

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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SERIES

In Our Place

PART

6

TITLE

Conquered Death

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 28:1-20



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Well, it is a joy to see you and to sing with you. For those of you who call Providence home, we're so glad that you're here. Happy Easter to you. And to all of those who are guests with us, we're glad that you have joined us. If you have with you a Bible, if you want to turn with me to Matthew 28. Matthew 28, it should be the most stunning, exciting news in the world, the most compelling, the most comforting. And it's this that Jesus Christ conquered death. And he did so in our place.

You see, this is really good news, and this is why? Because we're going to die. We don't want to die, and yet we are going to die. We are going to die in spite of our instinctual drive to keep living. We are all going to run out of days before we run out of ideas for those days. We're all going to run out of days before we run out of hope for the future of our days. And we're all going to run out of days before we run out of love for our loved ones.

And this causes everybody at some point in their life to become afraid. Death is frightening. In fact, when you look in the Bible, and you see the actual word pictures, and those metaphors that it uses to describe, and to help us identify and to describe the feeling that we feel when we are afraid to die. You can look through the Bible and find many of them, but perhaps the one that is most alarming is in the book of Job and there death is called the king of terrors.

A king is someone who has authority, they have power, they're real. Someone that has more authority and power than we do. And the king of terrors is not only powerful and authoritative, he's also terrifying. And this is the reality of death, we're all going to die, and we don't want to, and it leads us to become afraid.

It's interesting, you think about life experience, for about 20 years, we all want to get older. When we're a kid, we all want to get one year older. We can't wait to get a year older. In fact, when we're 12 and we have a birthday. It's our birthday, we're now 12. You wait one week, someone asked you, "How old are you?" And we say, "12 and a half, or 12 and a half, I'm almost 13. I'm just like that close." We do this until we get to 21.

And then God gives us this four years that humanity has coined as prime. Four years or five years before we get to 26. When you get to 26, now listen, you know that you're closer to 30 than 20. And so, now for the rest of our life, after our prime, those beautiful five years, all we want to do is stay young. And so, we attempt our entire life to stay young, which is why last year we spent \$52 billion on anti-aging products, creams, and serums around the world. All \$52 billion worth of those products are failing. We're all dying. We're all getting older. We do not want to die. And it haunts us if we think deeply enough that we will.

Imagine how epic it is that Jesus Christ in time and space stood on this earth, and He made a promise that He would be betrayed in our place. He would be accused in our place. Condemned in our place. That He would suffer in our place. He would die in our place. And then He would conquer death in our place. And then, He went out and did it.

I don't know why you're here today, I hope you want to be here. You may have been bribed. Nice lunch if you come, maybe it was guilt. I don't know what brought you here today. I don't know what brought you to tune in today. I don't know what you believe. I don't know if you believe what I've just said that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. But I hope that you can see even if you don't want to see it. That there is absolutely nothing more urgent if He did rise from the dead, than learning how to share in His victory over the king of terror. And that's what we're going to look at.

Let me pray. Father, we ask that you would give us grace, that you would give us strength, that you would give us hope, that you would give us belief. As we open up your word, would you create within us just an intense curiosity about what we're reading, and interest. Would you level every obstacle to believe. Every obstacle to run out of here resisting what you have made available. Would you help us to see our drastic need that one day we will die even though we don't want to. But there was one, and is one who came, who died and rose again. And so, would you speak through weakness and speak through all of the distractions of our life. And we pray this in Jesus name. Amen.

Matthew 28 starting in verse one it says, "Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, as He said. Come, see the place where He lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that He has risen from the dead, and behold, He is going before you to Galilee, there you will see him. See, I have told you.' So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

And behold, Jesus met them and said, 'greetings!' And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped Him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid, go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.' While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers and said, 'Tell people, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were sleeping.' And this comes to the ears of the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.' So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.

Now the 11 disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw Him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'"

The first thing that I want you to see here is actually the setting in between Matthew 27 and 28. It's a sobering reality, but it is true. And that is, death is our inevitable place. When we use the words in our place, it assumes we have one. That there's a place for us. That there's a location where we're supposed to be, where we will be going, it's our place. The Bible tells us that death is our inevitable place. We all know this, but death is the great equalizer. It doesn't matter how rich you are, how powerful you are, how famous you are, how educated or wise you are, we're all going to die.

