



Sermon – April 17, 2022
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Verses Covered This Week

Matthew 7:12 - 27

Romans 6:20 – 23

John 6:40

Let me invite you to open your Bibles with me back to Matthew chapter 7, and we're going to start in verse 13. And as you are turning there, He is risen. We celebrate that reality this Easter morning. The recognition that the most important event in world history has taken place. That our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, has come back from the grave defeating satan, sin, and death. Does that bring joy to your heart this morning? You know, we can take Easter for granted. But I was challenged in that reality this week. Because I have a friend of mine who's traveled to one of the countries just outside of Ukraine to visit with refugees that are there and he's ministering and trying to strengthen Ukrainian Christian leaders that are there outside the country. And as my friend was speaking to one of them, I want you to hear what this Ukrainian Christian leader said to him. He said this, "This is the first time in our life that we are celebrating Easter right in the midst of war. There are more reasons to cry than reasons to celebrate but we would like to experience the power of the resurrection in our hearts." And isn't that our desire this morning too, Central family? That we would experience the power of that resurrection in our hearts? And so, whether this is your church home or you're joining us for the first time as a guest, welcome home. Because we're coming to center our hearts on God's word knowing that the tomb is empty. Knowing that Easter changes everything. And that's what this last 21 days has been about for us as a congregation. As we've had this time. These 21 days of prayer with our final day today. Has anybody other than me enjoyed this experience? If you have, let me hear about it right now. It's just been so great to see how God has worked over the course of this last three weeks. We've seen over a thousand prayer cards turned in from you on Sunday mornings. Amazing! And we want to give you one more time to do that today. And so, if you have a prayer card in the seat back in front of you, I want to encourage you to take that out and during the message to write down a specific request or maybe a specific answer that the Lord has done in your heart. Go ahead and grab that now because we've seen that God is at work in the midst of our people.

There was a man that came to me in tears this week in our church who had been praying for God to provide a job within the next 2 week's time and the Lord answered that prayer. There was another one that wrote in on her card and she said that she was praying for an opportunity to share the gospel with a particular friend and the Lord opened up that door and she had the courage to walk through it. Or one of the cards that I really enjoyed this week, getting said this, our family has recently been church hopping and prayerfully trying local churches in hopes of a long-standing church home. We are so thankful to have found a permanent church home here at Central. Thank you, Lord, for answered prayers. That's the kind of prayer God's answering. And if that's, if you're in that similar situation with your family, I want to invite you to take a step towards joining the family of God through membership here at Central. Easter is an amazing time to take that step. But the thing that's encouraged me most during this 21 days of prayer is God is doing exceedingly more than we could ask or imagine. When we started this journey, I knew that God might work in our hearts here in our church. I hoped that He might work in the hearts of others around our community. But what I did not expect is to receive the letter that came into our staff earlier this week. It came from three women in the Waco area who are too far away to be able to attend our church in person but watch it weekly through the television broadcast that shows in their community. And here's what these three women wrote to us this week, Central. Dear Central Baptist Church, thank you for your ministry. Each Sunday morning, we watch your broadcast and are encouraged. The worship songs and the message truly uplift us in this place. We are writing to request the book, 21 Days of Childlike Prayer. If it's possible, could you send each of us a copy to help us in our own prayer life? Thank you for your time and consideration and thank you for your work and your broadcast. We look forward to it each Sunday. Now, as amazing as that is, what took my breath away when this letter was first shared with me is that these three women wrote this letter to us from the McLennan County Jail where they're behind bars awaiting trial for crimes that they have allegedly committed. And there they are week in, week out, tuning in to us to recognize and celebrate the same resurrection truth that we declare this morning. And while most of us in the hearing of my words are not behind prison bars, or maybe some of you this morning who feel a similar reality in your soul. That you're imprisoned by your sin. Trapped by your guilt. Overcome by your shame. And Jesus has a word for us this morning coming out of Matthew 7 as we turn our hearts now to the Scripture. Let's look down at Matthew 7:13 at the way Jesus speaks to the reality that Easter changes everything for us. Here's what Matthew 7:13 says:

¹³Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. ¹⁴For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

Let's pray together.

