

EASTER DAY - To Be Crowned with Glory and Honour

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Preacher: Wayne Schuller

[0 : 00] Amen. Please be seated, friends. And as we come to God's Word through the Apostle in Philippians, I'll pray for us and for myself. Lord our God, I pray that this day we remember the resurrection of our Lord, that we will be convicted afresh by the truth of this, but also understand more deeply the meaning of it for the universe, for the nations and for our lives as well.

So please, Father, do a great work in us now. May our hearts be open to what you have to teach us. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Dead people are impossibly hard to hide. I mean, corpses, dead people, they're impossible to hide.

You cannot not have been watching the news at all this year to hear story after story of the remains of deceased people or murdered people or such sad stories coming in the news almost every night.

At the end of last month, Frederick Boyle was sentenced with 21 years in prison for the murder of his wife Edwina, whom he shot in 1983. Famously now, he kept her remains in the inside of a barrel in his garage.

Now, at the risk of sounding morbid, it's worth saying, I've noticed this, that it seems relatively easier to kill a person than to dispose of the body.

[1 : 34] He shot his wife. It's a really simple thing to do. But he had 23 years to decide what to do with her remains. And the best he could come up with was a barrel in the garage, which one of his sons-in-law suspected and opened.

And then we all know the rest. He was charged and now he's going to prison for a long time. Dead people are impossibly hard to hide. Even more sadder and more tragic is the news this week that we've found what is probably or likely to be the remains of the toddler Daniel Thomas, who went missing four and a half years ago.

We pray for justice to happen and that the forensics and the police can get to the bottom of this case. We do know for sure that God himself will see justice done on the last day.

But again, it's a reminder that, you know, even after four and a half years, the dead are hard to hide. On a different scale in terms of time and number of dead, we remember this week the HMAS Sydney, which sunk 67 years ago with 645 brave young Australian men on board who died in a surprise battle off the coast of Western Australia.

At the time, much to the distress of the families, you know, we didn't know where this ship had sunk and where the corpses were. And really the families had no hope of ever them being discovered and of the kind of the help that is.

[3 : 15] And yet, until this week, we found the remains of the HMAS Sydney, sunk 67 years ago. And rightly, very quickly, our government has declared the location a heritage-protected war grave.

It's not to be touched. And lastly, a last illustration, which you will have seen in the news. It's 130 years ago. So even further back, Ned Kelly was hung at the old Melbourne jail on November 11, 1880.

He was buried with other prisoners, as was the custom within the ground of the jail. And when the jail was closed 50 years later, the remains were moved and lost.

And we had some clues about where they may have gone. There was some vague references and some records that they were moved to the Pentridge prison site in Coburg, which is now being turned into kind of apartments and townhouses.

And this month, we found what was likely to be the remains, which include the remains of Ned Kelly. After 130 years, nearly, we've found his remains.

[4 : 29] And as we speak, the forensic experts are doing their thing just to confirm that Ned Kelly's accounted among them. And, you know, the art of forensics is not just a recent thing.

You know, forensics goes back 2,000 years. It's not just DNA testing that we're going to use to find Ned Kelly. They've got one of his relatives. They're going to try and match the DNA. But also, we know about accidents he's had.

We know he had a broken wrist. And so we're looking for, you know, an arm with a broken wrist. Those kind of things. That expertise has been around a long time. The lesson is, whether we're talking four and a half years or 20 years or 67 or 130 years, dead people are hard to find.

Well, we know from biblical records and from non-biblical first century records that Jesus of Nazareth underwent a public trial, was publicly executed, and was publicly placed in a tomb that everyone knew about and was guarded.

And the preaching of the resurrection, it didn't begin 100 years after his death. It didn't begin 20 years after his death. It didn't begin four years after his death.

[5 : 44] The preaching of the resurrection began three days after his death. And within 40 days, all Jerusalem knew of this message that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead, that the tomb was empty.

If you wanted to kill the Christian religion at its birth, all you would have to do is produce the body. And bodies are hard to hide, impossible to hide.

You could conduct a search. You could torture the suspects. They're obvious. They're the apostles preaching the resurrection. If anyone's hidden the body, it's them. And they did that.

All the resources, the massive resources of first century Judaism and the massive Roman Empire put everything they could into disproving the resurrection, but they couldn't.

Jeremy Smith, who's a senior archaeologist from Heritage Victoria, said in the news this month, he said, that Ned Kelly's remains were not handled with a great degree of care.