James 4:14, it says that, "You and I, we are a mist that appears for a little time and then it vanishes." And this is remarkable that the Bible would employ this metaphor to describe the brevity of life. We've all known the experience where we go out on a cool morning, a cold morning, we breathe into the air, and suddenly there's a mist, there's a vapor. It's in the air and we see it. It's real. It's tangible. It's visible. And then it's gone. The Bible says this is what it means, this is what it's like to be a human being on the earth.

Death takes everyone. And yet in spite of the inevitability of death, I have never in my life been to a funeral. By the way, I've been to a bunch of them. That I have not said while I was at the funeral to myself, something is broken. It's not supposed to be like this. Instinctively, we know when we go, "Oh, it's normal." I'm not saying it's not normal. We know it's the pattern of life; we live and then we die. Someone lives and dies, and lives and dies. And yet, every time somebody dies, something within us says, "This wasn't God's original design."

It wasn't, in fact the Bible affirms this much. In the beginning we're told, at the very beginning of the Bible, God created the heavens and the earth. He created us in His image, to enjoy a relationship with Him, and to be with Him forever. And God wanted to protect that forever. He wanted to protect that relationship, that proximity to us and us to Him. And so, the Bible tells us that He gave humanity instructions. And among those instructions with one restriction.

That one restriction was framed inside the context of just overwhelming generosity. He says, "Do you see everything around you, it's all for you, all for your enjoyment, all for food, all the trees, except one." I care for you so much, I love you so much. There's one it's not for you. He says, "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day you eat of it you shall surely die." Humanity had a choice, and we still do.

And our parents, which is their parents, parents, parents, Adam and Eve. They just what we do, and that is that when we see a restriction from God, we assume tragically that He is seeking to withhold something that is pleasurable instead of protecting something that is precious. And so, they ate and sinned and we sin. God came in Genesis 3, and He says, "I formed you out of the dust, and to dust you shall return."

And from this moment on death became our inevitable place. You go anywhere in the world, and you will find places on the earth that are marked out specifically so that people who have died have a place to become dust again. This is the reality of life. Life on Earth, for us is brief because God's wrath against sin, our sin is

real.

In that moment of offense, though God, who was utterly rich in mercy, He promised the Savior. He says, “My wrath is absolutely real, but my love is absolutely enduring.” He promised the Savior, and in the fullness of time He sent that Savior. They gave him a name, a specific name, his name is Jesus. The name Jesus means Savior, for he was to come and save us His people from our sins. He lived on earth and He never sinned. And yet he went to the cross, in Matthew 27, to pay for our sins.

And this is the context that separates or that is at the peak between chapter 27 and 28, Golgotha, the floor ground where Jesus was crucified, was still stained by the blood of Jesus. It was that recent His body was placed into a tomb, death was in the air. Grief and bereavement and loss were the hearts of people who loved Him. Animosity and joy were in the hearts of his enemies. And the king of terrors it would seem had claimed yet another man.

But Matthew doesn't stop with chapter 27. There's a 28. And then chapter 28, we learn that Jesus conquered death in our place. He conquered death in our place. There came a singular moment on the earth, on that Sunday morning early, on that third day when Jesus' heart began to beat and blood began racing through his veins, and his nerves began firing, his body began warming, his eyes began opening, his muscles began moving, and He rose and conquered death.

He promised that it would happen. And his enemies knew it. Which is why in chapter 27:63-64, on the Saturday between the Friday of his death, the Sunday of his resurrection. They go to Pilate and they say, “We remember how that imposter Jesus said while he was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise.’ Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, ‘He has risen from the dead.’”

Promising a resurrection is not evidence for the resurrection. It's the invitation to look. This man healed people. This man walked on water. And then publicly, He said to his friends and his enemies, “You're going to kill me on a cross. And on the third day I'm going to rise from the dead.” That declaration did not make it happen. It was an invitation to the whole world to look to see if it would happen. And so Friday, at his death we're told that these two women both named Mary, in 28:1, were told that they were both at the foot of the cross when Jesus spoke his last words, “It is finished.” And they were both there to listen to Him breath his last.

