

**The Resurrection: A Celebration that Demands a Response**  
**Acts 2:22-24**

*“Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart and said..., **“Brothers, what must we do?”***

**Introduction:** Decision points are inevitable in life. In fact, the nature of adulthood is that making decisions is part of the entire experience. How we make these decisions determine outcomes and futures, and failure to decide at all is in itself a decision.

When we were young, decisions were simple and carried short term effects and consequences: *what do I wear today, what will I do at recess, will I obey or not.* As parents we can guide and help closely, helping push in a positive direction and mitigating harsh outcomes. But as we get older, the outcomes ramp up. As parents we are at that point where our daughters are going to make decisions about college, career, places to live, and even marriage over the next 5-10 years. Some of these will be obvious, while others will take wisdom, clarity, courage, and confidence to move forward. The process of decision making is of utmost importance, and though I wish as a father that I could dictate both what they decide AND the outcome, at best I can stand back in support and advice. *“What should I do, dad?”* is simultaneously one of the greatest and hardest questions we will get as parents, because we know that there are certain choices that our kids make that are solely up to them, and they will have to bear the consequences of it, both good and hard.

**You are here today to celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ,** the day that Jesus raised up out of the tomb, rolled the stone away, and walked out alive, showing Himself to many before His ascension. Some of you are here to be with family, some because of tradition, and maybe others of you have no idea why. But there is one reality this morning that is true of everyone here: we ALL must make a decision regarding a risen Savior, whether we believe Him or not, what we will do with our sin, and whether Jesus is our Lord....or not. And a non-decision is still a decision!

We want to look at the first Easter sermon ever given, one that is easily considered the greatest resurrection sermon ever. It was a message given by **the apostle Peter at Pentecost, 50 days after the events of Passover** where Jesus had died and risen again. Peter, who had denied his Savior 3 times on the night that Jesus died, now was fully restored and ready to give his life for the message of salvation. He and his fellow disciples were gathered once again in Jerusalem at this Feast where a life altering event took place: they were **filled with the Holy Spirit**, while tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on them. They began to speak to all the Jews and non-Jews gathered from around the world in their own native languages, which left everyone in the crowd both **amazed and perplexed**, with some asking questions and others mocking, thinking these guys were drunk. What was clear to all was that something historic was happening, as the OT prophecy of Joel was coming to pass, which signaled the time of the long awaited Messiah. Any person of Jewish heritage at this time was waiting for Messiah to come and rule, and the Spirit being poured out, signs and wonders being done, and prophecies given would have signaled SOMETHING was going on. So we want to look at a part of this sermon that will drive us all to a decision point to ask the eternal question: **“Brothers, what should we do?”**

**Jesus: The Undeniable Messiah (2:22-23)**

*“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with **mighty works and wonders and signs** that God did through Him **in your midst**, as you yourselves know ---- this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, **you crucified and killed** by the hands of lawless men.”*

Easter, like all of life, starts and ends with the Person and Work of Jesus. Peter started his sermon to a group of pilgrims from all around the world by connecting their idea of Messiah with Jesus of Nazareth, a man they had seen and heard just a couple months earlier. The question that all would have had then, and now, is that if there truly was a man Jesus who actually lived in history, who was the son of a carpenter from a nowhere place like Nazareth, ***how do we know He was the Messiah? What made Jesus so special and undeniable?***

- **He did numerous signs and wonders during His life** – We often attribute providential happenings as miraculous: looking up at the exact right time to avoid a car accident, unexplained recovery from illness, and the coming together of circumstances for a positive outcome. But miracles are NOT normal, are by definition unable to replicate, and point to the work of God alone. The signs Jesus did were so that ***you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name*** (John 20:31). He had authority over the natural world, commanding the storms, multiplying bread, and turning water to wine. He had the power over disease, healing all forms of illness, restoring limbs, and cleansing from leprosy. He had the power over death, even raising Lazarus to life after he was in the grave for 4 days! He did not wipe out disease, hunger, nor the rule of Rome in His life, but showed the fact that only one from God could do these things, and He did these to verify that HE was the Messiah, the Son of Man, the Lord.
- **He did all of these in plain sight and the view of many, including those listening to Peter** – Have you ever wondered why God doesn't just do the same type of miracles today to prove His existence? The answer is, even if He did, people would STILL refuse to believe. During Jesus' three years of public ministry, He did these signs but the crowds STILL rejected Him. The group of 5,000 that He fed (John 6:1-14) ended up leaving Him when He said He was the bread of life (John 6:66). After raising Lazarus from the dead, the religious leaders of the day were afraid that the people would take away their power and place, so they made plans to put Him to death (John 11:48-53). The miracles that Jesus did left no doubt about His claims as Messiah, but were not enough to get people to believe.
- **He died a verifiable, public death** – Jesus told His disciples and eventually the crowds that He had come to die, to be raised up on the cross so all could see and believe (John 12:32-33). When Jesus hung on the cross, it was the most heinous, painful, prolonged form of torture the Romans could dish out. Perfected to keep criminals alive long enough to writhe in pain and agony, it was designed to be public to de-incentivize anyone from committing acts of sedition. Again, there would have been people in the crowd during Peter's sermon who would have seen Jesus lifted off the cross, His limp body carried away and put into a tomb.

