

IN-BETWEEN

EASTER 2024 | PASTOR JORDAN BIEL | ROCK OF GRACE

OUTLINE:

In between Friday and Sunday felt like forever - a time of sorrow disappointment and questions for the disciples. The time in between was a perfect opportunity for FAITH - faith to believe that Jesus meant what He said.

When perfection comes, we won't need to have faith. We need to have faith now!

In between the Resurrection and the Rapture can feel like a time of sorrow, disappointment and questions for we who follow Jesus now. It's an opportunity perfect for FAITH - faith to believe that Jesus meant what He said - He's coming back again and will complete the work that He began when He rose from the dead!

Many of you are tired, feeling angry and exhausted. Many of you are hurting feeling let down and disappointed. Now is when you MUST have faith in the in-between heaven and earth.

When perfection comes, we won't need to have faith. We need to have faith now!

The resurrection was only the beginning of the perfection of all things. Yes, everything changed that day that Jesus overcame sin and rose to new life. But, He's like the gardener Mary assumed him to be. He's planting, harvesting, faithfully rebuilding a world that glorifies the Father.

The cross showed His love. The grave showed His power. Your faith and commitment to His Word shows your trust in Him.

Jesus accomplished for us what we could not accomplish for ourselves! Will you trust Him in-between - now until He comes.

Welcome to Easter morning at Rock of Grace!

We're so glad you're with us today!

Today as you might know is a special day - a day where we celebrate the resurrection of JESUS our Lord and Savior! We just sang about it - rejoicing in what HE accomplished for us!

The Bible tells us that THIS is how we know that God loves us. He died for us - taking the punishment of our sin and rising from the dead.

Many people wonder "Does God really love me? He loves others but I don't know about me. I'm different."

Yes. Yes you are ... different. Just kidding. YES you are LOVED by God!

And all your misgivings - all your "good" moments and "bad" moments led you here. Today - you just so happened to be in a church in Kinsman Ohio on Easter Sunday.

GOD has a plan for your life! You are NOT here by accident. GOD wanted you here today to HEAR the Gospel.

There's a reason is called GOOD NEWS you know. The good news is that you don't have to pay for your mistakes. God did that. That's why God sent His only son Jesus - to do just that - pay for your mistakes - and mine! ALL of us are need of a Savior. The wisest, smartest, moment of your life is when you realize that.

So let's read about it!

The Gardner?

John 19:38-42 | Jesus Is Buried

³⁸ After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body.

³⁹ Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight.

 ⁴⁰ So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. ⁴¹ Now in the place where he was crucified there was a **garden, and in the garden a new tomb** in which no one had yet been laid. ⁴² So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

I want to talk to you today about Jesus, The Gardner & what He is doing IN BETWEEN. My sermon title is IN-BETWEEN.

Let's Pray

God I pray that everyone who is far from You realizes like Paul said when preaching in Athens that they "are not far off at all"

Show them that You are near to them today - stretching out your hand - inviting them into something better - the life they were designed to live - a life that honors You and enjoys Your friendship.

In Jesus' name AMEN

How poetic right?

Here is a garden, blooming with flowers and there they laid the crucified Son of God. In 18 years of preaching - many times on the road in my traveling days and most often here at Rock of Grace - I have NEVER seen that. I always pictured stone - dry, arid dirt, just a lot of rock and yet the Bible describes this as a stone burial site in the MIDDLE of a Garden!

But didn't this all begin in a garden? The garden of Eden. God's trying to say something to us. It was beautiful. Lush. Lacking nothing.

Flowers and bushes and beautiful trees and berries and then what happened? THORNS. Where did they come from?!

THE CURSE OF SIN THE THORNS RESTS UPON HIS HEAD

Let's back up. During Creation we learn about the origin of thorns and thistles. The Bible says in

Gen. 3:17

God said to Adam, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; 18 **thorns** and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. 19 By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

God had instructed Adam to take care of the garden and enjoy it but once they sinned, the ground began to grow thorns. The thorns weren't there before sin.

So, why did Jesus wear a crown of thorns?

THE CURSE OF SIN was reprinted by THE THORNS, the crown that REST UPON HIS HEAD for HE was the only one sinless and able to defeat the curse of sin!

The Roman soldiers made a crown of thorns for Jesus to wear and they forced it into the top of His head as a way of mocking Him being He had claimed to be King. They knew that before the Sanhedrin, Jesus had said "One day you will see me coming on the clouds of glory."

He knew that He was truly the King of Kings. He knew that upon His resurrection He would be crowned King Forever and given all authority and all praise forevermore. Yet He also knew that these religious leaders didn't know that. They were blinded by their sin and their pride and they were simply pieces of a chess board. God was making His move. Not them. God was placing His son on the cross in a surprise move - a move that feels like defeat but ultimately destroyed death itself.