Verse 61 of the same chapter tells us that they were both at the tomb, they sat opposite the tomb to see and observe which tomb, where He was going. And they watched him bring the body into the tomb. They knew where he was buried. And now on Sunday, we're told in verse one, that they went to see the tomb. Mark's gospel tells us that not only did they go see the tomb, they went with spices to anoint his body. While they were going they had a conversation with each other, saying, “There's going to be guards there. We heard there's

going to be guards, and the tomb has now been sealed. How are we going to move the stone?"

We're glad that all that worked out. Because once they get there, or shortly before there's an earthquake. God had sent an angel from heaven down to earth. And suddenly these poor soldiers were absolutely terrified so much so that it looked like they were dead. They weren't dead, because they soon gone up and they went to the chief priests to say, "You're not going to believe what happened."

But in that moment, there they were two women and all the soldiers on the ground, and there's an angel who's sitting on the rock. And what did the angel say? "You don't need to be afraid. I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He's not here, for He is risen..." Notice what, "... as he said. He promised it was going to happen. He promised, and now He is alive." Then the angel welcomes them and says, "I'll tell you what, why don't you come on in and look, and then go and tell." So they looked and they ran. And as they ran, verse 9 and 10, says that Jesus Himself, the resurrected Christ, appeared and met these two women.

I love the word that He uses, the word greetings, like we did say, "Oh," He said, "Hi." And we would assume there is... And there is. There's words in Greek that both mean to say hello, or to greet somebody. There's some of them that are real formal. And some of them that are very, very casual. And this is the most casual. This is like Jesus saying, "Hey, what's up." It's just marked by friendship. It's marked by I want to be in a relationship with you. I'm here with you. I'm alive and you are welcome.

They fall on their face and they worship Him and He says, "Get up, go to Galilee, tell those disciples to get to Galilee. You need to go and you need to tell them." Well, this is the cornerstone, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of all of Christianity. What that means is this, you remove this stone, the whole house crumbles. And the New Testament affirms this.

In 1 Corinthians 15:17, 18, and 19, notice what he says, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile." Let's just stop there. Futile means empty or worthless. Sometimes we think the strength of our faith that saves us, it's not. It's the strength of the object of our faith. You may have a whole lot of faith, that chair is strong enough to hold you up. But if it's not, it doesn't matter the strength of your faith. Now, a little bit of faith and a strong chair will keep you up. And so it is with Christ.

For those of us who put our faith in Jesus Christ, what He's saying is this, that if He's still in the grave, you have put your faith in the wrong person. But wait a minute, Jesus taught so many interesting compelling things in his life, was such an example of love, oh, it's true. But if Jesus is in the grave, then his words are simply the words of a dead man. But if He rose from the dead, then his words are not merely interesting, they're essential. And when those words come out of his mouth, and He says, "I am the way the truth and the life, and no one comes to the Father, except through me." Those words are not simply interesting debatable, those words are essential.

He goes on and he says, “Not only that, if Christ has not been raised, you’re still in your sins.” Meaning his payment on the cross was not sufficient to forgive you. You still have a debt before God if Jesus is still in the grave. And then he goes on, and he says, “We...” He’s speaking to Christians. “... if Christ has not been raised, we are of all people most to be pitied.” For we have been duped the most.

We just sang four songs, and if Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead, then we have participated in the greatest fabrication in the history of the world. Whether we knew it or not, we should be pitied. Even this hour, if Christ has not been raised from the dead, you have by sitting here wasted an hour of your life. But He did rise from the dead. And therefore our faith is not futile, our sins can be forgiven, and we are not people to be pitied.

Well, there’s no videos of his resurrection, so how do we know what happened? Well, the New Testament gives us all kinds of credible evidence. One is an empty tomb. You simply only needed to produce the body and suddenly Christianity was game over. There was no body in that tomb. And so, there are options, either Jesus got up and He walked out as He said and as the New Testament says, or somebody had to move his body. And if somebody moved his body, it had to be either someone who was for him or against him, those are your three options. He rose from the dead, his body was stolen by his enemies, or moved by his disciples. Those are the options.

