

Welcome, everyone. I know Alan did this earlier, but it's. It's one of my favorite parts of the Easter service. If I don't do it, I'll walk away feeling like Easter didn't really happen. So you know the drill.

Maybe you don't, but the ancient church had the tradition of the leader saying, he is risen. And the response was, he is risen indeed. Now, now, all of you know this, so we're going to say it together. He is risen. I love it.

Now, I heard a few kids back in the back, and parents, I just want to reassure you. Right now, it takes a lot more than your kid to throw me off. I am impervious to distraction. These people try. They try hard, but they can't do it.

And your kid can't do it either. So just relax. Just relax. Your kids are fine. We love having kids in the room.

I find special joy in knowing that not only old people, but young people get to hear the mellifluous sounds of my voice when I preach. So we love having your kids here. All that to say, we're glad you're here. We're glad your kids are here. He has risen.

He is risen indeed. Now, for those kids who are here a little bit younger than me, which is a lot of you, I want to take you back to 1985. Anyone remember that year? Anyone around for 1985? You may remember that Mikhail Gorbachev was elected as the new General Secretary of the Soviet Union.

Scientists detected a hole in the ozone layer over the South Pole. Remember that there was a French exploration team who discovered the remains of the Titanic at the bottom of the ocean floor. Oh, one of my favorites.

Tens, maybe a hundred music stars gathered in a studio and recorded a song. We are the world we are the children we are the ones who make a brighter day so let's start living. Yes. Lionel Richie had the standout line. I loved it.

And a young 18 year old stud by the name of Timmy Thompson.

Okay, hold your applause, hold your applause, hold your applause. Here's the deal. I was in London, England, frantically having nightmares because I had no money. I was virtually a homeless kid in London, England in 1985. Let me explain.

My mom and dad had arranged for me, as a senior graduation gift to send me to Paris and London with a tour group. Now, we lived in Germany at the time, so really it's like sending me to St. Louis. It wasn't that big a deal, but it's Paris in London, for crying out loud. Yeah. So I was excited about it.

I Had I saved a little bit, they put some money towards this and I had a wonderful time. For 10 days I was with this tour group, met some wonderful people, had some great food, did all the Frenchy things, did some of the Englandy things, And then after 10 days, ooh, I had three days in London on my own as an 18 year old. Now my mother today loves to critique my parenting, but I just want to say you sent me off to London at 18 years old by myself. So here's the deal. I was so excited about that.

Those three days were going to be the time where I really, I came into my own as a young man. I was going to, I was going to, I was going to set London on its ear. We were going to transform everything. I was probably going to get a job there. The Queen might have found me and appointed me to some royal position.

I probably would never even go back home. This was my new life. I was so excited, so excited. As I said goodbye to my little tour group friends. I went back up to my hotel room, I pulled out my cash and I started counting it.

And I realized something terrifying if you lived in 1985, before the era of cash app and easy money transfers. I realized that I did not have enough money to last me three days. In fact, I did not have enough money to pay my hotel bill.

Anyone ever been there where you're like, okay, we're not going to be able to make it? My heart started beating faster. I counted out the money on the bed. You know, I laid it all out there. It's also in British pounds, which just adds another level of confusion for the whole thing.

I laid the money out, I did it by tens and twenties and then by pence. I'm trying to count it and it doesn't add up the way I want it to. So I reshuffle it and I try it a different way and I count it backwards and then I count it sideways and every time I counted just became clear I was broke.

Even if I had announced a spending freeze and said, we're not gonna spend any money, no breakfast, no lunch, no dinner, no souvenirs, no bus rides, nothing, there would still have not been enough money. My dreams of living the good life in London were over.

Here's the challenge.

Maybe you have been in that position where you've not had enough, where you've not been smart enough, where you've not been strong enough, where you've not had enough, maybe where you, maybe where you see the need in front of you and you Realize that you did not have the wherewithal to meet that need. And a little bit of panic sets in. And

you're like, what am I going to do? What am I going to do? And you start to maybe rearrange your life a little bit.

You start tabulating, okay, I can do this, I can do that, I can change a few things here. I can tweak some stuff here. And you're still left with not enough. As people who desire to please and honor God, as people who are trying to find our way back to God, perhaps we can find ourselves in the same position where we're looking at our lives. And you may be here this morning, you.

You may be looking at your life going, okay, I want to get closer to God. I want to please God. I want what God has for me. But what I have to offer is insufficient. And so what do you do?

You try harder. You do a little bit more. You rearrange a little bit, you tweak some things, hoping that maybe at the end of the day, the good will outweigh the bad and you'll have enough to pass muster. And God says, yeah, I'm impressed. Good job.

But it never works out that way. The Bible is very clear that works of righteousness do not lead ever to being right before God. In fact, oftentimes our best efforts only leave us understanding this truth.