Jesus came - to destroy sin. His death on the cross was not only redeeming mankind of our sin the punishment we deserved, but the crown of thorns speaks to the fact that Jesus was also bearing the punishment on the earth from sin.

THE PRICE HE PAID WAS ABSOLUTE TORTURE

Jesus, the perfect Son of God, the one who showed grace and mercy to all was THE ONE PAYING FOR THE SINGS OF ALL. THE CROWN OF THORNS HE WORE SYMBOLIZED THE SIN THAT HE ALONE COULD CARRY.

It was a prophetic picture that one day, He will restore the earth itself to its former glory. He was declaring in wearing that crown of thorns, not only am I dying for you but I'm making you a promise ... that the curse over the entire earth as a result of sin, will now be broken - that He will make a New Heavens and New Earth, one where thorns will never grow and fight back against mankind and God's divine plan!

BECAUSE HE WORE A CROWN OF THORNS, WE WILL WEAR A CROWN OF GLORY! DO YOU UNDERSTAND THAT?

BECAUSE HE SUFFERED, YOU WILL BE REDEEMED AND YOU WILL BE ABLE TO ENJOY THE PERFECT PRESENCE OF HEAVEN FOREVER.

 Because He was buried (VIDEO) Like a seed willing to be crushed, willing to die, a great harvest of sons and daughters arise and bloom!

Because Jesus was willing to be the suffering servant - to fulfill prophecy, to come as a son of man, die as a criminal, and be disregarded and buried in a garden, many who are willing to be hidden in Him, will come to life and have eternal life!

I think it's so poetic of God to orchestrate the scene - and even the misunderstanding Mary had - thinking that Jesus was the landscape guy - the gardener.

John 20:1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him."

 Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there,

 and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

 But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been

lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?”

She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” 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.”

Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbi!” (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because 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.’” Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.”

He called her by name! She realized He rose from the grave! But first, she had mistaken Him for the gardener. After all, they're in a garden and she's grieving the loss of her lord and then there's this random guy - in regular clothes and he comes to comfort her.

God is the GOD OF ALL COMFORT!

He suffered and fulfilled His role as the “suffering servant”

He was beaten beyond recognition- taking our place - BUT not just enduring it but conquering it!

He didn't just mourn with us in our mourning but He conquered all that causes grief by rising from the dead! He said He would do it and He did!

When Jesus took his final breaths, **the natural collided with the supernatural.** The sun went dark at mid-day; the curtain in the Temple separating our Holy God from His people split in two from top to bottom – symbolizing the barrier between God and humanity was removed. The earth shook! An earthquake took place as rocks split, and tombs opened! And the bodies of many godly men and women who had died were raised from the dead and went into the city and appeared to many people! Last year I called this the first zombi apocalypse! LOL that's for all the 14 year old teen boys in the crowd today =) You like zombie scenes? Look, God gave you one of those too! LOL

All who witnessed these things must have exclaimed: “***What Just Happened?!***”

Why did Mary, this prostitute, who was known for her scandals, misguided choices and checkered background find such a love for Jesus?

Jesus saw her for who she really was - Mary. She had a name. She was MARY a young beautiful innocent girl with hopes and dreams of getting married and having kids - all BEFORE she took one bad choice and one wrong step at a time in the wrong direction. Before she was a prostitute, she was MARY.

Jesus like He does for all of us - sees us for who we are - sons and daughters - prince and princesses - each with a name and purpose and dignity - He sees us and calls us by name NOT by our mistakes.

But how does MARY see JESUS?

She mistakes Him for the gardener. Interested.

 **We often see God through the lens of OUR identity and trauma.**

Our trauma and our missed aspirations paint a picture of God for us - one that is either accurate or possibly not accurate. We must all realize that Jesus loves us enough to come TO US and stand in the midst of our misunderstanding of Him and talk to us until we see Him for who He really is!

He loves us anyways - invites us anyways - hugs us anyways.

Jesus went from Gardener to Teacher in one millisecond because of one revelation. You are one revelation away from an entirely different life! How you see God determines how you see the world.

You are ONE ENCOUNTER from an entirely different life!

Seek GOD until you find Him!

Are you feeling far from God? Are you feeling distant?

Are you feeling empty and just weighed down with life?

God said in His word that if you seek him with ALL your heart that He WILL be found by you! It might take days or weeks but trust me if you will actually search for God, you will find Him! And when you do - oh man - best moment of your life!

Like Mary you'll be overwhelmed with His goodness and grace - His strength but composure - His power but humility.

 **The cross showed His love. The grave showed His power.**

Your faith and commitment to His Word shows your trust in Him while you're in-between.

Transition here...