Consider this for a second, if his enemies had the body, they surely would have produced the body. When his disciples began proclaiming around the whole world, and they began chasing and trying to imprison them, because they were preaching that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, all they had to do is produce the body that they had, but they didn’t have the body. If his disciples had the body, they certainly would not have been murdered for what they knew was a lie. They gave their whole life because they had seen Jesus resurrected from the dead.

And that brings us to the second evidence, which is eyewitnesses. We live our entire life on the basis of somebody else’s eyewitness account. Think about this. Those of you who are parents, let’s just say that you have more than one kid, or should say two kids, and they come running and one of them is crying, one of them is laughing. Now you have to mediate. You weren’t there. You don’t know what happened. What do you do? You talk to the eyewitnesses.

The same thing happens in a court of law, there’s a judge and jury. None of those people were there to see the incident in the home or on the road. But all of a sudden, what do we do? We call them to account, and we say, “What did you see?” And then on the basis of the credibility of those eyewitnesses, there’s a verdict that is given.

If after service today, your mom called and said your dad is terribly sick and is in the hospital, you need to come see him quick. It would be your mom's eyewitness testimony that would become the window through which you would believe and act. Some of us would immediately drive there, we would buy a plane ticket in order to get there. We would do so, and the reason is because our mom is a credible eyewitness.

Well, Christianity has credible eye witnesses. When you think about what it says in 1 Corinthians 15 that, "Christ was raised in the third day, He appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive." This was written 20 years after Jesus rose from the dead. Even critical scholars, meaning scholars who criticize the Bible, they all believe today that Paul wrote this and it was written close to 8050, roughly 20 years after Jesus rose from the dead.

And what Paul is saying is this, is that these early skeptics for 20 years, even 20 years later, Paul says look, most of them are still alive. You can go talk to people who had actually seen him, some of whom have actually touched the holes in his hand, that Jesus Christ is alive. And when you consider that there's two characteristics of these witnesses that become utterly compelling. One is their truthfulness, and the other is their relentlessness.

Their truthfulness. Think about this for a second, this should offend you, if it doesn't. Well, I hope it does. Is that in every single culture, there has been people who have strength and people who have had strength. Because we're sinners. We use that strength to exploit people who are weak. This has happened in every single culture, and it was happening in first century in Israel.

At this time, women were not allowed to testify in a court of law. Their testimony was not considered credible. What did Jesus do? He comes to this culture, He dignifies women, He befriends women, He heals women, He cares for women, He teaches women and men of course. And then what does he do? He dies on a cross, and then He rises from the dead, and who the first two people that He sees, or that he allows to see Him? Women.

And then what does He do? He sends them to testify to the disciples that Jesus has risen from the dead. The resurrection was the fabrication that was bundled and packaged for cultural approval in first century Israel, they would not have led with Mary. The only reason to package it this way is if it happened this way.

And you keep seeing throughout the different records, throughout the different letters, the Gospel accounts when they're writing is that they intentionally tell it how it was, even when what actually happened, cast themselves in a negative light. Consider the fact how many times we make fun of the bumbling disciples. And it was the bumbling disciples who gave us the account to tell us about all of their mistakes. Now, if you're fabricating a religion, you don't place within your canon of scripture all of your personal thoughts.

They were truthful, but they were also relentless. You see over the next 40 years these witnesses, these eye witnesses, with no earthly reward they pushed through, literally prison after prison and mile after missionary mile. And one after another, were murdered in order to spread the gospel that they had seen with their own eyes, that Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

There are scholars ever since this time for the last 2000 years, who have sought to take the principles of historical credibility and apply them to historical events. To see what things since we weren't there, how do we know if that event happened? How do we know if that event happened? There's a series of principles. Dr. Thomas Arnold, who is now in heaven, he taught history at Oxford. And this is what he said, "I know of no other fact in history after all that I've studied, which is proved by better and fuller evidence in this one, that Jesus Christ died and rose from the dead."

It's interesting for many of us in the room, we recognize there's an empty tomb, and we recognize that there's eyewitnesses and they're compelling accounts. But many of us in the room, there's another shred of evidence that is not just the shred, it becomes life-giving to each one of us and it's called personal experience.