Father, in this time, we are asking You to move in our hearts. That same power that raised Jesus from the dead, would You pour it out in our midst? Would You bring us the conviction of sin? Would You help us to leave behind those things that are holding us down, the weights that so easily entangle, and instead, turn to Jesus, whose yoke is easy, whose burden is light, and whose way is sure. And we ask these things in Christ's name, amen.

Well as we know in Ukraine, the largest refugee crisis since World War II is unfolding in Europe right now. And I want you to see the picture on the screen of one of those refugees. His name is

Hassan. He's a young boy about the age of 11; just in a tragic situation. See, Hassan was actually born in Syria and had to flee that country because of Russian warfare there and their family moved to Ukraine. He lost his dad in that Syrian war and now he's living there with his mom and his siblings. And his siblings had already fled the country and his mom and him were faced with this crisis; should we stay or should we go? And the wrestling that his mom had is that her mother, Hassan's grandmother, is in bad health. Unable to travel or escape. The mom made the difficult decision to stay in her town and send her 11-year-old son on his own to try to make it to freedom in Slovakia. So, he had a choice in front of him. He could take one of two ways. See, the wide gate, the easy way, the path that seemed as if it were the safest would be to stay because there was no one there. There was no current threat. But he knew that that might lead to destruction. So, instead of taking that wide gate and the easy way, Hassan entered into the narrow gate of his local train station and embarked on a journey that spanned 750 miles, the equivalent of going from El Paso to Houston, on his own as an 11-year-old with nothing but a passport, a plastic bag of supplies, and a smile. Hoping that even though the way would be hard and that the gate would be narrow, at the end of it he might find life.

And when you hear these words from Jesus this morning, speaking about these two ways, the the wide gate and the narrow gate. I hope you see yourself in Hassan. Because we too are surrounded by a war zone, not with bloodshed and bombs, but with spiritual forces all around us. And all of us, like him, stand orphaned in this moment. Not because our mom has made the difficult choice his mom his made but because we have been orphaned in our sins. We've been separated from God. And what Jesus is doing as he brings this Sermon on the Mount to its culmination is putting in front of us a choice that every person in the room and catching this by video faces today. There are two paths. Two ways. Two gates. Which will you choose? And so look at verses 13 and 14 here with me. You see the way that Jesus speaks upon about these two ways. One has a wide gate, the other a narrow gate. One has an easy way; one has a hard way. One has many people; the other has few people. One leads to destruction; the other leads to life. Both ways make the same promise of deliverance, of safety, of freedom. But only one can keep its promises. That's the way of the narrow gate, the difficult way. And the question for us this morning is which path will we choose? Which path have you chosen? Which way are you taking? You may be in here this morning saying, "I'm not sure if I've entered into the narrow gate or not. I don't know which way I've chosen. I've been wrestling with this decision. Have I made this or should I make this?" See, the beauty of this passage is that Jesus is going to give three tests, three indicators, three markers that will help us to know if we have entered into the narrow gate. How it is that we can find the way to life.

And I want us to see the first one now, beginning down in verse 15. The first test is the test of your fruit. So, the way we'll say it here is the first test of whether Easter has changed everything for you is your fruit. And let's see how he talks about that fruit beginning in verse 15.

¹⁵Beware the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷So, every healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can the diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁸Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

In our Bible belt culture, one of the things that you will be told is that if you want to have a relationship with God, you need to do good. That if your works are good enough, that if you do enough things for God, if your good outweighs your bad, then maybe, just maybe God will receive you into heaven. And it could seem as if when you first look at this passage talking about our fruit that Jesus is saying the exact same thing. But in reality what He is saying to us is this key about what our fruit reveals for us. That your fruit is not the source of your salvation; it's the sign of your salvation. That your fruit doesn't earn a relationship with God; it exhibits a relationship with God that already exists. And right here in this passage, you see another contrast, not just two gates but now, two types of fruit. That which is good and that which is bad. And as Jesus speaks about it, He mentions two things that our fruit reveals about who we are and where we stand before God. So, notice back in verse 16, the first thing he says is that our fruit reveals our root. That's why it says there, you will recognize them by their fruits. And when He's speaking there about fruits, he's not just referring to our good works. He's talking about the totality of who we are. The sum total of our convictions, our character, our conversations, our conduct. Our fruit is what, what we recognize when we know that how we live reveals who we truly are. The fruit reveals the root.