*So who killed Jesus? Why did He die?* He died because that was the plan before the world began, the story and plan of redemption that was created before Adam even realized he did not have a belly button. Jesus had to die because that was the ONLY WAY that sinful mankind could come back into a right, reconciled, and restored relationship with God. God was the only ONE who could satisfy the requirement of absolute purity and holiness of God, and only a man could take the place of mankind. In fact, no one took Jesus' life from Him, but He gladly laid it down to glorify His Father and draw His own to Himself (John 10:22-30).

But Peter also pointed out that those who were alive during Jesus' day were culpable of putting Him on the cross. ***Why did Jesus' own people want to kill Him, especially after celebrating His entrance on***

**Palm Sunday?** *In a word, FEAR!* The religious leaders feared that Jesus would steal the hearts of the people and replace their place and power. The people feared the religious leaders would put them out of the synagogue (John 12:41-43) if they followed Jesus. Pilate feared losing His grip on his position (John 19:8) and having Rome put *him* to death. So they all had a part in creating a false accusation against Jesus, bringing up weak and false charges, and when Pilate balked at putting Him to death, they did the unthinkable: pledged loyalty and fidelity to Caesar! (John 19:15) This left the Jewish people alive during this time full of **shame, guilt, wickedness, and fearful of the wrath of God**. These are the same conditions that people find themselves in today, and most choose to rebel against Jesus, trying to assuage their fear and guilt by continuing on in sin until they don't feel at all or by surrounding themselves with people who will tell them they are ok. The point that Peter made was this: the Jews were responsible for their part of killing the Messiah, but they were also the object of His **love, mercy, grace, and forgiveness**. This is the best news for all people. But there was still one of the most convincing proofs of Jesus being exactly who He claimed to be: the **resurrection itself**.

### **The Resurrection: The Unequivocal Proof (2:24)**

*God raised Him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for Him to be held by it."*

The resurrection of Jesus moved the story of redemption from the heroic but tragic death of a martyr to proof that God accepted the sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf. In other words, if Jesus had died on the cross and stayed in the grave, we could have revered Him as a loving leader and sacrificial servant, but not Christ the Lord. The empty tomb proved His claim, and guarantees our own resurrection to come (John 14:19; Rom. 6:4-5; 1 Cor. 6:14). The ultimate problem that we have in our sin is not that it brings misery (though it does) or cuts us off from a relationship with God (it does that too), but the fact that sin brings death (Rom 6:23; Heb. 2:14-15). We die in our sins physically, spiritually, and eternally. Each of these was conquered when Jesus rose from the grave for all who believe, allowing those who believe in Jesus to die physically but be made alive eternally.

Again, Peter does not expect his audience to simply believe his words, but pointed to their own experience in seeing the resurrected Jesus (2:32 – "This Jesus God raised up and of that we all are witnesses"), knowing that Jesus showed Himself to many, including 500 at one time (1 Cor. 15:6). David Himself prophesied in Psalm 16 and 110 that the LORD would not see corruption in death, and since David himself died, he was pointing to another to come. And finally, Jesus' ascension ushered in the gift of the Holy Spirit, the person of God that Jesus said would be an advantage if He left. The Holy Spirit now would indwell every person who believed in Jesus.

### **Repentance: The Undeserved Response (2:36-39)**

*Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.*

*Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?' And Peter said to them, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.'*

So Peter showed the crowd that Jesus was the Messiah, that they were guilty in their sin of putting Him on the cross, and that Jesus rose again so that the pangs of death would be loosed. But that is not all.

