

Our Risen Saviour **1 Corinthians 15:12-28**

Our sermon text is going to be First Corinthians chapter 15, from verses 12 to 28. We're going to read from First Corinthians chapter 15, verse 1 through to verse 28 to give it a little more context. Before the reading we'll pray. So please if you would bow your heads and join me in prayer.

Our Father in heaven, I pray that you would indeed now bless your word to us, that we would be given ears that hear, eyes that see, and hearts that are understanding and would obey. Father, I pray you would help me as I speak. Give me wisdom and insight. Help me, Father, to speak the words that you would have spoken. Let me speak not to please man, but to please you. Father, help us all as we listen. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

First Corinthians chapter 15, starting the reading at verse 1:

“¹ Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ² and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

“³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. ¹¹ Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

“¹² Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. ¹⁵ We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

“²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. ²⁴ Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷ For ‘God has put all things in subjection under his feet.’ But when it says, ‘all things are put in subjection,’ it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection

under him. ²⁸ When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.” Amen. And may God bless His word to us.

Life in this world today is a life of constant, total, and calculated distraction. Everything is aimed at distracting us from the main issues. The electronic media is an enormous distraction. How many people, how many of us here, can’t get through the day without our regular ten to fifteen-minute check of Facebook, of Twitter, of however many other social media accounts you’ve got on however many other social media platforms you have—the email, the text messaging, you name it? We all seem to just gravitate towards having more and more pointless, useless, almost random, in a way, information to be poured in upon us.

We’re kind of allowing ourselves to become the passive receptacles of just more and more words—nonsense, words almost without meaning. We live in a society where the definitions of words are being changed before our very eyes. It wasn’t that long ago—there are still people alive in the world who would tell you that the definition of the word “gay” is simply nothing more or less than light-hearted happiness. That’s what it meant. That was the word. What does it mean today? Constant, total distraction. It’s as though you’re not supposed to ask the big questions anymore. Don’t ask the big questions.

I remember a monologue in a movie, and in this particular movie, a certain man, the parent of one of the main characters, was silent throughout the whole movie. He didn’t speak. He didn’t say a word. But then, two-thirds of the way through the movie, perhaps three-quarters as the thing started to approach its final resolution, suddenly this man’s father speaks, and he says to his son something along the lines of, paraphrasing, but basically he said to his son, “Son, it’s not about the destination. It’s not even about where we began. It’s about the journey. Take the journey. Enjoy the journey. It’s the trip, Son. It’s the ride that you have along the way.”

Now that almost sounds wise. I’m sure we’ve thought about things like that, and we’ve even thought such thoughts to ourselves. We’ve thought, “Along the way, I learnt so much. Along the way, so many good things have come my way. I’ve got this list of experiences.” We go all over the place seeking various different experiences, some good, some not so good.

We met some friends yesterday. We took them to see a natural feature. We went for a bit of a bush walk and showed them a natural feature up in the mountains—an experience. I’m not saying that’s necessarily bad or evil, but there are plenty of experiences people seek out that are certainly evil. There are plenty of things that people say they must have, they must do, they must try. “I’ve got to have these things. If I don’t have these things, my life is not complete and I’ve been restrained from fulfillment.” And it’s a distraction. This idea that all you do is concentrate on the journey and don’t worry about the destination is a distraction.

Do we honestly believe that the human soul is actually mortal? Do we honestly believe that the human soul at death is finished? That’s what the atheists believe. That’s what they want people to believe. They honestly would tell you that that is one of the ways to be happy. Don’t worry

about eternity, don't worry about life after death. Push all of those things aside. When you die, it's no different to the lights turning out, and you fall asleep, and after that, there's nothing. They take that as a comfort.

There's actually a long-term result of that kind of thinking, and that long-term result is what has been called by many commentators today "the culture of death." What's the culture of death? It's a culture which presents death as a solution to problems. You've got cancer, why not die? You've got an unwanted pregnancy, why not have the baby die? If the baby's born alive and you still don't want it, why not just shut it in a silent room and there let the baby die? Because death is solving the problem. After all, when these people die, the lights are off. They've just fallen asleep. There's nothing to worry about. And when you've fulfilled your life, when you've done all the things that were on your list, why not die? Why not end it now?

