



The Sermon

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John 20:19-23

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"The Startling Appearance of the Risen Christ"

TRANSCRIPT

Well, I want you to take your Bible and I want to read the passage that we will be looking at today: John chapter 20, John chapter 20; and today we're going to be looking at verses 19 through 23. And in the wonderful providence of God, and I've seen this over the years, that when you preach verse by verse through a book in the Bible, how the Lord so often has it measured out that you come to just the right place at the right time. So, only the Lord could have orchestrated this and we come to this passage. I've entitled this message: "The Startling Appearance of the Risen Christ."

John chapter 20, and I want to begin reading in verse 19: "So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.' And when He had said this, He breathed on them and sent to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained.'" This is the reading of God's inspired, inerrant, and infallible word. Let us go to Him in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we have heard Your word read and You have spoken to our minds and our hearts already, and I pray today as we gather on this

Resurrection Day that You would just enlarge our understanding of and our excitement for the fact that Jesus has been raised from the dead, and He is alive forevermore. He is seated at Your right hand, and all authority in heaven and earth have been given unto Him, and He ever lives to make intercession for us. Lord, this is so glorious, this is so wonderful, that it thrills our hearts and our souls. And we who have known You for many years and have given thought over the decades, even to the resurrection of Christ, I pray that it would not be stale in our hearts, but that there would be a new wave of, really, fervency that would flood our soul for this fact, that You have raised Your Son from the dead, and thereby validating the perfection of His atonement, the finality of His redemption upon the cross.

We are thrilled. Our hearts are humbled as we give thought to this glorious truth. And so we ask for Your assistance today. I pray that You would fill me with Your Spirit. Lay Your hand upon me for good, that I would be an instrument in Your hand to unfold Your word. And I pray for everyone here today and everyone who is listening and watching, that You will meet them exactly where they are and personally minister to them at exactly their point of need. So, Father, we are a needy people and in need of Your grace, grace upon grace. So bring the fullness of Your favor to us this day, we pray this in Christ's name. Amen. [End]

As I have said, the title of this message is "The Startling Appearance of the Risen Christ," because in these verses we see the dramatic appearance of Jesus to His disciples at the end of what has been a hectic day on the first Easter. What a day that this has been. The day began before sunrise when Mary Magdalene and some women came to the tomb to further prepare the body of Jesus for burial; and as they arrive they are astounded and astonished because the stone has been rolled away. And when they look inside the tomb, the body of Jesus is not there. And Mary naturally comes to the conclusion someone has stolen the body, and so she runs away to tell Peter and John that they have stolen the body of Jesus. Peter and John come running to the tomb, and they look inside and they see just the linen wrappings laying there and the face cloth folded up perfectly. This is astonishment beyond what they can take in.

And next come five appearances of Jesus, five appearances on this first day. There will be more that will follow. But first, Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene as she now comes and returns back to the tomb after running to tell Peter and John, and there she has her encounter with the risen Christ. She first assumes that He is the gardener, and then He says, "Mary," and she immediately recognizes Him and falls at His feet and clings to Him. The second appearance of Jesus was to the other women a short time after that as He reveals Himself to them as raised from the dead.

After that, Jesus appears to Peter. We don't know where it took place, but Jesus did appear to Peter. And then Jesus appears on the road to Emmaus, His fourth appearance to two disciples, and they don't even know that it's Jesus is walking with them until He makes Himself known to them; and He takes the entire Old Testament and shows Himself in those mountain peak passages where He is and this fulfillment in His life. It is now toward the end of the day, it is now evening, and Jesus will make His fifth and final appearance to those who know Him. This passage that is before us contains the record of this fifth and final appearance, and I want us to walk through it together with us together because this is one extraordinary passage.

The first thing that I want you to note is at the beginning of verse 19 it is the persecution feared, the persecution feared, because after the crucifixion of Jesus, the disciples are terrified, because they have come after Jesus and they have crucified Jesus, and they understand that they are next. And so they will huddle behind closed doors, trembling like a leaf in the storm, fearful that the temple police will come and apprehend them and nail them to crosses.

