



April 8, 2012 - 1 Corinthians 15

The Epic Victory of Jesus Pastor Larry Adams

Thank you, choir. Thank you, orchestra. Thank you, worship team. Wow. Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for this day. This is a true celebration. And we of all people as Christians understand that we have the most to celebrate. We don't have to manufacture this joy. We don't have to generate the excitement. It's real. Our sins are forgiven. Our debt has been vanquished. You've risen from the grave, and we're alive with you forever. Thank you, God, for that great truth. May our worship today, our praise, and all of this truth be a blessing to you and a joy to us. And we'll thank you, God. In Jesus' name, Amen.

You know, each time one of these holidays rolls around, we always bemoan a little bit the fact that the secular forces steal away sometimes the focus on the holidays. During Christmas we think Santa gets more press than the birth of Christ, and at Easter the Easter bunny gets more press than the resurrection of Jesus. Well, that's probably true for the most part, but I want you to know that all that secular observance isn't bad. For example, at Easter I think it's great that candy is a part of that, don't you? I think that's a good idea. In fact, now that I have grandkids I like it even better because they get candy and they can't really eat it all. I say, "No, no, no, you can't eat all that. You have to give it to grandpa." But you always feel guilty eating that candy because you eat all those calories.

I want you to know that if you love candy, particularly chocolate, I found some good news for you. I found this on line so it's gotta be true. Listen to what this said. I'm gonna read it just like it is:

Chocolate is a health food. Chocolate is derived from cacao beans, and beans are vegetables. Sugar is derived from sugar beets or cane, both are vegetables. Of course, the milk cream is dairy. So, eat more chocolate to meet the dietary requirements for your daily intake of vegetables of dairy. (applause)

So if you're stuffing your mug with those Cadbury creams, you're getting healthy. You can say you learned it here. But please don't say you learned it here.

Thanks for coming out today. You know, this celebration of Easter is something God wants no one to miss. I missed it for a long time in my life. I don't how I did it, but I did. It's so important and so epic that God reminds us each year of the meaning of

the resurrection. We face a lot of things in our lives: a lot of disappointments, a lot of struggles. I hope it's been a joy to come in here for an hour and kinda forget some of the stuff that's out there, but we know it's waiting. And yet, somehow if we really believe the Easter message, you can change what's waiting for us out there. It puts a new perspective on everything we face because we realize that no matter what we face in our lives, because of Jesus, we're gonna live forever with Jesus; the best is really yet to come.

I love the way the Apostle Paul recorded that in the book of 1 Corinthians Chapter 15, a letter written to a church he loved but wanted to encourage. They too were going through times of difficulty, but he wanted them to know that the best was yet to come. That just as Jesus rose from the dead, so too would their death and their grave be conquered. And here's how Paul recorded it. It is the most important message we would ever receive. 1 Corinthians 15 verse 1:

Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. ² By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

Verse 12:

But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. ¹⁵ More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. ¹⁹ If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.

²⁰ But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ²² For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

Verse 49

And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.

⁵⁰ I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom

of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹ Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— ⁵² in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

⁵⁵ “Where, O death, is your victory?
Where, O death, is your sting?”

⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let’s pray for a moment.

Father, this victory is beyond anything we could ever imagine. It’s a victory over humanity’s greatest enemies. It’s the things that grip us most with fear. It’s the things that steal the quality of our life. It creates a death that hangs over us like a cloud. And yet these things are vanquished in the epic victory that you accomplished in the tomb conquering sin and death and rising again.

That’s why we’re here today to celebrate. You don’t want any of us to live another day in hopelessness or despair or to think that in any way this is all we get. But to realize with the same assurance that as Jesus rose from the dead so too shall we and live forever with you. This epic victory is ours. We celebrate it with you, and we thank you today for all that you’ll show us. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

It is called the “Miracle on Ice.” Sports Illustrated called it, “The most significant sports moment of the 20th century, an epic victory.” It was February 22, 1980, the Winter Olympic Games in Lake Placid, New York. The US hockey team led by Coach Herb Brooks was not expected to go very far, and yet here they were in the semifinals for the gold medal round.

