

INTRO:

Well again, Happy Easter. Today of course, marks the central confession of the Christian faith: That Jesus Christ is *risen from the dead*. BECAUSE if that DIDN'T happen, everything we believe is based on a lie. But if it did nothing, can stay the same. And here at Hub, we ABSOLUTELY believe it happened/*amen?*... So I wanna do **2 Things** together this morning: **First**, I want us to thank a few folks: Of course **The Neighborhood House** for graciously letting us gather here each week. **The Broadway** for our AMAZING brunch this morning. They do a great job every week, but if there is ANYTHING that says, "Jesus Is Alive"; it's chicken and waffles. But ALSO, huge thanks to: **Elizabeth Wolff, Matt King, Christian L'hreaux**, and of course my lovely wife **Abby**. *Could you all raise your hands?* Yeah, you guys these 4 folks/ along with many of you, really have, for weeks now, been working behind the scenes to simply help us celebrate this weekend! From hosting Easter Egg Stuffing parties, to the Egg Hunt yesterday, social media, the photo booth in the back, gifts when you came in, they've been leading the charge! AND...put up with me IN it all. *So could we give them a big round of applause?* Thank you guys!... The **Second** thing I wanna do is this: Some years ago, *Us News & World Report* had a section entitled "News You Can Use." THAT is what I'm gonna try and do for you today/not beat around the bush/just give you "news you can use." Cuz what you have in the passage you just heard read, is a kind of distillation, from Jesus HIMSELF, about all the important news behind Easter; NAMELY **Who It's About, Why It's More Important than just some tradition, and What It Means For You Today**. "News You Can Use!"

TEXT:¹

So take a look with me **First**, at **Who Easter's About**: And there's an old joke about a children's Bible teacher who's describing an object for his class. And so he says, "*Kids, I'm gonna describe something, and I want you to raise your hand when you know what it is.*" So the kids nod eagerly and the teacher says, "*Ok, so the thing I'm thinking about lives in trees and eats nuts. Anyone?*" No hands. So he says, "*Ok, it's also grey and has a long bushy tail.*" But still no hands and NOW teacher's thinkin' "*what kinda class is this?*" So he says, "*Ok I'll give ya one more: It jumps from branch to branch and flips it's grey bushy tail when it's excited.*"... Still nothin'... UNTIL one little boy sorta slowly raises his hand and says, "*Um teacher, it sounds like you're describing...a squirrel. But I KNOW the answer's Jesus.*" OF COURSE, when we ask **Who Easter's About**, the answer's Jesus! BUT look at exactly WHO Jesus is. He says, **vv.27-28**, "*Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I've come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.*" And of course, the purpose to which Jesus is referring there is His death! Throughout **John**, that phrase, "*Jesus' hour*" is always a reference to the crucifixion. And so on the one hand, you see this really steely-eyed determination Jesus has ABOUT His crucifixion. Calls it "*His purpose*," that He won't ask to be "*saved from it*"/no matter how painful, cuz He knows it's gonna "*glorify*" His Father! Just incredible determination... Back in the winter of 1952 there was a nor'easter that swept through

¹ Works consulted:

- 38 - The Effects of the Cross - John 12:27-36 - R. Kent Hughes, *John: That You May Believe*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1999), 303.
 - "Jesus, Mission, and Glory: New Purpose: Sent to Show Christ's Glory" - 2016-17 + "The Glory in the Cross: Gospel of John, Part 1 - Sep. 22, 1991 - John 12:27-36 - *Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (NYC: Redeemer Church, 2016 + 2013)
 - Bruce Milne, *The Message of John: Here Is Your King! With Study Guide*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 184-95.

our coast/wreaked a ton of havoc/took out two large tanker ships/literally split em in half, so that the Chatham Coast Guard had to go into rescue action. The problem was, they had to figure out how to conduct TWO rescues/for those two tankers, AT the same time, IN the middle of the hurricane. There's actually a movie about it called "Their Finest Hours" with a really all-star cast. But in the movie, a small team of Coast Guard swimmers sets out to the second tanker with the only boat they had left/this tiny little thing that could only hold about 8 of dozens of people they needed to rescue. And so there's this one sailor, who's in charge, and he's gotta convince 3 other sailors to come with him. And I won't spoil it for ya, but there's this great scene where all the sailors are terrified as they think about going out. And so the leader looks at em and he says this, "*They say you gotta go out! What they don't say is you gotta come back.*" And of course what he meant was, "*it's our job to go rescue! It's NOT our job to survive! We rescue no matter what.*" THAT'S the kind of determination, you see, in part, Jesus is evidencing here. Cuz of course ever since Jesus came to earth and was born as a baby in a manger, He'd effectively been preparing to die. As the gospel writer **Mark** records Jesus saying, "*For even the Son of Man CAME not to be served but to serve, and to GIVE HIS LIFE as a ransom for many.*" Being crucified IS what Jesus came to do! Death was the "FEATURE" of His' life, not a "bug."

