

## Strategic Design Part 3, Death Can't Hold Him! Easter Sermon

Pastor Jordan Biel | Rock of Grace Kinsman Campus | 04.17.22

### OUTLINE

*Death is the result of the sin within all of us*

*Death for Jesus was one part of God's strategic design to save you*

*Death can't hold Jesus and death can't hold you when you trust in Him*

*Death isn't the end, it's the doorway*

I'm Pastor Jordan and I'm so glad you're with us today - on Easter! What an awesome day when we celebrate the resurrection of JESUS! If you're a guest with us, I'd love to meet you after service today in the yellow room across the hall. We're so glad you're with us and we just want to get to know you briefly and then get you off to your Easter meal.

Our sermon series this month is Strategic Design with the premise being that GOD our Creator, has a strategic design to restore you and to restore ALL things. He's turning all things into something beautiful that displays His glory. Today's subtitle being DEATH CAN'T HOLD HIM I wanted to tell you a quick story. Yes, it's another story about my kids.

*"You told me grandma was in heaven"*

I was driving down the road with my girls - I have four of them - We were driving down the road and we passed my wife's grandmas cemetery- where's she buried and I said "Oh look, that's where grandma Berdy is buried." My daughter Selah - about 6 at the time - said "HEY. You told me grandma was in heaven!"

And... I froze. I really didn't know what to say. Do i explain that grandmas body is there and her spirit is in heaven? I went ahead and tried...

Selah... her body is in the ground over there but her spirit - the real her - went to heaven. She looked at me so confused - like a cocker spaniel looking at an lobster. I went on "Grandma is not over there. i mean she is. But she isn't. The real her is up in heaven. Her body is over there in the ground though."

Yeah that didn't help. I just gave up "Who wants a donut?" LOL

In that funny story from my daughters we learn actually a powerful lesson - death is just a doorway. We truly will spend eternity away from God OR with God and I'm praying today that you trust in Jesus so you too can spend eternity WITH God.

Before we get too far into today's message I like to do a quick recap from our series so far. The big take-aways have been this ...

**While God has all the power (He's sovereign) He came to serve.**

*Next we said that just like the crowd on Passover that day Jesus arrived in Jerusalem...*

**We want saved from others. Jesus wants to save us from ourselves.**

*It's the sin inside US that leads us to death. But if we're going to die,*

**Why would God allow suffering? When we suffer disappointment or grief, we're given a chance to learn to trust - trust in the One who made us, loves us and saved us.**

*Lastly,*

**People want a crowd. Jesus wants us to have a crown. People want NOW. Jesus wanted FOREVER. People want a King but not a Lord - but, You can't have Jesus as Savior and not as Lord.**

He must be both. So four points today - I usually stick with the standard 3 but hey Today is Easter so you get a bonus =)

## **1. Death is the result of the sin within all of us.**

The Bible says that because of Adam and Eve's sin, we are ALL terminal.

God's law and God's ways are perfect. Why? Because God is Himself perfect. But we, mankind, really messed things up right?

And we must be careful not to think when we hear that "Oh yeah, there's a lot of messed up people out there."

BILLBOARD ILL >

If I were to tell each of you "Listen, the top worst 5 thoughts you've ever had are going to be put up on a Billboard on Route 11 interstate for all to see." You might be horrified. Why? Because you know that you have thoughts that aren't kind - thoughts are selfish and really if we listed what we've done, if we're honest we're ashamed at some of what we've done.

Why?

That's **SIN - it's missing the mark of what God's perfect design requires.**

We've all felt the pain of sin - we can't deny it's reality. We've had someone lie to us, maybe even cheat us or steal something or even worse - steal our good name. Sin is awful. The problem is, without God, the sin just repeats itself in a viscous cycle. Revenge causes more hurt causing more revenge causing more hurt.

That sin left us in a dilemma that we could not get out of on our own. Like a pit we are thrown in and we simply have no way of escape.

