



Sermon Transcription • Abbotsford

Easter April 15/16 2017 - Jeff Bucknum  
Risen! - (Matthew 28:1-15)

[Please Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for ease of reading. Also, some headings have been added in square brackets to aid the reader in locating portions of the sermon.]

One of my favourite sporting events of the year just ended in March. You'd know it as *March Madness*. It's the NCAA College Basketball Tournament in the United States. Probably the best four days of any sports around. In the first round of the NCAA tournament you watch on a Thursday, a Friday, a Saturday, and a Sunday. You can watch all the college basketball that you'd like and every game matters. There seems to always be last second wins, heartbreaking losses, all sorts of great stuff. It's pure theater. It's fantastic. You switch from one game to the next, to the next. I was in Palm Desert this year and the only thing that could keep me out of the sun was watching those games. There weren't as many heart breaking losses or last second shots this year, but there was one game, later in the tournament that will go down in history as a real defining one. It was between the University of Kentucky and the University of North Carolina - who eventually won the tournament. It was fascinating because the University of North Carolina was ahead for most of the game and in the last seconds, Kentucky came down and hit a three-point shot in order to tie the game. The crowd was going absolutely berserk. There seemed to be more Kentucky fans there than Carolina fans, so they were going nuts over this. But North Carolina, instead of taking a time-out and planning the play to try to get the last shot, they just took the ball out of bounds and they immediately ran in-bounds, and one player ran the length of the floor, passed to another guy, and in the .6 seconds left or something like that, he hit the final shot to win it.

I mean, I was screaming the whole time because I like Carolina more than Kentucky. I was screaming with great joy and excitement this entire time, but one of the things that was interesting about after the game, is that when you watched on YouTube and other places, people started to post videos of what it was like for Kentucky fans. To have come all the way back in this game and they had pictures or videos of bars in Kentucky, where these people were screaming their heads off because they had just tied the game with five seconds left and their like hugging each other and like, "I love you! This is so wonderful. We've come back!" and then like two seconds later they're like, "No!" Man, I watched this over and over and over and over [laughter]. It was awesome. It was awesome. Absolute stomach punching loss. If you've been in sports at all, you've been around that. It doesn't take too long before you're in a place where your team just-- you have the win. All the expectations are that you are going to be celebrating the victory and then "Ugh", you "Seahawk it", right? [laughter].

I'm so fascinated by this sort of thing that I will watch YouTube compilations of these sorts of events. There are several of them about last second wins that turned to last second losses. There's one cyclist



who is riding to the end of the race and he looks behind him and there's no one to be seen, so he sits up - like they do - and he zips up his shirt, and he starts waving his hands. Of course, I don't know if you've ever tried to ride your bike without holding the handle bars. At some point you've got this-- and all of a sudden he goes like this [waving his hand back and forth] and crashes into the side. Then he jumps on his bike, but the front wheel is bent, so he's got one leg and he's trying to lurch towards the end, and one dude just comes whipping right by him at the end. "Ugh" and yet, "Hehehe," right? [laughter]. You see runners running to the end and giving everyone high-fives at the end of the triathlon. One of them stopped to sign an autograph, and while they are signing the autograph, the other guy came whipping past him and he's like, "No!" Stomach punching loss.

If you know that feeling at all, you will understand what it was like to be one of the disciples after the crucifixion of Jesus. They had backed the wrong horse. They'd expected this Jesus to go into Jerusalem and to win the battle. He was going to take on the Romans, kick them out. He was going to restore Jerusalem to the Jews, finally. He was going to be the great leader that David was. In fact he is the son of David. He's the one who is going to be our Messiah - our deliverer. They championed him when he came into the city, waving palm branches and declaring, "Hosanna in the highest heaven!" Then one week later they saw him - or some saw him, most of them ran away. But, he died on a Roman cross. Beaten by the very ones that he was supposed to kick out. You could imagine what it would have been like to be one of the disciples where that has happened. That you bet your life on the wrong horse and now you're left with only shame. I mean, everyone will always know you to be the one who spent the last three, four years of your life giving yourself over to this kook. Who, yeah, did some neat tricks in Galilee, but at the end of the day, the Romans were stronger. And everyone will know that you're the one who doesn't show any kind of discernment. "What a fool," they will say as you walk by, and whisper about you behind your back. But of course, these men, they felt like they were in danger and that's why they're hiding in the Upper Room. They don't want to be out on the streets, for fear of what they did to Jesus they are now going to do to these men. But most of all, you'd just feel sad.

