

## **“The Resurrection Of Jesus”**

### **Easter Morning Service**

**March 31, 2024**

**Dr. Dan Doriani**

It's great to sing together and to celebrate Resurrection Sunday. We're going to pray for a moment then I'm going to greet everybody. And in between our children are going to go to their excellent childcare. And if you don't know and you want to get your children childcare, just have your children follow the crowd going that way. Under excellent care. Let's pray together as we prepare to hear God's Word.

Heavenly Father, I do pray that what we've sung would be in our minds, our hearts, our emotions, our will, the whole person -- give us ears as we're going to hear old things and new -- speak to us today. We ask it in Jesus name. Amen.

That said, children can go off to that away with their teachers and leaders. If you're a visitor here today, we're so glad to have you. My name is Dan Dorian and I'm the interim pastor leader for a season here. In case you're wondering, I don't usually wear a dress. It's a little weird, imagine wearing a dress to speak in front of a thousand people or so but it is a longstanding tradition at Briarwood to wear the Geneva gown at special services such as Christmas, Reformation Day and Easter.

I also want to tell you that we're going to work through the text, as you have in your bulletin there. We're going to we're going to go through the big ideas, which are that the kind of the resurrection is both true and beautiful. Even if you don't believe it's true, you should want it to be true because it's such good news. And the account of the life of Christ fits, fits this world fits Jesus day and his mission. And it speaks to us today and especially ends with the Great Commission. Now, that's what I'm going to say. But beforehand, I want to make sure, you know, I'm going to read the Bible and then I'm not going to talk about Jesus for 5 minutes. And then talk about a man named Ernest. I just don't want you to worry that you wandered into the wrong movie.

God's Word. Matthew 28.

*Now, after the Sabbath, toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb and behold, it was a great earthquake for an angel. The Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. This appearance was like lightning in his clothing, as white as snow, and for fear of him, the guards trembled and became like dead men.*

*But the angel said to the women, do not be afraid for I know that you see, Jesus was crucified. He's not here, for he has risen as he said. Come see the place where he lay, then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead. And behold, he was going before you to Galilee. There you will see him.*

*See, I have told you so. They departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to tell the disciples. Then verses later the disciples did what they were told to do. Now it says, the 11 disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped. But some hesitated or doubted, and Jesus came and said to them, all authority in heaven on earth has been given to me.*

*Go therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded. And behold I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*

May God bless his reading of his word to us.

Sir Ernest Shackleton, who left London in the year 1914 with 28 other men intent upon crossing Antarctica entirely from one side to the other and to go over the South Pole. No one had ever done such a thing. It was early in the age of explorers. They went to a whaling station in an island off the southern tip of South America, the islands called South Georgia Island. And then they set out in December. They did not hit land again. They did not put their foot on land again for 500 days. Within a month, their ship was entirely encircled and trapped by ice. They waited and waited for the ice to break up. They waited ten months and finally the ice crushed their ship entirely and they realized they had to grab their sledges and walk miles upon miles upon the ice pack to the open sea, and then set out over the wildest ocean, the coldest ocean to try to get back to South Georgia Island, 800 miles away. The men journeyed. They weren't all strong necessarily. There were scientists who were crew. There were explorers. They traveled day by day in winds up to 50 miles an hour in temperatures 30, 40 and 50 below zero, surviving on ship's rations, raw seals, raw penguins. They got to the edge of the ice pack eventually, and they fitted the three ships, the three lifeboats they'd been dragging mile after mile to go across the ocean. They were, on average, 21 feet long. The men rode 100 miles to a spot called Elephant Island, just a rock jutting out of the sea. After going 100 miles, 22 of the 28 men were too exhausted to move on. They refitted the biggest ship, made it into a somewhat of a sailing ship and set out six of the men, including Ernest Shackleton and the captain.

