



HILL COUNTRY
BIBLE CHURCH | AUSTIN



The Open Graves

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Well good morning. Grab your Bibles and turn to Matthew 27. While you're turning there, there's so many really incredible things taking place in our city, and sometimes I just have to share even though it has nothing to do with the message. As many of you know, we are doing a spiritual awareness campaign in the city called "Explore God". It starts on July 1st and goes through

September. We're going to have the biggest public advertising campaign in our city challenging people to explore God. So we set that forward, and our goal was that we would have at least 400,000 spiritual conversations that would take place in Austin. We're beginning to train people; we'll get you guys trained in how to do that. Right now we have 157 churches that have committed to be part of that (Congregation claps), which is pretty incredible. We're praying that we'll have 200 churches by May, and who knows . . . maybe 300 by the time it starts. I don't know, I don't know, but one of the things we found out about is that this year is the 50th anniversary of the American Atheist Association, and they're coming to the birthplace of their association, which is Austin, Texas.

Madalyn Murray O'Hair started this organization and it's been going on for 50 years now. And actually they're having their national convention and 50-year anniversary celebration during the week of Easter, weekend of Easter here bringing in world-renowned atheists and seculars from around the nation to come and speak. They started a billboard campaign advertising, you know, have a nice day, don't believe in God kind of billboards and some of you have seen them around the city. So we just found out about this. So the pastors are texting back and forth, and one of the pastors texted and said "Well maybe this would be a good time to love our enemies." When I hear that stated that way, I personally don't believe I have any enemies. Not that I know of. And so it kind of hit me, but I think that they think we're their enemies, so since they feel that way - so one of the pastors reached out to the director of the association and asked if it would be possible for some pastors to just sit down with him and interact over various things related to their view of the church and where we're missing each other and where they feel offended and hurt, and what we can do to kind of help out in that process. Just having an interesting dialogue and he said, "Um that's the first time a Christian group had ever asked to have that kind of a gathering with him."

And so on the Wednesday before Easter we're going to get together, and who knows what will happen in that meeting. We may get ambushed, it's happened before you know, so I have no idea what's going to happen in that meeting. But what's so ironic to me is I am so glad that the atheists are coming to Austin. (Congregation laughs) I'm so glad about that. I'm so glad they're doing a public advertising campaign advertising atheism because it's just so ironic to be able to get the conversation about God and truth, and whether you believe or whether you don't believe, and the value of each of those two points of view to have them both hit our city in the same year. So people will be asking the questions, "Hey how is life without God? If I take God out of life what does that look like?" A very negative campaign versus what they're going to get later on in "Explore God," a very positive campaign. "Is it true that God exists? Is it true that God loves me? Is it true that God has a plan for my life?" And really

mobilizing 100,000 believers to just be out having those conversations. And that's all going to happen in 2013. And so I know there's a lot of stuff going on in your life that's really cool, but that's some of what's going on in my life so I had to share it with you today. Anyway, as we dive in here. (Congregation claps)

Ken Davis tells this great story about a woman who is standing in her kitchen. She looks out into the backyard and there her German shepherd has the neighbor's rabbit in his mouth. He's shaking that rabbit with that death shake, and she thinks to herself, "All right the neighbors already hate me, we have a bad relationship anyway, this will be the end of it." So she grabs the broom, runs out, begins to pummel the German shepherd with the broom. Finally the German shepherd releases the rabbit, she picks it up and it's dead. In a panic, she carries it into the house, shampoos the rabbit, blow dries the rabbit, brushes the rabbit, sneaks over to their rabbit hutch and opens it up, puts the rabbit in, props it all up, closes it, runs back home thinking "Whew, they'll never suspect it was us." A few hours later she hears this screaming in her backyard, and she runs out there and she runs up to her neighbor in her best faking voice and she says, "What's wrong." And the neighbor says, "Our rabbit died two days ago and we buried it and now it's back in its hutch." (Congregation laughing) One thing that people in the ancient world knew is that dead rabbits have a tendency to stay dead. They also knew that dead rabbis had a tendency to stay dead as well.