You see, this was a team made up of amateurs, college kids. Only one had any prior Olympic experience. But to get the gold on this day they had to get past the powerhouse of powerhouses in the Soviet Union. You see, the Soviet Union had a team that consisted of some of the best hockey players in the world. Three of them would go on to be in the Hockey Hall of Fame. These were seasoned professionals. In fact they had won almost every competition in every Olympics since 1954. They had played a year earlier an All-Star team from the National Hockey League, and they crushed them 6-0. They had played two weeks prior an exhibition game with the US Olympic hockey team and easily dispensed with them 10-3. There wasn’t anybody that gave the US hockey team a chance, but then it happened, an epic victory that became one of the greatest ever seen in sports. In fact, if you ever lived during those days, the days of the Cold War when the Soviet Union was exerting its might: When it was trying to convince the world that communism reigned over republics and democracies. When you realize that they wanted to win the gold medal that year to display to the world

superiority of communism. When you realize all that what was at stake in this game. And here comes our fledgling little US hockey team up against this powerhouse, you can wonder if the team looked at Herb Brooks in the locker room when he said, "Boys, you were born for this moment."

"What moment? The execution!"

But they went out and played the game. In fact, when Al Michaels with ABC Sports was the play-by-play that day, if you ever remember watching that final minute, you could not believe what was unfolding before your eyes. In fact, we have that last minute for you to see. You can relive it again. It'll make you proud to be an American. Watch this thing.

(Video begins)

. . . Now, Petrov controls. Off to Palomar(sp). Skating in on the left side into the American end. 55 seconds. But Mikhailov has the puck. Mikhailov sweeping in. Out in front! Backhander goes wide! Craig got a good piece of it. Mikhailov back out to Bilyaletdinov. 43 seconds remaining. Morrow checked into the boards and comes back to center ice. 38, 37 seconds left in the game. Petrov with it. The Americans on top 4 to 3. Long shot. Craig able to get a piece of it to sweep it away. 28 seconds. The crowd's going insane! Kharlamov. Going into the American end again. Morrow is back there. Now Johnson. 19 seconds. Johnson over to Ramsey. Bilyaletdinov gets checked by Ramsey. McClahan is there. The puck is still loose. 11 seconds, you've got 10 seconds, the countdown going on right now! Morrow, up to Silk. 5 seconds left in the game. Do you believe in miracles? YES! Unbelievable!

(Fans cheering wildly. USA team hug each other in celebration. Final score USA 4, USSR 3. Video ends)

The US would go on to defeat Finland and win the gold medal, one of the most powerful victories in US sport. And every time I watch that thing I think of Jim McKay's words from ABC when he said, "It would be like the fledgling teams from the Canadian football league beating the Pittsburg Steelers who are world champions." It was amazing.

But you know, as epic as this victory was, it's memorable, it's noble, and as grand and brave as it was, it pales in comparison to the greatest victory that's ever taken place in the world. That greatest victory would take place in a Jewish cemetery just a short while outside the city of Jerusalem on a Sunday morning when the tomb of Jesus Christ would explode with life, and sin and death would be conquered for all men for all time, and everyone who would believe would experience the epic victory of Jesus Christ.

People, this is Easter Sunday, the day that we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, an epic victory over sin, death, and the grave. No wonder Paul called it and said of it, "Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

It's an epic victory that still brings hope and help and salvation and eternal life to all who believe it and receive it. It's the good news that is so great. Paul wanted to make sure that no one would ever miss it. I'm embarrassed to tell you today that I was 25 years old before I came to Jesus, but I'm more embarrassed to tell you that at 25 I couldn't

have told you what Easter was, the most significant day in human history. And not only was it not benefitting me, I couldn't even have told you what it was. Paul wanted to make sure that no one ever lived that way or missed the importance of this, so in 1 Corinthians 15 he said to you in verse 3, "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."