The women probably felt it worse, though. And the reason I say that, is because, as I said, all the other disciples left, but the women, they stayed behind. They watched as Jesus hung on the cross. They saw him die. When Joseph of Arimathea asks the ruling powers, "Can I have the body of Jesus so I might prepare it for burial and at least give him that kind of recognition. So that he's not just thrown out to the dogs." They gave him permission and he took the body. The women are the ones who come and they help with the burial of Jesus. They felt his cold flesh. Their tears dropped on his lifeless body. Stomach punching. I'll tell you what they did not expect. They did not expect that on the Sunday morning, when they decided to go to the tomb to finish the work they had begun in the burial process, but were interrupted by the Sabbath, where everyone is not supposed to do any work, when they went back to finish that work, I'll tell you what they did not expect. What you read here. This is their story. Matthew 28. It's the story of what these women find when they arrive at that tomb.

What I want to do here, is we are going to learn three things about the resurrection. There's more that we can learn here about the resurrection, but I'm just going to point out three things that we learn



about the resurrection from Matthew 28:1-10.

- The Resurrection is True
- The Resurrection is Powerful
- The Resurrection is Physical

It's true, it's powerful, and it's physical. Here's the first of those:

### **[The Resurrection is True]**

The resurrection is true. Look at verse one of Matthew 28 with me,

“After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.”

I want to stop there. Matthew - this is his version of the story - he doesn't see fit to talk about why they came to the tomb. Mark and Luke, when they talk about this event, are clear about it. The reason that they're coming is to finish the work that they did prior to the Sabbath, so his body won't stink. It's an act of kindness and charity to put spices on the body to give him that kind of honour and recognition, to finish the burial process so his body doesn't decompose really quickly. Mark tells us that when they're going to the tomb, they're thinking to themselves, “We have a problem. How are we going to get the stone out of the way? I mean, the Romans rolled the stone in front there and we don't have any big, burly guys who are going to be able to push that out of the way, so we are going to need help. We're not sure if we thought this through properly.” But, the important part that I want to point out here, is not the difficulty they have or what Matthew left out, it's actually the fact that women are the first witnesses. That might not seem shocking to you, but that's probably because you're a 21st century Canadian.

If you lived in the first century, and you were a Roman, say, or a Jew, when you realize that it was women who were given the responsibility to report what happened, okay? That's just, like, shocking. Women weren't trusted *at all* in the first century, for any reason. They believed in the first century, that if you were a woman, you were a little flighty, right? Highly emotional. So when you reported events, we really couldn't trust what part was your fritzzy brain and what part was truth. That's not my view [laughter]. First century Jewish men, okay? Not me. Not me. That's the way they viewed it. So, if you were a woman and you were called to testify in a court of law (which, you wouldn't be), but if you were called to testify in a court of law, the judge would look at you and go, “Okay, we're not going to listen to her because her blonde is going crazy,” right? She's just totally untrustworthy. The fact that women were the first witnesses to this, and that that is recorded for all time in the Gospel of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, *that* fact signals the authenticity of this story. You know what I mean? This is true. If you're going to make this story up, what you do is not have women involved. What you do, rather, is you have smart Roman men. They're the first ones that you have. You have the guards be the one who reports it and everyone believes. You don't have ditzzy women. You don't do that if you're going to make it up. Yet, the fact that it's here, lends credence to the story itself. This is an authentic, true account.