**You see the question we all can't seem to shake - no matter whether you're religious or not - is this "What is wrong with this world?"**

The Bible tells us what's wrong with the world - it's our sin - a nature within us that causes us to crave power, at the expense of others, push others down through force or political gain or thru cohesion and manipulation. We see it all round us - the bully at the

school - who - as it turns it - is bullied and beat at up by *his* father. He likely learned it from someone else - maybe his own dad.

The world leader who invades another country just to have more territory under his belt - the man who cheats on his wife just because he wants to - ignoring the years of pain it will cause her.

Why?

SIN. Sin leads to death - and it's within all of us and SIN is what Jesus came to defeat!

But how would he defeat it? With a sword? With a new political regime? No. He came humbly, like a servant. He came to pay the penalty of OUR sin! And what motivated Him? LOVE. Love for YOU.

Jesus, God's son was given over by the religious leaders to be crucified. Let's pick up where we left off last week.

John 18:37

Let me set the scene for you.

Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead - a man who was in the tomb for 3 nights! He was the brother of Mary and Martha and a good friend of Jesus. Jesus grieved with Mary and Martha, cried with them and comforted them.

Why did Jesus cry with them? Because you see Jesus was also fully man and fully God. 100% BOTH! He feels pain with us and has true empathy for us because His love is genuine!

After Jesus comforts these two women, he then goes to the grave of their brother and THEN raised Lazarus from the dead by the sheer sound of His voice!

Now imagine this - days later - Jesus is standing before Pilate the Governor and Pilate is torn inside. He doesn't think Jesus is guilty of anything let alone something deserving death. But the religious elite have insisted that because Jesus claimed to be God that it was blasphemy - deserving of death.

Jesus is standing before Pilate answering questions - behind closed doors - just Jesus and the one who can sentence Him to death. Jesus says....

**JN 18:37-40 "For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." <sup>38</sup> Pilate said to him, "What is truth?" After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, "I find no guilt in him. <sup>39</sup> But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" <sup>40</sup> They cried out again, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a robber.**

Many people today also ask "What is truth?" Truth and moral absolutes are becoming more and more vague and harder to define.

My truth can be relative to my situation and your truth be relative to you. But in the eyes of God and His Word, truth is not subjective. It's objectively truth.

But I want you to know in a confused world that we're in now, that you can KNOW what truth is. In the words of Jesus, God's Son, He IS the way the TRUTH and the life.

Now if you were with us last week, you remember that this is the same crowd who worshipped him only days before. They wanted Jesus to SAVE THEM NOW from their oppressive government.

But Jesus was coming to save them from themselves - anyone willing to admit their need for God. The same is true today. Jesus doesn't save you from others. He saves you from yourself - the sin within YOU. We ALL need that grace. I'm so thankful He was willing to forgive me.

So who is this Barabbas character? And WHY is he being released?

So there was a custom that allowed one guilt person to be set free during the Passover high holy day. What is Passover?

**Passover is when the Jewish people celebrate God miraculously delivering them from slavery in Egypt. 1,000 years earlier, God instructed them to put the blood of a lamb over their door-frame to prevent their children from dying. A death angel (sent from God) swept through ALL homes and brought death. The Jewish people were saved by the blood of the lamb - a symbol of what Jesus would do.**

Because it was Passover and the death angel passed over their homes and they were delivered from death, Jesus comes on the scene in GOD's STRATEGIC DESIGN to be our Passover Lamb!

God's payment for sin wasn't a whim, it wasn't a reaction, it was His strategic design to save YOU and to save me! For God so loved the world that He GAVE His only Son to die in your place - in my place!

So in this design, it was their custom in Rome, to set someone free at passover. This was all part of God's design. This guy Barabbas a KNOWN murderer, happened to be the lucky guy!

I love how one author I read often, Glen Pakiam pointed out when teaching on the sermon on the mount that when translated the word "blessed" was used by Jesus to convey the joy of being in God's Kingdom. IE "Blessed are the poor in spirit" Blessed are the meek. Blessed are the merciful for they will be given mercy..."

The word "blessed" isn't the best word for the Aramaic word Jesus used. The better translation would be LUCKY.