In those supposedly advanced nations which have more thoroughly booted the influence of Christianity out of their culture than we yet have, though we are on the way, this thing, this thing called euthanasia—do you realize that it's now available to teenagers who are depressed, feeling bad? Teenagers.

You know, I didn't enjoy my teenage years. They weren't a happy time for me. I've never gone to a school reunion because I've never wanted to remember school. They weren't a happy time for me. I hate to think what thoughts might have run through my head if I could have just taken an extra dose of tranquilizers and basically killed myself. Because, I'm telling you, I was not a happy teenager.

How many teenagers are not happy teenagers? And they think that the world has come to an end because something went wrong, certain friends have turned against them—boyfriends, girlfriends, it makes no difference, a group of friends, they've been bullied, you name it. How many teenagers think that the world is without hope and that life is darkness, and I might as well be dead? You think I'm exaggerating at all?

I heard the story last year, read it in the news—a girl twenty-two years old. The psychiatrist diagnosed her to be suffering "chronic depression." Told her she would never be happy. "You've got chronic depression. You've just got to live with it. The way your life is, is the way your life is." She said, "I don't want to live with it." He said, "Go to the doctor. Tell him you want to die. Here's your diagnosis." This was over in Europe, Belgium I think, Netherlands. She went to the doctor. "Here's the diagnosis. I've got chronic depression. I'm never going to be happy. I'd rather just die." He said, "Okay, what day? When do you want to die?" Literally, dead. Apparently her problems are solved. The lights are turned off; she went to sleep.

Don't think about the big problems: "Why am I here? Where did I come from? Where am I going? Is there such a thing as eternal life? Is there such a thing as eternity?" Don't think. Whatever you do, don't think. Everything's a distraction. You're not allowed to worship anything these days except perhaps sports, except perhaps animals, except perhaps the

environment. You're allowed to be serious about all of those things, but whatever you do, don't get serious about eternity.

We would like to imagine we don't live in idolatrous times and that we are more modern than those in ancient times, where there were idolatrous temples on every corner, so to speak, and every form of perversion was practiced as worship of the small-g "gods."

Yet I think the truth is, we do live in such times, even here, even now. The gods have different names—convenience, distraction, lust, whatever. The gods have different names, but they're still here, and people still serve these ancient demon gods. People still seek distraction. People still seek anything other than righteousness and holiness and eternal life. People don't like to be told that they're mortal.

I was having lunch with a workmate once, and basically in the background at the café where we were was a TV screen playing film clips. The particular film clip that played behind the music was a film clip, an animation, of the grown-up fairy story of evolution. So you had this blob in water, and in time to the music, the blob in water started to beat like a heart, and then the blob became a fish, and then the fish grew legs, and it walked up the beach, and then it got fur, and then it climbed up a tree, and then it got arms, and then it got hands, and the classic evolutionary fairy tale of evolution from goo to You, as it used to be said. Evolution from goo to You.

And the guy I was sitting there with, he just said to me, "You know, I absolutely love that film clip. I just love it. It's so clever. I love it." And I thought, "An opportunity here." Flashed through my mind, "Opportunity here." And so I said, "Yeah, I suppose so, if you believe in the theory of evolution." That was all I said, "If you believe in the theory of evolution." I thought, Let's see where this goes. His head just about exploded. The anger, the language, the accusations that flew from his mouth. I was a hypocrite, a moralist Christian hypocrite, one of those. I can't even repeat the words he was using. This diatribe went on for about five minutes.

Later on I found out that he'd been diagnosed as suffering cancer. The comfort that he was seeking was the thought that, when he dies of cancer, the lights are out and he's asleep. And in daring to challenge his worldview—and all I did was ask the question—in daring to challenge his worldview, it's as though I'd kicked the stool from under his backside and he'd fallen flat on the floor. You see, he really wanted it to be true. He kept telling himself it was true. But I think the very anger of his reaction actually proves to us that he couldn't stop the back of his mind asking the big question, "When I die, is it over? Is it finished?"

Well, humanity's been asking the big question since there's been humanity—since God put humanity upon the earth, since they were booted from the Garden. "Where am I going? Is there eternal life? How do I get there? Why does everybody die? Why does everybody die?" Sometime or other as a child, you realize people are dying. You'd like not to realize that, you'd like not to think about it, but you realize people are dying. And what's more, you realize these dead people—they don't come back and talk to us. They're gone. Why does everybody die?