They set out for the next 700 miles over the ocean, the open seas, 50 foot waves crashing over them, drenching them again and again. It was constantly cloudy. The Captain Worsley saw four glimpses of the sun in a span of 17 days and using his navigational skills, the tech sextant and a compass, he was able to ascertain where South Georgia Island was. They hit it but they hit it on the wrong side. They did the best they could. Three of the men were then too exhausted to move on and they stayed there on the beach. Three men ready to continue and Ernest Shackleton was one of them. They then set out to cross South Georgia Island with no maps, no knowledge whatsoever of the island which no one had ever explored. They knew they had to get to the other side and they set out. They marched for 36 hours straight over 5000 foot peaks, crossing waterfalls, icy ledges. At one point they got stuck at two or three in the morning. They didn't know, of course, exactly when it was. And the mighty mist came over them. It was getting colder and colder and they had no idea where they were. And they felt a sheet of ice and they said, We have no choice but to slide down this sheet of ice. They slid for a mile and they were okay and they made it to the whaling station. It is considered by most people to be the most astonishing story of survival ever told. All 28 men survived. It was the age when people tried things like that but weren't really equipped to do so. They all survived. It's a story you wouldn't believe except for the evidence. The evidence included the two pieces of equipment. When they crossed that island, they had 90 feet of rope. You can still see it today, frayed rope, a compass. People saved them. Then, of course, there were the journals. There were the men, the men bedraggled, emaciated, bearded, foul smelling, but alive, all 28 of them telling the story.

Now, the skeptic says it can't be true. But of course, there is evidence, including the men that people saw and the journals and the way it fit the times. It was a time when people started out on expeditions improperly prepared, and many died. These men did not.

I tell you this story because on Easter, I know that skeptics are here and I'm glad that there are skeptics here. You weren't singing the songs. I'm glad you don't sing about things you don't believe in. You're operating with integrity. And I'm glad you're here because you probably have doubts about the resurrection. I mean, if we could believe that Shackleton and 28 men survived for 500 days, if that's hard to believe, imagine how hard it is to believe in the resurrection.

A man who is not almost dead, but actually dead. This is not observed. Science doesn't have the capacity to verify this. But even as even as the story of Shackleton perfectly fits the times, the story of Jesus perfectly fits the times. Everything is where it belongs. Everything fits the culture. and by the way, people took notes back then too -- there is a saying If your teacher is teaching and you don't have paper, write it on your clothes. People took notes. People kept journals that became what we call today the four Gospels. But it's not just that there are records kept. There were eyewitnesses. We know that women were the first ones to see Jesus. Now, I'm not telling you my personal view of women here at all. I'm describing the view of women 2000 years ago -- women were not considered 2000 years ago to be fit, to give witness, to be witnesses in a public setting and yet God chose women because real stories have all kinds of improbable things in them, like choosing the wrong witnesses, so people thought -- but it wasn't just a couple of women. It was also the disciples, 11 of them and James, Jesus' brother and Paul later on, and 500 more at once. Paul writing in ICorinthians 20 years later, roughly maybe 17 years later, says, By the way, most of them are still alive. You can check them out if you want to. I mean, they're around. They saw him. Eyewitnesses. Something had to happen to make the church not go away. You know, there were lots of rebels and people trying to break free of Rome in those days. And the Romans had a very simple system of stopping rebellion and unwanted movements, populist movements. They would just grab the leader and kill him and the movement would end. But somehow when they killed Jesus, the movement didn't end. In fact, if anything, it grew and grew. It went from 120 dedicated at the end to outposts in every major city in the eastern half of the Roman Empire within 20 years. And then another 20 to 35 years later, there were outposts of the church, followers of Jesus, all over the Roman Empire, which was one of the two biggest empires in the world at the time. China was the other. And then a few more years passed and the Gospel had gotten to India and what we call today, France. It just kept spreading even though by the year 100 A.D., you could be put to death simply for being accused of being a Christian and called in front of a magistrate Nature. Are you Christian? 16 And if you say yes and persist and don't recant, we just might kill you. You know, the church grew and grew and grew. The best explanation of that, of course, is that the leader whom they killed didn't stay dead. You know, of course, that if the leaders wanted to disprove the resurrection! All they had to do is produce his corpse, which they never did, because it wasn't there. So the story has credibility to it, even if you don't believe it. But there are there are bigger issues behind the story. And the bigger issue is that this world has a Creator. I mean, it's a big world is complex, it's beautiful. It's also broken in a lot of ways and the Bible story or account explains. It says there is a Creator. He made a beautiful world. He cares about it. Do you know why you are personal? Why you love to be with people? Because the creator of the world is personal and he loves people. That's why you love people. Because you're made in God's image and the Creator cares about his creation. Enough that when it's leaders, that's a people that you rebelled. He said, I'm not going to leave them in their rebellion. I'm going to do something. I'm going to intervene to win them

back to myself because I do love them. God created humanity and wants to win us back. And so he began to do things like speak, to call out and mentor. We would say today, individuals like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David, Samuel and others, and not just individuals, but he actually formed them into a tribe, a clan, a people, a nation.