Now, you might object at this point if you know what you know about the Bible. Maybe you're a skeptic. You might object at this point and say, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. Okay, if we're going to talk about authenticity and truthfulness, what you read in Matthew about the resurrection of Jesus, when compared with what Mark says, and with what Luke says, and with what John says, they are hopelessly contradictory. I mean, just take the number of angels, for example. You have, in Mark's gospel, a description of one angel, but the angel is inside the tomb. In Matthew, he's outside the tomb and sitting on a rock. In Luke's gospel, you've got two of them. I mean, what do you want to do there? Which is it? Two? One? Where are they? I don't get it. So, if we're going to talk about truthfulness, this story is not true because of the variance between these gospel writers." Well, I'll bite. Okay? Let me engage with that, for just a second, in a couple of ways. Number one, different numbers of angels doesn't a contradiction make. A contradiction, by definition, is saying, "A and *not* A" at the same time. Do you understand? "Blue and *not* blue," "male and *not* male," "angel and *not* angel." Saying there are two angels and one angel - not a contradiction. Here's why: If I were to go to lunch, for example, as I do from time to time, with some people, and there were three people at the table, and that was the full number of them, and we were talking about whatever it was that we were talking about. Later that day I went home and said to my wife, "Hey, I had a really good lunch today," and she said to me, "Who did you have lunch with?" I say, "My friend, Graham." Am I lying? Well, if Graham was there, no. I'm not lying. Graham was there. But, I did not mention the other two people. She might find out later that there were another two people there and she might say, "Why didn't you tell me that there were two other people there?" But, I'm not lying, and it's not a contradiction for that other person to tell her that there were three people there, because there were three, and for me to say one. It's not a contradiction. There were probably two angels at the tomb. It's just that Matthew likes to highlight the one. He can do that, you know. It's the way we tell stories. We focus on the parts that we think are important, at least for us at that point. But, maybe more importantly, when it comes to multiple eye-witness testimony (you know what I mean by Matthew, Mark, Luke, John), these guys are eye-witnesses. They're watching an event happen. They're reporting, anyway, about those. Like the women come back and they're telling them what they saw. When it comes to multiple eye-witness testimony, variances are not a sign of a lie, but of the truth.

Look, let's imagine it this way. I want you to pretend you are a police officer for a minute. Someone is saying, "Finally" [Laughter]. You're going to go interview a number of people about an accident that they witnessed. It was somewhere in the town of Abbotsford. A big truck hit a little car and there were five different witnesses to the event. You go and you take your little notepad and you start interviewing the witnesses. You find out from the first witness, that they say, "Well, the big truck was a Ford and it was black." They talk a lot about the car. They don't mention anybody driving. The next witness talks, not about the car at all, but only talks about the driver and about how many people were together in the cab. Says there were three of them. Another person says that they only noticed the driver. One of them says that there was a little dice ball hanging from the rear-view mirror. My point is, each one of these is going to bring a particular perspective in it. You will know that they are telling the truth about what they see by the presence of two things. Number one: There will be a consistency in the basic details that they give you. There will be overlap between what they say about the core of what took place. "The car turned here, that one hit it." That will be the same across all of them, but they will also be truthful if there is variance in it. If there is no variance, what you will think is, "These six people or



five people got together and they concocted a story that they're giving to me. Their using the same language and the same images for everything. It's all a conspiracy. So, what you need is variance and a core of truthfulness in all multiple eye-witness testimony for it to be truthful. You followi? So, what do we have here?

Simon Greenleaf, who is one of the great Law Professor of the 20th century, from Harvard Law, said this about this event. He said,

“There is enough of a discrepancy to show that there could have been no previous concert among them...” [Right? They didn't get together and have a powwow and decide that they were going to lie to everyone] “and at the same time such substantial agreement as to show that they all were independent narrators of the same great transaction.”

In other words, the varying accounts are evidence that it's true. Not that it contradicts, it doesn't contradict. It's evidence that you have multiple eye-witness testimony, all of the same event, that *happened*, reported by women. Matthew's not lying to you here. This means everything. You know that. There was a man who was dead, who said before he died that he would die and rise again three days later. There it is. It is the most historically verifiable fact about ancient history. I dare you to disprove it. The Christian church has 2000 years of history of people trying to disprove it and yet, we stand. It's true.

### **[The Resurrection is Powerful]**

Secondly, it's powerful. So, here's the guts of what happens when these ladies come to this tomb. The resurrection is powerful.