We're born, in a way, dying. We're born dead. I mean, Ephesians chapter 2, verse 1, "You were dead." We're born dying. We're born, in a way, dead. What's going on? Well, Scripture gives us some answers, if only we're willing to hear what Scripture has to say.

What was it that God said to the man? "Do not eat of the tree. In the day that you eat of it, dying, you will die." I know your Scripture will say, "In the day that you eat of it, you will surely die." They're not sure how to handle that, because the thing is, the word "die" is repeated twice, and it's repeated with an ongoing tense. So it kind of doesn't make a lot of sense to us in English to say, "Dying, you shall die," but that seems to be exactly what was being gotten at there. "The day that you eat of it, you will die, die," or, "The day that you eat of it, you will dying, die."

In other words, "In the day that you eat of it, dying begins. Death begins." And from the day that they ate of it, death began. And if we were to turn to the book of Romans, we would find there that Apostle Paul says that death has reigned. From that time forth, death has reigned. Everybody dies, even—and Paul sort of infers there in Romans—even babies die. Die. Dying, they die.

And here in our text for this morning in First Corinthians chapter 15, Paul says, "For as in Adam all die." As in Adam, all die. No exceptions. It's often said, "What about Enoch and Elijah? They were taken up to heaven." You know, we're not told much about them being taken up to heaven. I wonder if they died and were resurrected on the way? It's just a thought. I mean, after all, sinful flesh doesn't enter into the presence of God. That's what Scripture tells us. There was something happened to them along the way to make them acceptable in the sight of God. If they've gone to be in the very presence of God, I'm assuring you, they did not take their human sinfulness with them. But all die. In Adam, all die.

We live in a society that hides death. Either death is presented as the solution, or death is presented as the problem that will never come. Those who say it's the solution, they're in favor of euthanasia and abortion. Those who say it's the problem that will never come, well, they'll keep telling you that as long as your heart still beats, we can patch you up. And we all think that way. We all think that way: "As long as the heart still beats, I'll survive. The doctors can do anything these days. They'll bring me back to life. Transplants, blood transfusions, you name it. We'll just put death back—put it back a little bit. Push it further back."

A Christian man I know was very close to his last days, and I remember one of his friends asking him was there anything he wants. Now this guy was a Christian, okay? This guy was a Christian, but he was asked, "Is there anything you want?" And his answer was, "Just another two weeks." Just another two weeks. Christians can have their weak moments. That's just the way it is—push it back, further down the road.

Well, we have this person called Jesus Christ. He came into the world, the Son of God. He called Himself the Son of God. Scripture tells us He is the Word of God incarnate. "The Word took upon Himself flesh and dwelt among us"—the very presence of God with us in the body of

a man. And almost every word that He has to say has something to do with the very thought that people die, and after death comes eternity. He was trying to cut through the distractions.

Yet He Himself went to His death. He died. He was truly human. He submitted Himself to true humanity. He didn't cease to be the divine Son of God. Exactly what He always was is exactly what He is. God is unchanging. He is the divine and only begotten Son of God. But He added to His divinity humanity.

Jesus brought humanity upon Himself, if you want to say it that way, and in that humanity, He underwent the humiliation of mortality. He died. He shed His blood. He died suffering. He died lonely, as we read earlier. "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani." My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? He died alone.

Why would He have been alone? If He's the eternally begotten sinless Son of God, if He's the apple of His Father's eye, if He's the one who has done no wrong, if He's the one who is perfectly obedient to His Father, why would He die? And what's more, why would He die feeling loneliness? Feeling loneliness. Now that in itself is worth thinking about. God is ever-present. God is omnipresent. It's not actually possible to escape from God. There's a whole Psalm to that effect. "Highest heaven, deepest hell, and anywhere in-between, wherever I go, there you are. Can't get away from you."

But Jesus upon the cross was completely unaware of the presence of God. How could a sinless man have been completely unaware of the presence of God? What's happening? What's happening there? Turn to Second Corinthians chapter 5, and let's let Scripture answer that question. Second Corinthians chapter 5, straight to the very last verse, verse 21: "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin.