So we begin reading in verse 19, "So when it was evening on that day." We know what "that day" is. "That day" is the day of the resurrection. And it is now evening, it is after sunset, and John records, "It is the first day of the week." That's important for him to note. Jesus was crucified on Friday, He was raised from the dead early Sunday morning, and Sunday will become the day when the early church will meet. It will be because Jesus was raised from the dead on Sunday that the gathering of the people of God on Sunday

will be like a coronation day. It will be a celebration day to rejoice always in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

And we continue to read in verse 19, "and when the doors were shut," literally bolt locked, "where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews." They are terrified. They are fearful. There are ten of the disciples who are huddled, we think probably it is in the same upper room where Jesus had met with them on Thursday evening. It's in Jerusalem on the second floor; and interestingly enough, it was the house of John Mark who became the author of the gospel of Mark.

And so they are gathered together, and they are fearful that the authorities are coming after them next, and so they have shut the doors. "They are fearful," it says, "of the Jews." And "the Jews" refer here to the temple police and to the Sanhedrin and to the Jewish leaders. They are shaking in their sandals. And you and I would have been shaking as well if we had been there that day. They knew that Jesus had been crucified, and surely in the very city in which Jesus was put to death, they will be next.

We can hardly imagine really just how terrified they were. They knew that there was a conspiracy that had been unfolding to apprehend, arrest the Lord Jesus Christ in order to try Him and put Him to death. They were there in the garden of Gethsemane, and they watched Jesus be arrested by an entire cohort of Roman soldiers, probably either two or four hundred Roman soldiers come to arrest just one man when Judas singled out Jesus in the garden. And so they know that they're next.

And just on Thursday night in the Upper Room Discourse, Jesus had already promised them that they will be persecuted and that they will be put to death. In John 15:19, Jesus said, "I chose you out of the world; because of this, the world hates you." And then in verse 20, "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you also." They have it from the authority of Christ Himself that they will be coming after them.

And then in John 16:2, still in the Upper Room Discourse, Jesus said this to the disciples, and we need to understand what all is in their mind as they are behind shut doors. Jesus said to them, "They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that He is offering service to God." They know the hour has come. And Jesus then said in John 16:20, "You will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve."

And so for them, this hour has now come for them to be persecuted, for them to be apprehended and taken off, for them to be put to death and to be killed just as Jesus said it would take place, only just not yet. But the point is they are terrified and they are traumatized. This leads, second, to the panic increased. It only goes from bad to worse. They now will be startled. They now will be frightened at an even higher level than if the temple police had knocked on the door and entered into the room where they were. What could possibly have caused them more trauma than the authorities to come to arrest them?

It's right here in verse 19: "Jesus came, Jesus came and stood in their midst." The resurrected Christ has suddenly appeared in the upper room in their very midst. How did this happen? The doors are shut. The doors are locked. They are huddled in isolation, and suddenly He just appears out of thin air in their midst. And the fact is, in His resurrection body He just passed through the walls. He has a body that is both natural and supernatural, if you will, natural enough that they could touch Him and see Him, but supernatural enough that He could just appear on the road to Emmaus, He could suddenly leave the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and now suddenly appear in their midst in the upper room.

This only escalated their fear that they now are traumatized at an unexpected level. I mean, this would be like you going to a funeral, and the person who is in the coffin is suddenly seated next to you in the pew. You would be stark whatever the color of your skin is. I mean, you would be stark white, black, red, whatever. As I looked around I saw a lot of different colors. Just being PC here, just being PC. What you mean we, **Kemosabe?**

The last they had seen of Jesus was He was arrested, taken off to be crucified; and only John followed to the cross, the rest scattered like rats on a sinking ship. And now here, Jesus suddenly appears in their midst, He who has been crucified, and they think they are seeing a ghost. They think they are seeing a disembodied spirit from the invisible world.

In Luke 24:37, you can look at it when you get home, I'm going to read it for you. But in Luke 24 37, Luke gives us some additional insight into this unfolding scene, and Luke records, "They were startled and frightened." Those two Greek words literally mean they were terrified and super terrified, "and thought they were seeing a spirit," small "s." They thought they were seeing a ghost. For all they knew, this was either an angel or a demon or whatever in-between. They didn't have a category for this.

And in verse 38, Jesus said to them in Luke 24, "Why are you troubled?" And that word "troubled" means disturbed. It was used of the angry waves in the sea earlier in Matthew and Mark. And on the inside their hearts are turbulent, as a storm is brewing within them. This appearance of Jesus created a far greater panic than the thought of them being arrested and put to death.

So Jesus in an act of tender compassion and loving concern, we read, said to them, at the end of verse 19, "Peace be with you." Why would He say that? Because that's the last thing they had at this moment. They were scared spitless. This blew their mind. They were astonished, they were bewildered, they were amazed, because they had been fearful that the Jews would apprehend them. They have been fearful for their own lives. They have now become fearful because of Jesus' appearance. And the thing they need is peace.