And he appointed leaders. And he chose people that he would speak to. And they were God's spokesmen. We call them the prophets, people like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Elijah. They knew God and they spoke of God to the people to win them to himself. And they told the truth about God. And they also said there's more coming. Prepare for the day when there is a redeemer who's going to put things back together again. The Easter stories prepared by the Christmas story, it's just interesting how many ways and together Jesus name and his birth is Emmanuel. In the end of the passage I read to you, Emmanuel means God with us. At the end of the passage, Jesus says, I am with you always. And when Jesus was born, wise men came from the east, from outside Israel. And at the end of the story we have Jesus saying, go to the nations, go to the world. And at Jesus birth is called the King of the Jews. And at the end I read it to you a moment ago, he says, all authority has been given to me and heaven on earth.

The story fits the time. The story also coheres. It hangs together. Jesus says, I have a gospel for the world. And his first two miracles were for a leper and a centurion's sick servant, an outsider. To outsiders. Gospel goes to the world. The gospel story hangs together. I want to summarize it for you for just a few minutes.

So Jesus was born and about 30 years later he began his public ministry and he burst upon the world with remarkable deeds. People would come into his presence lame and halt of gait or not walking at all. And he healed them. And they came into his presence, deafened it, left hearing, speaking, it came blind and they saw and word spread. People came in the thousands. They were so enthralled with Jesus that sometimes they would go find where he was and forget to take enough food and follow him for three days until they're all running out of food because they just wanted to be near Jesus. He was so popular they didn't exactly know what they were doing, but he was very popular.

And of course, his very popularity became a problem for the leaders who pretty quickly showed themselves to be envious and looking for a cause to keep their place against this this upstart. And they criticized him for things. You know, he did heal people, but they noticed that he sometimes healed them on the Sabbath day, which was against their rules, not God's rules, mind you, but against their rules. He's breaking a rules and he doesn't wash his hands often enough. They had rules about that, and he claims to forgive sins, which is God's prerogative. And if you've made it, have you noticed who He spends his time with? He openly spends time, they said, truly with prostitutes and with traitors to the land of Israel. Tax collectors. What kind of a man is this?

On the other hand, he's got thousands of people following him, saying things like, This is the prophet, this guy's dangerous, we've got to stop him. And they thought about it, and then Jesus gave them an occasion. The occasion was on the first part of the week, Holy Week, we call it the week that ends with the Resurrection. Jesus went into the temple and he noticed that it wasn't functioning the way God intended. He noticed there was all kinds of commercial activity in the back, five or ten rows, and those were the places where the Gentiles were supposed to come. Jesus said, My house is the house of Prayer for the Nations. You've made it a den of thieves. You pushed out the nations. And so he drove out the money changers, and the commercial activity is back in those last rows and the authorities in Israel said, and now he's done. It is clearly transgressed to our authority. Now we're going to put an end to him. And

so they tried and they succeeded in killing him. They found a man named Judas for reasons we don't understand, betrayed Jesus disciples were with Jesus. Peter was there for some reason. He had a sword. And when and when somebody came to arrest Jesus, he whipped the sword answer, swinging wildly, chopped off somebody's ear, pretty enthusiastically. He'd promised that he would stay with Jesus to the end. But a few hours later, a little servant girl about 13 years old, looked at him, sitting by a fire and said, You aren't one of his disciples, are you? Caught off guard he said, No, no, no, no. I'm not one of his disciples. In the end, he said that three times He betrayed Jesus, as did all the disciples in their own way, fleeing when Jesus needed them the most.