I can get a science book, and then that science book it's going to talk to me about that there's this really bright thing up in the sky. They call it a sun. And they tell me how hot it is and how it casts light upon the earth. But that's not why I believe in it, because it's in a science book. I believe in the sun. I believe it's there, because I see from it's light and I feel it's warmth. And so it is with Christ.

Many of us have come to the place in our life, that when we opened up our heart and we began reading and hearing the gospel, suddenly Christ as though He was right next to it, He says, "This is true." And He authenticated the testimony in our own spirit. He's saying, "This is true." He sat with us in hospital rooms, and He's been with us at grave sides, and He's been with us and tragedies and trials, just as He has me.

There is an evidence that many of us in this room recognize that we're so glad that the evidence continues to stack up from the empty tomb, to eyewitnesses, to martyrdom, to everything else has happened in history, where we say Jesus rose from the dead. But the greatest evidence that I know that gives me the most comfort today is that I spoke to Him this morning. There is a personal relationship that's available to you and to me.

Well, if we ended the sermon here, it would be a shame. And the reason is because we would have concluded that death is our place and there was a man 2000 years ago, who defeated death for himself. How do we connect those two though? And that's what the Bible does. And that's the third point. And that's the rest of the chapter is that Jesus conquered death to give us a new place. A new place so that the last chapter of our life would be completely different if we would trust in Jesus Christ.

Do you know what you receive when you rise from the dead and conquer the king of terrors, you receive authority, that's what you receive. Which is why when Jesus met his disciples in Galilee, and they saw him and worshiped, and they began saying, "I can't explain this, I have these doubts. And yet, this is irrefutable that I'm looking directly at you." What's the first thing that came out of his mouth, "All authority has been given to me." He has all authority. And what this means is this, is that there was a man who came in time and space, He died on a cross, then He rose from the dead, He has the authority and He has claim over our life.

And what He says this, He goes with that authority, "With that authority, I am giving you a new life mission. Go and make disciples of all nations, baptize and teach them." In other words, people must know that I rose from the dead, and they must know what that means for them. You look through the Scriptures, and you keep finding different benefits that come to believers in Jesus because He rose from the dead. For example, because Jesus rose from the dead, we can be forgiven. We actually can be forgiven of our sins.

I remember years ago, I was in Central Asia, and I was trying to buy some snacks. And so, I put down some money, their currency, but I did not know that that currency that I had was expired currency. I don't speak their language, they weren't speaking mine, except for one word. I put the money down. He looks up at me and he says, "No!" He knew that one, no. How do we know that Jesus blood was acceptable to the Father and that God the Father didn't say, "No. Payment not accepted." We know because God the Father rose Jesus from the dead.

Romans 4 says it this way, "Jesus was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification." To be justified, is a new account. What it means is that instead of having no money and being molly bankrupt, not only are we forgiven of our sin, but we're given his righteousness. In other words, for those of us who trust Christ, our new place is a new account. A new account with God. Is utterly settled and loaded with the righteousness of Christ over us. And because Jesus rose from the dead, we can be changed.

Many of us we want to change. We want new desires in our life. 1 Peter 1 says that, "He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." In other words, that when we trust Jesus, we are born again, that means we receive a new operating system. Our heart of stone is replaced with a heart of flesh, that we get new desires, we want new things, we enjoy new things, Godly things. We continue to change over our life. And so, one of the beautiful things about the gospel is that when we trust Jesus Christ, we get a new place. And that new place includes a new heart.

There's another one, and that is that because Jesus rose from the dead, we can rise to be with him. One of the hard realities that you find within the scriptures is that we will all die and then we will all rise. All of us will rise. And we will live forever in Heaven with Him or in hell apart from Him. I know that this can be offensive, but let me just tell you something, Jesus did not come to the earth to congratulate us for our morality. He came to the earth to say you don't have what it takes, but I do, and I want to give that to you. He came to seek and save the lost. He came to seek and heal sinners like me.