“There was a violent earthquake...” [They're on their way, wondering whether or not they're going to be able to get into the tomb because of the stone.] “There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and [he] sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.”

So, fascinating little scene. This is not the first earthquake that has occurred in the last few days around this event. It says, in fact, that there was an earthquake when Jesus died on the cross. That the ground shook. At this occasion, though, the ground shaking is not a result of plate movement, I suppose. It's actually a result of an angel descending from on high. Shaking ground usually, in the Bible, accompanies the presence of God, which is what you'd expect here when this angel comes down. You know, in the Old Testament, when there's a character named Isaiah, who sees the Lord high and lifted up in His Temple and he describes the event by saying, “There's smoke in the Temple and the train of God's robe fills the entire room and the entire earth shook. Door posts shook because of the presence of the Lord there.” In Exodus 19, when the Lord descends on Mount Sinai to give the law to Moses, he says to the people of Israel, “Don't come and touch the mountain. Moses is going to come up on the mountain, but you don't touch the mountain.” Smoke comes and descends on top of this mountain and the ground shook because of the presence of God. So, you know when the ground



is shaking and this being descends from on high, that something big is happening, yeah? And let's be clear about what the being looks like. He's not going to look like a cricket player here, you know? He's dressed as white, but the white we're talking about is like a brilliant, gleaming, looking into a bright LED light, that kind of thing. Like, shield your eyes away from the presence of this one whose descending down. He comes and he rolls the stone away and he sits on it.

Now, there's something that I need to point out here. He does not roll the stone away so Jesus can get out. I know in most of the movies, where we do this, there's this scene where Jesus comes up to the stone and he kind of sits there and waits. It's, [knocking] "Hey, a little help? Hey, could you just-- Angel?" That's actually not the way the story is told. In fact, Jesus is gone. He'll say that, in fact, in a few minutes to Mary. "He's not here. Come, see where he lay." In fact, Jesus didn't have any problem, in his resurrection body, in going through the grave clothes. When they look in there and find grave clothes that are fully intact. So somehow, he came through the grave clothes and then a little bit later he'll end up coming into a room (a locked, sealed room) where his disciples are all meeting in this upper area, and he will just be in there with them. So, going through the locked door is not a problem for the resurrected Son of God. So you have to say, "Why is the stone rolled away, then?" Well, so the women could have a look, because they can't go through walls. They come, the angel comes down in his bright light and he rolls the stone away. He probably tips it over because the way they did these stones was they had to roll them. They were on an incline. They are like a big disc that rolled right in front of the tomb. So, he probably pushed that thing back and tipped it over, and he's sitting there on the top of it.

The best part of the passage though, is what happens to the guards, right? Which, of course, if you saw a bright light descending down and the earth shaking and the disc moving back and this bright being, sitting on the thing, you might freeze for just a second. There's this video I watched recently about a news reporter who is sitting there with-- Every once in awhile on the news they'll do an animal showcase and they'll bring an alligator into the studio (which is always a good idea) and, "Here's a snake." This woman, they put a tarantula on her. Right? "Can you hold this tarantula?" Her name is Bessie or whatever. They put this tarantula right here [indicating his shoulder] and this woman, honestly, she just starts shaking and she won't move. That's a great image. That's what's happening here. This angel comes down and these men, and we're not talking, like, weenie Abbotsford men [laughter], we're talking the the kind of men that most of those men *want* to be; Military, burly Roman soldier men. They have seen their fair share of combat. They have fought off the hords and there they sit in their own mess, like dead men. Here's what I want you to see. All of the power of the most powerful nation in the world - the Roman guards, the Roman seal put on the tomb daring anyone to come and remove it at the threat of death, death itself - all the powers of the present world and the world beyond could not hold him. Nothing could stop him. Behold the power of this.