SUMMARIZE this story in 2 sentences!

JN 21:1-14

After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. ² Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. ³ Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

⁴ Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ Jesus said to them, "Children, do you have any fish?" They answered him, "No." ⁶ He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish. ⁷ That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea. ⁸ The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off.

⁹ When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." ¹¹ So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

[The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 21:1–14). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

They are coming to grips with the resurrection, but they still have not learned the profound truth that apart from Christ they can do nothing (15:5), and so *that night they caught nothing* (cf. Lk. 5:5).

Is it possible that you too are still learning that apart from Christ you can do nothing?

 **Jesus accomplished for us what we could not accomplish for ourselves and apart from Christ, we can do NOTHING! Even when we misunderstand Him or blame Him, He has arms wide open, inviting us into redemption and friendship!**

Friend if you are thinking that you are a self-made man - or woman - that you just have to get your act together - that you gotta get your life right - that you gotta perform to out-do everyone else - that you need to earn enough money to be happy or impress a parent or someone - you need to stop for just a moment and realize you can do NOTHING apart from God. He gives you the oxygen you need to be breathing right now!

And if you're feeling overwhelmed with the weight of that pressure - that pressure to make ends meet - to succeed in this life - to be a good dad or a good mom or survive another difficult day at work I have news for you.

When we encounter the risen Jesus like Mary did,
We are overwhelmed by mercy!

We are overwhelmed by forgiveness and grace. We are overwhelmed by victory and we are overwhelmed by peace because He was overwhelmed by false accusations. He was overwhelmed by religious legalists, vying for power and fame.

He was overwhelmed by lies and He was overwhelmed by the cross.

But the grave was overwhelmed and it could not hold the King!

All the while he seemed overwhelmed- it was really grace under pressure - power restrained - the epitome of love!

Therefore we are overwhelmed with the goodness of God!

 **His death was our death - our punishment of sin. His resurrection can be OUR power over sin and it's final judgment. Embracing and believing Jesus rose to new life gives me hope for the next life! The eternal life while I'm stuck in-between.**

What did the Old Testament prophets have to say about Jesus and what His resurrection would accomplish?

We know well about the suffering and heartache that this life has to offer.

Cancer. Tragedy. Betrayal. Loss. Death.

But what about the life to come? What does Jesus offer us? We're in between His resurrection and the age to come. What is the age to come like?

 **Isaiah 25:6-9**

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples

a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines,

of rich food filled with marrow, of **well-aged wines** strained clear.

And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death forever.

That "sheet" of grief - that heavy blanket that hits us hard when we get the diagnosis from the DR -

push into this JORDAN

When we get the call we dread to hear - she was in an accident

Or "he's being taken to the Hospital"

"Or they had to life-flight him over to this other Hospital for immediate surgery..."

When these moments come and trust me, they will... we are reminded of the fragility of this life - the pain that it brings - the disappointment that rings true for ALL of us.

So many are disappointed with God. They feel He simply hasn't been there. But listen you have to let your pain drive you TO God not AWAY from HIM!

God is the only one strong enough to handle your pain - and He certainly doesn't expect you to carry it.

So what is JESUS offering you? Truly ... what did HE promise you and me and all who will trust in Him? Let's read it.

 Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken It will be said on that day, "This is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us! This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation!"

Like I shared a few weeks ago... Eternity is when all of God's promises are fulfilled. You will only "taste and see" some of them here and now but then and there all will be made new! No more cancer. No more death. No more pain and no regret!

Remember,

 The resurrection was only the beginning of the perfection of all things. We live in the in-between. Yes, everything changed that day that Jesus overcame sin and rose to new life. But, **He's like the gardener Mary assumed him to be. He's planting, harvesting, faithfully rebuilding a world that glorifies the Father.**

I know you're hurting.

Some of you are here today and truth be told, you don't want to be. Your spouse or maybe a parent drug you here. You're angry. You're mad at God.

Things have not worked out the way you had hoped and if you're honest you can't believe in a God that keeps letting you down.

How can God be good and powerful enough to raise Jesus from the dead when I see so much pain around me?

You've got to remember that like a Gardener, He's planting and harvesting and pruning and making all things new. He does that through people willing to trust in Him. He will make ALL things perfect, free of pain, but that is the age to come and we are stuck in between - but not without hope! "We have this hope" a "hope secure" the Bible says!

Don't believe that God is actually caring? Do you feel He is callous to the world and to the suffering of humanity?

It's just the opposite!

God was SO interested, so caring and compassionate, that He came to YOU! He didn't have to! He's GOD!

He's perfect in all of His ways and His creation blew it! They rejected his offer and took the bait to believe they needed *more* to be happy. And in their vanity and desire for more, "to be like God" they truly messed things up.

