

Free, Indeed!

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[0 : 00] Amen. If you enjoyed that church, you can say amen. Well, it's good to be here on Resurrection Sunday.

! If you're a guest, I hope that you have felt welcomed. I just want to encourage you to stick around a little bit afterwards. We'd love to meet you. Come introduce yourself to myself, Pastor Scott. We would love to at least put a name and a face and shake your hand. And we want to welcome those that are watching over video. And we're going to spend some time in the Word this morning, as we typically do when we gather on Sunday for worship.

I would say turn to a passage. We're going to be roughly in John chapter 8. A couple verses in there, but I may be so fast that you're not even going to get there.

So we'll just see how things go. So let me pray, and then we will dive into the message this morning that I've entitled, Free Indeed. So join me in prayer.

[1 : 04] Lord, we think about that first morning, that first resurrection morning, with some of your faithful followers, this group of women that went to the grave, to somehow take care of your body, Jesus.

And maybe to adorn the grave with flowers and incense. And yet they arrived, and an angel was there. And he asked a question, why do you seek the living among the dead?

Well, he is not here. He is risen. And Lord, we trust that that is so. That this is a historical event.

And Lord, it's the great plot twist, reversal, in the story of history.

Where life, new life can be experienced by anyone willing to bow their knee and cry out for forgiveness, Jesus.

And so Lord, thank you that we have gathered here to celebrate you, Jesus, the risen Christ, the returning King. And we pray that you would use your word to minister to people.

[2 : 21] Lord, I pray for the salvation of the lost and the edification of the saints. And Lord, all that takes place would bring you glory today. We pray this in Jesus' wonderful name and all God's people said.

Amen. Well, one final thing. He is risen. He is risen indeed. He is risen indeed.

Now, what's the big deal with the resurrection? Why have Christians been greeting one another with this phrase since the very first Easter when the disciples on the road to Emmaus, they declared this to the eleven when they arrive in Jerusalem.

And it says in Luke 24, The Lord has risen indeed. Why do we greet one another on Easter with this greeting? It's because the life, the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus is the only pathway to peace with God.

That's it. And in fact, Paul told us this in 1 Corinthians 15, where he writes in verse 3 and 4, For I deliver to you of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

[3 : 48] Paul's saying this is what's of first importance. This is the most important thing that a person can know in this life. Just as if I was a skydiver jumping out of a plane and I had my chute attached and I'm in the air, the only thing, the thing of most importance is that I pull that lever by the time I hit 3,000 feet.

That's the only thing that you've got to remember at that point. And Paul says here, This is the most important thing that you can know in this life, that Jesus died for sinners and that he rose from the grave.

And Paul here is telling the Corinthians, Take this seriously. You've been taking your fun, your leisure, your personal passions seriously.

Start considering the God that died on your behalf. He was willing to suffer in order to create a pathway for a very new sort of life.

I deliver to you of first importance. Friends, without Jesus dying for sinners and then resurrecting from the grave for those sinners, there is no Christianity.

[5 : 02] That is the hinge pin. That is the fulcrum on which our faith rests. In fact, Paul said it later in 1 Corinthians 15 where he says, If Christ had not been raised, your faith is futile.

In fact, you're still in your sins. And what he's saying there is if Christ didn't raise, your faith is a joke. Sigmund Freud got it right in the 1920s.

The Austrian psychologist, neuro-whatever. There's a fancy name for what he did. But he came up with this term.

He came up with this term called a wish fulfillment. That's all your faith is. You've concocted an imaginary friend to help you cope through life, but has no bearing on this life or the one to come. But here's the thing, friends. The record stands. It doesn't matter the fancy terminology that you come up with to try to discourage folks from believing in the resurrection of Christ.

[6 : 07] The record stands. It stands in history. And it stands in our hearts that the story is true. If it were not true, I would not be up here this morning.

I would not regularly be up here. Scott would not spend the hours to prepare messages from God's Word if this were not true. We believe this with all our hearts. And in fact, Jesus says in John 8, 32, You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

It's true. It's true. You'll know the truth, and the truth will set you free. Now, that's an often misquoted verse, sometimes plastered on the halls of academia, higher learning, as though it has something to do with academia.

But Jesus here is speaking of a truth that actually transcends the classroom. And the record stands in history that it's true. In fact, Paul, when he wrote 1 Corinthians 15, he wrote it some 20 to maybe 25 years after the resurrection.

The crucifixion was in the lifetime of the people Paul is actually writing to. They could have come back to Paul and said, No, no, no, no, wait. That's not true.