British Theologian N. T. Wright, writing about the resurrection says this: He says, "There were many Messianic movements in the first century. In every case the would-be Messiah got crucified by Rome as Jesus did. In not one single case do we hear the slightest mention of the disappointed followers claiming their hero had been raised from the dead. Why?" He writes, "They knew better." Think about it. If you were going to purport something that would be so easy to disprove, claim a resurrection. The people living in that day at that time could have easily disproven the resurrection. So how did the disciples get away with this and why are we over 2,000 years later here in a Christian church having this conversation? The reason is found right here in Matthew 27. Starting in verse 45 it says:

From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land.

So this is halfway through the crucifixion. It started at 9:00 in the morning, at noon darkness came over the land and it lasts until the ninth hour, which is the time that - 3:00 in the afternoon when it gets light again. And it says:

About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi lama sabachthani?” “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

“When some of those standing there heard this, they said, “He’s calling Elijah.”

Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. The rest said, “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to save him.”

And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

At that moment, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus’ resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

Wow . . . “At Jesus’ death all of creation is **shaken**.” Now what we have here are a series of signs starting at noon with the darkness going all the way until his death when he says ‘Into your hands I commit my spirit,’ which is accompanied by the tearing of the veil, the earthquake, and this last one that we’re looking at today which is just as bizarre as can be. The tombs are open, people are resurrected, and they come out and they go into the city and appear to people.

Now Matthew is written somewhere before 70 A.D. So if this is about 33 A.D. and Matthew is written somewhere before 70 A.D., the tearing down of the temple is not recorded in his book. Most conservative scholars believe that he wrote about 50 A.D. or somewhere in the early 50’s, which would put this event between 17 and 25 years afterwards. As he’s writing these things why are they not being refuted? The reason why they are not being refuted is because they actually have recorded in the literature of the day this darkness that came over the land that was unexplained. People were alive who knew about the temple veil being torn. People who were living who actually experienced the earthquake, and there were people who were alive that told about seeing those who had died resurrected in the city talking to them. These things, whether you accept them today or not, made it very easy for Matthew and the other gospel writers to communicate what had happened, and we find very few attempts to even refute this by the people who were living during that day. These were incredible signs that shook heaven and earth – think about it.

So the first three hours on the cross it's light, but then at noon it gets completely black. It shook heaven, as the sun is blacked out, and then the place where heaven and earth meet in the Holy of Holies in the temple, the veil is torn in two from top to bottom, and at that tearing it opens up the way for people to come into the presence of God. The earth itself begins to shake -- an earthquake that shakes the very foundation on which we stand. It began to shake as earth was shaking, but it didn't just stop there. It went below the earth. So from heaven all the way to earth all of creation is rocked when "*sheol*", the Old Testament word for the grave is broken open and people are resurrected and they come out.

You see Jesus Christ's death on the cross is accompanied by these incredible miracles in creation that shake everything to get everybody's attention as to what just transpired here and what was going on here. And there's a reason why all of this took place. God bent the rules of the natural world to bring about these catastrophic things because he wanted us to get the point. And the point is this -- God was validating Jesus' victory over death through these signs and especially through the last sign, which is the raising of these people from the dead. God was validating this. "God **validates** Jesus' victory through the resurrection."

Now when we read this and we looked at the earthquake last week -- Russell did a great job explaining about the earthquake. Verse 52 says:

The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

I read those two verses and I go . . . What!! That's really bizarre. What in the world is going on here? What actually happened here? Well we only have two verses, okay? So let's talk about what we can know and what we can't know from this passage.

The first thing that we notice is that it was many people that were raised. It wasn't all people. In other words this is not the resurrection of all the Old Testament saints -- that's still going to happen in the future. But many people were raised. So how many is many? It's probably more than five, maybe less than a million; I don't know, okay? So many people.

The second thing we can know is that this was an actual physical, bodily resurrection. In other words, it says

The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life.