The Son of God, that cry, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" It's often called the cry of dereliction. That cry of dereliction was uttered because at that moment He was bearing the sins of His people. He was bearing the sins of all who would be saved. And God does not come near sin. Sin does not come into the presence of a holy God. The holy God does not come near sin. He's too holy. He's holy, holy, holy, as we would read if we turned to Isaiah chapter 6. He's holy, holy, holy. The very gateposts in heaven shake at the proclamation of the holiness of God. Scripture tells us that God's eye cannot look upon sin.

So, why was Jesus alone? Why was He completely unaware of the presence of God, though the omnipresence of God tells us that God was indeed present? The conditions at His crucifixion tell us that God was indeed present. An Old Testament appearance of God is called a theophany, and if we were to flick back and look at them—we won't—in many theophanies, there are dark clouds, darkness over the land. The sun was covered.

Jesus died upon the cross during what in Old Testament theology would be called a theophany. During a coming of God to earth, Jesus died. Yet He Himself felt Himself to be abandoned, felt

Himself to be derelict. He's bearing the sins of humanity. He's bearing the sins of all who would believe. He was treated the way you and I actually deserved to be treated.

God hates sin. We don't like that. We don't like it. God hates sin. You know what Israel Folau did? He told the world that God hates sin. He paraphrased Scripture, and he pointed out to the world that God hates sin. Sin is rebellion against His goodness. Sin is rebellion against His holiness. Sin is rebellion against His righteousness. Sin is disobedience to God. Sin is wickedness. God hates sin.

Now if you want to sum up the law of your Old Testament in one simple sentence, it is actually fairly easy to do. It goes like this: Do as you're told or die. Do as you're told or die. The Old Testament law is pretty simple. Do these things and you live; don't do these things and you will not live. You will die. What's the price of sin? Death. What's the reward of sin? Death. What's the wages of sin? Death. Unfortunately, what can a man and a woman give birth to other than a sinner? None of us is better than those who came before us. Sin. God hates sin.

It's become a bit of a saying in the modern church, "Hate the sin, love the sinner." What do you mean by that? Do you mean, Love the sinner, therefore tell the sinner the truth—that they must repent of their sins and put their faith in Jesus Christ? Is that what you mean? And that even where you are in your sins right now, if you will but believe and repent you will be saved and have eternal life? That's loving a sinner. That's telling them the truth—the truth which, if God is willing, will save them; the truth which, if it's accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit, will bring them into eternal life, will bring them into the kingdom of God. That's loving the sinner.

But many people mean when they say, "Love the sinner, hate the sin," they mean something different to that. They mean that you don't ever say anything to the sinner that might cause them discomfort. If you're talking to someone who is a homosexual, don't ever tell them that homosexuals will not inherit the kingdom of God. Don't tell them that; it makes them uncomfortable. They might not want to come into the presence of a God who makes them uncomfortable.

We talk as though it's up to us. It's not up to us. God draws people into the kingdom of God, and He draws them in through the use of His word. I'm not particularly worried about the decisions people make when we present the gospel. We've just got to present the gospel. God will make it powerful and effective. The only possible way you can love a sinner is to share the truth with them. The wages of sin are death. Your sins will take you to hell. Even now, your sins are separating you from God and hardening your heart. That's what sin does.

We've got to preach the cross—the cross, you know, where Jesus died. What does Paul mean when he says, "Preach the cross"? He doesn't mean tell people that the cross is a magical symbol that will draw down blessings, okay? He's not telling people to wear a cross, or anything like that. The cross is the place where the most thorough, crystal-clear, perfect expression of the fullness of God is to be found. This is where God has revealed Himself to humanity more clearly than anywhere else.

The cross, the crucifixion of Jesus, is recorded in Scripture, and it's in the crucifixion that God reveals Himself most thoroughly. What does He reveal? He reveals His righteous anger and judgment against sin, His hatred of sin. He also reveals His unbounding grace, and His unbounding love. He reveals the way of salvation.