Because Jesus was faithful, humble, and loving to add humanity while keeping His divine nature, God had made Him both **LORD and Christ, the Savior who forgives sin and the Lord who reigns forever.**

What was the response of the crowd? **Conviction.** Conviction is a gift of the Lord, since emotions can be drummed up but only God can produce conviction of sin, since conviction comes from an understanding of our sin against a holy God. Conviction comes when we have a personal understanding of sin, not simply a general one. All of our guilt, shame, and fear is able to come out of hiding, to have an honest assessment of who we are and where we stand. The only question that could be asked is, ***“what shall we do?”***

**The Answer: REPENT.** Repentance is faith that turns from our sin to a loving and holy God. This has more than just fear of consequences, it is an admission that we have rebelled against a holy God, fallen short of His glory, and are rightly under His wrath, deserving judgment. Repentance turns like a child to a father and asks for forgiveness. God forgives us not by waving a magic wand, but by pouring out His wrath for our sin on His Son, wringing out every ounce of judgment on Him so that God could look at us and NOT see sin, but Christ’s righteousness. That is why Jesus is the ONLY way of salvation, since no one else could bear our sin and give us righteousness. And the requirement is that we must believe, turn from our sin, ask for forgiveness, and follow Him. For the Jews listening to Peter the first mark of obedience would be a public baptism, identifying themselves with Christ alone.

Peter tailored this message to the Jews alive at the time right after Jesus life, death and resurrection. But he extended the offer of salvation to those ***“who were far off”***, which means those non-Jews who would come after. That’s us! So the questions that every person must answer this morning, without emotional plea or dramatic acts are simply this: **what do you believe about Jesus?** Is He who He says He is, the Lord and Savior of the world, or a good man who lived in a past age? **What do you believe about yourself?** Are you good on your own to deal with your fear, guilt, and shame over sin? **What do you believe about life to come?** Are you sure that you will live into eternity with God or will you stand under judgment?

The answer to these questions are knowable and can be answered today. So I call you today: REPENT of your sin and believe in Jesus, turning from your own way and turning to God in Jesus Christ, asking God to forgive your sins. We would love to help you in this. After Peter’s sermon 3,000 were added to the church and they began to devote themselves to teaching, fellowship, eating, and praying with other believers. We invite you to do the same.

I leave you this morning from a part of a sermon from a pastor named **SM Lockridge**, describing Jesus as our King. I will not deliver it like he did, but his way of describing the risen Lord Jesus is poignant.

*“The Bible says my King is the King of the Jews. He’s the King of Israel. He’s the King of Righteousness. He’s the King of the Ages. He’s the King of Heaven. He’s the King of Glory. He’s the King of kings, and He’s the Lord of lords. That’s my King.*

***I wonder, do you know Him?***

*My King is a sovereign King. No means of measure can define His limitless love. He’s enduringly strong. He’s entirely sincere. He’s eternally steadfast. He’s immortally graceful. He’s imperially powerful. He’s impartially merciful.*

***Do you know Him?***

*He’s the greatest phenomenon that has ever crossed the horizon of this world. He’s God’s Son. He’s the sinner’s Savior. He’s the centerpiece of civilization. He’s unparalleled. He’s unprecedented. He is the*

*loftiest idea in literature. He's the highest personality in philosophy. He's the fundamental doctrine of true theology. He's the only one qualified to be an all sufficient Savior.*

***I wonder if you know Him today?***

*He supplies strength for the weak. He's available for the tempted and the tried. He sympathizes and He saves. He strengthens and sustains. He guards and He guides. He heals the sick. He cleansed the lepers. He forgives sinners. He discharges debtors. He delivers the captive. He defends the feeble. He blesses the young. He serves the unfortunate. He regards the aged. He rewards the diligent. And He beautifies the meek.*

***I wonder if you know Him?***

*He's the key to knowledge. He's the wellspring of wisdom. He's the doorway of deliverance. He's the pathway of peace. He's the roadway of righteousness. He's the highway of holiness. He's the gateway of glory.*

***Do you know Him?***

*His life is matchless. His goodness is limitless. His mercy is everlasting. His love never changes. His Word is enough. His grace is sufficient. His reign is righteous. And His yoke is easy. And His burden is light.*

*I wish I could describe Him to you.*

*He's indescribable! He's incomprehensible. He's invincible. He's irresistible. You can't get Him out of your mind. You can't outlive Him, and you can't live without Him. Well, the Pharisees couldn't stand Him, but they found out they couldn't stop Him. Pilate couldn't find any fault in Him. Herod couldn't kill Him.*

*Death couldn't handle Him, and the grave couldn't hold Him.*

***That's my King, that's my King."***