[6 : 51] And yet, 130 years later, we found what is likely to be his remains. Jesus Christ's body was handled with a great degree of care and public transparency.

And yet, his tomb was empty on the Sunday. He appeared to many witnesses on the third day and for many days. His body was never produced.

Even though the apostles were persecuted to admit some deception, they could not do it. All they could do was preach the message he was risen and die for that message.

It's also worth thinking about, friends. Anything to do with, I think, to do with rumours about the dead or to disturb the dead is extremely offensive to us.

And how much more so to the first century Jew, who the Jewish people treated the dead with a massive amount of kind of reverence and respect. It was extremely distasteful and offensive to say Jesus had risen from the dead.

[7 : 56] If you're going to make up a message to convert Jews, you would not have such an offensive message. And yet, that was the message. That was the message that transformed the first century world and continues to transform our lives today.

The only historically logical, I think, and feasible conclusion to the empty tomb is that Jesus did rise from the dead. The apostles were the witnesses of this and they were the messengers of why Jesus came into the world and what he achieved by his death and his resurrection.

And what we have here today in the words of the apostle Paul in Philippians 2 is kind of one of the earliest texts witnessing to the resurrection. It's one of the earliest Christian creeds, or even better, it's the first recorded Christian song.

It's the first sort of Christian hymn that we have in scripture. And it's a beautiful witness and it's a stunning explanation of the meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection.

You may believe that it's likely that he rose from the dead, but do you understand what it means for our world? Well, here is what Paul says. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited.

[9 : 25] Though Jesus, the Son, was equal to God, and here God, I think, means God the Father, because later Paul will call him to the glory of God the Father. Though the Son was equal to the Father, he did not regard his equality with God as something to be exploited.

He was the eternal word of the Father, the eternal Son of the Father. He did not snatch glory over creation. He did not sit back in heaven and demand indifferently or aloof that the world must worship him, although that was his right.

What Jesus does is he earns the glory he has. He earns our worship, and he deserves our worship and praise.

I mean, he did deserve it before. He is God. He is God the Son. But what he does, he earns, and he does it in this way. He emptied himself, verse 7, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness, and being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Jesus emptied himself of his heavenly majesty, of his heavenly splendor, to become a human being, fully human. So fully God, fully human.

[10 : 52] He didn't empty himself of his divinity. He couldn't do that. He is the Son of God. He's God. But we know from the story, say, of the transfiguration, when Jesus took some of his disciples to the mountain and, as it were, lifted the veil and showed his splendor and his glory, and he shone like the sun.

That was the glory that he emptied himself of when he came to earth, as one of us, as a human being, as a man. And the life that Jesus took was stunning, because the life he took was not of human royalty or of human privilege or of honour or comfort.

He didn't choose to be born in a comfortable era, like our era. He didn't choose to be born in a comfortable Doncaster in the 21st century. He chose to be born in 1st century Palestine, a carpenter's son, a humble life, a servant life.

Jesus Christ is our servant king. Our God is a servant God. And that's why Paul says to the church, to you, let that same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.

Humble service is the most honourable service. If you've ever changed a nappy or tended to a frail, elderly person who really can't look after themselves, if you've ever emptied a garbage bin or cleaned a toilet, maybe read a story to a toddler for the 200th time, all acts of humble service are dignified by the servanthood of the Son of God.

[12 : 35] True glory is in humble service, unseen by all, except by the God who sees all. So parents of little children, children of frail parents, be encouraged as you serve them.

It's modelled by the Lord Jesus. And yet his service actually goes beyond what I think even what we would do because in obedience to God, it says, verse 8, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

So the Son of God not only humbled himself, but he submitted himself to his Father in such a way, in such obedience to the point of death. So it's not saying he was obedient to death.

He only obeyed the Father. But he obeyed the Father to the point of death. As the hymn writer says, it's mystery all, the immortal dies.

And not just any kind of death, but the most cruel and agonising and violent form of death devised by sinful man, crucifixion. The death of the cursed sinner hung on a tree for you and me, the righteous for the unrighteous, the righteous one killed by the unrighteous to bring us to God.

[14 : 01] And God the Father was greatly pleased with his death. Verse 9 is very important. It says, Therefore, God highly exalted him. Therefore, because of the way he died, God lifted him up.