LUCKY are the ones who receive God's mercy and see it for what it is!

LUCKY - as in there is NOTHING you could ever do to deserve it!

Barabbas so blessed - so lucky - that day to be given freedom when he deserved punishment - when he deserved death!

WE are like Barabas! WE go free when JESUS goes to the cross!

## 2. Death for Jesus was part of God's strategic design to save you.

**We are like Barabbas! We are guilty - proven to be convicted of our sin - yet we go free and Jesus goes to death!**

**You see the longing within all of us - the desire that maybe we've never named or said out loud is that we would be forgiven and free of all our past.**

**For some of you, you may be haunted by your past. Maybe your past mistakes come up a lot in arguments at the house. Maybe TODAY is the day you let God put the past in the past and forgive you AND today can be the day you forgive yourself.**

In John 19, 1 through 11, we read that Pilot handed Jesus over to be flogged - whipped and beaten within an inch of His life. Then Jesus stood before him again and questioned Him but Jesus stood His ground. But did so with kindness.

I watched The Passion again on Friday - I try to do that every year on Good Friday. As usual it was too much to bear and I couldn't watch many parts as they tortured Jesus and Jesus had the courage to endure that - ALL so I could be saved - all so YOU and ME could be set free. So we pick up at vs. 12

<sup>12</sup> From then on Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are rebelling against Ceasar! etc" So they took Jesus, <sup>17</sup> and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. <sup>18</sup> There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them.

<sup>19</sup> Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Look at verse 23...

<sup>23</sup> When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, <sup>24</sup> so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfill the Scripture which says,

"They divided my garments among them,

and for my clothing they cast lots."

So the soldiers did these things,

Notice how they fulfilled prophecy - God's strategic design.

The Death of Jesus

<sup>28</sup> After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." <sup>29</sup> A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. <sup>30</sup> When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

<sup>31</sup> Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. <sup>32</sup> So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. <sup>33</sup> But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.

<sup>34</sup> But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. <sup>35</sup> He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe. <sup>36</sup> For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken.” <sup>37</sup> And again another Scripture says, “They will look on him whom they have pierced.”

**Jn 18:37–19:37)**

### **5 prophecies were fulfilled in this one passage.**

**They divided his garments**

**They offered Him sour wine**

**Not one of his bones was broken (even though He suffered excruciating pain)**

**He was pierced**

**He was placed in a rich man’s tomb (the next passage - he’s given Joseph’s tomb)**

All of these things were prophetic pictures given to us by Prophets in the old testament AND David in the book of Psalms. It was all a part of God’s strategic design to save YOU. Jesus took our place on the cross, paying OUR punishment!

It’s remarkable that we are saved by the WORK of GOD!

What would cause a HOLY God to die in OUR place - to give up His son for us?!  
LOVE

Love is the motivation of God. HE IS LOVE! Look at this verse.

### **Eph 2:4-8**

**<sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,  
<sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—  
by grace you have been saved— <sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with  
him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might  
show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.  
<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing;  
it is the gift of God**

We are like Barabbas, dead in our sin - guilty on death row - but GOD stepped in and gave us grace. When we have faith to believe that, GOD steps in and save us and we are made new! And we all need that change to happen! We all are born with that thing within us that we can’t define - that sin that causes us to do things we regret until we meet Jesus.

STORY > HUMAN ELEMENT > TRUSTING IN GRACE / HIS POWER

### **MOUNTAIN RESCUE**

You know last week, me and the family were watching these true stories re-enacted of heroic rescue. It was one of those “shouldn’t be alive” type shows.

It was remarkable. These two guys went to the top of this mountain peak to ski down it. It was pretty much sheer snow cliff and they had the bright idea to go to the top and then ski down.

The problem is, it was even steeper than they thought. They hit a section of the mountain they didn't plan to hit and fell about 40' hitting rock hard ice. One man broke his femur while his friend has his face smashed in; he could barely see out of one eye and his other eye was swollen shut.

They were able to call for help using their emergency kit.

When the EMTs came on the helicopter, they one interviewed said he had been doing these crazy rescues for 20 years and never attempted one as dangerous as this.