General Patton once said, Courage is hanging on for one second longer. They didn't hang on for one second long. Now, of course, I don't say that to condemn the disciples, I say so. We all know that humans just can't do the right thing often enough. That's why Jesus came. He came to call disciples, but they also came to redeem disciples, to forgive them, which he did from the cross.

Now he was charged in Israel before Israel's people and Israel's court with blasphemy for claim to be the Son condemned him and then they took him over. Then Pilate said, That's not going to wash people. He doesn't care about religious sense. Let's call him seditious and dangerous and Pilate said, okay, I'll sign off on that. And they killed him. It would be the single most horrific travesty act of injustice ever known to mankind, except it was also God's purpose and plan. It's not an accident. Men did their evil deeds, but it all fulfilled God's purpose, which is that Jesus would bear the consequence of sin upon himself On the cross.

I wracked my brain for analogies and analogy. I came up with the best I could think of and it's not very good. Nathan Hale. You've heard of him? That young man, Revolutionary War, who said my only regret is that I have but one life to give for my country. It's a sad story about Nathan Hale, who was a believer. He was 20 years old. He was a college student, and they needed somebody to find out something about the British troops in New York City, as I recall, maybe Boston. And he wasn't really very well trained and he was discovered within 24 hours and put to death shortly thereafter. The analogy of course, is he willingly gave himself for his people with bravery. But the analogy breaks down so fast, and there's actually five clear differences between even Nathan Hale and Jesus.

Jesus wasn't caught. He intended to perish. Nathan Hill was caught. Nathan Hale's cause was national-Jesus causes as big as the world. Nathan Hale risked his life for his people. Jesus risked his life for all people. Nathan Hale risked life. Jesus didn't risk it. He gave up his life. He knew what was coming. Nathan Hale wanted to contribute to a human cause. Jesus fulfilled a divine cause. God's calls when Jesus was executed, He said various things from the cross. One of them was My God, my God, Why have you forsaken me now? Probably many of you who are believers and have had a dark night of the soul have asked the question, God, where are you? Why don't you hear my prayers -- I feel forsaken by you?

And when we say, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? We're describing our true feelings. We're not describing reality. God never forsakes us people. We feel that he's far away, but he isn't. But when Jesus said, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? He wasn't emoting. He wasn't describing how he felt at the moment. He actually was forsaken on the cross because God is too pure to look on sin iniquity. And Jesus was at that moment bearing the sins of the world upon himself. And the Father did turn away. But I have good news for you. Before Jesus died, he said a couple of things. One of them is -- it's finished -- in 3 hours. It only took 3 hours for Jesus, human and God to pay for the sins of the world and 3 hours after the 3 hours and that he said, It's finished, it's done. I've done everything I had to do.

It's completed. And he said, Father, no longer. My God, my God, where are you, Father? Restoration of relationship. Father Into your hands I commit my spirit. His separation from God, His sin bearing was done in 3 hours completed. There's only one thing left to do, and that is to demonstrate to the world that he had done what he set out to do. And that happened through the resurrection.

Now we hear a variety of things about the resurrection in the Bible. One of them is death could not hold him. That's true. That's true. But it's also true that the resurrection is a is a kind of a demonstration of something. If Jesus simply died and everybody said, hey, he did what you're supposed to do, hooray. Some people would say, Well, if if he really defeated death, why is he still dead? Why is his corpse in the ground? And so to make it absolutely clear that he exhausted the penalty for sin and conquered death, he rose bodily from the grave. When I say bodily, I mean that when he visited with his disciples, one of them said, I've got some doubts. We call them Doubting Thomas. By the way, if you're a doubter today, just understand you're in good company, Doubting Thomas, that I can't believe it. And Jesus said, You know what? Put your finger into the holes in my hands. The pictures are wrong. They have a finger also exploring Jesus side. That's not what the text says. The text says, Put your fist into my side. Stick your whole fist in there. The wound isn't sealed. For whatever reason, it's me. That's where they stabbed me. These are live flesh and blood eating meals. Grab them with your hands. Listen with your ears. A real dude whose hair still grows, whose fingernails still grow as real as can be.