So, over the last few years, we've all been familiar with the wildfires that have raged in California and some of them have even ravaged and affected the Napa Valley Wine Country. Is it allowed for a Baptist preacher to talk about wine on Easter Sunday? You see, what's happened over there in these last periods is that as things have heated up and become drier, it's made the wine country more dangerous for the growing of wine. You see, it's even come to the point where it's gotten so hot that some of these wine growers, the grape growers, have had to put sunscreen on your grapes. I didn't even know that was a thing. One of the vineyards was running so low on water from the drought that they had to truck in filtered water from the local sanitation station where they clean wastewater. Remember that the next time you see somebody taking a drink. But the biggest effect on these grapes is from the smoke. The smoke seeps into them and it takes healthy fruit and turns it bad. It damages it. It corrupts it. And it doesn't just affect the fruit, it affects the vine. It's now diseased. As if it's no longer capable of bearing good fruit. And Jesus is giving us that type of warning. That bad fruit is the evidence of a bad root. That good fruit reveals, that good fruit is revealed through good fruit. There is this contrast that takes place in showing us our root. But Jesus also tells us there's a second reality that this fruit reveals. Not just our root but also our routes. Our destination, our future, where we are going. That's why you'll see when you look back in verse 19 at the way he says, every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. He is saying, what you see in your life now, your character, your conduct, your conversations, your convictions is not just revealing who you are now but where you are headed. It reminds me of Romans chapter 6 in verse 20. You'll see these words on the screen. The way the apostle Paul speaks about how our fruit doesn't determine our future but it discloses the future that we are headed for. Listen to what he says,

²⁰For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regards to righteousness. ²¹But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. ²²But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. Get this. ²³For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

See, the shame that you feel behind closed doors, the guilt that overwhelms you is a sign of the future that you are headed towards apart from Christ. It's a sign of that need to exchange your sin for Jesus' salvation the way that Paul speaks of it here. And the reason that's necessary is in part because of what also unfolded two years ago in that same Napa Valley. You see, the fires didn't just surround Napa Valley back in 2020, they went through it. There was significant damage done through both the fire and the smoke to both the vineyards and the trees. And as I was reading an article about its effects, I came across the vineyard owner who was showing the the journalist his vineyard, and the damage that had happened. And this man, his name was Stu John, Stu Smith, looked at one of the trees that on the outside looks beautiful and you know what he said to the journalist? He said these words that might haunt you this morning. Even though that tree looks alive, it's dead. It just doesn't know it yet. And that's a warning that our fruit is giving to us. It's that blinking alarm flashing in front of us, revealing the reality of where we stand before God. And what Jesus says to us is that our fruit is the first test of where we stand before God this Easter Sunday. But I want you to see a second one as we go down in the text beginning in verse 20. The first test is your fruit. The second test is your faith.

So, what we find here beginning in verse 21 is that the second test of whether Easter changes everything for you is your faith. And here's how Jesus talks about that faith in verse 21.

²¹“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. ²²On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and cast out demons in Your name, and do mighty works in Your name?’ ²³And then will I declared to them, ‘I never knew you, depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness.’