We live in a world where people want the smorgasbord God, the Sizzler God. Know how Sizzler works? You walk in there, you pay your fee, you get a plate, and you walk around the bain-marie, and you take what you want. "I like that, I don't like that, I like that, I want some of that, I won't have that, I might have some of that later. I'll have a bit of this, I'll have a bit of that, but I won't have that." You can't do that with God. You don't get a little bit of God.

You don't get to choose which parts of God you want to take: "Look, I'll believe in a god who's loving." Okay. Then you take that attribute of God, and you try and set it over and against anything else. I believe in a God who's loving, but what about a God who is perfectly holy and righteous, and will not dwell in the presence of sin?

What about a God who, in His perfect love, must be a judge? He must be a judge. You see, if love is good—and I'm sure all the world would tell you that love is good and that love is a good thing—then how can it be love if it's not based upon goodness, and how can there be goodness if evil is not called evil and the wicked are not judged?

When people go to court, accused of various crimes, we expect the guilty to be found guilty, and then we expect the guilty to be punished. Why? Because that's right. That's what's right. That's what we expect. All of us understand it. All of humanity understands this. The smallest child understands this.

You take a three-year-old playing happily in the corner. You walk up to that little kid, belt him on the head and take their toy off them. They'll cry. Why are they crying? Well, one, you belted them on the head. But even at three years old, they know that something wrong has been done to them. They might not have theological language. They might not be able to argue in a philosophical or abstract way. But they know in their own mind, "I was doing no wrong. I was doing no wrong. You should not have hit me. You should not have done that to me. I had the right to play with the toy that I was playing with."

We all know right and wrong. All of humanity knows right and wrong. How do we know it? Remember, we're told back in the book of Genesis, mankind was created in the image of God. It's a good illustration. That image can be broken. We sinned. The image was broken. But a broken mirror still reflects. It's warped in its reflection, but it still reflects. Spend enough time looking in your broken mirror, and you can still pick out the details. You can still see what you're looking at. You can still interpret what you're seeing.

And we, my friends, are broken images of God. And so, being broken images of God, we still do know right from wrong. All humanity knows right from wrong, much as they would try to deny

it. It's known. All of creation testifies. "The heavens declare the glory of God; the sky above proclaims His handiwork." All of creation knows that there is a God, and that God has established righteousness, that God has established a law, by which you may know right and wrong. Therefore, all of creation knows that we indeed are sinners.

We know, therefore, when we hear the preaching of the cross, that the God who is being revealed through that cross is indeed the true and living God. He's revealing His judgment of sin at the same time as He's revealing His willingness to forgive the repentant. That happens only at the cross. These two things which can't be reconciled in our limited humanity, these two things that can't be worked out in us, ourselves—because, being sinners, we're not perfect images of God—could be worked out in the Lord Jesus Christ, the perfect image of God, the sinless one.

And so He could receive the judgment of God for the sins of all who would believe. The fury of God that you and I deserve, it's been poured out upon Christ. The judgment of God that you and I deserve, it's been poured out upon His Son, that His righteousness—that which is credited to Him as righteousness, His perfect faithful obedience—could be poured out upon us.

We're counted righteous in the sight of God, by grace, through faith, because of the works of Jesus Christ. He died. He died the death of a sinner, for us, in our place, as our substitute. But He Himself was no sinner. That's why death had no power over Him. That's why death could not hold Him down. That's why Satan had no claim upon Him.

In the gospel of John, Jesus said, "The prince of this world is coming, and he has nothing in me." Do you hear what He's saying? He gets what I give him; he gets no more." Jesus was crucified for us, and on the third day He was raised to life, as it says in the book of Romans, for our justification. For our justification. And we as Christians, we serve a risen Saviour. He died once; He dies no more. Those of us who are Christian, we die once; we die no more.

Scripture talks about the second death. The second death is for those who are not Christians. They die once, and then they die again as they are judged, and cast into eternal punishment. Scripture speaks of the second death.

You're born twice, you die once. You're born into this world, that's your first birth. Be born into the kingdom of God by the Spirit of God through the preaching of the gospel, that's your second birth. You die once, you die once only. You go into the very presence of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Born once, born only into this world, born only a sinner and you're not born again? You're not born into Christ? You're not regenerated? Well then you die in this life, and then you're resurrected to be judged and die again in eternal life. It's a constant, undying death. "Dying, you will die," and that's the state you will be in for all of eternity. Dying, you will die.