So this was not an apparition, a spirit, this was not a ghost, not a vision or a dream that people saw. They actually saw human beings in the flesh that were raised that they knew had died and came into the city and interacted with them.

The third thing that comes up here that I think we can know is that these people were raised because of Jesus' death on the cross. In other words, when Jesus says:

"It is finished and into your hands I commit my spirit"

That's the time that they were raised. That's what caused this to happen. Now the reason why I point that out is because in the text it says,

The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life.

Now sometimes we read that word "holy" and we think "Oh these were the perfect people, the people who never did anything wrong. The people that were sinless." We take the word "holy" to mean sinless. Actually the word holy doesn't mean sinless. The word literally means to be set apart to God. Now it can imply sinlessness, but it doesn't have to mean that. In fact it's clear that it doesn't mean it in this passage because if you look at verse 53 it says,

They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city.

Now the holy city was the city of Jerusalem. This passage isn't telling us that everybody who lived in Jerusalem was sinless, is it? It's just saying that of all the cities, this is the one that is special; it's set apart to God. The temple is there. So for all people who have embraced this idea that the way that I get my sins forgiven, the way I get close to God, the way I come into his presence is by me cleaning up my act and doing good works. And if I just do enough good, then somehow I'll attain the resurrection - I'll be resurrected, which is what all the major religions of the world teach except for Christianity. That's not what's going on here. These are Old Testament saints who had believed in God and they were resurrected, they were holy, they were set apart to God not because of what they had done, but because of faith in Him and what Jesus did on their behalf. So those are the things we can know.

Let's talk about the things that we really don't know. Is this a resuscitation or is this a resurrection? You say what does that mean? Okay well let me explain it to you. Here we're going to get a little deep and a little weird.

Okay, resuscitation would be like Lazarus. You recall the story of Lazarus, his body was in the grave for four days, and Jesus actually took that physical body and reunited his spirit when he said "Lazarus come forth," God reunited his spirit or brought his spirit back into it. He enlivened the cells that were there, he overcame the decay, and Lazarus walked out of the tomb and lived with his family until he got old, and then he died again. Resuscitation.

Resurrection on the other hand is referring to the time in the future when you would get your glorified body. Paul makes it very clear in 1 Corinthians 15 that there's a day coming for believers when you are going to be raised again and God's going to take the material part of you and do something with it that makes it immaterial, that makes you immortal. Your aches and pains are gone, your disease is gone, and your sin is gone. You will live forever in a physical body, but it will be completely immortal, completely renewed. And I know some of you guys are working on that right now. You keep replacing parts hoping that you can get the bionic thing going. Well that's what it's going to be. So that comes at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. So Jesus himself appears after his resurrection in this body that is immortal that's been changed, it's transformed and so the other view would be that that's what happens to these folks as well. So which one of these is right? Well it's hard to say. If they were raised - if they were resuscitated, then they would basically go into the city, they would live, they would - grandma moves back in with the family, she hangs out with them until she gets old and dies or older and dies. In the resurrection view they would basically come, appear in the city, show themselves to people and then ascend to heaven.

Personally I think it's the resurrection. I'll give you four reasons why I think that. First, it seems unlikely that if they were simply resuscitated and they went back home and they hung out with their peeps and lived with their families that we would not hear from them again. There wouldn't be a time after this that they wouldn't be all gathered together to find out about their not-so-near-death experience, their complete death experience and what happened to them. But we never really hear any more from these people, which implies to me that they didn't hang around - they didn't stay there.

Second reason why I really believe that it's resurrection is because I'm wondering where they would have hung out from the time the tombs were opened and they were raised until the time they came into the city. Notice what it says. It says:

The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life.

So when Jesus Christ says,

“Into your hands I commit my spirit,”

And he dies; at that moment they’re raised. When the earthquake happens they’re raised. It says:

They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus’ resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

So they came out of the tombs, but they didn’t go into the city until after Jesus resurrected. He was the first. So I’m wondering, you know, they’re probably hungry, thirsty; maybe they needed a protein shake or something like that to kind of get going again. And so what do they do, you know, they go find a place up on a mountain and just hang out until it’s time to come into the city? I don’t know. That seems kind of weird to me.