They certainly couldn't land the helicopter so they're hovering over these two men.

They risked going into a tail spin and crashing because of the altitude and precarious location of these two men between mountain sides.

When the EMT was lowered from the helicopter, his body went into a tail spin and he said it felt like eternity of just spinning till he hit that icy edge hard.

He gathered himself and walked over to the two men.

He loaded them up and hoisted them one at a time to the helicopter. He made it clear that he knew that he could die that day. The stakes were high. Those EMT risked death to give these two men LIFE.

### **That's what Jesus does for us!**

#### **He risked his life - no GAVE his life - to rescue us!**

We were the foolish ones who caused our own problem - stuck in our sin - crippled - unable to help ourselves out of the mess of our sin!

BUT JESUS came to us!

Jesus, the son of God became a son of man to make the sons of men, sons and daughters of God!

He not only rescued us from death, but healed us - inside and out!

We're no longer bound to pay the penalty of our sin.

We all have done things we regret - made choices we wish we hadn't. Why? It's what the Bible calls *sin* within us.

Sin is wanting what God hasn't given - it's craving power - it's selfishness - and we're born into it the Bible says. We have no way of saving ourselves!

### **Romans 7:14-25**

**<sup>14</sup> For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. <sup>15</sup> For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. <sup>16</sup> Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. <sup>17</sup> So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. <sup>18</sup> For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh.**

**For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. <sup>19</sup> For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. <sup>20</sup> Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells**

within me. <sup>21</sup> So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. <sup>22</sup> For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being,

<sup>23</sup> but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. <sup>24</sup> Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? <sup>25</sup> Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

### **So Jesus died on the cross, then what happened next?**

At first they went back to their old way of life - assuming Jesus had failed them. But on the third day they heard the news.

Peter and John raced to the tomb because Mary Magnalege found it empty and the stone rolled away. She assumed someone stole the body.

Peter and John remember in that moment that Jesus had said he would rise from the dead. Let's pick up at John chapter 19, vs 11

JN 19:11-14 Mary is standing at the tomb crying - total despair that her Lord the ONE person who saw her for who she was and not her mistakes - was dead. Suddenly she hears His voice!

**JN 19:15-29** <sup>15</sup> Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." <sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). <sup>17</sup> Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father;

but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' " <sup>18</sup> Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"—and that he had said these things to her. <sup>19</sup> On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

**That would be SHOCKING!** <sup>20</sup> When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." <sup>22</sup> And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld."

*Now Thomas wasn't with them and when we heard all this, he doubted dit was true. So ...* Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." <sup>27</sup> Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not doubt Me, but believe." <sup>28</sup> Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" <sup>29</sup> Jesus said to him, "Have you believed



**because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” Jn 20:11–29**

Did you hear that last part?

Jesus not only comes to Thomas in the midst of his doubt and questions - maybe even anger towards God - but He comes to YOU - today - right now - in the midst of your questions, your doubt, your anger, your grief, your disappointment and He said “Touch my hands, feel my side where I was pierced... FOR YOU!”

**Jesus doesn’t condemn us when we doubt and when we’re mad at Him, He makes a special trip to see us. He comes even closer to help us believe!**

*Acknowledge their pain and doubt and skepticism ...  
Tim Keller ....*

I get it if you’re mad at God. I get it if you have skepticism in your heart towards God, towards faith and towards eternity. You’ve been hurt. I have too. I can’t explain all the reasons you’ve been hurt and been disappointed. But I can promise you that God is making all things new and that renewal starts with trusting in JESUS.

You can be BLESSED for believing today.

Jesus may not be standing in front of you like He did for Thomas that day but you can feel His Spirit right now. You can sense the truth - that He IS The Son of God and that He DID die in your place and rise again to new life!

### **3. Death can’t hold Jesus and death can’t hold you!**

Because Jesus rose from the dead, we have proof of His power over sin and death and that promise to give US power over sin and death. All we have to do is BELIEVE in Jesus, the Son of God and believe in His message of grace. Admitting our need for Him to save us!