I was on TV one time, I don't know, 20 years ago. All I know is the day before it was before Netflix and Prime and YouTube were big. So I was on CBS. It wasn't for the whole country, but it was regional. You know, a few million people in the audience of which I'm sure 19 or 20 saw the show Easter morning, you know, 8 a.m. I'm invited. I'm the token Orthodox Protestant. The host was clearly a skeptic, maybe believe God existed. Hard to be sure. Certainly not a Christian. No, I'm not judging him. He made it abundantly clear I am not a Christian. And then there was there were supposed to be some other there's supposed to be a Jew there, and he didn't come. So the host became the atheist opponent. And then there was a liberal Protestant, a Catholic in me, and I said, You know, I've got 30 minutes. I'm going to cause as much trouble as I possibly can, because there are four people here and I'm the only I'm the only one who actually believes in the resurrection. And so I said I said to myself, every time I get to talk, I'm just going to say that physical, bodily, corporeal resurrection over and over till I just needle these guys. And one of them says, You're nuts or something like, Then we have a real discussion. I couldn't get them to do it. I said things like, you know, the physical, corporeal, bodily flesh and blood, sinew and bones Resurrection of Jesus is something that drives Christian ethics. Can we all agree on this. I said, because, you know, it proves that Jesus cares about this world, because, you know, we all believe in take care of creation, but most people call it environmental care. We call it creation care. We believe in that. And the reason is because we know God cares about this material world and the proof is that he sent Jesus in his body once and again in his resurrection. And we believe in taking care of the poor and the needy in our culture. Everybody loves surgeons and skilled doctors. And of course, we love surgeons, skilled doctors, but we should also love people who change the sheets in the hospital and clean up the blood that falls on the floor. And people who work in extended care facilities and wash dishes and clean bedsores because God cares about the body. And we should care about people who do the humblest forms of service, too, because God cares about bodies, physicality and the proof is the resurrection. And they're like, great point then that's great. Thank you so much. I just this wonderful. And then the second the camera went off, I mean, the second the camera went off, the guy next to me said, Of course we don't mean a physical body. And I said, Actually, I said physical body 14 times because I do mean a physical

body. Because when I say physical body actually mean physical body. And that's what we believe. We don't believe in some vague, ephemeral hope that things will get better someday. No, people do believe that. But that's not what proclaiming here and now today. Today we're saying I believe in the resurrection of the body. And I don't know if you remember this, but you said it at the beginning of the service.

I'm going invite you to say it again right now. I believe in the resurrection. You want to say it with me? I believe in the resurrection. Now, if you're a visitor and you don't believe in the resurrection, don't say it. Operate with integrity. Think about it, laugh at it, let it bother you. Don't say it if you don't believe it. But if you do believe it, let's say it again. I believe in the resurrection and you know, in the Bible, if you really mean something, you say it three times. You ready? I believe in the resurrection. It's important.

Redemption is complete in the resurrection. It tells us things about who God is and about what this world is all about. You know, God made bodies so they could do things like play the music that our musicians play. It's not easy to play a clarinet and a double bass and violins, but God gave us the capacity to do that within our fingers. And some of you are foodies and you love to make great food and God loves great food. And some of you love sports and just marvel what God enabled you to do with your body. God is so pleased with you because He made this world to be a bodily lit, rural physical place. And beyond that, he's going to remake it again and we're all going to be 30 years old forever. And that knee that hurts. It's going to stop. I know you woke up at four in the morning, your knee hurt. You had no idea why. That's never going to happen after the Lord remakes the Earth, we believe in the resurrection. This is not just what I'm saying. This is what Isaiah says in chapter 35. He says these words about the coming of the day of Christ. When all things are renewed, He says he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened. The ears of the deaf will be unstopable. The lamb will leap like a deer. The tongue of the mute will sing for joy. Resurrection is the first taste of that for all of us, for all time now, Jesus didn't just rise. He also had some words for his disciples.

I'm going to look closely at verses 6 to 24, just a few minutes. Jesus told his disciples to go meet Him in Galilee, and they did. Now, when they came, some of them were having a hard time. They hesitated. They doubted they couldn't take it in. They couldn't comprehend that Jesus had died and risen. And so they hesitated. I say it again If you have some hesitations or doubts, you're in good company. But they did come and Jesus had words for them, which we call the Great Commission. And it is a great commission.

