

# He Must Rise

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[0:00] Good morning, church. Today's reading is from the Gospel of John, chapter 20, verses 1-9. Now on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

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. So Peter 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 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. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed. For as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

[1:10] This is the word of the Lord. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this word.

This word which describes a true event that happened 2,000 years ago that forever altered the course of human history and eternity. God, many of us in this room have heard this accounting of your resurrection over and over again for decades.

Would we hear it differently today in the power of your spirit? Would we believe it truly today?

Would we live our lives in light of the resurrection of Christ from the dead?

Spirit, would you, as we already sang, as we have asked you multiple times this morning, would you be present in power this morning, move upon our hearts and our minds, help us to grasp these deep spiritual truths and transform this church to be more and more in your likeness, we pray in Christ's name.

Amen. Well, good morning, church. My name is Mike. I'm one of the pastors here at Shoreline, and I'm so glad that you've joined us this morning. The last couple weeks, my wife and I and family were out of town.

[2:27] We were in Delaware last week on family vacation with Brittany's family, enjoying the beach and pool and really, really hot weather down there.

And you know what the worst part about vacation is? Worse even than packing. I hate packing. It's when vacation ends, right? I mean, it's when vacation comes to an end.

Now, some of you are homebodies, and you're like, actually, I love when vacation ends. I don't get that, but that's okay. The worst part for me is when vacation comes to an end. And you know, vacation time always seems to move faster than normal lifetime, right?

It's like the clock speeds up. And when you finally arrived after a week of vacation at the I could get used to this status, it's time to pack up again and leave.

And then you think to yourself, does this really have to end? I wonder if that's what the disciples were thinking during the last days and weeks leading up to Jesus' death, right?

[3:23] They had witnessed Jesus perform awesome signs and wonders. They had heard, they had sat under his captivating and unprecedented teaching. They had experienced the intimacy of loving friendship with Christ, with God in the flesh.

It's like the tides of darkness were being turned back by the light of the world. And they probably thought, you know, we could get used to this. We could get used to this.

But then the dominoes started to fall, as we've witnessed in the Gospel of John. See, Jesus began to speak ominously about his impending death. The Jewish leaders grew fiercely opposed to him. And then there in the upper room, which we spent, you know, I think six to eight weeks in, Jesus gave a farewell address as if he were departing this world any minute. Does this really have to end? And only hours later, the light of the world was arrested, condemned, flogged, crucified, dead. But church, the disciples didn't know it.

[4:32] They didn't understand it. But he must rise. He must rise. That is the title of the sermon today.

He must rise. And the main point is this, that the definite and determined resurrection of Christ forever disarms the powers of darkness.

The definite and determined resurrection of Christ forever disarms the powers of darkness. You know, on Easter Sunday, we talked about how the resurrection of Christ is like D-Day.

It's a common analogy that's used. It's like D-Day. The beginning of the end. And perhaps that's why I have so many D's in the main point this morning. Kevin, if you could jump to the main point there.

The definite resurrection of Christ. It really happened. It happened in time, in space, in history. It is a reality that is true. It is definite. It was determined.

[5:32] He must rise. This was written in Scripture, prophesied from ancient times. It was determined by God Almighty. And it forever disarms, dismantles, it destroys the powers of darkness.

That's what Christ's resurrection proves. And that's where we're going this morning. Now, the first movement of this text I've titled Darkness. It's the disciples' ignorance.

Now, verse 1 says, Now, Mary Magdalene was only recently introduced in the Gospel of John before the cross, at the foot of the cross.

But we learn in Luke's Gospel, it would have been well known in the early church's days, who Mary Magdalene was. In Luke chapter 8, verses 1, it says, Soon afterward, he, Jesus, went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God.

And the twelve were with him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities. Mary called Magdalene, listen to this, from whom seven demons had gone out.

[6:40] Seven demons. So Christ had healed this woman of demon possession, and she followed him from then on out. As I said, John's first mention of Mary came just two weeks ago, at the foot of the cross.

And what do we see of Mary? That Mary, filled with love and gratitude for Christ, she devotedly follows him to the end of his earthly life. And now, we see here in John 20, she's continuing to honor Jesus, even in his burial.

And that's what's going on here. See, she's coming to complete the burial preparations, which were expedited and cut short due to the onset of Sabbath, on the Friday evening of Jesus' death.