The word “appeared”, this is my third reason. The word “appeared”, that they went into the city and appeared gives the same feeling to me that Jesus did when he appeared in the upper room, remember after his resurrection? He appeared to the disciples and said “Look, it’s me, it’s the real me. I’m here. I can eat. Look at my hands, look at my feet – the holes, look at my side. It’s the real me.” He appeared to them, but after 40 days he quit appearing to them and he ascended to heaven, which makes sense to me that when they come in they make appearances. They tell the good news to family and friends, and then they ascend up to heaven like Jesus did.

The final reason why I take this as the resurrection view is this. It seems anticlimatic that Jesus’ death would raise these people from the dead only to live for a number of years and then die again. It seems like that is kind of underwhelming, right? Jesus’ death paid for their sins and gave them life that they would ascend to heaven and take on their glorified bodies.

Now for those of you guys who don’t really care at all about this and say, “Hey I’m not really that interested in it.” I get that, okay. For those of you who say “I really care about this, and like if you don’t take my view on this I’m never going to come to church here again.” For all three of you (congregation laughs), let me just say to you guys, you know, bottom line is there are Godly scholars that

take the resuscitation view. There are Godly scholars that take the resurrection view, and it brings me to my first point of application:

We need to be very careful to not traffic in speculative theology. “Avoid the trap of speculative theology.” Not invest in speculative theology. So think about this for a minute. Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit Matthew pinned two verses about this incident. How much more do you think God wants us to know about it? Besides what’s said here? Because Mark doesn’t record it, Luke doesn’t record it, and John doesn’t record it. Only Matthew records it, which would seem to me to mean that this is really all we need to know, right? This happened. So the theological meaning or the reason why it happened appears to be what God wants us to focus on, not the details of what could have happened or not. Let me just say that the number of people that have twisted off into all kinds of weird ideas, theology, and cults that have come about by trying to take what is not clear in scripture and build a theology on it has been huge within the church. Building a theology on details. Now I’m not saying we shouldn’t study to try to understand the fullness of the Word, but when we come to a place where we’re not really sure whether it’s resuscitation or whether it’s resurrection, we don’t have enough information to be able to make that decision. We shouldn’t become dogmatic about it, focusing on speculative theology. That’s a trap. So let me just say again, I don’t really know exactly. And I’m really good with that. But there are some things that we do know from this passage and that’s what I believe that Jesus wants us to focus on today and pay attention to.

Let me give you three more applications as we wrestle through this passage. The second application is that “God has a comprehensive plan: Jesus.” God has a comprehensive plan and his comprehensive plan is Jesus. Do you ever feel like your life is out of control? Do you ever feel like if God was really paying attention, then what you’re going through would not be there? You wouldn’t be going through that. Do you ever feel like “God you are asleep at the wheel”? Do you ever feel that way? I mean I feel that way from time to time. I believe that this passage teaches us that God is in control. He has a plan and he’s working out his plan. Let me tell you why. There were people that lived before Jesus Christ and died, who put their faith in God and trusted in God. And the miracle of some of those people being raised at the death of Jesus and making an appearance at the death of Jesus clearly communicates that God has a plan for the people in the Old Testament, and many of those people died wondering “Where’s the promise? When’s the Messiah going to come? God the world is a mess.” And the resurrection of some of those Old Testament saints proved that God had a plan all along. He would never forget them. It was just the timing issue.

So their resurrection proves that God is the God of the people of the past, the people of the present, the people of the future, and all of that comes together in the person of Jesus whose death and substitutionary atonement and resurrection and power and life is available to those in the past, those in the present, and those in the future. God's got your life under control. He knows what he's doing. He does not forget his promises or his people. And I believe this miracle would have communicated to everybody that wondered what happened to the people in the Old Testament. Now they have confidence. Some of them were their aunts and uncles and grandmas and cousins who are now coming into the city and making an appearance and saying, "Hey I'm in, I'm resurrected. I'm going to heaven. I'm not laying in the grave someplace, I'm going to heaven because Jesus Christ has made a way for me." What an incredible testimony.