1 Peter 1:3

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!

Did you hear that? Because Jesus rose again, we are BORN AGAIN when we put our trust in Jesus!

Born again - meaning it’s like you become a NEW person - you are BORN - AGAIN.

*(Proof via life change)*

I’ve met so many people who’s lives have been radically changed after God made them a new person when they put their trust in Jesus.

Many of which are a part of this great church. Hundreds of lives, hundreds of stories, hundreds of unique testimonies of God’s amazing grace! This church has a few hundred stories of God’s saving power - God’s ability to take a hurting heart and

change it. That's just the tip of the iceberg as millions even an estimated 2 billion have put their trust in Jesus - roughly 1/3 of the world believes Jesus is the son of God. Not just because some preacher told them - but because they felt His love and admitted their brokenness - their need for Him.

God knows each one of them and knows you - He knows YOUR story and today, your story can take a dramatic turn! You can begin again today when you put your trust in Jesus!

One of my favorite passages in God's Word is Romans 8. Before we read it I want to tell you that

You may be skeptical and I get that. But can I pose a question to to you?

Which is more likely - that multiple eye-witness accounts recite a man name Jesus who claimed to be God, who walked around Jerusalem and it's neighboring cities for 3 and 1/2 years doing miracles, was crucified and then 3 days later was seen multiple times IN PERSON by multiple people.

What' more likely to be true - it was all a fairy-tale - a myth - a legend?

OR multiple people really did experience the same phenomenon - Jesus of Nazareth died and rose from the dead and appeared to them!

**There's an argument of logic here that you can't ignore.**

**If 20 people told you that they witnessed** an alligator run through the square in Kinsman, you'd be likely to believe it.

If one, meh... prob not.

But 20 - 20 different people - many of which didn't share the same values in life - 20 people from different backgrounds faiths and customs all sharing the same eye witness account that indeed an alligator ran through Kinsman square and into the swamp behind Burrells Towing ... LOL

You'd consider MAYBE it to be true. Why? The logic. The chance that 20 different people from different bkgd and value systems agree on what they saw makes it virtually inevitable - even proven - that indeed an alligator ran through the square.

This is the same verification system used in a court of law today - eye witness accounts - varied testimonies with a reoccurring theme.

JESUS DID IN FACT RISE FROM THE DEAD! Witnessed by MANY people scripture says over 500 people. And He did so because it was GOD'S STRATEGIC DESIGN! King David foretold about Jesus resurrection in Psalms.

Then Jesus Himself told His followers that He'd rise from the dead.

MT 12:40 Just as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three night sin the belly of the earth."

What's remarkable is that after Jesus did exactly what He promised He would do in giving his life on the cross, the disciples still doubted. Most of them went back to their

old way of life - some fishing, some went to hide in a room together to discuss what they were going to do and JESUS SHOWS UP to them.

He tells them DON'T BE AFRAID!

1 Cor. 15:3-8 tells us He appeared to MANY people after He rose from the dead - that's why this story carried on through generations!

**1 Cor. 15:3-8**For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

How can that many people being telling such a strange lie? OR is it not a lie? Is it the TRUTH => JESUS truly did rise from the dead!

I get it if you're not quite sure about a story so strange, but I just want to dare you to trust in GOD - believe this story - it's the TRUTH - it's the HOPE that you need!

TURN TO ROMANS 8

**Life in the Spirit**

**8** There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup> For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup> in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, ... skip to 10

**<sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.**

#### **4. Death isn't the end, it's the doorway.**

Last Saturday, I was at a funeral in Andover. And while the family and friends grieved their loss, they were able to celebrate Heaven's gain. Why? Because of the HOPE THEY SHARED in the resurrection life that Jesus made possible!