[7 : 37] In fact, they could have gone on a crusade to say, Hey, we're going to go and find the body and dismiss this lie that Jesus raised from the grave. In fact, if this were not true, why did the apostles die for this message?

It was Friday when they fled the scene, and yet they gave their life for this message. And history records, majority of them gave their life for this reality.

The leading atheist of the day, Saul of Tarsus, gave his life to Jesus. And then he goes on to write so much of the New Testament.

The Bible testifies this is true. And friends, the Bible is an accurate account of Jesus. Who He is, what He did.

There's no other ancient book, friends, on planet Earth more credible than God's Word, than the Bible.

[8 : 43] I'm not going to turn to a book written 600 years later. That would be the Koran. Testifying about Jesus. Claiming in Surah 4, 157, 58.

That Jesus didn't actually die. He wasn't actually crucified. I'm going to go with an eyewitness account of what actually occurred. And the Bible is as good an ancient historical document as there is.

I would say the next closest we have is Homer's Iliad. Written in 800 B.C.-ish. 400 years then, till we have our first copy, manuscript, and of the Homer's Iliad, which we don't argue.

It's like, yeah, that's legit to Homer. We have now today 1,800 manuscripts of that book. Well, when it comes to the New Testament, we have manuscripts within 50 years of the originals.

And we have almost 6,000 manuscripts from the 2nd century to the 15th century. Christian Research Institute says it this way.

[10 : 03] Even Homer's Iliad, which has seen the greatest manuscript increase in recent years. They've discovered more manuscripts. It used to be around 650. Now there's about 1,800. It's still dwarfed by the New Testament, which has more than three times the Greek manuscripts as the Iliad.

And if you add in other languages, Latin, Coptic, other languages, there's roughly 20,000 more manuscripts. Friends, this is not the telephone game. History is on the side of the Bible.

It just is, whether you like it or not. And so because of the numbers of manuscripts, it's very easy to spot when an error creeps in. You have so much data to consider.

So history is on the side of this story being true. We also have the testimony of the heart that it's true. Maybe you've had a critic of the faith share with you, oh, you're just projecting, you're longing for God onto this thing, and you're creating this idea called God.

And I would say if man has this longing in him that there is a higher power, there's something transcendent to himself, I think that's an indicator that indeed there might be something actually very wonderful about Christianity, in that it's actually true.

[11 : 27] We long because we were created in the image of God. Our longing is consistent with the Christian worldview. Christian theology says that we will long for a God if we do not know God.

So that restlessness that you have, if you're an unbeliever and you're trying to fill it with this and that and this and that, and you're still restless, that's consistent with the Christian worldview.

See, if Christianity is right, then one would assume that one would have this longing. It's that argument for God from desire. C.S. Lewis said it this way, creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for these desires exists.

A baby feels hunger. Well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim. Well, there is such a thing as water.

And then he goes on to say, if I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. Our longing tells us, I think it actually screams to us that God exists, that his existence is so reasonable.

[12 : 46] And then the Bible tells us his name and explains why the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus is actually the best news ever, friends. Amen? It's the best news ever that God in human form came to earth on a rescue mission to rescue men and women from a life of slavery to all sorts of, all forms of evil along with pulling them away from an eternity of torment apart from their maker.

And friends, humanity is stuck without the Lord. They're stuck. I drove a gentleman this week who was sharing with me how energized he was that he had finally given up the bottle.

He's like, man, I'm no longer, you know, stuck in that addiction. But the irony was I was driving him to the dispensary. And it wasn't lost on me.

And I just said, wow. And we're on our way to the dispensary. I get away with saying a lot. And he's sort of chuckling. He says, I know, I know.

Trading one vice for another. Without God's power, friends, we're stuck. Easter is about rescue. In fact, Easter is about liberation.

[14 : 14] A joy forevermore in the presence of God who made us. And then redeems us. I mean, who doesn't love a great rescue story? This is the greatest rescue story.

In all of history. But we love rescue stories. We love the books. We love the films. A great escape story. How about Alexander Dumas' Count of Monte Cristo?

Man, that's a great escape story. Edmund Dante digs himself to freedom after 14 years of imprisonment. Scratching away at the rocks of the jail.

And then he becomes the man he was always meant to be. And then not that I'm quoting Stephen King. I'm not. But his work, Shawshank Redemption, based heavily on the short story by Leo Tolstoy in 1966, Andy Dufresne escaped from Shawshank prison after 19 years of tunneling through the wall of his cell with his tiny rock hammer.

Then getting out to freedom and enjoying the remaining days without the taskmaster of jailers controlling his life. We love these stories, friends.

