

Easter 2026

Happy Easter! He is risen!

Like many of you, I've been following the Artemis II mission this week. I'm just amazed by what it takes to pull off something like this, and even more amazed that we were able to do a similar mission 60 years ago in a time where I have more computational power on my wrist than they had combined. I just blows me away.

And these are some of the most highly trained people on the planet. They've poured in years of preparation. Thousands of hours of simulations and drills. Engineering brilliance behind every detail. Everything is calculated, tested, and rehearsed.

But then, not even 24 hours into their mission, they ran into a problem...with the toilet. Which, let's just be honest, is NOT the problem you want to have when you're that far away from earth.

But just imagine...you have trained your entire life for this moment. You're going to be orbiting the moon. Seeing things no human eye has ever seen before. And 9 minutes into your mission, you have to say, "Uh, Houston, we have a problem." And, I have to imagine that one of those brave, well-trained, prepared astronauts thought to themselves, "What did I get myself into?"

Have you ever had a moment like that? A moment where you thought, "Man, I'm in over my head right now!" Like, I thought I was prepared for everything, but not this, and now it just all feels like a lot.

And you may not be dealing with a plumbing issue thousands of miles from earth, but some of us are raising teenagers right now and we're like, "Let's trade problems! Because at least you have a team of people working on the issue while you do other things.

Some of you are navigating the difficulties of caring for your aging parents and it just feels like a lot and you don't know what to do or the best way to help.

You might be leading a project at work that feels impossible or overwhelming. There are problems in your marriage. Money is super tight and you feel like you're drowning.

I don't know what you carried in with you today, but, I imagine at one time or another, most of us have hit a point where we realize, "I can't fix this on my own. I don't know what to do now." That's probably what Jesus' friends were thinking in the days following his crucifixion.

- They'd left everything to follow Jesus and now he was dead.

- Hope is gone. Fear has started to settle in. The same people who killed Jesus have the disciples on their radar, too. They want to squash this nuisance.
- And so, it's not surprising that right after the passage Maggie read for us, we find them huddled together behind a locked door. They're afraid and hurting and confused.

But while they are focused on all the things they CAN'T do, and just how much they are in over their heads, God is busy doing something greater than they could even imagine! Something that was so powerful, so disruptive, so life-changing that we're gathered today to celebrate it nearly 2,000 years later!

On that first Easter morning, Mary goes to the tomb and finds it empty. She thinks his body has been moved...because dead people don't come back to life. But then Jesus appears to her and everything changes. She runs back to tell the other disciples and later that day, this is what we read...(READ John 20:19-20)

It's not long until these same fearful and confused followers of Jesus walk out into the streets, boldly preaching the message of the resurrected Jesus. And they start a movement that is still changing lives, and the world, today! And behind this movement is a message that is still good news for us today: **God raised Jesus, and in doing so, proved there is *nothing* he cannot overcome.**

You see, on Easter, we don't just celebrate the miracle of the resurrection of Jesus, we also celebrate the declaration behind it. Because Jesus lives:

- Sin doesn't win.
- Your past does not have to define you.
- And death does not have the final word.

If God raised Jesus from the dead...if he can transform a group of fearful followers into bold witnesses...if an instrument of death can be transformed into symbol of life...if a tomb that was filled with a body can be left vacant for someone else to use...that means, **the resurrection isn't just something to believe in, it's something to be experienced.**

One encounter with the risen Jesus changed everything for these first followers. One encounter with the risen Jesus changes everything in the lives of people today. And one encounter with the risen Jesus has the power to change everything in your life, too.

When we put our faith in Jesus, Scripture says that, **"the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you," (Romans 8:11)** too. He brings resurrection life into those places where we just feel like we're in over our heads. He brings hope to those relationships that

feel hopeless. He brings courage when we feel afraid. Comfort when we feel alone. And we find that peace and freedom when we stop trying to do life on our own and surrender to Him.

Last week, we wrapped up a series on the 12 steps of recovery. And as part of preparing for that series, I read a great book by John Ortberg called *Steps: A Guide to Transforming Your Life When Willpower Isn't Enough*. He laid out surrender like this. It's us saying, "I can't. God can. So I think I'll let Him." Can you say that with me? (**Note: Please leave on TV until Cardboard Testimonies**)

If you're tired and anxious right now. If your way isn't working and you feel like the disciples, huddled up behind locked doors, afraid of what might be on the other side of that phone call, that diagnosis, that conversation...if that's you, maybe this is the confession of surrender you need to make today.

I can't. I can't fix it myself. I can't outrun my past. I can't heal this hurt on my own.

God can. God can forgive. God can restore. God can raise dead things back to life and make all things new!

And, here's the thing...these first two things are true, whether we want to admit it or not. And I've brought on a lot of trouble in my life ignoring the reality of these first two statements, thinking I can do it on my own, or that I can't trust the Lord. And so, the question for me, and for you, is...is this 3rd statement true?

So I think I'll let Him. This is the moment of surrender when you stop trying to manage your life and your own and you start trusting Jesus with it. That you let go of that thing in your life that you can't fix on your own and you put your faith in a God who can bring dead things...and dead people...back to life.

And in this room, there are people who, that's their story. They stopped trying to do it on their own and they started trusting Jesus. People who proclaimed, "I can't," discovered, "God can," and decided, "So I think I'll let Him."

And right now, they want to share their stories with you. These are stories of real people, with real struggles, who experienced real transformation through the resurrection power of Jesus...(Cardboard Testimonies)

Closing

So, my question for you today is, "What's your story?" And not just, *what has God already done for you*, but *what do you need Him to do?*

Instructions for Cards

- Side 1 – A struggle or pain in your life. Label you wear. Lie you believe. A place where hope feels lost.
- Side 2 – The new life you've found, or want to find, in Jesus. What resurrected life would feel like in that place. Where you need death to give way to new life.

Take this card home. Write your story. Share it with someone. Share it with us! All of our stories are still a work in progress, but we're letting the resurrected Jesus transform us, one day, one moment at a time.

And so maybe, today is the day you say, "I can't. God can. So I think I'll let Him."

If you've never taken this step, but are ready to surrender your life to Jesus, we'd love to come alongside of you. This Easter could be a line in the sand moment for you when you stop carrying the weight of guilt and shame and regret that you were never meant to carry. You can surrender it to Him today and walk in the freedom and resurrected life He brings.

Communion

Communion is a moment where we slow down and remember what it cost for that resurrection life to be possible.

The body of Jesus was broken. His blood was poured out. Not just so we could be forgiven, but so we could be made new.

So as you take the bread and the cup, bring whatever feels dead, heavy, or out of your control, and place it in His hands once again. Pray through that front side of your card and ask Him to bring new life on the other side.