And what's the evidence, what's the confirmation of this? He was raised from death to life. Those wages of sin, that punishment of death, that judgment of God, it could not ultimately kill

the one who was sinless. He died in His humanity, and He was resurrected, still the God-man, still truly God, still truly human.

We read in Revelation chapter 5. Remember, He's still being worshiped as the Lamb—the Lamb who was slain. He's still being worshiped as the one who, by His blood, purchased people from all the nations, all the tribes, and all the languages. He's still our Saviour.

In First Corinthians chapter 15, I just want you to look at verse 25. Speaking of Jesus, “For he must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet.” For He must reign. Think about what it's saying now. You understand tense—past tense, present tense, future tense. “For he must reign.” What's the tense? It's present. It's happening now, in an ongoing sense. He reigns now. He has been resurrected from the dead.

The whole point of First Corinthians chapter 15, Paul argues logically, carefully, step by step by step by step, Jesus was raised from the dead. In the first Adam, all die; in Christ, all shall be made alive. He even says if there is no resurrection, we are pathetic fools. If all you've got is a feel-good religion that makes you happy in this life, but you're in the same state as everybody else, we're the most to be pitied of all the fools upon the face of the earth. Fools, fools, fools. But no, Paul argues, Jesus was raised from the dead, and now He reigns. All things, all things, are in subjection under His feet. He reigns until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

My friends, that's incredibly good news for all who are in Christ—for all who are in Christ. We no longer live in a total monarchy-type government, a genuine monarchy where you've got a king or a queen with the power of life and death, whose word is law.

But the picture that Scripture gives of the way God rules over His creation is a total monarchy. There's a King who has the power of life and death over all of creation, and everything that He says is law.

Now if you lived under a genuine monarchy, what you desperately needed was a way to get your pleas, your troubles, before the king. You needed to be able to get to the king to plead your case. Because if the king's said that's the way things are, if the judgment comes in your favor, that's it. There's no higher court.

Now as Christians, there's a man upon the throne, the man Christ Jesus. And what did He call Himself, if we were to go back through the gospels? What are we to Him? Well, we are His servants, He is our Lord, and that word usually translated “servant” can actually mean slave. At the basic level, we're His slaves or His servants. We're the people that look after His feet. But He's also called us His brethren. We're His brothers. We're of His family. He's also called us His friends. We're His friend.

You see, in this throne room over all creation, in this throne room in heaven, where God rules all things, He rules all things through our personal Lord, through our brother, through our friend. To God who reigns over all creation, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Our King is alive. He died for

us, and yet He lives. Our King has been resurrected from the dead. Where our King is, there we will be. Before He died, in John chapter 17, He prayed that those who are His people would be with Him and behold His glory, which He has had from the beginning of time. There's our King in eternity.

Where are we destined, all of us who are in Christ? We are destined for eternity with our God. And when we speak now, when we pray now, when we sing our praises now, where are we being heard? In the very throne room of heaven, in the very presence of God. Meek little mortals that we are, worms that we are, the King is in court, the King is enthroned.

Now you know in the Old Testament book of Esther, when Esther has to approach the king, Ahasuerus, what does she tell her uncle, Mordecai? She said, "It's a very dangerous thing to do. If I approach the king and he doesn't show me a token of his favor, if he doesn't hold out his staff toward me, I die." So she said, "Fast and pray. I will approach the king. Hopefully, I don't die." Okay, that's the picture. That's your Old Testament picture of what I'm talking about.

My friends, the King of all creation is enthroned at the right of hand of the Father in heaven. The resurrected Lord Jesus Christ is enthroned at the right hand of the Father in heaven, and that rod, staff, scepter, as it's variously called in different places through the Old Testament, it's always held out in mercy and recognition of His church. We're not taking a chance when we approach the King of Creation. We who are Christians, we're actually not taking our lives into our own hands. We're walking into, as it were, the very presence of God Himself. Our prayers are being made to our brother, who is enthroned in heaven, ruling over all creation. The King is in court, and He looks upon us with mercy. He looks upon us with mercy.