You see, in our Bible belt culture, the world around you will tell you not just to do good but to be good. If you're a good person, if you're nice to others, if you have the right types of thoughts and treat other people with respect, then that's all that God wants from you, that that's enough from Him. And when the reality that Jesus is showing us is very different. That our standing before God is not on the basis of our behavior but our belief. It's not enough to be good because none of us in our sin are good enough for God. Instead, we need to quit pretending and start depending. That's the essence of the true faith that Jesus talks about. And the way that we can tell if we have true faith may surprise us by how Jesus talks about it here. There's three surprising realities He speaks of. If you look back in verse 21, he shows us that true faith is not just about what you say about God, but what God says about you. Look at the warning. “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven but the one who does the will of my father in heaven.” So, there's this danger that we can know all the right things to say but not be in a right standing before God. It's it's like what Jesus says in Matthew 15:8. He is quoting the prophet Isaiah and he says there about the the people of Israel, the people honors me with their lips but their heart is far from me. You might say the right things with your lips without believing the right things in your heart. Jesus is sounding a warning of a danger that we might have soft words but hard hearts. But notice what he says there. It's not the one who says, Lord, Lord, but the one who does the will of the Father. And what is that will of the Father? Well, I want you to see it right on the screens coming out of John 6:40. Elsewhere, Jesus tells us what God's will is. He answers the question, who is it that will enter the kingdom of heaven and here's how he says it.

⁴⁰For this is the will of the Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day.

So, what's the will of the Father? The will of the Father is to behold and believe. It's to see and to savor. It is to take in and to trust. And what happens with those who are of true faith? Jesus tells us in John 6:40. That just as Jesus as we celebrate today was raised from the dead, so too will those of us with true faith be raised up on the last day. Not on the basis of what we say about God but what He says about us. Now, look back at Matthew 7. We'll look down in verse 22 and we'll see a second reality here. It's and the he's showing us that true faith is not just about what you do for God but what God does for you. So, notice how he says in the verse 22.

²²On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and cast out demons in Your name, and do many mighty works in your name?'

So, look what happens here. On the day of judgement, these people stand before the living God and they present to them the equivalent of their spiritual resume. They send Him their LinkedIn profile with all their spiritual accomplishments and it's as impressive as it gets. I mean, look at the list there. They, they prophesy. There's exorcisms. There's miracles. If there's anybody that should get into the kingdom of heaven on the basis of what they've done, these are the people. And yet He tells us it is not enough. And the problem is it's not about what they did but what they didn't do. And what they didn't do was put true faith in what God had done for them in Christ. You see, true faith is not based on what we do for God but what He does for us. And that's seen in the most amazing way during this holy week that's in its culmination right now. I mean, think about what happens from Palm Sunday when Jesus rides in as a triumphant King. He cleanses the temple but then He is mocked. He is put on trial. There are those who bear false witness against Him and He is beaten, scourged, condemned, and then crucified. He goes to the cross to die in our place, making the payment for the penalty of our sins so that we might have a way to God. And he is laid in that tomb. The stone is sealed around it. And in the silence of that Sunday morning a heart begins to beat again, lungs begin to heave, hands begin to twitch and He is raised from the dead showing that he is the power to defeat satan, sin, and death so that all who put their trust in him may be set free to walk in newness of life. It's not about what you do for God but what He has done for you.

Notice this other reality back in verse 23, we also see that true faith is not about what you know about God but what God knows about you. So, here's how He says it

²³And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

So, in other words, even though they had said the right things, they had done the right things. What they find is not a celebration in heaven but a condemnation. Why? Because even though they claim that they knew God, it becomes clear that God never knew them because their true faith did not exist. So, I want you to see another picture that young boy Hassan up on the screen after he had traveled this long journey. He'd entered through the narrow gate. He had gone through the hard way, making it that 750 miles. He finally was able to cross the border to Slovakia. And, and as he traveled on this path, he would've known what was ahead of him. He

would have known the freedom he might have found. He would have known the safety he could've experienced. He would have known the types of people that would be waiting on him but his knowledge was not enough. It wasn't enough that he knew them. He needed to be known by them, rescued by them, received by them, and you can see the joy on his face. He's holding up this sign right here, the universal sign of peace. He has not experienced peace for that entire journey. And now his heart as it rests and the reason because of it, it's because he's been known by a rescuer. And that's what we find Jesus speaking of here. That it's not enough to know about God. We must be known by God and that's the danger growing up in the Bible belt. You could've grown up going to church, grown up reading your Bible, you could have prayed the sinner's prayer maybe even 15 times hoping it would stick. You could have been baptized on a Sunday morning. You could have eaten Easter lunch at your grandparents house. You could've rededicated your life at student camp each summer and yet you find yourself inside broken. Hollow. Empty. Even though you've known about God, have you ever been known by God? That's the question that Jesus is confronting us with this morning.