If you're thinking about food after the service, we can think of it as a sort of a sandwich structure. Now we know a sandwich is held together by two pieces of bread, and the Great Commission is held together by two things. Jesus says, verse one is Authority has been given to me in heaven on earth. I have the right to say this, that holds it together. And the last thing he says, I'm with you always, even to the end of the age, I'll be with you. So I have authority to say it and I'll help you do it. That holds it together. And then the core commandment is make disciples. And now if you're experienced, Christian, you probably know this, but the command does not share your faith. It's assumed it's not the command. The command is not evangelize, it's assumed it's not the command. The command is make disciples disciple. Someone who hears the gospel, believes the gospel, and is mature enough over time that they can make other disciples make disciples. And Jesus says, Go make disciples of the nations, go make disciples. And then He tells them how to do it. He says, Go, Don't wait from the come to you. You go to them. That's why we're a missional church. Go baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, a Holy Spirit, which

means expect a clear confession of faith. Don't be satisfied when you hear people say, I guess there's I suppose there's a God. That's not what we're talking about. Talking about a confession of faith and to try and God and teach them to observe every last thing I commanded you somebody once said in my hearing, if you want to know what God is saying to the church today, read the parts of your Bible that aren't underlined.

Read the parts of your Bible that are not well-thumbed. You want to know what God wants you to do today. Look at the commandments you don't like, the ones you don't keep. Can't keep despair of keeping. That's what God's saying. Teaching to obey everything, every last thing. Now, of course you say I can't do that. And that's true, which is why Jesus came and died in Rose in the first place. But that's our commission. And I don't want you to be discouraged. In fact, I want you to be encouraged. And I'll give you two reasons why. The first thing is, the man who wrote this book, Matthew, was himself one of those guys who ran at the crucifixion. He started off as a tax collector, a trader, and God built him up until he came to the point that he could write the gospel of Matthew, which we're starting today.

What God did for Matthew, he can do for you and he can do it for you. So you become a great man, great woman. Like I don't mean famous, I mean great in the eyes of God. You can be a great man, great woman, great child like Matthew by studying what Matthew had to say to you, what he learned over his years, you said, I'm going to write it down for other people.

Now, behind all this, of course, is the idea that God exists and that God cares about this world and that Jesus actually loves people. But he didn't come into this world because the father commanded him, or it seemed like a good idea. But he actually loves people. And I go back to Ernest Shackleton for a minute. Ernest Shackleton got all 28 of his men back to South Georgia. Island, although at one point, another 25 of them had to say the words, I quit. I can't take another step. He got them all back because they believed in him. It was very clear when you read the stories, when you read the narratives, the books people have written, and also what's in the men's journals, that they trusted this man, they trusted the capacity that he had, but they also trusted his love. Here's my favorite detail from the story of Shackleton. When the ship was about to be crushed by the ice, they were trying to decide what to take in one or a few of the men's said, Can we take our banjo now? Banjo would not seem like an essential to drag for hundreds of miles across the ice and then in a boat but he knew his men well enough to say yes, bring the banjo because he knew the banjo mattered to the men who loved music. He said, Bring the banjo because he knew his men. He loved his men. Now, if that's true of Ernest Shackleton, and it is, may I ask you to believe it's so much more true of Jesus? He cares about banjos, He cares about lost kittens. He cares about what you care about. He loves you. He wants you to know him forever. He came to redeem you, but also so you would know and be his disciple and be formed, so formed, so mature that you can be his agents to make disciples all through the world. It all hinges on his coming, his death, his resurrection, which we celebrate today.

Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for your plan. We thank you, Lord Jesus, for coming and fulfilling it. We thank you, Holy Spirit, for empowering Jesus, as Hebrews says, empowering you to fulfill your work. We thank you. You fulfilled your work. We thank you that we know your plan. And you've made it possible by your actions, by your words, by your Scripture, to know you and have life in you. We're thankful for that Lord. We're thankful. We look forward to the day when we will see you face to face. All things renewed because you were renewed in your resurrection. We pray in your name. Amen.