And we learn in the Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, that Mary Magdalene is accompanied by other women with spices, which with are going to anoint Jesus' body. So here, Mary and these other women are in the pre-dawn darkness, coming to honor Jesus.

And you know, they're not even sure how the heavy stone sealing off the tomb is going to be rolled away. But they go nonetheless. They're driven by their love and gratitude for Jesus.

[7:48] They're driven by their desire to honor him, even in his death.

And I just want to pause and think about that for a minute. What a beautiful example for us to imitate. See, Mary is continuing to express her love and devotion to Christ, even when she doesn't understand what's going on.

Everybody is confused. All the disciples are confounded, scared, ignorant of what needed to happen, what was going to happen. And actually, we see in this week's text and in the next, that Mary continues to refer to Jesus as Lord.

So she was filled with grief. She was confused by what was going on, but she held to her belief in Jesus' identity. And she was devoted to showing her affection to him.

So I just want to ask us, do we trust and love Christ even in the darkness? Even in the darkness, do we trust and love Christ?

See, Mary's example compels us to. Now what Mary and these women see when they arrive at the tomb confounds them. The stone has already been rolled away and the body of Jesus is missing. [9:01] Now, quickly as sort of an aside, but a significant point here, the first eyewitnesses of the empty tomb in all four gospel accounts are women.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all report this. Now, why is this significant? Well, because in the first century A.D., women were considered inferior to men. They could not even testify in a Jewish court of law.

In a culture that devalued women, Jesus upheld their honor and their dignity. And that's why so many followers of his were women. In fact, the church in the first and second century was ridiculed for having so many women.

It's because Christianity upholds the dignity and worth of women. And the gospel writers were doing that and they're choosing to report these things. Women are the first witnesses of Christ's resurrection.

And I just want to say, when I look around this room, what I see are women filled with honor and with dignity. I see women with equal worth, equal value to the men that are gathered in this room.

[10:10] I mean, my wife's more valuable than me. You guys could lose me. You guys would be fine. I wouldn't want to lose her. Without the women in this room, our church would not function or it would function miserably.

There's women here, all of you who are sacrificing and loving and serving your families and this church family. And as you do, you adorn the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So I'm thankful for the women in this room. Now, men that are sitting here, husbands especially, if you didn't just say something sweet to your wife, I don't know what to do with you guys. That was a perfect opportunity.

So Jesus upholds the honor, the dignity of women. Now, secondly, the fact that all four gospel writers reported women as the first eyewitnesses of the tomb, this demonstrates the historicity of the resurrection.

Now, if the disciples were inventing a story to try and convince people of, they surely would not have intentionally called their story into, you know, their credibility into question by reporting women as the first witnesses whose testimony would not even hold up in court.

[11:18] Now, the disciples were writing of true events that happened in history. And so they report what actually happened. So Mary ran, verse two, she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciples.

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. Now, apparently, bless you, apparently, in those days, tomb robbing was not uncommon.

Seems kind of strange to us, but in fact, it became so prevalent that one of the Caesars of the first century AD made the disturbance of graves and tombs a capital offense. So perhaps, we don't know, perhaps Mary is thinking that Jesus' body has been stolen, but whatever she's thinking in that moment, I can tell you what she's not thinking.

She's not thinking, Jesus' body is missing, he must have risen from the dead. She's not thinking that. No, Mary assumes that Jesus is still dead and that someone has done something with her body.

And Peter and John must assume the same thing because they aren't expecting Jesus to rise from the grave either. Nobody was. Nobody was. Sometimes we have this idea of the first century people that they were like stupid and thought that, right, you know, people rose from the grave all the time.

[12:39] They didn't think that. And also, they were ignorant. We're going to talk about this more. They were ignorant of scriptures. And actually, verse 9, I think I've got it here. Verse 9 says, For as yet they, referring to Peter and John, the leaders of the disciples, they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead.

Now, Mary, Peter, John, all the disciples are still in a shroud of pre-dawn darkness. It's a symbolism, I think, that's going on here. It was not even a thought on their minds that Jesus might rise from the grave.

They were filled with grief. They were filled with ignorance and fear and doubt. And in fact, we'll see, as we move the next few weeks through John 20, the resurrection of Jesus overcomes those four human responses.

You see, in this passage, the focus is on the resurrection overcoming the disciples' ignorance. Next week, we're going to see Mary's grief overcome as she meets the risen Christ face to face.