And Jesus says, "Peace be with you." Peace is that inner calm, that inner tranquility in the midst of the raging storms of life. Peace does not remove the trouble, peace gives you the serenity and the stillness within your heart in the midst of the raging adversities and trials of life. Jesus never promised

us an easy life. He said in John 16:33, "In this world you have tribulation." But what He has promised in the midst of the tempest and the tribulation and in the midst of the trials is a supernatural peace that surpasses all comprehension, and it is more real than anything your heart will ever know.

Jesus said in John 14:27, earlier, just three days earlier, four days earlier in the upper room, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, do not let it be fearful." And Jesus now brings home to their troubled hearts this supernatural peace. It is this same supernatural peace that you and I so desperately need.

I don't know what all is going on in your world. I don't know what you left at home. I don't know what you left at the office. I don't know what's going on with your children or with your circles of relationships. I don't know what's going on with you financially, emotionally, physically. But I do want you to know this, that there is a supernatural peace that the Lord Jesus gives to His children in the midst of the storms, and it is so real that it is inexplicable.

In Philippians 4:6-7, the apostle Paul wrote, "Be anxious for nothing, and in everything through prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." I need this peace, you need this peace. There's not a person in this room who is beyond needing this peace. This peace we need in the midst of this social unrest in which we find ourselves, in the midst of this economic uncertainty, in the midst of this political upheaval, in the midst of this cultural madness, in the midst of this sexual revolution, there is only one place that you and I will ever find peace, and it's not at the mall, it's with the Master, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. And so, He says, "Peace be with you." And I want you to know this same risen Christ who is seated at the right hand of God the Father, He says the very same to you today: "Peace be with you."

I want you to note, third, the proof shown. In verse 20 we see in order to further calm their troubled hearts, Jesus gives them clear evidence that it is truly Him, that it is not a ghost, it is not a spirit being, that it is actually Jesus. How gracious of Jesus to now provide concrete evidence that He is raised from the dead.

And so, in verse 20, we read, "And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side." He showed them His nail-pierced hands in which the holes and the wounds are still visible. And, beloved, they are still visible in heaven in His glorified body as well. And when we arrive in heaven, we will stare in amazement and astonishment that One so mighty and One so majestic would have laid down His life for us upon the cross. We will stare at these nail-pierced hands throughout all of the ages to come.

"And He showed them His side," where the soldier's spear had been thrust into the side and the water came gushing out because of the trauma of His heart as He hung upon the cross. The pericardium sac around His heart was so pushed to the limit His heart was about to burst upon the cross, that water formed around His heart, and when they thrust the spear the water came gushing out.

"He showed them His hands and His side," the visible marks to prove that He was not a ghost He has been raised from the dead. He is in a real human body: God in human flesh. And Luke gives us some insight here that's helpful again.

In Luke 24:39, Luke records, "Jesus said to them," very same setting, 'See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.' Verse 40, "He showed them His hands and His feet." Verse 41, He said to them - now this is amazing. He says in verse 41, "Have you anything to eat?" What's He up to?

In verse 42, "They gave Him a piece of broiled fish"; verse 43, "and He took it and ate it before them." It was to further document that He has a real body. He is a real man who has been raised from the dead. "See My hands, see My feet. Touch Me, see Me. Watch Me eat this fish that you took from your hand, put into My hand, and I now eat it and swallow it." Their eyes are opening and they are beginning to grasp the magnitude of this, because they just could not let themselves believe that He had been raised from the dead.

Now He had told them many times that He would be taken into custody, He would be put to death, and on the third day He would be raised from the dead. Mark especially records those sayings of Jesus. But it just went in one ear and out the other, it went over their head. In fact, one time after Jesus said it, Peter actually said, "Lord, may it not be so." And Jesus had to say, "Get behind Me, Satan, because this is a part of the plan of God." So they should have known He would be raised from the dead. But they were like you and me, not always paying attention to what the Lord is saying in His word.

And so, we read, "The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord." Rejoiced? They were euphoric. They exploded with joy. They were beside themselves, because seeing the risen Lord has changed everything. I mean, this is like a ball game where you have gone from certain defeat to now, "We have won the game." The tables have been turned completely, and they are filled with joy.