Third, "Death is the result of sin." Death is the result of sin, so if you defeat sin you actually destroy death. "Defeat sin = Destroy death." And the fact that Jesus Christ at the moment he defeated sin, when he paid that last price for sin, that last bit of suffering, when he shouted out

"It is finished."

At that moment the power of death is broken and this resurrection reveals that to everybody.

Now I want us to wrestle a little bit with the relationship between sin and death, because I think it's important for us to get. If you've got a Bible in front of you, I want you to turn to 1 Corinthians 15. I want us to look at a passage in 1 Corinthians 15. I think it's very important - I'll put some of the stuff up on the screen so you can see the big text that I'm looking at here.

Look what he says starting in verse 54. Paul talking about our resurrection says,

When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable,

When that is our old body, the one that's decaying, the one that's getting wrinkles right now, the one that's wearing out, the one that's getting pudgy. When our perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, that's the new body that doesn't wear out, doesn't rot out, doesn't fall apart or sag, then,

And the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

So the resurrection proves that death has been defeated, there's a victory that comes out of that. And then he says these words, he says mockingly,

***"Where, O death, is your victory?
Where, O death, is your sting?"***

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

Now that word "sting" there is an image of a scorpion or a snake injecting its venom into you. In other words, what he's saying is that sin is the poison that we inject into our lives or into our relationships that actually kills us and causes death. Now it's real clear that Jesus came to overcome that. In fact, in verse 3 of chapter 15, he says,

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

That's why he died. In verse 17 he says,

And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.

In other words, the resurrection was to get us out of our sins. And then he says it again in verse 33. He says:

Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning.

Stop sinning. What's he saying here? What he's saying here is that everything that Jesus Christ did on the cross was to eliminate sin. To remove the poison, and the resurrection is the ultimate victory where the poison is completely removed, death is overcome, and we live.

Now, I've got good news and I've got not so good news for you. The good news is this: that the moment you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone as your personal savior and you believe in Him without works, you repent – we talked about this awhile back. That as you change your mind and you change your way of thinking and you put your trust in Him, the moment you do that Jesus Christ's substitutionary atonement is applied to you, your sins are forgiven, you are justified before God, you are adopted into his family. Nothing can ever shake that relationship – you're going to heaven. That's good news, right?

Here's the bad news. Between now and the time you go to heaven you're still alive in this world and you still have the free choice to be able to decide to sin or not. Think about it. If sin injects the toxic into your life that kills you, Jesus has paid the eternal price. But guess who gets to enjoy the death in this life? I do, you do, and everybody in your sphere. As we said a couple of weeks ago in a message, if the wages of sin is death that means that every time you sin something dies. Every time you decide that you've got a better way than God and you're going to follow your desires rather than following God's will for your life, every time you sin, something dies. Now that doesn't mean that it dies physically, but it does die in your reality. How does it work? Sometimes it's an opportunity that God has before you, but because you sinned that opportunity is no longer available to you. It dies. Sometimes it's a relationship. That there's a relationship that's there, but because of your sin you kill that relationship . . . it dies. Sometimes it has to do with your own character. God designed you to day-by-day take on the image of Jesus Christ and become more like him to experience more of the humanity that he gave you to be. That you would grow deeper in who you are, your intellect, your capacity to love. Deeper in your creativity, deeper in the humanness that God created to be in Jesus Christ, and sin diminishes that, it kills it. It kills faith. It kills hope. It kills love. Ultimately it makes the world a darker place. It makes the world a darker place.