I had a friend when I was in high school named William. William was kind of a small guy and so people would often pick on him and stuff. What people didn't know about William (he was a good friend of mine) was that he was the Pan Pacific Champion in Taekwondo. He flew to Japan and beat them all up and came back [laughter]. He was amazing. Because we knew this, we used to say to William-- I used to taunt him and say, "Listen, you're so small, there's no way you are going to get out from



underneath my burliness.” He’d say, “Okay, just, whatever you want. Just put me in whatever hold you want.” And I would. I would twist his arm behind his back, grab his neck and his head, “Okay, go,” and within, no kidding, like five seconds, he would have me on the ground with my head on the ground saying, “Uncle, uncle, uncle!” [laughter]. All of us would try to hold William and there was nothing anyone could ever do against William. Nobody messed with William even though he’s little, everyone in the school was like, “You know, you probably don’t want to mess with him.” This is the kind of thing-- Jesus cannot be held by any of them. He laughs at the Romans and at death itself. He mocks it with his laughing. Psalm 2:2-4,

“The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, ‘Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles.’ The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them.”

I have two little boys. They aren’t so little anymore, but when they were little I used to wrestle with them all the time. I loved to wrestle with my boys and my wife would say, “Take it easy,” and I was like, “No, they’ve got to learn to tough it up.” This is the moment, when they were three or four years old [laughter]. They would start to wrestle against me and I would have a go at them and stuff, but it was always funny, I would get to the point where I’d be eating a sandwich and be wrestling with the other hand, right? I would hold them down on the ground and just pin them to the carpet. They’d be like, “I’m going to get loose.” Okay, that’s fine, “No, I promise.” Ha ha ha ha okay. Right? So, finally, there would be points where they would say, “Okay, I’m so sick of it,” and they’d start to cry. Just a little fatherly advice - when they start to cry, that’s not time to give up, you know? [laughter] Life lesson here, right? I’m going to write a book about fatherhood soon [laughter], but I used to get down into their ears and I would say this line to my boys. I’d get right down to them and say, <whispering> “Is that all you’ve got? [laughter]. When the apostle Paul has the opportunity to write about the resurrection and the resurrection body, listen to the language he uses in 1 Corinthians 15,

“When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable... [When our mortal bodies. Jesus is the firstfruit, he’s the first one to go and we will follow. All who believe in Jesus will follow and have resurrection bodies just like he does. So, when the perishable (this body that we are currently in) puts on the imperishable - the resurrection body], “and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: [Listen to him.] “‘Death has been swallowed up in victory.’ ‘Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?’”

<whispering> “Is that all you’ve got?” You can hear Jesus saying that, right? “Is that all you’ve got?” We sang a song here this morning. Matt Maher writes it, it’s, “Christ has risen from the dead, trampling over death by death, come awake, come awake...” There’s this part in the middle, right? Where we almost chant together, “Oh death, where is your sting? Oh hell, where is your victory?” I, every Easter, drive around town playing in my car (and I probably drive too fast when it’s playing), but you know, the resurrection of Jesus should inspire inside of you some sense of boldness and excitement and joy, that he couldn’t be held and therefore we can’t be held. He was bulletproof and so we are bulletproof. There is hope forever because death is beaten. Every year at Easter there’s always that-- you can watch it online, people will pass it along. There’s a guy named S. M. Lockridge who was a pastor of



Calvary Baptist Church in San Diego. He was a pastor there from 1953-1993 (40 years) and his most famous sermon was actually one that he preached on Good Friday. You've heard it? Sunday's Coming? People put it to videos and things. The end of that sermon is delightful.

"It's Friday. Hope is lost. Death has won. Sin has conquered and Satan is just a laughin'. It's Friday. Jesus is buried, a soldier stands guard, and a rock is rolled into place. But, it's Friday. It's only Friday, *and Sunday is a comin'.*"

Listen, I make a big deal about this because as believers in Jesus Christ, if you are one, you and I face an awful lot of obstacles. It feels a lot like Friday and we wonder at times whether or not God has the will or power to accomplish what he's promised for us. We wonder if there's going to be a better day, but listen, you can't get stuck in a moment. This is just a moment. The battle is already won. It's only Friday *but Sunday is a comin'.*

### **[The Resurrection is Physical]**

Here's the last part of this. The Resurrection is Physical. Look at Matt 18:5-10 with me. You've got the guards shaking on the ground like dead men. Bright angel sitting on the stone,

"The angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid...' [which is of course is what you would say, because I would imagine fear would be the first thing that they would feel. If the soldiers feel it, so do they.] "'Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here,'" [He's been gone for a while now.] "'He's not here; he has risen, just as he said..."