"Of first importance." We may hear a lot of messages in our lives. We may believe a lot of things, but there is no message greater than this one and nothing more important to believe than this. Miss this and you will never really live. Believe and receive this and you will never really die. Easter is the celebration of the epic victory of Jesus. But the victory over what? The victory over humanity's greatest enemies: sin and death. Easter is the celebration of Jesus' epic victory over sin.

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul wrote this in verse 16, "For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins."

When Karla and I got married in 1980, just a couple months after that epic victory in the Olympics, we moved to Oregon where I was gonna go to school finishing up and also where we would be serving in a church. Our first two kids came along, Amos and Andy. They were ferrets that we adopted from a local pet store. Now, ferrets are cute if you never have seen them, but they are in the weasel family. They are cute. They're furry. They're fun, and they're smelly. Ferrets are part of the mustelid family. They have an oil gland in them that puts out this musky scent. It's really repulsive. In fact, it stains and affects everything it touches. Now we don't blame the ferrets. They can't help it. They're born with this. Being stinky and having the oil gland is part of their nature. We're told the only way you can get rid of it was bringing them through a very invasive surgery.

You know, humans are a lot like ferrets. Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that ferrets are humans. They're not. We are created in the image of God. But as humanity we need to understand fundamentally that we have a flaw in our nature that is fatal. We're born with it. We can't do anything about it. This fundamental problem stains and affects and ruins and destroys everything it touches. This fundamental flaw of our nature is called sin. No one is immune.

Paul couldn't have been clearer when he wrote to the Romans in 3 verse 23, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." None of us measure up. We are all sinners. We violate God's law. Sin is lawlessness. We rebel against God; we go our own way. Intentionally or unintentionally all of us have sinned and fall short of his glory. It is important for us to know today that sin is not just an act, it's a condition. We sin because we are sinners by nature and by choice. We inherited this sin problem from Adam and it spread to all humanity. Most people don't want to hear about the fact that they're born with a sin nature. Most don't believe it. In fact I didn't want to believe it when I heard about it myself. But the fact of the matter is, it is so fundamentally a part

of our nature it cannot be denied. All of us struggle with sin, and there's a reason. The problem people have is that they're born with this. They want to believe they're born basically good. We're not. We're born in sin.

I've shared with the congregation before, this is especially been highlighted by the fact now I have grandchildren coming. When they come, man, it's precious. They're cute. They're beautiful. They're so innocent. It's hard to image they have a sin nature brewing in there, but they do. Just wait until they turn 2 and you begin to see that rebellious nature coming out. If you don't harness that, if you just let them go and develop naturally on their own, you won't like what they produce.

In fact, I've asked parents who don't want to accept their little prince or princess could actually be born with a sin nature, I've said to them, "Really? Let me ask you something. What do you have to teach your kid to do? Do you have to teach them to be bad or do you have to teach them to be good? What do they do naturally? Do you have to teach a kid to lie or do you have to teach them to tell the truth? What will they do naturally? Do you have to teach them to be selfish or do you have to teach them to be generous? What do they do naturally?" Exactly. We know that if we don't counter that sin nature it creates an ugly human being because we're born with that problem. We're sinners by nature and we're powerless to do anything about it. We can't get rid of all of our sin any more than a ferret can get rid of its stink. Our sin has to be cleansed; it has to be removed.

That's why Paul said, "The good news of the gospel is this: I passed on to you as of first importance that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." You see, that's why we have a cross, because we were powerless, but Jesus wasn't. In fact, Paul told the Romans in Romans 5 verse 6, "You see, at just the right time when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly."

Peter put it like this in 1 Peter 3 verse 18, "For Christ died for sins, once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God."