And I want you to know that every drop of joy your heart will ever know is in one way or another rooted and grounded in the Lord Jesus Christ. The world may have happiness, and it's a fleeting fickle emotion, but you and I as Christians may have what the world will never know, which is a deep, abiding joy that comes from Jesus and is in Jesus. The most joyful you will ever be in your entire life is when you are worshiping Jesus, is when you are serving Jesus, is when you are obeying Jesus, when you are following Jesus, when you are meditating upon Jesus, that will be those moments when you have the greatest joy you will ever know. If you come up to me after the service and say, "How can I find this joy?" I'm just going to point

you to Jesus. Joy is a byproduct, Jesus is the destination. You need to see Jesus in the Scripture, and then you will have true abiding joy.

Well, this leads now to verse 21, and I want you to see, fourth, the plan announced, because having revealed Himself to them, Jesus now reveals something else; not just Himself, but the program, the plan that He has for their lives. So, He says in verse 21, "So Jesus said to them, 'Peace be with you.'" He says it a second time. Why would He say it a second time? Because they still can't get over this. They still are like on a roller coaster emotionally, up and then down. They can't believe it. "It's true? No, it can't be true. It is true."

So Jesus has to reinforce it, just like He does with you and me, a second time, "Peace be with you." And now here is the Great Commission in the gospel of John. You find it at the end of Matthew's gospel, at the end of Luke's gospel, you find it at the beginning of the book of Acts. Here it is in the gospel of John, the Great Commission: "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." So this begs the question, "How did the Father send the Son?" Well, the Father sent the Son into the world, into a world of darkness, into a world of depravity, into a world of sinful people, to preach the gospel and to give His life for them. Jesus now commissions them as the Father has already commissioned Him.

So what are they to do? They're not to withdraw into a holy huddle and just be with themselves. No, they are to penetrate the world. The light must shine into the world, the salt must be shaken out into the world, that they are now sent into the world, a sinful world, to rub shoulders with people who are separated from God, in order to preach the gospel and to lay down their life for them. They're laying down their life would not be a substitutionary atonement, but it would be a martyrdom, and it would be a giving of their life unto death for the cause of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And so this is the Great Commission. And this Great Commission is still in effect today, it has been passed down through the centuries. And what Jesus said to these ten disciples in the upper room is laid at our feet. We too are

sent into the world. Think of it this way: we were chosen by the Father before the world, we have been called within time out of the world, and we have been commissioned to go back into the world. And that is our primary business in the world is to reach the world for Christ and to try to take as many people to heaven with us as we possibly can.

So this Great Commission is still on the books. It's never been rescinded, it's never been annulled; it has a very long shelf life. It is still in effect, and it is His commission to you and to me. And you don't have to go overseas to fulfill this, you can just go across the street, you can go across the hallway, you can go down the office and fulfill this Great Commission.

Now this leads to verse 22, and I want you to see the power given, because this commission, "I want you to reach the entire planet with the gospel," that is a commission that is so far beyond the ability of any human being to fulfill. The only way it could possibly be fulfilled would be for God to give supernatural ability and power to fulfill the commission to be sent into the world, right? You can't do this on your own. It's not hard, it's impossible.

So, notice what Jesus says in verse 22, "And when He," Jesus, "had said this, He breathed on them, He breathed on them." Now what is the significance of that? Well, it was symbolic of the imparting of the Holy Spirit, which He is now giving to them.

The Holy Spirit is often pictured as "breath" or "wind." For example, in John 3:8, Jesus said, "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, and do not know where it is going or where it has come from; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit." You see, the wind perfectly illustrates the Holy Spirit: you can't see the wind, you can only feel the wind; and you can only come under the power of the wind, and you can be propelled by the wind. And so it is with the Holy Spirit: you cannot see the Holy Spirit, He doesn't have a physical body; but you can feel His presence, and you can be impelled to carry out God's will. He's like wind in the sails of a sailboat that ushers us along to do God's will.

And so, He says at the end of verse 22, "and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" Now there are different ways to understand Jesus' saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit," here." I think Jesus is actually giving them great power by the Holy Spirit at this moment. It will be like a little bit of a down payment to get them to Pentecost when there will be an even greater measure of the Holy Spirit who would be given. But they already have the Holy Spirit. No one can be saved without the Holy Spirit, and no one can follow Christ without the Holy Spirit. They already have the Holy Spirit, that's how they cast out demons, that's how they raise the dead, that's how they healed the sick, that's how they cleanse the lepers. It was by not their power, it was by the God-given power of the Holy Spirit.