Then in verses 19 to 23, the disciples' fear will be overcome by the reality of Jesus' presence among them. And then finally, in verses 24 through 29, Thomas' doubt will be overcome as he puts his fingers on Jesus' hands and on Jesus' side.

[13:55] Do you remember back in chapter 2 when Jesus cleansed the temple? Jesus answered to the Jews. He said, destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.

And John reports, the Jews then said, it has taken 46 years to build this temple and will you raise it up in three days? And John says, but he was speaking about the temple of his body when therefore he was raised from the dead.

His disciples remembered that he had said this and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken. It wasn't until after Jesus' resurrection from the dead that they understood that he had been referring to the physical resurrection of his body from the grave.

So right now, right now in this story, I want you to consider what Mary and the other women and Peter and John are feeling. Mary had been possessed by seven spirits.

Jesus had freed her from their power. She had followed him since that point, devoting her entire life to him and Jesus is now dead. And she doesn't even know where his body is so she can honor him.

[15:04] Peter and John had abandoned their lives as fishermen. They had given themselves completely to the cause of Christ. They had confessed him as their only Lord and Savior. We saw this especially in chapter 6 when disciples desert Jesus and Peter says, to whom then will we go?

Like, you have the words of eternal life. They knew that he was the long-awaited Messiah who was to come and bring redemption and healing to Israel and to the nations.

And then, they watched him unjustly arrested, beaten, mocked, flogged, crucified. Ignorance, grief, fear, doubt has likely taken hold of them.

See, the darkness seems to be prevailing. The light of the world lay dead and now even his dead body is missing. I wonder if you here this morning feel like the disciples felt in that pre-dawn darkness on Sunday morning.

I wonder if ignorance or grief or fear or doubt has taken hold of you. I wonder if you feel like the light is being eclipsed and the darkness is prevailing and I want to say if you do, you are in good company, friends.

[16:26] Even the early disciples struggled with these things and what saint down through the years has not struggled with these things? Which one of us in this room has not struggled with one or all of these things in different seasons of our life?

But the story doesn't end there, does it? It doesn't end there. And in the second act of this story, we see a dawning. The disciples behold the empty tomb.

So verse 3. Verse 3 says, So Peter 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 and reached the tomb first.

Now growing up, I always imagined Peter and John like gleefully frolicking into the tomb, like seeing who could get there first, bursting with excitement that Jesus has actually risen from the dead.

But we see that that is not, that's not the case, right? They're not driven by excitement towards the tomb. They're driven, as we've talked about, with grief and fear and confusion. Okay, but like what's the deal with John talking about being faster than Peter?

[17:32] This has always confused me. And it's confused everyone for 2,000 years. Now, I mean, there's all sorts of speculation about why John included this detail and then repeats it again.

Now some of it's quite fanciful and creative. I mean, this is just me. Nobody knows. I think that John is simply helping place the reader in the story. Like, I think he's just, he's reporting the events that happened, he's helping us imagine ourselves there with him and actually reenact the movements

that were being made.

So John gets to the tomb first, but if, I mean, if we think he's bragging about his speed or some say his prominence over Peter, then, I mean, the next verse, the next verse is this, and stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloth lying there, but he did not go in.

So he's a scaredy cat, right? Like, he doesn't have the bravery of Peter. Like, why does he not enter the tomb? I mean, perhaps he is fearful, perhaps he's scared, perhaps he doesn't want to be defiled by the dead body.

Maybe he's just frozen in just stunned silence. Now, whatever it is that's keeping his feet locked in place, we see in verse 6, then Simon Peter came following him and went into the tomb.

[18:42] Right? So if John's bragging about himself, he's doing a bad job. Right? Despite Peter's former denial of Christ, Peter is the bold one to, you know, just walk right into the tomb and investigate for himself.

So, I mean, I don't think John is bragging. I don't think John's trying to prove his prominence over Peter. To me, that seems just worldly, right? I think John is just humbly and accurately recounting this is what happened.

These are the true events that happened. And, you know, it seems to highlight his own fear and ignorance in that moment. So Peter enters the tomb and he saw the linen cloth lying there in verse 7 and the face cloth which had been on Jesus' head not lying with the linen cloth but folded up in a place by itself.