And so, 1 Corinthians 6 says that, “God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.” And that means that if we trust Jesus, not only do we get a new account, a new heart, but we also get a new eternal home. So here’s my question. Are you enjoying this new place? If Jesus made all this available to us, then what is the key? What is the secret? What’s the way to respond so that we can actually participate and receive the blessings of his victory?

And the answer is so simple sometimes that people stumble over it. Jesus simply says, “I want you to believe.” I want you to believe. It’s a free gift, but you must believe. Part of that belief has to repent, meaning I need to stop believing I can save myself. I need to stop believing I don’t have a sin issue before God. I need to start believing. I need to turn. And then I have to believe in Christ.

Let me encourage you to put your trust in Jesus. Every single one of us will respond to one of three ways. Because there’s only three ways that you can respond to the gospel. I know it feels like there’s lots of ways, but there’s really only three categories found in the scriptures, and in Matthew 28. Some of us will respond like a chief priest who simply do not want this to be true for fear of what the Lordship of Christ might mean over our life.

Some of us like the chief priests, we look at the evidence, we go, “Wow, it is compelling.” But I must be resistant to this, because if this is true, then He has claim over my life. And so, some people even today, in here or at home will resist. Others, like the soldiers simply won’t care if it’s true. There’s only two ways to reject the gospel. One is to be resistant to it and hostile to it. The other is simply not to care. It’s to be apathetic to it. The soldiers took the money, and they just went on about their life as though nothing happened. Some of you will leave this room. I pray not, but there’ll be people that will leave rooms all over the world today hearing this news and they’ll walk out and they’ll assume that nothing happened.

And some will respond like the women and those disciples by placing their faith in Jesus and finding new life. These disciples said that, “God commands all people everywhere to repent, because He has fixed the day on which He will judge the world and righteousness by a man whom he has appointed. And of this He has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.” You notice that this applies to all of us, all of us in all places. What? There is a judge? We’re going to stand before that judge? How do we know who it is? Well, He’s the one who rose from the dead.

I invite you to trust Christ. You say, “How do I do that?” The Bible says that you confess to Him, that means you pray. You can pray right now, where you’re sitting right now, you can pray something like this, your own words to God. God, I believe, I believe I’m a sinner. I believe I have a debt that I can’t pay. I believe that I need a savior. And I believe that I can’t be that Savior.

But I believe in Jesus. I believe He died. And I believe He rose from the dead. And I confess Him as Lord of my life. The Bible says that if you believe and confess to Him, that you'll be forgiven of your sin. You'll be given righteous, you'll be given a new heart, you'll be given a new home, you'll be given a new place. We invite you this morning to trust Christ.

That leads to the last thing that I would say is that it's important for those of us who do believe for us to share our hope in Jesus. For we are following someone who was betrayed and accused and humiliated and crucified in our place. And what this means is it gives us confidence to run, and to risk, and to dream, and to send people, and go with the gospel.

Even now, we have a team of people from Providence in Denver, who are serving with the church plan that we want to be praying for, and we want to be encouraging, even as they come back in a day or two. This is why we go, is because people are going to die and they don't know there's hope. And so, we have to go and we have to tell them.

Roman says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes." And beautifully God gives each one of us a very simple way at the beginning of our journey of faith to declare that we're not ashamed to be associated with Christ, even in a culture that ridicules him repeatedly.

It's called baptism. Baptism is a beautiful symbol where somebody is lowered into the water symbolic of a grave, and raised up symbolic of a resurrection. The water does not save anyone. It doesn't forgive anyone. It doesn't purify anyone. It simply gives them an opportunity to tell us that they are not ashamed.

Over this weekend, 21 people have been baptized and we have the privilege to see six more right now. Let me pray. And then let me invite you when these individuals, is a little terrifying to do this in front of a lot of people, is that as their family when they come out of the water, let's celebrate with them like we know it's good news.

Let's pray. Father, thank You for Your Grace. Thank you for your love. And we pray now that you would be working in the lives of people who are considering trusting Christ. And even use these testimonies of people who even in spite of anxiety would stand to say, "I am not ashamed of Jesus." And so, would you give them courage and hope, and would you give us courage and hope. We love you, we acknowledge you. And we pray this in Jesus name. Amen.



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