I have a very, very close friend. He had risen through the ranks of hard work in his personal career, became the president of a bank. Along the way he met a girl, an employee. He started a relationship with her. When that relationship became public the board of directors fired him. He lost his opportunity to continue in that employment at that level. That had income ramifications, lifestyle ramifications, health ramifications, time ramifications, what's he going to do after this, reputation ramifications. When his wife found out about it she took her four kids and she said goodbye. It killed a relationship, killed a marriage. Every single day sinning in a dramatic way like that or sinning in a little way, something dies. I would love to see the person that you could be today. I would love to see the person that I would have been today if I would have followed Jesus every day and not given in to the sin in my life.

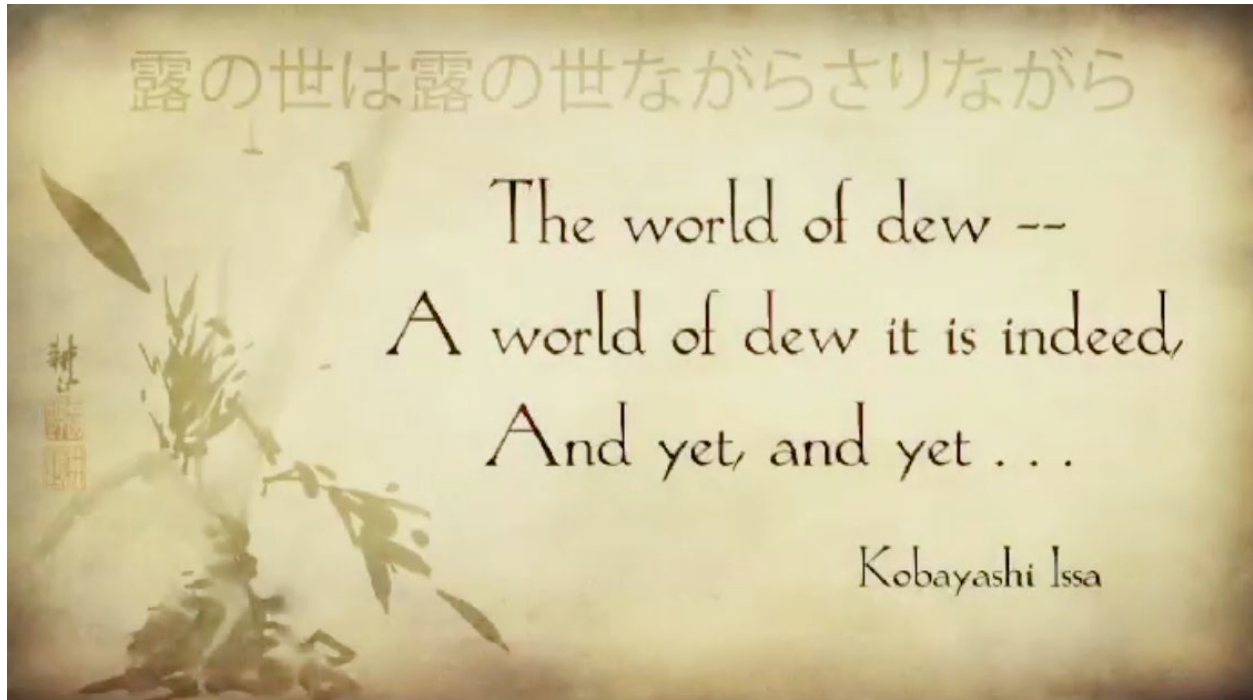
Now here's the really good news on top of that bad news. I have opportunities before me starting today forward. I have relationships before me starting today forward. I have things about me that God wants to do in my character starting today forward if I will commit to listen to Jesus, to love him, to follow him, and not give in to sin. Sin is the poison in our lives. It's the poison in our world. The reason why we have problems in our community is because of the sin that's being committed that's damaging opportunities and relationships. Who knows what this area would be like without sin. Who knows what this city would be like without sin. Who knows what the State of Texas would be like without sin.