But if Jesus dies and doesn't rise from the dead, we have a problem. Paul said, "If Jesus dies for our sin and pays that penalty for us, but offers us a forgiveness he can't deliver because he couldn't conquer sin and the grave, then you and I have a problem. If sin conquers Jesus then sin conquers us." That's why Paul told the Corinthians in Chapter 15 verse 17, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, empty, hollow, meaningless, pointless. You are still in your sins," he said. If there is no victory in the grave, there's no forgiveness. We're still in our sins. But the good news of Easter is found in verse 20, "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead." Sin is conquered, we are forgiven, our debt is paid. That's why Paul said, "The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

You see, those who are not in this victory, those who are not benefitting from this epic victory are still in their sins. So every Easter, every day really, we are confronted with this issue. "Am I dead in my sins or am I alive in my Jesus?" Dead in my sin and separated from God now and forever or alive in Christ, forgiven and made whole, full of hope and eternal life with a future holding the best that's yet to come. Every Easter

is God's reminder of his epic victory in the tomb of Jesus so that we could all know that our great enemy, sin, has been conquered and we have been forgiven and set free and because of that we are gonna live forever. But not only an epic victory over sin, Easter is a celebration of Jesus' epic victory over death and the grave. Paul put it like this in verse 16:

For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, . . . ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. ¹⁹ If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.

People, death is a violation. It hurts. We were never created to deal with it. It was not part of the original design. But now death hangs over us like a dark cloud. It affects everything. It paralyzes people because they haven't understood the power of the resurrection and what Christ actually accomplished there.

I used to be paralyzed by the thought of death but not anymore because I can tell you confidently I am never going to die. My body may. I never will. And neither will you if you have your hope in Jesus. You know, it's been said that there's no real atheist in the face of death because without a hope beyond the grave they know that not only is their future bleak but their present has no meaning.

I came across an article this past week by Greta Christina. If you never heard her name, she is a freelance writer, a very prominent atheist, who usually writes in feminist and adult magazines. She wrote recently, or a few years ago, in a skeptic magazine called "Skeptical Inquirer" where she confesses her atheism, but in a moment of candor she writes about fear and the meaningless of her own death without a savior. Listen to this:

Death can be an appalling thing to think about. Not just frightening. Not just painful. It can be paralyzing the fact that your lifespan is an infinitesimally tiny fragment in the life of the universe, that there is at the very least a strong possibility that when you die you disappear completely and forever, and that in 500 years nobody will remember you, and in 5 billion years the earth will fall into the sun.

This can be a profound and defining truth about your existence that you reflexively repulse, that you flinch away from and refuse to accept or even think about, consistently pushing it to the back of your mind whenever it sneaks up for fear that if you allow it to sit on your mind even for a minute it will swallow everything else. It can make everything you do and anything anyone else does seem meaningless, trivial to the point of absurdity. It can make you feel erased, wipe out joy, make your life seem like ashes in your hands.

You see, that's life with no hope. That's life lived in the fear of death. If I were to be honest today, and I must be, there are many Christians who don't handle death any better than an atheist. They fear it with the same paralyzing fear. We try to hold on to loved ones as though this is all we get, that somehow this life is the best. We're so attached to the here and now we can't even imagine the excitement of the glories that

await us. Now I'm not suggesting for a minute that death doesn't hurt. I've lost far too many family members to be that naive. When you have to say goodbye to your dad and then to your mom and then to your little brother and a host of others, I can tell you death hurts. But we don't have to fear it. Not anymore. Because if you're a believer in this Jesus who is alive, then you need to know that you're never going to die.

You see, Paul told the Romans that death came as a result of sin. "The wages of sin is death," he said. Romans 5:12, "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, Adam, and death through sin and in this way death came to all men because all sinned." You see, Paul tells the Corinthians in verse 56 that death has a sting. The sting of death is sin. If you die with sin still in your life, death is gonna sting you. Sin is what separates us from God. You die with sin in your life, and death will separate you from God forever. That is to be feared. But if you could die with no sin in your life, if you could die knowing your sin was cleansed at a cross and if by trusting in that Jesus who died and rose again, your sin was also cleansed, then you could know you could come to your death and it would have no sting. It would be as harmless as a bee without a stinger. A bee cannot hurt you without a stinger. Death cannot hurt you without a stinger. The sting of death is sin, so when your sin is forgiven death can't hurt you anymore.