**You see the longing within all of us that we we would pass from this life to the next and not be wondering about HOW we'll spend eternity. Eccl 3:10 tells us that God put the concept of eternity in ALL of us!**

**Truth is - we all know we're terminal yet we also know that life will continue after this life on earth. TODAY you can know HOW and WHERE you'll spend eternity. You can have that LIVING HOPE that we sang about. You don't have to WONDER if you'll go to heaven! You can KNOW FOR SURE!**

**Jesus makes us not only forgiven like Barabbas, but He make us His brothers and sisters, sharing the same loving Father who makes all things possible - forgiveness, miracles & an eternity spent with Him!**

**Turn back to Romans 8 with me...**

**Ro 7:14–8:17 Heirs with Christ**

**<sup>12</sup> So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. (Sin nature that causes death) <sup>13</sup> For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. <sup>14</sup> For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. <sup>15</sup> For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs— heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.**

All of you have a desire to be told by your Father that you are loved and that he’s proud of you. Whether you had a good dad or not-so-great dad growing up. Why is that there? Why is there hundreds, even thousands of stories written for movies in Hollywood that depict the father-wound - the hole in the heart that deepens when a father isn’t there for his child? Because that desire is put there by God Himself! He is your Father and HE wants you to know it.

82% of prison inmates grew up without a father.

This is one of the reasons why our church is committed to foster care and adoption. Since launching our #EveryChild initiative, We have 10 families who’ve become foster parents and we’ve had 36 kids brought into care in ROG homes!  
WOW!

Thank YOU LORD for being a Father to the Fatherless!

That’s what happens when a people surrender to God - God’s love that THEY received starts to flow out of them to a hurting world! BEAUTIFUL!

And that’s only ONE aspect of a church that has put their faith in JESUS! There are countless ways that people are serving one another - not perfect - but serving and following Jesus together!

Think about when Jesus rose from the dead; In John chapter 20, we read about the roman guards who were supposed to guard the tomb. Poor guys - LOL - They were NOT given the best job available at the time. LOL

Can you imagine that conversation? “Hey guys uhh you know Jesus - the one who fed 15,000 people miraculously - the one who raised Lazarus from the dead - and the widows son from the dead - oh and uh Tim, he healed your Aunt from that deadly disease - yeah we need you stand by His grave in the cemetery ... at night. LOL

Can you imagine that moment when the guards fell over ..  
 Jesus' power over death becomes YOUR power over death when you trust in Him!

In God's strategic design, He knew He would be sending Jesus to die in your place before you were ever born! He is sovereign and sacrificial!  
 Eph 2 tells us that God KNEW He would be sending Jesus to die in our place and that all we'd have to do is accept this free gift of salvation.

STORY > REAL LIFE STORY to illustrate this free gift

**Jesus did for you what you couldn't do for yourself.  
 He and He alone was perfect and was able to complete the law of God.**

GOSPEL - what Jesus did that we can't do.

**Ro 6:3-10 "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.**

**<sup>5</sup> For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. <sup>6</sup> We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. <sup>7</sup> For one who has died has been set free from sin. <sup>8</sup> Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. <sup>9</sup> We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. <sup>10</sup> For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God."**

The fear we don't want to face is this - some of us are afraid that we won't actually make it to heaven. Our good works simply don't outweigh our bad ones. We've simply done too much wrong to deserve heaven... so we assume we simply won't make it.

WRONG! Today you can be SURE that you'll make it heaven not because of your good works but because of JESUS' good work. You can be sure you can be forgiven and you'll spend eternity with Jesus and all who've trusted in Him! Scripture says in Rev 2:10 there's a crown of life designated for you!

**THE CROWN OF LIFE:** THIS PROMISE IS FOR ANY WHO STAY FAITHFUL TO JESUS IN TEMPTATION AND PERSECUTION. THOSE WHO REFUSE TO GIVE UP IN RESISTING TEMPTATION AND

This crown of life is given to everyone who puts their trust in Jesus for salvation and then endures temptation to sin and the temptation to quit.  
(JAS. 1:12; REV. 2:10).

GOD has the right to give this crown of life to those who trust in His Son Jesus!  
You might say why does God have the right to judge? Well, the truth is this - He simply does. He is God and you are not. He is God and I am not. He is creator, sovereign King!  
He is perfect in love and justice!

Romans 9 tells us that we're like a clay jar trying to ignore the one crafting and forming us. GOD is God and we are not and yet He calls us to be His children...

“Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’  
... they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’ ”

Vs. 32 goes on to tell us that some people will take offense at the message of the Gospel. They don't want to admit their sin and their need for a Savior. Look at this verse.

<sup>Vs32</sup> Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, <sup>33</sup> as it is written,

“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense;  
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

You see you don't make it to heaven because you're good enough. You make it to heaven because Jesus was good enough.

But notice God's desire is that you ARE saved! He wants you to simply accept His FREE gift of mercy and grace!

**10** Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.  
<sup>2</sup> For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.  
<sup>3</sup> For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. <sup>4</sup> For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Christ is the END of the law - for who? - just the ones who grew up in the right house?  
NO! Christ Jesus and His grace is for “EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES!”

You see God changes our hearts and gives us NEW hearts that WANT to please Him. His Spirit comes in and makes us a new person! BORN AGAIN - desiring to love our Maker.

“But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed  
Ro 6:17

As we close, let's go back three days in our story - three days before Jesus rose from that tomb, he was hanging on a cross, surrounded by a man on each side.

ALTAR MUSIC STARTS when I say "There were two criminals also being crucified that day - one on each side of Jesus the Gospel of Luke tells us"

One of those criminals mocked Jesus - openly made fun of him.  
The other cried out to Jesus for mercy - asking to be with Jesus in paradise.  
Jesus, so full of love and mercy, forgave him in that moment.  
Here's

**Which criminal are you going to be today?** The one who rejects Jesus and ignores His message of salvation? OR will you be the one who acknowledges your need to be forgiven? Will you be like the thief who asked Jesus for mercy and TODAY you can be saved - TODAY you can be made into a new person - a brother or sister of JESUS!

When I invite you to be a Christian today, I'm not inviting you to a life of burdensome rules and regulations - of comparing yourself to others to ensure you're doing more good things than they are. I'm not inviting you to be "religious" No. I'm inviting you into a relationship with Father God, the one who made you - the One who knows what's best for you. He wants wants best for you too!

**I'm inviting you into a relationship with Jesus Christ, the perfect Son of God who came** to die in your place and not just die but RISE AGAIN to new life! It's true! Death can't hold Him!

The Disciple John described Him as the Light of men saying ... light of men. <sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.  
(Jn 1:4-5)

Death and darkness can not overcome Jesus - He IS the light of the world. But you can be overcome by death. You and me - we are terminal. We need Jesus, the perfect God-Man to be the one to change us and to make us right with God.

This is an invitation to TRUST - trust in the God who created the universe and created you! He formed you for 9 months, crafting you, designing you, making you into someone unique and special - someone who would be a picture of His glory on the earth!

You may have regrets. You may be even thinking of those regrets right now - should have's - Wish I would have's - We all have those!

We ALL have sinned and fallen short of God's standard.

But JESUS DIDN'T!

JESUS met God's standard! JESUS was good enough and paid the price for your sin and my sin! It's ALREADY PAID FOR.

The sin within ALL of us puts us on a path - a path that leads to death.

But when we confess our sin, God is faithful to forgive us and make us in right standing with Himself. Although we are NOT good enough, JESUS WAS GOOD ENOUGH. In fact, the Bible says that He was perfect.

**When you trust in Jesus to make you right with God, He is faithful to do just that and restore you, healing you from the inside out! You can have hope for an eternity spent with a perfect loving Father in the heavenly home that He's already prepared for you!**

SALVATION CALL ... If you want to put your trust in Jesus and be forgiven of your sins today, I want to give you an opportunity right now.

ENDING

**SLIDE: If you're a guest with us today, I'd love to meet you! You're invited to meet me and Danielle and some of our leaders in the Yellow Room across the hall. We have a gift for you** and it's like a time share really. If you come and hear my spiel, I have a gift for you! LOL But you must stay the WHOLE time - 3 hours! - Just kidding. We'll be in there like 10 or 15 min at the most; I know you have Easter Lunch plans but really, we'd love to just shake your hand and meet you for a moment.