Because he revealed the love of God in his death, God exalted him. Because he purchased by his death people for God, God lifted him up. Because he rescued us from darkness, because he acted as a substitute for us.

God raised him and highly exalted him. Because he absorbed the wrath of the Father for us sinners. God was highly pleased with him and exalted him.

On earth, one of Jesus' key teachings that I think we forget, one of his key teachings was, whoever exalts himself will be humbled, whoever humbles himself will be exalted. It's the upside down nature of the kingdom of God.

And so Jesus, I think, must have known that in undergoing the ultimate humiliation, he would receive the ultimate exaltation. That's why it said that Jesus, for the joy set before him, endured the cross, enduring its scorn and shame.

[15 : 14] Jesus knew that in serving the Father in this way, he would be highly exalted. And the exaltation he got was great. God the Father gave him the best thing he could give.

It says, therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him in his resurrection, in his exaltation, the name above every name.

You see, if you believe that Jesus is risen from the dead, you believe more than just a dead man started breathing again. To believe that Jesus rose from the dead is to believe that he is now the name above every name, which is the name Lord.

Jesus is Lord. To believe that in the resurrection is to believe that Jesus is now the Lord of the universe. And that means that he is the Lord of you and he has a claim on you, on your life all the time.

So in response to the cross, God the Father exalted Jesus and gave him this name as Lord, the name above every name. So the Lord Jesus' name, remember friends, is therefore now higher than your name.

[16 : 25] So whose name do you live to promote? Your name or Jesus' name? The name of the Lord Jesus is higher than your family name. Do you live for your family or do you live for the Lord Jesus?

The name of the Lord Jesus is higher than the name of the company you work for or the name of the car you drive or the name of your suburb. Which name do you live for? Which name do you think about all the time?

Who do you serve? What do you worship? Whose approval do you crave? Do you seek the approval of men?

Do you crave the acceptance of other people? Why don't you crave the acceptance of the name above every name? The name of Jesus as Lord. He is the one to whom you must seek approval.

Do you run after recognition before men and yet ignore recognition from the one named Lord of Lords? Do you seek to build a name for yourself? When God himself has shown us the name that is to be exalted it is the name Jesus as Lord.

[17 : 32] It's the only name by which we can be saved. How dare you if you do how dare you take a different agenda to that of God and seek to exalt another name above the name of the Lord Jesus?

Why would you live and strive and grovel to other Lords when there is one Lord and one name above every name? In fact Paul says the whole universe will confess that Jesus is Lord in a stunning conclusion to the song so that the name of Jesus every knee should bend in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Every knee not just Christian knees but every knee on the day of judgment will bend and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Confess here doesn't mean confess sin to him it doesn't mean repentance it means to declare publicly the truth the visible truth on judgment day when all the world will see he's on the throne he does have the name above every name he is Lord and everyone will confess that truth as it's so it'll be so obvious at that point everyone you know will confess that truth all your family members everyone from every religion every Muslim every Hindu every atheist every hedonist every African every Asian every European every person every eye will see every ear will hear every tongue will confess that he is Lord everyone will confess but not everyone will be saved this is an important distinction some will confess in joyful worship here is the

Lord that they confessed in their life on earth and now they meet him face to face others while even hating him will grudgingly acknowledge his majesty over them some of us can repent all of us should and some of us will repent and trust in him now others will defer their repentance too long and on that day they will confess in shame and in terror all will confess but not all will be saved and it's not just people it's every sentient being God has created in heaven every angel will confess that Jesus is Lord angels have longed to look into the plan of salvation we know from other parts of the Bible they've longed to try and figure out what is God doing and what is he up to and how does the sun fit into it and finally on that day they will see Jesus as the centrepiece of God's salvation plans and every angel will bend the knee the myriad the millions upon millions of angels will worship

Jesus and confess him as Lord and Paul says on heaven on earth and under the earth and on earth that is us image bearers made in the likeness of our God created for his glory we who know the Lord Jesus and love and trust him and follow him we who can believe in our heart that God raised him from the dead and we confess with our lips that Jesus Christ is Lord now on that day we will see him and in ecstatic worship we will confess and even God's worst enemies even Satan and all his demonic armies which the scripture speaks of those under the earth they will confess just like some of them did when Jesus was on earth and he met a demon the demon would often say something like would confess him that say I know who you are you are the holy one of God have you come to destroy us and on earth Jesus said be quiet no it's not that time yet but on that day on the judgment day all those demons will confess and they will say have you come to destroy us and Jesus will say yes your place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur this is the second death and for many people many people who have died or who are alive when