And Jesus had already told them in Luke chapter 11, "If you then being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?" And so what Jesus is doing here is giving them a greater measure of power beyond what they have experienced to this point, to propel them forward, to keep them going over the next fifty days until the day of Pentecost, when God will then give an even greater measure of the Holy Spirit. It would be only by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit would they be enabled even during this interlude between the resurrection and the day of Pentecost. They couldn't go fifty days without the Holy Spirit.

And let me just tell you, neither can you or I. You and I couldn't go fifty days without the Holy Spirit. We couldn't go fifty seconds without the Holy Spirit. Jesus said in John 15:5, "Apart from Me you can do nothing." They could not have even made it up into the upper room if it was just them. No, He is giving them a greater measure of the Holy Spirit. And there are times in your life and in your Christian walk where you need for the Lord to unleash a greater measure of His power in you to do that which is seemingly difficult or challenging. Even to the end of your life He gives a dying grace, and He gives the power by the Spirit to remain faithful all the way to the end.

But this leads us now to the last verse, verse 23, and I want you to note, finally, the pardon proclaimed, the pardon proclaimed. Jesus has

commissioned them in verse 21: "I'm sending you, as the Father has sent Me." In verse 22, He's given them the power by the Holy Spirit. Now in verse 23, He gives them the message. "Here is the message that you are to take to the world it is the message to proclaim the forgiveness of sins."

So, notice what He says in verse 23: "If you forgive the sins of any," let's just stop right there. The "you" refers to the disciples as they are being sent out to preach the gospel. "If you forgive the sins of any." Now let's be clear, first of all, what this is not saying. This is not saying that the disciples will have authority in and of themselves to forgive sin. There's only one who can forgive sin, and that is God.

In Mark chapter 2:7, you remember after Jesus raised the paraplegic who had been lowered through the roof, and He said, "Take up your pallet and walk," and everyone was aghast. "What? How can You say this?" Jesus said, "So that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sin. I say to you, 'Take up your pallet and walk.' And he sprung to His feet." They couldn't get him into the house, but he walked out of the house, as everyone just fell back. That miracle that Jesus performed authenticated that He alone has authority to forgive sin.

All sin is ultimately against God and against Christ, and He alone has grace and mercy to forgive. So what does this mean, "If you forgive the sins of any"? What this means, taking the whole rest of the Bible into consideration. And that's how we interpret the Bible. We never take one verse and read the entire rest of the Bible through the lens of one verse, it's the other way around. We take the whole rest of the Bible and look at one verse. The tail is not wagging, the dog the dog is wagging the tail. The train is being pulled by the engine, not by the caboose.

So, taking the whole rest of the Bible into account, it is very clear that what Jesus is saying is that, "As you go, you are to proclaim the forgiveness of sin, and you will give the terms for this forgiveness of sin, 'That you must confess your sin, and you must call upon the name of the Lord in order to have the forgiveness of your sin.'" And having announced that to the people

in the world who are perishing, as they will confess their sin and as they will call upon the name of the Lord as Christ has prescribed, you may say to them, "Your sins are forgiven based upon your faith in Jesus Christ and based upon the abundance of His mercy and grace upon your life."

So, this is the message that they are to take to the world: "If you forgive the sins of any." Now those three words, I want to drill down on those three words: forgive, sins, and any. Do you see them in your Bible? The word "forgive." What does the word "forgive" mean? The word literally means to send away. It means to remit a debt. It means to cancel out a charge. It means to just wipe the slate clean, to put it in the vernacular. It means that there is now therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. All charges of guilt have been taken away. "Forgive."

Next word is "sins." Do you see that? "Sins" is in the plural. It's referring to all your sins, not just some sins. Sometimes people will come to me and say, "Well, I know God can forgive this sin and this sin and this sin that I've committed. But how could He ever forgive me for this sin that's a far greater sin?" Listen, your forgiveness does not depend upon the size of your sin, it depends upon the magnitude of the Savior and His grace and His mercy. "Where sin does abound, grace does much more abound." So all of our sins.

God says through the prophet Isaiah, "Come, let us reason together," says the Lord, Isaiah 1:18. "Though your sins be a scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be white as wool." When you commit your life to Jesus Christ, He scrubs and purges the stain of sin from your soul, and you are left as pure and white as a virgin snow. From the top of your head to the bottom of your feet, every inch and every ounce is under the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is all washed away. The Bible says that He has taken our sins and placed them behind His back where He can see them no more. The Bible says He has taken our sins and buried them in the sea of His forgetfulness, never to be raised again.