So as John was able to see, you know, from the outside of the tomb, Peter enters in and he sees the same thing. He sees the linen cloths lying there. Now these would have been the linen cloths that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had wrapped around Jesus' dead body packed with the myrrh and the aloes that they brought to prepare him for burial.

But now, the linen cloths are just lying there. Can you picture the clump of cloths? They're not tightly wound around a body anymore. They're just lying there.

[20:01] Well, Peter is also able to see that John couldn't at first is that the face cloth which had been on Jesus' head is also lying there except it's folded up.

Folded up. Can you picture this? Folded up face cloth lined separately from the linen cloths that were on his body. What Peter beholds before his eyes is evidence that Jesus' body is not there. His body is gone. And yet, clearly, it hasn't been stolen. Right? If robbers had come in to steal the body of Jesus away, it is incredible to believe that they would have left the linen cloths.

Like, let's take the linen cloths off the dead guy so we can pull his body out. Like, that just doesn't make any sense. It's even more absurd to believe that they would have taken the time to just like neatly fold up this face cloth.

This will trick them. Let's just put this face cloth right there. Like, no. Who would do that? Nobody. Nobody. The light's beginning to dawn here in Jerusalem.

[21:05] Verse 8, then the other disciple, I didn't say, we've talked about this in past weeks, we are pretty sure this is the apostle John, calls himself the disciple whom Jesus loved, the other disciple.

Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in. So then John, likely emboldened by Peter's example, he goes into the tomb, and then he himself beholds the evidence, right?

The same evidence. He sees the linen cloths just lying there, no longer tightly wrapped around a body. He sees the face cloth folded up and just neatly in a different place.

The light is dawning in John's heart in this moment. And I wonder if in that moment that John had a flashback to just a few months before, when the disciples and the crowd of mourners watched in stunned silence as Jesus cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come out!

And as John had recounted for us in chapter 11, the man who died, the man who had died, came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, his face wrapped with a cloth.

[22:20] Do you remember that? Lazarus emerging from the grave, totally wrapped in all the cloths? Remember what Jesus had told Martha a few moments before that?

He had said, I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.

And then Jesus had demonstrated his resurrection life and power by calling dead Lazarus forth from the grave. Now as John perhaps reflected on that awesome moment, now here at the grave of Jesus, he would observe a contrast.

Maybe you noticed it too. Lazarus had come forth from the grave, his hands and feet bound with the strips of linen, the face cloth still wrapped on him, but now the linen cloth, the face cloth, they lay on the bench where Jesus had been laid as if, as if what?

As if his resurrected body had passed right on through those linen cloths. In that moment, I think, the light of revelation burst full strength upon John's mind and his heart, and that's the third act here, daylight.

[23:38] John sees and believes, and that's what it says. It says at the end of verse 8, In that moment, John knew there is only one explanation.

There's only one explanation to the evidence that lies before me. You know, it's the Jesus who had called him to leave his fishing net behind and follow him, the Jesus who had turned water into wine and who had healed the invalid man and who had given sight to the man born blind, who had walked on water and fed the 5,000 and raised Lazarus from the dead, the Jesus who had declared, I am the resurrection and the life, the Jesus who had been betrayed by one of his closest followers and arrested by the Jewish leaders and falsely accused and beaten and mocked and scorned and delivered up by Pontius Pilate and flogged and crucified by the Roman soldiers, the Jesus who had cried, it is finished, and then yielded up his spirit and died.

The Jesus who had been wrapped in linen cloths and buried in a tomb where his body lay dead for three days, that's dead, dead, beyond a shadow of a doubt, John knew that the only explanation was that that Jesus had by his own divine power raised himself triumphantly from the grave.

That's what John knew. See friends, Christ's resurrection is definite and that's the sub-point here that Christ's resurrection is definite.

It truly happened in time and history. If you can put that on the screen, it truly happened in time and history. Jesus had said, destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.

[25:26] Remember in chapter 10 he said, I laid down my life, we've quoted this over and over again, I laid down my life that I may take it up again. No one, no one takes it from me but I lay it down to my own accord.

I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again. Raise it up, take it up again. He surely has, church.

He surely has. Revelation 1, 17 and 18, the risen, reigning Lord Christ says, fear not. I am the first and the last and the living one.

I died and behold, I am alive forevermore and I have the keys of death and Hades. Christ rose from the grave bodily, in time, in space, in history.

It is a definite fact of history. But remember, it's not as if Peter and John and the other disciples were expecting this to take place.