But if there's no resurrection then your sin's not forgiven. And if your sin's not forgiven, your death still has a stinger. If death conquered Jesus and the grave, then death will conquer you. That's why Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15 verse 18, "Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. ¹⁹ If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men." That word "pity" means "we are to have a miserable existence," just like an atheist because there is no hope if Jesus isn't alive. But the good news of verse 20 is what we celebrate every Easter:

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ²² For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. ²³ But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.

You see, this is what allowed Jesus to stand next to a grave of two grieving sisters in John 11, Mary and Martha, whose brother Lazarus had died. When he shows up on the scene they said, "Jesus, couldn't you have done something?"

"Don't worry," he said. "Your brother will rise again"

"Yeah, we know he's gonna rise again at the resurrection on the last day. We were hoping you could do something now."

"You don't really get it yet, do ya?" Basically is what Jesus is telling them. **"You don't get it yet, do ya? Your brother believed in me. He's not dead. His body is in the tomb, but he's not in there. In fact, would you like to see? Roll away the stone."**

"But, Lord, he stinketh."

“Did I not tell you if you believed you would see the glory of God? Roll away the stone.” Lazarus, come out!” The dead man walked out of the tomb. Why? Because when life speaks, death obeys.

Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. He conquered sin. He conquered death and the grave. Some day they’re gonna stick my body in the ground, but they’ll never put me in there. Because the day death closes my eyes and thinks it wins, it loses. I’ll be more alive than you have ever seen me before. **“I am the resurrection and the life,”** Jesus said. **“He who believes in me will live even though he dies, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.”** You believe this?

“Yes, Lord,” she said. “We believe that you are the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior, the Son of God who was to come into the world.”

Jesus is the firstfruits, the first of many to come. And some day our own bodies are gonna be raised out of the grave. They are gonna be raised out of the urns and the ashes. They’re gonna be raised out the sea and wherever they’ve been destroyed, and God’s gonna raise those bodies up. Our salvation is so complete. When we die we go to be with Jesus, and our bodies one day will be raised up. A cemetery is gonna be the most exciting place on earth to be. Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Those graves are gonna explode! Those mausoleum doors are gonna fly open. The sea is gonna give up its dead. The ashes scattered over the sea – watch out, man, it’s gonna look like a dust storm. God is gonna bring that together and raise that body up to be like his imperishable body.

That’s why Paul said, “The perishable must put on the imperishable. The mortal must put on the immortal. And when the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the immortal puts on the mortal, then what is written will come true: ‘Death has been swallowed up in victory. Death, where is your victory? Death, where is your sting?’ The power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

That’s why we celebrate Easter and that’s why his victory is so epic. You know, every Easter I’ve told people that the resurrection of Jesus is what sets Christianity apart from every other approach or religion. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is what sets Christianity apart as truth and every other religion false. Every year I get people angry whether they hear it in person or they hear it on-line. “How dare you say that other approaches are wrong, that they’re not all equal? Who are you to declare that Christianity alone is the truth?”

Well, I’m a nobody, but you have to consider the facts, and the facts are these: All the religions of the world, except four, are just pure philosophy. Men made them up. They are based on the inventions of men. You and I could invent better religions than now what billions of people are laboring under. Their religions that have been invented are as useless as anything as you and I could invent. They’re pure philosophy. They’re of human origin. They are bankrupt. They are meaningless. They’re just philosophy.

Of the four that are left, they are based on the life and teachings of their founders.

Judiasm based on the life and teaching of Abraham. Buddhism based on the life and teaching of Gautama the first Buddha. Buddha is a title, Gautama was the first. Islam based on the life and teaching of their prophet Mohammed. And Christianity based on the life and teaching of Jesus.

Abraham died about 2,000 years before Christ at the age of 175. He is buried in a cave at Machpelah in the Holy Land next to his wife Sarah. If you go there today, you know what? Abraham's body is still in the tomb.

Gautama, the first Buddha, died about 500 years before Christ at the age of 80. When he died they buried him in a Himalayan village called Kusinara. If you go there today you will find that his body is still in the tomb.