We're never going to get there. In other words, trying harder doesn't actually fix the problem. It just makes the problem more obvious for all of us. Romans 2 or 3:23 says this. All have sinned.

All. All have sinned and all have fallen short of the glory of God. This may not be a new verse for you, but it strikes me at times. We were at Alcatraz, the decommissioned prison two weeks ago, and we saw on the wall some of their famous criminals here.

Guys like Al Capone and Machine Gun Kelly, notorious bad guys. But Romans says that it's not just the notorious bad guys who have fallen short of God's glory. It's all of us. All of us miss that mark. And if that makes you want to sort of give up and throw in the towel and say, well, what's the use?

I'll just sit in my hotel room and let life go by and bite my knuckles until the police bobby, show up and haul me from this hotel and throw me in the Tower of London. Because that's what happens when we have a debt that we cannot pay.

But giving up and surrendering is actually a key part of God's plan. Romans 3:21 says this. Now God has shown us his saving power without the help, the law, all those rules and regulations that sometimes we think will make us better before God. God says, those are fine, but again, they're not going to make you right before God. They're only going to point out how far you are from God.

Instead, God says, I've got a different way. I'm going to show you my saving power. And it's not going to be using that old system of trying to do better. Since I'm going to show you my saving power in the form of Jesus. Here's the beautiful thing.

Jesus knows we're flat broke. Jesus knows we do not have the stamina, the wherewithal, the resilience, the good looks, the charm, all the stuff that we sometimes think, well, that'll get us farther than we would have gone otherwise. And God says, no, I know. I know your weaknesses. I know your deficiencies.

I love you, but I know all that stuff about you.

And I'm going to make a way that doesn't depend on you, which, if you are like me, I want to be right with God, but I don't see much of a way inside me to make that happen on my own. And when God says, I got a different way, I go, that's great news. That's good news. That's gospel news. Romans 3:22 goes on to say this.

This rightness before God is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. That's it. That's it. To all who believe in Jesus Christ through faith, this. This grace, this rightness before God, this righteousness is handed out.

Underline the words. If you've got your Bibles, underline the word given, not earned, not achieved. Just. Just given.

I suspect that while most people in this room have trusted their sin debt to Jesus, you're believers. You know the grace of God. You sing about amazing grace, and you live in amazing grace. There may be a few here who have shown up because you know your life is not measuring up to what God wants for you. You know, there's parts missing, there's things that you can't add to it at this point in time to make you right before God.

You feel it. You feel it. And you may think that what God wants for you is just to try a little bit harder. This is not just you. The world seems to operate on this system.

Just do better. Just try harder. Just knuckle down, by golly, just get your. Get your feet on underneath you and get up there and get it done.

God says this, I love you and I want you to get better.

I want you to get closer to me. But the way to get better and the way to get closer is not to try harder. Instead, it's just to swallow your pride and humbly call out to him.

He loves you.

Eighteen year old Tim Thompson, sitting in that hotel room in London, panicking, having nightmares about a debt that he could not pay and what might happen to him because of that, finally comes to his senses and does the thing that he should have done at the beginning. He humbles himself and he makes a phone call.

Hey dad, I'm gonna need some money.

I'm gonna need you to pay this debt for me. Now, Dad's three countries over, but somehow, somehow he arranges for money to be placed in my hands. I don't know how he did it. And there's mysteries to how the atoning work of Jesus works. There is still mysteries.

I've preached sermons on the cross of Jesus and the blood and how God covers and cancels our sin through the work of Jesus. I'll be honest with you, I preach sermons on it and there is still mystery, divine mystery about how this works. So I don't, I don't know that I can unpack all that for you right now. I don't know that I know fully how dad arranged to get money from his bank account through various people so that it ended up someone handing me cash on a London street corner. It wasn't quite like that, but it was close enough.

I don't know how that works, but I know why it worked. I know why it happened because my dad loves me. And my dad said, I don't want you in London stressing about the debt that you cannot pay on your own. I want you to enjoy the life that I have gifted you. And so I'm going to to pay that debt.

You have a father who loves you, you have a dad, you have an Abba who says, I want you to have an amazing life that I've created for you to have on your own. You're never going to get there. You're never going to have the relationship with me, you're never going to have the relationship with others apart from a work that only I can do. You can try harder, go for it. You can do your darndest.

Can you say darndest in church on Easter? I just said it. Thankfully, God knows my weaknesses and he loves me anyway. Amen. You can try harder, but harder only makes you tired and God says, I have come to that you may have life and have it abundantly.

Let me take care of you. And he pays the debt. I love that old song. Child of weakness, watch and pray and find in me thine all in all. And the chorus goes like this Jesus paid it all, you know it all to him I owe Sin had left a crimson stain he washed it white as.

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