Now, there's a little mild rebuke there, right? I mean, it's not a heavy rebuke to these ladies, but it's sort of a, "Listen, you guys should probably have expected this. I know you're bringing these spices to come and to anoint the body, but honestly, you should have brought maybe, like, flags and a victor's crown or something because he said, prior to this, that he was going to rise from the dead. Did you not believe what he was going to say? This one, this Jesus, has the power to fulfill everything he says, so he has risen just as he said. Come and see the place where he lays." He probably invites them into the tomb, "Look, right here, see? Grave clothes."

"Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee...' [Which is something else that he promised. He would meet together with them in Galilee after he rose.] "There you will see him.' Now I have told you..." [Which is angel speak for, "My job is done here."] 'So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy..."

Imagine that mixture of emotions. "Could it be? I mean, it's not every day you see a shining, bright being, telling you that he is gone, and we saw the tomb ourselves, and so he's certainly not there, but, could it be?" Yet fearful because you have already committed yourself to this horse in the past and it didn't pan out."



“So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus [himself] met them. ‘Greetings,’ he said.” [I love that. Greetings is the Greek way, in the original language that this was written in, it’s just a standard, “Hello.” Honestly, they came across Jesus after he had risen from the dead, and the first words from his mouth are, “What’s up?” [laughter]. “How are you doing this morning, ladies?” “G’day!”] They came to him, clasped his feet [notice that] and [they] worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

What do they grab? They grabbed his feet. Listen, you can’t grab the feet of a hallucination, can you? Have you ever had a dream in your mind and you grasp it? No. Ghosts don’t have feet that one can grab. Disembodied spirits don’t have feet. The resurrected Jesus was physical. He was actually there. This isn’t the only place in the resurrection stories where this appears. You have stories where Jesus, in fact, will go and he will speak to doubting Thomas, in John chapter 20, and Thomas is like, “No, I’m not going to believe that Jesus rose from the dead unless I see his nail-pierced hands and touch his scarred side. So, Jesus appears to him, a day or so later, and says, “Hey, Thomas, put your hand [tapping his hand] right here. Feel it.” You know what Thomas did not do there? Reach his hand through his hand. “Oooo, mystical.” Felt his side. Jesus goes on to a beach a little bit later and he starts eating fish with the disciples. He has a digestive system, this Jesus, in his resurrected body. Very physical.

You think, “Why are you making a big deal about that? Of course Jesus was physical.” Here’s why I’m making a big deal about that. Some think that the Christian hope is a disembodied heaven. Listen to me now, some people in the Christian Church think that the great Christian hope is that we are going to go to some disembodied bliss, up in the clouds, where we are going to play a harp and hum for most of eternity. This is the way it’s played off, in all honesty, in the way that we talk about this in the Christian Church. A lot of that comes, in fact, from what is called *Gnosticism*. It was a rival viewpoint to the early Christians. In fact you can go and you can find a bunch of other books, instead of the gospels that we have. You can find in the first few centuries, other books called the *Gnostic Gospels*, which were written by rivals to Christianity. They’re kind of late. They are not eyewitness accounts and they usually tell stories about a Jesus who is really not physical because they believe that physical stuff was bad and non-physical spiritual stuff was good. So, they tell stories about Jesus as being-- if you walked behind Jesus on the beach, he would leave no footprints, right? He sort of floated above the beach. One of my favourites is that there’s a story about how Jesus doesn’t blink. Just imagine that; [staring wide eyed] “Come follow me.” [laughter] He won’t look away, right? “Yes, okay, I’m coming.” It’s crazy! Of course he doesn’t blink because blinking is a physical thing and physical things are useless and worthless and so the Christian Church has a long history of adopting this kind of weirdness. That only spiritual things are really valuable, but physical stuff doesn’t really matter as much. So we picture heaven and we think, “Oh yeah, it’s an escape from the body because the body’s physical, so we’ll be freed at last to go live in the ethereal realm up with the clouds. The Philly Cream Cheese realm where the lady is there with her angelic clouds.” If I asked you right now, “Can you draw me a picture of heaven?” most of you would put clouds there. We would say, “Heaven,” with a blue sky and puffy white clouds. We sing about this hope of being released from the body. One of the great Christian hymns (which I love to sing, to be honest with you) is called, *I’ll Fly Away*. You know it?