[22 : 01] Jesus returns whose lives have spurned him even some present here today I don't know there will be some who have rejected Jesus who will confess and their destiny will be with Satan in the lake of burning fire to be punished eternally every person here will see and confess Jesus as Lord but there are two different groups of people confessing those doing it gladly to the Lord they know and those doing it reluctantly because they hate him and have spurned him in their life this is really clearer friends when we see that Paul himself is quoting from a very important prophecy in the Old Testament from the book of Isaiah chapter 45 and I'll read it to you it's only a short prophecy but it's part of a bigger more important section it says God says by myself I have sworn

Isaiah 45 23 I have sworn my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked so this is important this will not be revoked God says before me every knee will bow by me every tongue will swear which is exactly what Paul says in Philippians what will they swear what will they confess they will say of me in the Lord alone our righteousness and strength everyone will say that in the Lord alone our righteousness and strength and we know that Jesus Christ has been given the title Lord there's another way of saying Jesus is Lord in Jesus alone our righteousness and strength but then Isaiah says there are two groups who say that the first group are those who have raged against him all who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame but in all the descendants of Israel will be found righteous and will exalt that is all the true children of Abraham that those who trust in the

Lord Jesus as the Messiah as the King will be found righteous and will exalt so all will confess but not all will be saved now what was driving Jesus to do all this what was driving him to leave heaven and live this humble life and be exalted again what drove him to that was it just for our salvation well that was a big part of it was it because he knew he would get glory through it yes that's true as well he did it for the joy set before him but the driving reason behind those reasons is for the honor and glory of his father is what it says every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord verse 11 to the glory of God the father ultimately all of this plan is for the glory of God the father just as the father graciously gifted Jesus with the name above every name that then comes back to the father and

Jesus exalts the father the father exalts the son the son exalts the father the son reciprocates everything the father gives him and when everything is put under Christ Paul says elsewhere when everything is finally under Christ and all confess he is Lord the son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him that is the father and on that day God will be all in all friends you will all confess him then let me challenge you to confess him publicly now you will all confess him then so confess him now the next song we sing is a way of confessing the truth that Jesus is Lord this communion service is a way of confessing publicly in this place that we belong to Christ and we want to have faith in him every Sunday we call it the

Lord's day remembering his resurrection remembering his exaltation as king you see friends you can live even though you believe in the resurrection you can live as if it didn't happen you can live as if it made no difference and as if one day was just like another the early Christians in the first century the witnesses actually chose to live believing that the resurrection happened and so they changed their whole life not least the structure of their week and so they moved from being Jews who celebrated the Sabbath on a Saturday they took the first day of the week which is the first working day the Sunday which in many Middle Eastern countries is a working day of the week and they took that and called it the Lord's day and they gave up the cherished Sabbath and worshipped and met on the Lord's day they changed the structure of their week to confess him as Lord will you be counted among those who profess the

[27 : 09] Lord Jesus he's got the name above every name so we don't want to confess him one morning a week we confess him every day we declare our allegiance to him with our time our money our passion our hearts don't be ashamed of the Lord Jesus friends because all will confess one day don't be ashamed when you are insulted for being a Christian say in the workplace for following Christ in that place because he's Lord over that place too don't be ashamed because you know that those who insult you will remember that that insult on the day they see Jesus now remember how wrong they were with sadness you will be vindicated for your faith your public faith in the Lord Jesus even if you are afraid and many of us are afraid to speak up for Christ with our family and friends look at the people you know and think one day they will see

Jesus and confess him as Lord may it not be in terror may it be in worship because you have shared the gospel with them may that day not be a first time meeting for our friends and work colleagues but may be the culmination of a life trusting serving and knowing Jesus as Lord may that be your life and may be the life of many of those that you share the gospel with both today and all your life and let's pray for that Lord Jesus we confess you as risen Lord not just alive but exalted to the right hand of God to become Lord of the universe and making a claim on our lives Lord Jesus we worship you you are God but especially because of your death for us and of your humble service in your death Lord Jesus we recognize that God the father has exalted you that every name will see you and everyone will confess that you are

Lord one day and bend the knee and so we pray that you would give us boldness to speak of you ahead of that time so that people can take their chance now to be forgiven and to become followers of you and a worshiper of you on each Lord's day we ask this in Jesus name Amen