[26:30] We talked about it already. They absolutely were not. So I want to go back to verse 9 here. John says at the end of this, for as yet, they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead.

You can write this down if you're taking notes. Christ's resurrection was determined. The scriptures declare that he must rise. And in this we see, as mentioned before, that John's ignorance, in this case, his ignorance of what the scriptures had predicted about the Messiah, it was overcome by the resurrection of Christ.

John and the other disciples, they didn't understand that Christ's resurrection had to happen. The Old Testament had prophesied about it, predicted that this would happen, and therefore, it had to happen.

Now perhaps, perhaps John is referring here to Psalm 16, verse 10, which says that for you, this is David writing, for you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your Holy One see corruption.

Or maybe to Daniel 7, verse 14, prophesying of the Son of Man and to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.

[27:53] His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. Something John's referring to Hosea 6, 1 and 2, which says, You see, these and many more Old Testament passages pointed forward to the resurrection and the subsequent eternal reign of the Messiah, the resurrection of Christ.

It's not only a definite fact of history, but also something that was determined in ages past, before the foundation of the world. It was part of God's redemptive plan for mankind. Church, He must rise. He must rise. And actually, if you think about it, the resurrection of Christ was perhaps not so much something God had determined would take place, and something that inevitably must take place as a consequence of the fact that God determined Jesus would die. In other words, let me try to restate that. God had decided out of infinite love for mankind that Jesus, His Son, would be sent to earth to die on the cross for our sins. He decided that Jesus would die. But Jesus, who is the living God and life itself, could not possibly stay dead.

[29:33] God raised him up, loosing the pains of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

He must rise. Saint Athanasius, writing in the fourth century, he says this in his book on the incarnation, indeed it would seem that he who disbelieves this bodily rising of the Lord is ignorant of the power of the word and wisdom of God.

If he took a body to himself at all and made it his own in pursuance of his purpose as we have shown that he did, what was the Lord to do with it? And what was ultimately to become of that body upon which the word had descended?

Mortal and offered to death on behalf of all as it was, it could not but die. Remember Christ in the garden says, shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?

It could not but die. Indeed it was for that very purpose that the Savior had prepared it for himself. But on the other hand, it could not remain dead because it had become the very temple of life.

[31:05] It therefore died as mortal but lived again because of the life within it and its resurrection is made known through its works. He must rise. He must rise.

And yet the disciples did not understand these things, right? What we see here, what we see here though in John 20 is that despite John's ignorance of these truths, he is moved to certainty and to belief in the resurrection of Christ based on the clear evidence before him.

The resurrection of Christ, it overcomes his ignorance and it replaces it with truth and with faith. Now this is but one example of a greater principle at play that Christ's resurrection is disarming. It's disarming. The powers of darkness are forever undone by the resurrection of Christ. See, human ignorance in Peter and John. We'll see grief in Mary, fear in the disciples, doubt in Thomas. all of these manifestations of the power of darkness, the effects of the curse upon the world, they're all overcome by the resurrection of Christ. In him was life and the life was the light of men.

[32:24] The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. That was in John 1. Jesus had said in chapter 8, I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life. More fundamentally, more significantly than Jesus overcoming ignorance, grief, fear, and doubt.

By his resurrection, death is crushed to death. Death itself is crushed to death. Paul says in 2 Timothy 1 verse 10 that our Savior Christ Jesus has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

We were singing earlier because of Jesus' triumph over the grave, the saints can proclaim, O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? The light has risen in Jerusalem and not just in Jerusalem, church, but across the globe, down through the generations, having vanquished the darkness, having trampled on man's greatest enemies of sin and Satan and death.

The definite and determined resurrection of Christ forever disarms the powers of darkness. So what does this mean for us today?

[33:54] We don't have time to unpack all this, but it takes a lifetime. Now fortunately though, we're going to be walking through John 20. We're going to get to consider more and more of the implications of the resurrection of Christ.

But the first thing it surely means that Christ has vanquished the powers of darkness is that we are truly forgiven. We are truly forgiven.

There is a spiritual resurrection because Christ is risen from the dead. Friends, this means that his once-for-all sacrifice on the cross for the sins of mankind was sufficient.

It was sufficient. See, his resurrection from the grave, it is God's divine certification that indeed it is finished. There is no more sacrifice left to be paid.