[15 : 30] They're echoes of the greatest story, of the greatest escape story. See, but unlike these stories, man cannot escape the bondage of his sin on his own.

He can't actually do it within his own efforts. He can't dig himself out of spiritual bondage to freedom through his own goodness, to be okay before holy God.

There's nothing he can do to gain that clean conscience, to help him permanently forget. He can't do that. In fact, friends, we were all in jail when we began life spiritually.

Romans 3 says, For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. And this is precisely why Jesus came. He came to give his life as a ransom for many.

Who needs a ransom paid for them? Like what sort of individual would need a ransom paid on their behalf? Well, it's somebody who's in a condition where they can't free themselves.

[16:48] They can't rescue themselves. They can't get free. They're unable, utterly unable. We can't rescue ourselves.

In fact, every one of us began life as POWs to sin. Prisoners of war. And we couldn't claw our way out.

We couldn't chip away year after year by our own goodness to stand before holy God. And maybe some are here this morning going, Well, I don't feel like I was in bondage or I don't feel like I'm in bondage.

I like my bondage. And I would suggest to you this morning that no, you don't. You may like the pleasure, but you don't like the jail that you live in.

And in fact, often what happens is you try to then suppress guilt by engaging in more sin. I think psychologists call this avoidance coping, right?

[18:00] Double down in sin to distract from the guilt. And what's even crazier for those that are in this place trapped, they want actually others to stay trapped with them.

That's what the Word of God says. Paul said to the Romans in Romans 1.32, Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them, but give approval to those who practice them.

See, I think we're actually afraid to be alone in our sin. We want others to stay jailed so that we're not alone in our guilt. And I would just say, man, the exhilaration of sin, it's short-lived.

Friends, in the end, it leads to death. It leads to an eternity apart from your Maker. That's what the book says. It's destructive in nature, sin is.

Right? Just as smoking, heavy drinking, lack of exercise, that will catch up to you physically in life.

[19:10] So will sin catch up with your soul. Friends, the gospel is a rescue story. It's a story of liberation. It's a story of freedom.

And Jesus says in John 8.36, So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. You will be free indeed.

Friends, the reason I wanted to camp on this idea of freedom this year as we celebrate the resurrection is we talk a lot about the resurrection on Easter, but there are implications.

And I want you to see the implication that God has destined you for a different sort of life, a life of joy, a life not given to sin, a life not of compromise, a life being used of Him, where you experience His joy, where you're serving people, where you're engaging with all of life in a way that honors and glorifies God.

That's a good life. It's actually a life of freedom. Because you're like, well, Jay, I'm bowing to an authority. Yeah, but you're bowing to the highest authority. Everything else is lesser.

[20:17] Some of you here this morning maybe have been digging a long time, and you're weary.

And I just want to tell you, Jesus came to dig for you and for me, to rescue our lives from the chains of sin.

Remember the interaction that He had in John 4 with the Samaritan woman at the well? And just talking, and I've got life, I've got living water, talking about himself, and she's just, you know, sharing bits of her life, and then all to come find out, man, she's been in bondage, right?

She's like six men in, trying to find solace, find to find joy in a relationship. And she's broken. She'd been married to five men, and now she's with a guy that's not her husband, and she's looking for belonging.

I think this woman hated her bondage. Friends, sin both enslaves in the now, and then it damns us for eternity, apart from our Maker.

So freedom, friends, when Jesus says, I come to set you free, it wasn't just for heaven. It was actually for now too. It's for now. Yeah, it's for forever.

[21:32] Like our friends who have died in Christ, they're with the Lord. They're with the Lord. I was thinking this morning about a dear friend, and I sent a text off to my friend Tom Cowan, his wife, like a second mom to me, Carla, passed away this last year.

Well, she's with the Lord. She's in the land of the living, having the best Easter of her life. And I just share with Tom, man, I just can't wait, like to experience Easter on the other side of eternity. Some of you guys, like many of you know Merlin Calvert.

He's doing very well today. Like this is a very good day. To celebrate Easter in the presence of Jesus. Salvation, like this liberation, this freedom is for tomorrow.

I think heaven is going to be a sweet time of reunion for those that have died before. So I think there's going to be special reunions for children that were never born in this life. I think those that were miscarried, I think there's going to be reunions. Those aborted, I believe that they will be in heaven and there will be a sweet reunion. I think scripture, I believe it teaches an age of accountability.

[22 : 40] I can make a very strong case for this. And if you want some passages, that's for another time. But I think, man, like there are good days ahead.

Freedom, it means like that we are with the Lord forever. But this freedom is for now. It's for this life as well. If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

You will be truly free. If you trust in Christ and you walk with Him in this life, man, you will experience freedom from fear. Jesus is your ransom.