You know, I imagine the child who comes charging into his busy father's office. "Dad, Dad, Dad. Found a frog! Found a frog! Found a frog!" And that father looks to him and smiles. "My son, my son. My son has come into my presence. This is my son. This is my child. This is my offspring." Okay, my friends, we who are in Christ, we who are in the resurrected Christ, who has paid the price for our sins—we charge into that throne room in heaven like crazy little kids. We go blundering in there.

You know, do you feel when you pray that your prayers are not adequate? I feel when I pray my prayers are not adequate, so I will assume you feel exactly the same. Do you feel when you pray that your words are not good enough, that your thoughts are not worthy? Do you feel when you pray that, "Why would God even listen to me?" That's the Christian experience. That's the way I usually feel.

Well first of all, Scripture tells us in Romans chapter 8 that the Holy Spirit is helping us, that our prayers don't sound the same way to God as they do in our ears. The Scriptures also tell us that Jesus Himself, the great High Priest who is King, intercedes for us, and that though we go blundering into heaven like foolish little children, He's glad to see us, each and every single time. Our resurrected Lord and Saviour is glad to see us.

My friends, that's our eternity. Okay, we should—we should be thinking about the big questions. We should be prepared to think about death. We should be prepared to consider mortality. Why? Because that's how you get off this world. That's how you get out of this place.

There is going to be at some point in time in the future, a generation who are alive when Jesus returns. But we've got no reason to expect that that may be us. Scripture says it could be. Scripture commands us to live as though it would be, so that if He did return, we would have nothing to be ashamed of when He does return. But only a fool would say it's going to happen in my lifetime. You've only got to look at 2,000 years of Christian history to see that Christians throughout the generations have all thought that that particular ruler was the antichrist. Surely, Jesus is returning now! Even a theologian as great as Martin Luther thought that in the 1500s.

There will be a generation that doesn't have to die to get out of this present sinful age, but we shall expect that we will live until we die, because that's—let's face it—that's the 100% rate. You're born, you die. It's a one-for-one thing. And we will hope and trust and pray and expect that upon death we will be united to our Lord, our Saviour, and our King, the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ, because He has been raised; therefore, we are not the most pathetic of all people. The world thinks we are. That's what the world thinks of the church. Let them think that. He has been raised from the dead. Therefore, we have hope. We have hope for eternity. We have something to base our lives upon. We can live as people who have eternal life before them.

And as I close, I simply press upon anyone here—If you have not sought reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ His Son, repent of your sins, put your faith in Jesus, and you will receive eternal life. That's not my promise, that's the promise of Scripture. Trust in Christ. Live for Christ. Live in Christ. Worship God the Father through Jesus Christ our Lord.

It's as simple as asking for the forgiveness of sins. And you get more than just forgiveness, you get given eternal life. You get given the power of the Holy Spirit, that you may repent and live a life that's pleasing in the sight of God. Put your faith in Christ, seeking the forgiveness of sins, and repent, and you will have eternal life. And you will know our risen Saviour. And you will rejoice in His goodness to you.

But let me warn you. Don't take that for granted. Don't assume that you're a Christian. No one was born a Christian. "I was raised in a Christian family, I was taken to church." They're good things. They're not bad things. They're all good things. Even so, you yourself must put your faith in Christ. You yourself must have trusted in Jesus. You yourself must have sought the forgiveness of your sins. No one else can do that for you. You yourself have to respond in obedience to the gospel. And you will know forgiveness. You will know that God indeed does love you. And you will know that you indeed are looking forward to eternal life on the other side of death. Let's close in prayer.

Father in heaven, we do thank you and praise you this Easter Sunday for the gospel that came to us through Jesus Christ our Lord. We thank you and we praise you that you sent your only begotten Son into the world, that He took upon Himself flesh, that He lived a perfectly righteous

and pleasing life in your sight, and that He died a perfectly righteous and obedient death in your sight. We thank you and we praise you that He was raised on the third day. We thank you and we praise you that through Him, our prayers and our praises are heard in heaven, that we have a King. Our King is our Priest. Our King is our friend. Our King is our brother.

Father in heaven, the blessings that you pour out upon us are so wonderful, and our praises are so feeble. Father, may we indeed worship in spirit and in truth. Furthermore, Father, we pray for the salvation of souls, and if this message can in any way be used to that end, we ask that in Jesus' name. Amen.