And then the word "any." The word "any" in verse 23 means any person with any background, with anywhere, with any soiled past. No matter how sinful your past, your sins are washed by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes people say even to me, "A Christian who commits suicide goes to hell, right?" No, every sin, even a tragic, horrible sin like that, every sin has been washed by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ for the one who has put their faith and trust in Him.

So notice verse 23, let's just finish this: "If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them." If you have a New American Standard translation as I do, they're very careful to make the distinction in the verb tenses; and I just want you to understand what this is saying. "If you proclaim the forgiveness of sin and they confess their sin and they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, their sins have already been forgiven, it's a done deal. But," He says, "if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained if in your presentation of the gospel to someone who is without Christ, and you extend to them the free offer of forgiveness of sin and they reject that for whatever reason, and whether they procrastinate or they've hardened in their own heart, then you can say to them, 'You are still in your sins; and if you perish in your sins, you will be eternally separated from God and suffer eternal punishment in a real place called hell.'"

So this is quite a first Easter, is it not? And this is quite a scene, a real scene, as Jesus has appeared that evening to His disciples. And as I conclude this message I just want to ask you this one question: "What must you do to have the forgiveness of your sins?" There is no greater issue that is facing you than the forgiveness of your sins, because no one can be made right with God except all their sins be forgiven. No one can find acceptance in heaven except all of their sins have been forgiven. If you think you could go to heaven without your sins being forgiven, you have no idea of how holy God is, and you have no idea of how sinful you really are. Every one of us in this room, whether you're an adult, whether you're a child, however old you are, whatever your background, whatever your place in society, you have one great, compelling need, and it is for your sins to be forgiven.

So what must you do to have your sins forgiven? I'm going to reduce it down to two things, the heads and tails of the same coin. Number One: You must confess your sin. You must confess your sin. No one will ever have forgiveness of sin unless you know you have sinned. No one will ever have forgiveness of sin until you confess your sin to God. And the word "confess" means to agree with, or to say the same as, *homologeó*; and it means to agree with God about your sin problem. And every one of us has had or has a sin problem. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

There's not a person in this room or watching by livestream who does not have a sin problem. And we must acknowledge our sin to God. Jesus only died for one kind of person, a sinner. He did not die for good people, He died for bad people, He died for sinners. So that requires that you humble yourself. That requires that you swallow your stinking pride. That requires for once in your life you are honest with yourself. That requires that for once in your life you look into the mirror of God's word and you see yourself for who you are, that you have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

Confess your sin. And, second, call upon Christ. He is the Savior of sinners. And upon that cross God took the sins of all the people who would ever believe upon Him, God transferred our sins to the Lord Jesus Christ. And the Bible says, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us," 2 Corinthians 5:21, "and He bore our sins in His body upon the tree." And as Christ took our sins, the Bible says in John 1:29, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." He became our scapegoat.

As our sin was transferred to Jesus, Jesus in His death upon the cross took our sin far, far away. First John 3:5 says, "He appeared to take away sin." That's why ultimately He came was to deal with your sin problem and my sin problem by dying upon the cross, bearing our sin, and carrying that sin far away, shedding His blood to make the only atonement for our sin. In Revelation 1:5 it says, "He has released us from our sins." The noose that was once around our neck has been released. And, "If the Son shall set you free, you shall be free indeed."

So here's the question for each and every one of us here today: "Have you ever confessed your sin? Have you ever come and declared spiritual bankruptcy to a Holy God in heaven? Have you ever said to God, as in Luke 18:13, 'God be merciful to me, the sinner'? And have you ever called upon the name of the Lord to save you?" To call upon the name of the Lord means for you to take that decisive step of faith, that last step of faith, to entrust your soul to Jesus Christ, who alone can save you and take your sins away.

So, have you ever called upon the name of the Lord to save you? It's possible to be in this room and not be a Christian. You could sit in your garage and not be a car. I've heard about kittens born in a bread basket, but that doesn't make them biscuits. You can sit in church your whole life and never have confessed your sin, and called upon the name of the Lord.

Jesus has been raised from the dead, and the Bible says, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." He is alive, He is in this room today by His Spirit, and He desires that we all embrace Him as Lord and Savior. May God give us grace to do this. Let us pray.

[Prayer] Father, thank You that You've raised Your Son from the dead. Thank You for this authentication, that You have accepted the atonement that Jesus has made for us upon the cross as a full and sufficient payment for our sins. Lord, for those here today who are without the forgiveness of sins may they call upon You, and may they come into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ this very day. We pray this in His name. Amen.