Which brings us to the third foundation that he is calling us to; the third test, the third marker, the third indicator that we'll see starting in verse 24 and going down to verse 27. It's not just your fruit and your faith. The third test is your foundation. So, the way we'll say it this morning is that the third test of whether Easter has changed everything for you is your foundation. And I want you to notice how he closes out this section talking about it beginning in verse 24.

²⁴Everyone then who hears the words of Mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵And the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, why, because it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶And everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷And the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell and great was the fall of it.

So, when you grow up here in the Bible Belt, people will tell you, you need to do good and be good but if nothing else, if that doesn't work for you, what you really need to do is look good. Put on a front. Put on a mask. Say the right things. Be the right places. Do the right things. Have the right relationships. And we find ourselves playing this game because we want to cover over our sin. We want to hide our guilt. We want to suppress our weaknesses. We want to feel as if we've got everything together but Jesus is confronting that reality here when He speaks about these two foundations. Notice this passage talks at the first about two ways and now it culminates by talking about two buildings. And there is much the same about them. I mean, just think about the similarities of these two buildings. First of all, can we just admire for a minute the fact that these buildings are completed construction? They're not waiting on supply chain problems. For windows to come in or other needs that they have. But notice the similarities here. They are of the same type. They are of a similar material. They're in the same location and they face the same storm. So, what's the difference? What's the contrast that Jesus is making? There's one big difference and it's something you can't even see. What is it? The foundation. Even though everything else seems the same, the foundation makes the difference. And what we find is that we don't realize the difference in foundation until the that storm comes on that day in the future. But look what happens. What's that difference? How does it play out? Well, you'll notice one way the difference in foundation plays out is that the different foundation shows up in their actions. So, look at the way he speaks about the firm foundation in the middle

of verse 24. He says, those on the firm foundation, hear these words of Mine and does them. Now, look down at verse 26 at the one on the foolish foundation. See, the foolish foundation in the middle of verse 26 it says, they hear these words of Mine and does not do them. In other words, there's a contrast here between being hearers of the word and doers of the word. Does that sound familiar? And as Jesus is speaking of this reality, He's confronting us in the fact that we could go to church. We could hear the sermon each week. We could listen to Christian music. We could even know the right Bible passage to point our friends to in their moment of crisis. But if all we do is hear God's word and if we do not build ourselves on God's foundation in Christ, then we're in danger. I mean, think of this reality. Jesus is preaching in this Sermon on the Mount. His disciples are gathered amongst the multitude that's there and do you know who one of those disciples is that's hearing these Words right now? Judas. The one who would betray Him. He hears the word but he doesn't do it. And by virtue of that, it's revealing his faulty foundation. It's not enough to be a hearer of the word.

But there's another contrast I want you to notice. If you look back at verse 25, we also see that the different foundations show up in their different outcomes. So, it's not just about their actions but the outcomes of those actions. So, notice what the way he speaks about the firm foundation at the end of verse 25. He tells us that when the storm comes, the building did not fall because it had been founded on the rock. Now, look down at verse 27. When he speaks about this one built on the foolish foundation, at the end of verse 27, look what happens when the storm comes. It fell and great was the fall of it. So, why does it fall? Why does that foolish foundation fail? It's because it's not built on the rock. And happens is that the intensity of the storm reveals the instability of the foundation. There are two relatives, a man by the name of Russell King and his relative LeBron Lackey who built what was their dream home. A second house for both of them down on the Florida Panhandle near Panama City Beach. They named it the, the sand, the Sea Castle at Mexico Beach and they were so excited to be able to visit it. But both of them were back home back in 2018 when Hurricane Michael set its sights on that part of the Florida coast. I don't know if you remember Hurricane Michael but it blossomed into the most powerful Category 5 to strike that region of Florida in decades. And all they could do was watch the aftermath of what happened to their home and those around it from the, the Nest cam that they had on the outdoor patio of their home until it was whisked away by the waves. And they did not know what was the fate of their home until a, a news station surveyed the damage in that region. And I want you to see a picture of what the aftermath of that storm looked like. And what you're going to find there is devastation. You see slabs. Barren. You see construction materials strewn about. But what do you notice right in the middle, in the front? You see that building standing there? That was the home that they had constructed. The Sea Castle in Mexico Beach had survived the severity of the storm. Why? Because as they said in the article I read, they had built it for the big one. They had engineered the construction such that it should be able to endure up to 250 mile an hour winds. And way they did that is by using special designs, special materials. But what made all the difference when the storm came, you see those stilts that is standing on. Those are built upon pilings that were plunged 40' through the sand until they struck rock. Until they had a foundation that could stand in the midst of the storm. That's what Jesus is calling us to this morning. To find our, find our foundation not in doing good or being good, or looking good, but finding our foundation in Jesus Christ alone, so that we can declare along with the hymn writer, that our hope is built on nothing less, than Jesus blood and righteousness. Because what we know is this reality on Christ the Solid Rock I stand. No other, all other ground is sinking sand. That's the truth that Jesus is driving us to this morning.

