest of my life I will grow in my ability to give myself to you and surrender unconditionally.

And that's what Lauren Daigle is doing in the song. And why is that a reasonable thing? Because this is chapter 20 of the Gospel of John. And if you read all the way through the Gospel of John you discover who Jesus is.

At the beginning of the Gospel of John Jesus through John reveals that life and light and love is responsible for creating all things. And then human beings turned away from God.

And what does that mean? When they turn away from life you turn to death. When you turn away from love you turn towards indifference and hatred. And when you turn away from light you turn towards the darkness.

[40 : 23] And Jesus when he dies on the cross he takes your darkness on himself. He takes your hatred. He takes your indifference. He takes your death upon himself and he dies for you.

And so when you are surrendering to Jesus you are surrendering to love. Why wouldn't you want to surrender to love? To pure uncreated unfailing eternal love.

You are surrendering to life. You are surrendering to light. And then the gospel continues to introduce Jesus and Jesus is revealed as the one who can heal turn water into wine.

That Jesus is the presence of God that is the fullness of joy. Why wouldn't you surrender to a fullness of joy? He heals the official son. He is health. Why wouldn't you surrender to health?

He heals the paralytic who's grumpy and doesn't like him. Means that he is grace unmerited grace in the flesh. Why wouldn't you and I surrender to unmerited grace?

[41 : 23] He feeds the five thousand which shows that he is the creator and the provider. Why would we not surrender to our creator and provider? He walks on water which shows that he is in fact the new heaven and the new earth.

Why would we not surrender to the new heaven and the new earth? He is the man who heals the man born blind. It means that he is light himself. He is sight. Why would you and I not surrender to light itself and sight itself?

He is the one who raises Lazarus which shows that he is life. Why once again would we not surrender to life? He is introduced as the bread of life, the light of the world, the entrance into God or the gate.

He is the good shepherd. He is the resurrection and the life. He is the way, the truth, and the life. He is the vine, the one by whom we can be connected to and be connected to the living God. Why would we not surrender and give ourselves to that?

Why would we choose darkness and hatred and indifference and darkness rather than surrender to that?

[42 : 30] Jesus is introduced in the beginning of John's gospel as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and we have just seen that he has done this. This is who he is. Why would you not surrender and give yourself to him?

And why would it not be your goal for the rest of your life when you begin the Christian walk by surrendering to him to have it your goal to surrender more? To surrender more to love, to joy, to life, to light, to walk from darkness and hatred and indifference?

And why would we not want to regularly hear what he says about our new identity in him and who we really are? Please stand.

Just bow our heads in prayer. Father, if there are any here who have never surrendered to love itself, love made flesh, light made flesh, light made flesh, father, they can feel the knocking of your son on the door of their heart and we ask that you help them to open that door and come in to say, I surrender, I surrender all, I give myself to you, be my Lord, be my Savior.

And father, for all of us, father, you know how we get beaten up by the world, you know the doubt, the confused identity, you know all those things about us, you know the chaos that goes on inside us, the bright shining moments of goodness and greatness and those horrific times of just being really bad and dark and you know all there is about us and father, you gripped us with Jesus and he is our Savior and our Lord and so father, we ask that you fan into flame within us a longing and yearning to make it a daily goal, a lifelong goal to surrender and give ourselves to the one who makes us right with you.

[44 : 36] And all God's people said together, Amen.