God himself has paid the price and he is alive. Amen? The empty tomb, it validates the effectiveness of the cross of Christ.

[34:56] So that means that if you walked in here today plagued by guilt and by shame for sin, you don't have to be any longer because Christ is risen.

The author of Hebrews says that he saves to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him. Why? Because he always lives to make intercession for them.

See, all the other high priests, they die. That's what the author of Hebrews talks about. The high priest is alive forever more. His intercession is good forever more. Our sins are covered.

The veil is torn. Access to God. We are forgiven. There is a spiritual resurrection for the saints. You know what else this means for us, and we are singing about it, is that we too shall rise.

So we are forgiven, we shall rise. And this is speaking of a physical resurrection. Jesus' resurrection from the grave bodily, physically, is a proof and promise of our bodily resurrection from the grave to come.

[36:04] See, as believers in Christ, we have experienced a spiritual resurrection already. We were dead, but Christ has risen us, God has risen us in Christ, but we will also experience a future physical bodily resurrection from the grave.

Death has been defanged. Right? It's been rendered powerless. Powerless. It is no longer a vicious monster to be feared, but simply a door.

I think that was from Ian. Where is Ian? I think that's what he said back when he preached from John 6. It's just a door that we pass through into the next life. What a great hope that we have.

Great hope that we have. when Christ returns, our bodies will be raised imperishable. Imperishable. For he will transform these lowly bodies to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

1 Corinthians 15. A chapter all about the resurrection of Christ. I highly encourage you to read 1 Corinthians 15 over the next couple weeks. We too shall rise. That is our great hope.

[37:22] We are forgiven. We shall rise. We must witness. That's another implication here in this passage. Listen, those of us in this room who believe in the resurrection of Christ from the dead, we have a glorious message of hope and healing to bring to the world.

We have a message of life and salvation. And we have got to get it out. We've got to steward that message. It's been entrusted to us. That's what Paul talks about. The message of the gospel has been entrusted to him.

It's been entrusted to us. We're stewards of the gospel. Paul is dead on earth at least. His soul is in heaven. Paul's gone. He passed on that message. He finished the fight.

He passed it on. And saints have been passing on that gospel message for 2,000 years. It's on us right now. It's our responsibility to steward the message of the gospel. If we don't in this region, who is going to?

The churches in this region, the saints in this region have a gospel message to bring to the world. To bring to the world. You guys are all in different jobs and vocations.

[38:27] You're with unsaved children at home. You are reaching people that like I can't go onto your boat, Curtis, and preach the gospel to those sailors. You have special access onto that submarine.

My electric boat ID is probably no good anymore. I still have it. But I can't go into those gates. I can't witness those people. If you're an electric boat employee, you can do that.

You have this gospel message to steward. And all the moms that are here with your children stewarding the gospel message every single day, we must witness. He must rise.

Right? We must witness. Now, regarding our witness, there's one neat connection to this text that I want us to see.

Now, in this passage, we see John is drawn to faith in Christ's resurrection, even in the face of his ignorance of scriptures, right? Because he saw, he saw before his eyes the clear evidence of the resurrection.

[39:28] Now, there are people all over the city, all over this region, all over this world, who are completely ignorant of the scriptures. And yet, they can be led to faith in the risen and reigning Lord Jesus Christ through us, the church, who live to be the evidence of Christ's resurrection.

Do you guys follow that? We are the body, the living, breathing, active, working, loving, sacrificing body of Jesus Christ in this world.

We are, we are meant to be the evidence of Jesus Christ's resurrection from the grave. And so, when the world sees us, they see the church of Christ doing what the church of Christ is supposed to do, they will see us and say, Jesus Christ must be risen.

He must be risen. Overcoming the ignorance of the world through our witness of Christ's bodily resurrection from the grave. And we could press this into application in all sorts of ways, but what John has made clear, what Christ has made clear, is that chiefly, the church does this through love, right?

Through our love, especially for one another. By this, all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another, if you love one another, when we love our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, the way that Jesus loved us, the world looks on, and they see Jesus as alive.

[41:01] They see that Christ is risen, because they see us loving one another sacrificially. And friends, that's what this is about, testifying to the resurrection of Christ, being the church, the body of Christ, like there are so many ways that we could be divided, so many ways.

God has led us through a very difficult season over the last year and a half. We could have been divided. This church could have been no more, but he has ordained that we are still here.