And so you may find yourself here at the end of this message and you're looking at these tests of your fruit, your faith, and your foundation and you're realizing you may have thought that you had put your trust in Jesus before but now, you recognize that you haven't. That you come to this point where you have failed that test and you're looking for that narrow gate, that hard way that leads to life. I've got good news for you this morning. You can find it in Jesus Christ. That's where true faith begins and if you find yourself wanting to know what it looks like to follow the way of Jesus this morning. That true faith happens when we trust in Jesus as our Savior, our Lord, and our treasure. Our savior in the sense that we know that we bring our sin and that sin brings judgement. But there is nothing else that we can bring to our salvation that unless Jesus paid that penalty, unless He defeated that grave, apart from Him, we cannot know salvation. Is He your Savior this morning? But not just your Savior, is He your Lord? Are you at the point in your life where you are ready to surrender all? To lay it down at God's feet and say, "Lord, I've tried to do this my own way. I've tried to ignore You or to run from You and all that's happened is brokenness, heartbreak, failure, disappointment. And I surrender now. I say, You are the Lord of my life and wherever You lead, I will go. Where ever you take me, I will follow. That's the type of trust I want to have in You." And would you see Him as your treasure? We look around this world and there are so many things that it has to offer. So many ways it is pulling at us and yet the call of the Gospel is to see Jesus as your treasure, as that great reward, as the deepest desire of your heart. That's what it looks like to trust in Him salvation. That gate is narrow. That way is hard. But that path is sure. It's a path that leads to salvation and that salvation comes from true faith built on a firm foundation.

Let's pray together.

I just want to ask you now with your heads bowed and your eyes closed. It was a great joy for me to get to baptize my son, Nathan, this morning. And one of the things that happened that night when we were talking about Jesus is he looked at me and my wife and he said to us, "I think it's my time." And I just wonder this morning for some of you, is it your time today? I want to pray specifically for you if that's what your heart is telling you, that it's your time to follow Jesus, your time to put your faith in Him. And if that's you, I'm going to make a challenge to you. You're right here while nobody's looking in the quietness of your seat. If you just raise your hand, if that's you. If you're tired of pretending, if you're tired of making a way for yourself. If you're tired of running from your sin. If you're tired of trying to do it on your own. If you're overwhelmed by the weight of that sin. If that's you, I want to pray specifically for you this morning if you want a new start in Jesus Christ. Would you raise that hand with me? For just a moment. Let's take a moment to pray over these men and women as they put their hands back down.

Father, thank You for the way that you've been at work in our people. Thank You for the way that you've been at work in Your Son. Thank You for the Gospel reality that You have called us to in Christ. And I pray even now, Lord, that as people wrestle with what to do with Jesus, that they would turn from their sins and turn to that Savior and find newness of life. That that might us that know by You, rescued and redeemed. Set free so that this Easter Sunday they can declare with all of us that know Christ the joy that is set before us because of what You've done or us in Your Son. And we ask these things in Christ's name.