So years and years of people being born into sin, perpetuating this problem with no solution in sight, GOD came in HUMAN form.

So it's not that He doesn't care about your pain. He does!

He is so caring, so loving that He came and He died on cross for all the sins of all humanity - past present and future! He made some bold promises before He died that day. He said that ...

He was making all things new.

He was a bridegroom and that He would return for a people that in a way is alike a Bride awaiting her husband on their wedding day.

He was a servant-leader, building for US a place to call home.

He was stone the builders rejected yet now the chief cornerstone - a solid foundation on which we can build our lives.

He is Gardener who is making ALL THINGS BEAUTIFUL!

Remember that line we read from the prophet Isaiah! "Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces..."

When you enter heaven, there is NO MORE TEARS.

JESUS makes that possible.

JESUS has prepared a place for you. He didn't do so from a distance but came and suffered and experienced heart-ache and betrayal and pain so we can look to Jesus and say "you too?"

CS Lewis brilliantly pointed out a theological connection to a philosophical statement made by Aristotle one of the great thinkers of his day who is still revered. One of his observations was that

 **Friendship begins with the statement, whether implied said directly “You too?”**

CS Lewis, through the connection to our Lord and Savior Jesus, being a suffering servant to quit Isaiah that he suffered that he was mocked that he was betrayed that he felt separated from God. All of the same feelings that we have. God was willing to identify with our loss, he was willing to suffer the hurt of leaving him, accusing him of something untrue. Jesus was willing to suffer, feeling disconnected from God. Jesus was willing to be misunderstood one of the great heartaches of the human experience. It's not that we can look at God and say you? Of course, there is nothing in his perfection that we can identify with, but what's remarkable is that we can look to Jesus as the son of man who suffered and was tempted in every way, like we, and say, “You too?” and our friendship with Him can begin!

It's not that God saved us from a distance, but he was willing to save us up close. He came to us in the midst of our pain.

When we were the woman caught in adultery, he knelt down in the dirt and got eye eye with us - standing between us and our accusers!

When we were the Leper - filled with disease - ashamed to be around people - avoided by everyone in public, Jesus was willing to walk towards us! unafraid to touch us, unafraid to be close to us, unafraid that our sickness in our problems would inconvenience him, or somehow burden him.

When we were the orphan - alone and rejected - the Father came to us - loved us - took us in and called us by name!

 **Jesus came to us, hugged us while we were diseased, looked at us in the eyes when we were ashamed and called by name when we were to blame.**

Even David is Psalm 118:22 & 23 prophesied about Jesus and how although He was rejected by men, God raised Him up!

 **Psalm 118:22, 23**

“I will give thanks to you, for you answered me and have become my salvation. The same stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.”

What an ironic twist in the plot! Satan thought he won when he put Jesus on the cross. Yet he was just a ploy - a pawn on the chess-board - used to carry out The Father’s plan to redeem mankind!

After Jesus rose from the dead, He appeared to His 12 disciples and many others over the course of 40 days. Acts 1 where the Gospels end, Luke writes his second book, a second letter to Theophilus and says this...

 **Acts 1:1-11** “In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, ² until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³ He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

⁴ And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

Can you imagine those sermons by Jesus? Here He is in His resurrected body - everyone knowing He was killed and in a grave for THREE DAYS - yet here He is, spending time with them again on the hillside, teaching about the Kingdom of God - teaching about what it means to follow Him and be a “Christian” if you will.

WOW!

After 40 days of Jesus doing this - appearing to over 500 people scripture says to teach them and encourage them - He ascends to Heaven. I’ve never included this portion in an Easter sermon but for today’s sermon it just fits so well.

 **Acts 1:6-11 The Ascension**

⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” ⁷ He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

God uses mankind to continue gardening - working in the earth - calling people back to the Father - God brings restoration to the earth through you and me!

⁹ And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they were gazing into heaven as he went,

behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹ and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? **This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.**" ESV

■ **We are living in between Jesus' resurrection and His second coming. It takes faith for you to believe that and hold on to God's promises but that faith is available to you today!** The Bible says that God himself has given you that faith - that seed of belief - the idea that you WILL continue on after this life ends and that there IS more to life than what we see here and now. God put that understanding within you!

Yes, there will be pain and heartache...

There will be unanswered prayers and questions of WHY with no response

THIS is when we must turn to Him and TRUST in the ONLY one who is truly trustworthy.

■ **The question is will you say YES to the Son of God and Son of Man? Will you say YES to Jesus? By saying nothing you are saying no. Today you've been given the Gospel and now the choice is yours.**

Admit your need for God and your need to be forgiven and find HOPE in Jesus and His resurrection OR remain a self-made man, someone who doesn't need the Creator who made you.