What the United States, what the world would look like without sin. You know who knows? Jesus Christ because it's going to look like the Kingdom that he's planning to establish in the future for those who love him. All that to say this -- I'm not trying to be condemning to you or to me, I'm just trying to ask that you consider . . . consider. For those of you who think, "Well you know, Jesus has got my future covered so I don't have to worry about it. I can do whatever I want to." That is a foolish, foolish thought. It's a foolish thought that is spawned in the pit of Hell by Satan, the liar himself to undermine and ruin your life. If death is destroyed by defeating sin, Jesus came not only to defeat it forever, but defeat it today in your life and in my life.

And finally, "You overcome sin and death by **faith** in Jesus." This resurrection reminds us that you overcome sin and death by faith in Jesus. And ultimately we want to beat death, right? Sin that leads to death, we want to beat that, right? There were three friends that were having a conversation one day, and the conversation turned a little bit dark and one of the guys said to the other two guys, he said, "Hey, what would you like for people to say at your funeral?" The first guy spouted off immediately and said, "Well I would love for everybody to say I was a great humanitarian, loved the community, served people." The next guy said, "Nay, I want something more personal. I would love for people to say I was a great family man, loved his wife, and loved his kids. You know, really build into their lives." And the third one thought about it a little bit more, and he said "I think what I would want at my funeral for someone to say, "Hey look, he's still moving."" I mean, isn't that right? Isn't that what we want? We don't want to die. We don't want to get beaten by this thing called sin and die. And here's what's important to understand. Christianity is the only religion that really promises a true resurrection, not based on me trying to earn it, but based on something that God did on my behalf. Christianity is the only religion that teaches that. It's the only faith that teaches that. In addition to that, Christianity is the only thing that is grounded in historical reality that on a certain day a certain man named Jesus went to a cross and died on that cross and rose from the dead. And it's fixed in time and history, and there are ways to go look at the evidence to see if you can believe it's true. Other religions are just philosophies or ideas not grounded in reality; in fact, some of them are grounded in anti-reality. That reality doesn't exist.

Oz Guinness tells the incredible story about the 19th Century Japanese Haiku poet, Kobayashi Issa. Kobayashi Issa lived a really hard life. His mother died when he was a kid, his dad remarried, things went south, he got kicked out of his home when he was young, a really, really painful life. Along the way he finally married and lost a daughter, and in the process of all that, he being a Zen Buddhist went to the Zen Master and he asked the Zen Master, "How do I process the pain in my life?" To which the Zen Master reminded him, he said,

“The world is an illusion. Like the morning dew our lives will evaporate on the rising sun.” Although Issa was committed to Buddhism and believed it, there was something that just didn’t work completely for him. And in response to this he pinned this Haiku poem. I want you to see it.



“The world of dew-- the world of dew it is indeed, and yet, and yet . . .”

Unfinished. See in the logic of Issa’s Zen Buddhism, which he was committed to, there was something that he had to embrace, and that is that the experiences of my life – they’re an illusion. They don’t really exist. This is not really real. And like the dew that just appears for a moment and disappears, that’s the way the world is. But Issa the man, the husband, the father, the son, the brother, Issa the man couldn’t help but hope for more “and yet, and yet . . .”. You see Issa was living with the dichotomy of a system that says deny reality. But as a human being he couldn’t deny reality. And Christianity is the only system of faith that actually explains the “and yet.” And yet God loves you in spite of sin that breaks the world and breaks your life and breaks your heart. That God intervened, he sent his son into the world for you that you can have hope, a life to come – eternity that you can embrace, a relationship that changes the world. How sad it would be for people to miss that. For people to miss that.

Let’s bow our heads for prayer. Father we thank you that you went so far to validate, to give us evidence of Jesus. You shook the earth, that you clouded

the heavens, and that you brought people out to testify of a life to come. And when we celebrate the resurrection in two weeks, we're going to be reminded all over again that you raised your son from the dead, and there are billions of people on this planet that will worship together on that day, because they resonate with the truth. It's my prayer that no one in this room would go away empty, with the "and yet, and yet . . ." unanswered. It's my prayer that none of us, having found the truth would wander back in to the pitfalls of sin and experience death in this life. Father speak to us, lead us, change us. May we know you, the only true God in Jesus Christ whom you have sent. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

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