<singing> “Some glad morning when this life is o’er, I’ll fly away; to that home on God’s celestial shore, I’ll fly away. I’ll fly away, Oh Glory, I’ll fly away; when I die Hallelujah, by and by, I’ll fly away.” Like, I will be released from this prison cell.

Switchfoot (one of the great bands in recent days) sings a song called *Red Eyes* that’s talking about Christian hope and how we ought not-- even though we have red eyes in the present moment because of our tears, we have a Christian hope. Listen to what they describe as the Christian hope, they say, “All of my days are spent within this skin, within this cage that I am in.” The body is a cage and you need to be released from the body, so that you can be non-physical, which is good. I’m telling you that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is decidedly physical. He’s got feet and a digestive system and hands and side. The future is physical for all who follow in his way. Our great Christian hope is not that we get relief from the prison of our body to some ethereal realm. Our great Christian hope is that the new heavens and new earth, where there will be trees and soccer and baseball (and I’ll be good at it) [laughter]. Romans 8:23,

“Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.” [What are we waiting for? The redemption of our bodies. Verse 24] “For in this hope...” [What hope? The redemption of our bodies.] “In this hope we were saved.”

The great Christian hope is that we will be in a renewed heaven and a renewed earth. Now, I know, people ask me questions theologically-- “Well what happens when people die?” They go to what theologians call *The Intermediate State*,” and to be honest with you, most-- and it’s immaterial; It’s non-physical. Most of what’s written in the scriptures, about heaven, is not describing the intermediate state. Your dead friends and relatives are in the intermediate state. They have not reached their final destination because their final destination is a new heaven and a new earth, where we will have joy forevermore. So listen, if you like food (not fish) [laughter], but if you like food, if you like the feel of the wind in your hair, these are all just echos of what will be. Ruined and marred by sin, but the greatest joys that we have in this world, will be joys forevermore, even better than they are in the present moment. What a hope. The resurrection is true, it’s powerful, it’s physical.

Let me finish with this. It’s been several years since my mom died and there’s not a day that goes by where I don’t think about sitting with her alone in the hospital in Bellingham, Washington, as her brain was dead and her body was shivering and choking for life. She was breathing in a way that sounded like she was breathing through a snorkel, all night long. Talk about a sleepless night for me. I sat by her bed and held her hand and she didn’t know I was there. I don’t know if you’ve been in a hospital late at night, but it gets really, really quiet. I’m holding the hand of my dying mother and I remember distinctly thinking, “Death is having a victory here. It doesn’t feel like Jesus won a war, in this moment.” To be honest with you, it was the biggest stomach punch I’ve ever had in my life. Do you know why I love Easter? Because it means that that moment is not all there is. That’s not the last thing for my mom. That this moment is just a moment in a vast eternity for her. That she waits in the intermediate state for her resurrection body where she will be renewed and all the challenges that



body had will be made obsolete and done away with. There is a hope for the future that there is a joy forevermore. It's described in Revelation chapter 21. Just listen to the words,

“Then I saw ‘a new heaven and a new earth,’ for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’ He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’”

Yes Lord, make it all new. He has risen. He has risen, He has risen indeed. Let me pray for us.

Lord, I am so thankful for your kindness and grace to us by dying on a cross, for fulfilling the plan of the ages, and applying it to us. Lord, there are lots of people who are hearing my voice, Father, who don't have this hope and I pray that you would convict them, by your Spirit, to draw close to you. I pray, Father, that you would move them, that they might know you ultimately, Father, and know this great hope. And for those of us that have put our faith in Christ, I pray Lord, that you would fill our minds and hearts with this hope, so that we will not be stuck in moments, but instead, Father, we will remember, always, that our great God has won the victory and it will be here soon enough. We pray it in that way. In Jesus name, Amen.