We're still here. We've got a job to do of testifying to the resurrection, and we do that by our love for one another. And that requires humility and sacrifice, right?

Daily we need to set aside our own pride and the offenses that others commit against us and love one another. a beautiful way that we can give evidence to Christ's resurrection.

He must rise, and we must witness. And I mean, I just want to say, too, we just witnessed yesterday, as Brad was praying for, a pretty significant event in our nation, right?

[42:17] where we have a presidential candidate being shot at. And it's a reminder to me, as we're thinking about the resurrection of Christ, that our king is alive, and he is risen, and he is reigning, and he has established a kingdom that is eternal, right?

It's a kingdom of peace, it's a kingdom of righteousness, and it will not be shaken. That is our true hope. Like, our citizenship is in heaven. It's not here.

Like, let us, yes, let us steward the citizenship that we have as American citizens, let us work to love, you know, this nation, and to give our lives to, I don't know, to love other people, but the purpose of that is to reflect Christ and his eternal kingdom in this world.

And so, let us not be afraid, let us not be fearful. Now, that's going to be the focus of the text in a couple weeks. The disciples are gathered fearful, and Christ comes, his presence is among them, I want to say, perhaps you're here and you don't believe in Jesus.

Perhaps you do, but you sometimes struggle with doubt about the staggering claim that Jesus rose bodily from the grave. It is a staggering claim that Jesus rose from the grave.

[43:39] and I just want to end by asking you all to consider the objective evidence of how history was forever altered in 33 AD.

Just think about this. A group of no names, mostly low class, uneducated, common folk, they began to spread a message that they called the gospel, claiming that their leader had died, risen from the grave, and ascended back to heaven, and they claimed to be witnesses of these things, and they went on to be persecuted for their faith, beaten, stoned, imprisoned, some of them becoming martyrs for their faith, never once recanting, never once recanting.

The gospel message spread, and it spread, and it spread for the last 2,000 years, reaching across the nations, across the nations. Would those early disciples have suffered and died for a lie that they knew to be a lie?

Do people do that? It's one thing to be conned, it's another thing to be the one with the story, and to die for it, knowing full well that it's a lie.

Chuck Colson was one of President Richard Nixon's advisors during the Watergate scandal in the early 1970s, which led to Nixon's impeachment and resignation from office.

[45:06] Colson pleaded guilty, served time in prison, and later became a Christian. There's a good chance you've already heard this famous quote of his, but he says this, I know the resurrection is a fact, and Watergate proved it to me.

How? Because 12 men testified that they had seen Jesus raised from the dead, then they proclaimed that truth for 40 years, never once denying it.

Everyone was beaten, tortured, stoned, and put in prison. They would not have endured that if it weren't true. Watergate embroiled 12 of the most powerful men in the world, and they couldn't keep a lie for three weeks.

You're telling me 12 apostles could keep a lie for 40 years? Absolutely impossible. He goes on, the Watergate cover-up reveals the true nature of humanity.

Even political zealots at the pinnacle of power will, and the crunch save their own necks, even at the expense of the ones they professed to serve so loyally. But the apostles could not deny Jesus because they had seen him face to face, and they knew he had risen from the dead.

[46:14] Now, you can take it from an expert in cover-ups. I have lived through Watergate that nothing less than a resurrected Christ could have caused these men to maintain to their dying whispers that Jesus is alive and is Lord.

2,000 years later, nothing less than the power of the risen Christ could inspire Christians around the world to remain faithful despite prison, torture, and death.

Jesus is Lord. That's the thrilling message of Easter. It's a historic fact, one convincingly established by the evidence, and one you can bet your life upon.

And you know, to quote St. Athanasius one more time, he says, doubt no longer then. When you see death mocked and scorned by those who believe in Christ, that by Christ death was destroyed and the corruption that goes with it resolved and brought to an end.

Hallelujah. Friends, the definite and determined resurrection of Christ forever disarms the powers of darkness. He must rise.

[47:19] Church, he must rise. In his resurrection, it's a resounding no to the disciples' question, does this really have to end? No. No, it doesn't.

It's not going to end. This will never end. The light of the world has risen. The darkness is overcome. The kingdom of Christ is eternal. So let us, this morning, let us take heart filled with faith in our risen and reigning Savior and let us take this gospel message to the world.

Please pray with me. Heavenly Father, Thank you.