Payment to the Father. You will experience freedom in this life in terms of not having to live with a critical spirit. You'll be free from that. You'll be given a new heart.

Freedom from addiction. You'll be given a spirit of self-control. You'll be free from living a selfish, self-oriented life. You have a heart that will have the ability to expand and care for others.

[23 : 47] You'll be free from living a misery life. You'll actually grow in generosity if in Christ in this life. Free to experience the joy of being totally forgiven.

The whiteboard erased forever. No condemnation. None. You'll be free from feeling guilt for sins that you really committed but now you're forgiven of.

Free to experience new life. Free to experience a lifestyle free from complaining about everything. There is great liberation in Christ, friends.

Free from wearing the jersey of victim. Free from retaliating when wronged. Free to actually care about your fellow man instead of viewing them as your enemy.

Free from the opinions of others to determine whether you're okay. free to dream far bigger aspirations than your own fame or success or power.

[24 : 58] Free to become all that you were meant to be selfless and holy totally satisfied with life. Free from demonic accusations that stick.

Free to not repeat the sins of your parents or generations before you. Freedom to begin a new legacy. There is great liberation in Jesus, friends.

It's what I'm trying to tell you. Free to enjoy life as God intended. Freedom from never being alone. A Savior who carries you all the way through life. Free from a life of regrets.

That's huge. Free to live for the glory of a good king and the joy of those who have yet to meet him. And if you have Jesus then death is simply a transition home.

That's what it is. You're now free to go home. In fact, Jesus, before he died, the upper room, he says in John 14, he says, let not your hearts be troubled.

[26 : 01] Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself.

And where I am, you may be also and you know the way where I am going. Friends, today is a day we celebrate the good news, right?

That Jesus is offering himself to you this morning. If you don't know him, he's not offering you a moral code. He's offering himself. That is God in human flesh.

And I want to just say that Jesus is not for insiders, for folks that have their lives together. It's not like you're going to start working out and you're going to like before you go to the gym work out for six months so that you can go to the gym to work out.

No, you just, you show up and all your need for working out. Jesus is like, man, you bring everything to me. You don't clean up first, you come to me and I will begin to do the sanctifying work in your life as you bow your knee to me.

[27 : 14] Jesus is for everyone. Jesus is for anyone willing to cry out to him for help, for forgiveness of sins that we on our own cannot undo.

Salvation is not for the elite or attained by works. Salvation is a gift to any willing to come to Jesus. Jesus suffered in order to heal us spiritually.

In fact, when we think about the crucifixion, it was prophesied. That's why this book is a book like none other because 700 years before Jesus even got up on that cross to die in our place, Isaiah the prophet wrote in Isaiah 53, he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we esteemed him

stricken, smitten by God and afflicted, but he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities, upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace and with his wounds we're healed.

That was prophesied 700 years before Jesus accomplished that incredible work. See, Jesus has always been in the business of rescuing people lost in their sins.

Friends, no one is too broken, no one is too sinful to experience God's healing through Jesus. the most sinful man that ever walked the planet according to himself, Paul the apostle, says, I'm number one because he says in 1 Timothy 1.15, the saints trustworthy, deserving of full acceptance, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the foremost.

[28 : 54] I am the first. I am the worst. And if he can rescue me, he can rescue you. You. Jesus takes broken people and he makes them whole, friends. Amen?

He takes things that are stuck and he unstucks, whatever, he unsticks them, right? I know there's a term. You'll have to teach it to me later, Scott. People in prison of their own sin and then he liberates them to be all that God purposed them to be.

That's joy. That's freedom indeed. Your sin prison actually is the necessary precondition to needing a Savior. So if you're here this morning going, I'm too sinful, I'm too sinful, perfect.

You're exactly the sort of person that needs an incredible Savior. Well, I have one for you and his name is Jesus. The story of Jesus is a story of a gracious father telling his children, come home. Come home. I'll take the penalty for you. It's the best trade ever. I love this example because I think it's the gospel.

[30 : 06] It's a picture of the gospel from history. In World War II, Ernest Gordon was a British captive in a Japanese prison camp by the River Kauai in Burma where the POWs were forced to build the Railroad of Death for transporting Japanese troops to the battlefield.

They were tortured, starved, worked to the point of exhaustion, nearly 16,000 died. Gordon survived the horrors of that experience. He wrote about it in his memoirs in 1962.

They made a film out of this to end all wars. He described one occasion when at the end of a work day the tools were being counted before the prisoners returned to their quarters. Guards declared that a shovel was missing.