Mohammed died 632 AD. He was 62. They buried him in a tomb in Medina which has become a pilgrimage site for all Muslims to come to their Holy Land. You know why? Because when they get there they're gonna discover Mohammed is still in the tomb.

But Jesus Christ died about 33 AD at about the age of 30. He was brutally beaten, taken down from a cross, wrapped in a linen shroud, and placed in a tomb, a cave. They rolled a rock over the front. They sealed it with a Roman seal. They posted a Roman guard. They did everything possible to keep him in the tomb.

You know, Karla and I have had the privilege, because of some friends, to visit the Holy Land. And when you go to one of the sites you see the traditional site of the cross and then the place where they laid him when they took him down. And just around the corner is the tomb. Or you can go to Gordon's Calvary in a little bit different part of the city where they think the cross took place there and then there's another garden tomb right there. People, I don't care if you go to the traditional site or whether you go to the garden site, these two places, one of them most likely the real one. You walk there and you look inside the tomb of Jesus you know what you see? NOTHING! He's not in there. Jesus Christ conquered sin. He conquered death and the grave and he rose again. And he said, **"Kill me, bury me, I'll rise again, and I'll prove to you I'm the way the truth the life, the only way to God. He who trusts in me will never be disappointed because everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."**

People, the best is yet to come. That's why we celebrate Easter. It's an epic victory over sin and death. And that victory is ours. That victory is ours if you have Christ in your life. Religion won't do it. Being good won't do it. Taking communion won't do it. Going to masses and things won't do it. You gotta come to Jesus. You gotta be in him and the living Christ needs to live in you. If you're here today, I can assure you that if Christ lives in you, you're alive and will be forever, your sin is forgiven, and your death has been conquered. But if you're here today and you do not have Christ living in you, you can be as good as you want to be, but you're still like a stink on a ferret. You got sin in you, and it will not go until Jesus Christ cleanses it and conquers your death. If you're here today, you can be saved by faith because our faith is not futile. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. That's why we celebrate this epic victory. Let's pray today.

Father, I want to thank you for the power of the resurrection. Because of the

resurrection, we can know that our sin is forgiven, our death and our grave has been vanquished. Our faith is not futile. This faith brings salvation to all who believe.

With your eyes closed and your heads bowed today, I just want to ask, are you in sin still or are you in Christ? Have you believed and received this living Jesus to live in you? You can today, right now. We are saved by faith. If you know you're a sinner and you know you're separated from God then I want to ask you, call upon the name of the Lord and he'll save you. Believe in your heart, confess with your mouth, you will be saved. If you're not sure what to say, you can pray just like this:

Lord Jesus, I know that I'm a sinner and I believe that my sin separates me from you. I believe you love me and that's why you came to die for me in my place for my sins on that cross. When you died I believe you were buried, and I believe you rose again just as you promised. And I believe you're alive right now. So I ask you, Lord Jesus, come and live in me. Wash away all of my sin. Take the sting out of my death and give me the gift of eternal life. I believe and share in your epic victory, and I thank you. In your precious name, Amen.

If you prayed today to receive the Lord into your heart whether here or in Antioch, I want to ask you don't leave today without telling someone. We won't keep you long. But if you prayed today to receive the Lord, come to our prayer room here in Brentwood. Just take a moment, tell the people there, they'll give you some materials to read. In Antioch, Pastor Dennis will be waiting in the front. If you received the Lord today, I want you to come forward and I want you to see them. They will rejoice with you. Please come. The prayer room will be open.

Father, thank you today for this celebration. No hype. We don't even have to exaggerate. We can't begin to describe the glories that are ours because of Jesus. Lord, we have to face some tough things in this life, but you face it with us. We never face it alone. When it's all said and done we're going home. We're going home with you. So help us every day to live for your glory and remind us that no matter what, the best is yet to come. We praise you, God, for your epic victory that is now ours because of the resurrection. Thank you, God. We pray in your precious name, Amen.

God bless you everybody, Happy Easter!