He began to rant and rave demanding to know which prisoner had stolen it. Working himself into a paranoid fury, he ordered whoever was guilty to step forward and take the punishment.

No one did. And so the guard yelled, all die, all die, he cocked his rifle, aimed it at the prisoners. At that point, one man stepped forward. Standing at attention, he calmly declared, I did it.

[31 : 12] The Japanese guard at once clubbed the prisoner to death. As his friends carried away his lifeless body, the shovels in the tool shed were counted only to reveal that there was none missing.

An innocent soldier dies to protect the lives of all the other POWs. That's Jesus, friends. That's Jesus. Only the rest of us, we all stole shovels.

So this morning, if you're here, like, Jay, this sounds great. I want to live a different sort of life.

I need forgiveness. I don't want to spend eternity apart from the one that made me. I want to know him, enjoy him. How do I get him? How do I get Jesus? It's not by your works.

It's by faith alone. Trust. Trust. It's belief. You ask him to forgive you, to be your savior.

[32 : 16] It's just a simple prayer. God knows your heart. It's just a prayer between you and him. And so today may be your day of salvation, your day of liberation.

For others, this may just simply be the start of the conversation. You're like, man, this sounds good. I have some questions. Then I would love to have a conversation with you. Scott would love to have a conversation with you. Any of our elders, any of our pastors would love to converse.

The friend that brought you here this morning, they would love to converse and talk more about this with you. If you're interested, we have Bibles for any that would like one. It's the story of Jesus from beginning to end.

prophesying in the very first book about this snake crusher that's coming to deal with the serpent that deceived man in the garden. This is a good book and we have some Bibles for you.

If you'd like one after the service, you just go out to the foyer near where you got your sausage and egg bites, kind of in that region. We have some good protein. Amen. Amen. That was good. Thank you, Melissa.

[33 : 17] Pastor Scott will be out there. He would love to meet you. He has a stack of Bibles. He would love to give one to you this morning. We also have a church family to invite you into.

It's just a collection of sinners saved by grace, including your pastors, your elders. That's our story. We didn't begin life righteous. We began life as sinners.

We needed a Savior. You know, it's interesting. At the end of that book, film, Shawshank Redemption, Andy gets free.

He chills his way to freedom. And then Andy's friend, who is played by Morgan Freeman, read, he's trying to do the same. He gets released. He's paroled.

And then he tries to do life on his own. But he was so institutionalized in prison, he wasn't able to. He wasn't able to function. He's like, I'm not doing this very well.

[34 : 18] He discovers a map and directions to where Andy now is doing life. And he takes his bus and he makes, he takes the steps to get out there to find a friend.

And somebody who also escaped the life that he was living and was beginning to live a different life. And I think it's a wonderful picture of him finding his friend there on the beach. And we all want to find our friend.

They're on the beach. Let's live on the beach. But it's this beautiful picture of like, that's the church. Like you have been, some of you, so institutionalized by sin. You're like, I don't even have taste buds for righteousness.

I don't even know what that looks like. Well, you begin to walk with people who have also experienced the transition, the transformation and have people around you to go, this is how you do this new life.

Right? That's the church, friends. That's the church. And that's why we're here. Freedom in Jesus is real. Scripture doesn't lie.

[35 : 16] Jesus doesn't lie. Titus 1, 2 says he can only tell the truth. He never lies. And he says, if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

The risen Jesus is offering himself to you today. And I would commend you. I would exhort you. I would plead with you.

Respond in faith. It's real. It's real. Despite what this life holds. And we would love to begin to walk with you on this new journey.

Amen? Let's pray. Father, we love the fact that the resurrection seals it.

That death doesn't actually hold power anymore over those who have cried out to Jesus in this life. That we can live this life without fear.

[36 : 16] That we can know what it is to be truly forgiven. Father, I am so thankful that those who are in Christ, their sins have been forgiven past, present, future.

There's no condemnation over them. And I pray that the reality of that would affect. Lord, we don't want to be thankless people. We want to be those who are moved by extraordinary grace such that it actually shapes us.

It does change us. It causes us to walk in greater liberation and greater freedom from things that are not of you, Lord. And so we celebrate this morning the joy that you have conquered death.

That you are now at this moment preparing our home. Our forever home. Lord, I pray that these realities would not be something that we just touch upon one Sunday a year, but we would revel in each day through the week and it would affect us.

It would change the way that we do life. Thank you, Lord, that for those in Christ they would be free indeed. We pray all these things to the glory of Jesus.

[37 : 33] It's in your name we pray and all God's people said. Let's pray.