AND YET you see also there **right?**, He's incredibly torn up about this. Says, "*Now is my soul troubled.*" In some translations, it's, "*my soul is in turmoil.*" Cuz the word He uses there, literally means a constant state of shocking terror!²...He's quite literally trembling and in a sense, flinching before His death...Which is interesting **right?**, cuz **why be so overwhelmed at something you've prepared your whole life for?** And I don't say that to diminish what was, no-doubt, an excruciatingly painful death for Jesus. I mean that's literally where we GET our word "*excruciating*" - from the Latin "*ex-crucis,*" meaning "*from the Cross.*" But isn't there a sense that - even IF painful - if you've been preparing for this your whole life, why be shrinking back like Jesus is here? ESPECIALLY given that plenty of people throughout history have gone into their death really, WITHOUT flinching. Socrates, for example, when he faced with death in Athens cuz of his teaching, spent his last moments basically cracking jokes with friends. Certainly not the kind of dread Jesus is facing here. **So here's the question:** What would be so dreadful as to make the Son of God/the 2nd person of the Trinity, cuz you see there in **vv.28-30**, God the Father powerfully speaking from heaven to affirm Jesus' divinity - **what would make THIS kind of person - the God-Man - so upset?**... Well, think about the worst thing that can happen to a person/And I'm not trying to get your mind racing into all kinds of mental horror films. More just get you to consider: that isn't that the worst possible thing that can happen to any of us, the loss of true love? Having a parent, spouse, child walk out on you; neglect you; say they never wanna see you again...die on you? And I know, some of you have, sadly, faced that kind of pain/it's awful! Which is WHY, you have to see that, if there's a God the Father and a God the Son, as we've seen there to be throughout **John** and the Bible as a whole, then THEIR eternal relationship would be one of PERFECT love...infinitely greater than even the greatest love you and I could know..or lose!...What's SO horrifying to Jesus about the Cross is not just the prospect of having His BODY ripped apart, but having His "*soul*" ripped apart, as for the

² ταράσσω - Leon Morris, *The Cross*, 74, fn. 19.

first time His Father is gonna turn His face on Him; be silent toward Him...utterly forsake Him. Jesus literally experiencing hell. Cuz that's what hell is: It's the absence of God. Sin is the rejection of God/hell the natural result of that choice... THAT is what's already tearing Jesus up! As one commentator says in-part, *"THIS is the horror of the One who only ever lived for the approval of the Father; in communion WITH the Father; wanting to GLORIFY the Father...but who in His death...saw nothing OF His Father."*³ THIS is **Who Easter's About!** One who HAD everything, but became NOTHING, so you could GAIN everything!

Cuz **Second**, you see WHY Jesus Did It All/**Why Easter's PROFOUNDLY More Important than just some cultural/religious tradition**: He says, **vv.31-32**, *"Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I'm lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."* And of course, Jesus is referencing there, both His death and resurrection, since throughout **John**, but also in OT passages like **Isaiah 52**, that phrase *"lifted up"* is a reference, PRIMARILY to, the Messiah being "lifted up" on a Cross, but ALSO in a sense, "lifted up"...from the grave/Resurrected. So Jesus is saying that in His "being lifted up"/in His death and resurrection, something ultimate is gonna get taken care of once-and-for-all! **You see what it is? "Judgment" right?** Judgment/ALL the judgment both brought on BY you cuz of your sin/what He calls, *"the judgment of this world,"* AND brought TO you, by others like Satan, who He calls, *"the ruler OF this world."* ANY AND ALL "judgment" in your life getting wiped away with His death and resurrection!...Now I know in our culture, we don't like to talk about judgment. Feels oppressive **right?** But the fact of the matter is: It's entirely necessary. Cuz can you imagine, for example, a judge here in Boston, getting a defendant in front of em who was really truly guilty of a crime - let's say a really public, gruesome murder. Can you imagine that judge/after the jury has deliberated and come to the obvious conclusion that the defendant's guilty, addressing the court and saying, *"I understand the jury has found you guilty. I also understand that in our system of justice that means this case is open and shut. But ya know, I sat here/I listened to everything and frankly, I'm moved by the fact that you/Mr. or Mrs. Defendant said you were sorry. So I'm gonna break precedent, overrule the jury...and let you go free."*... Friends, if that happened, you know what would ALSO happen? Boston would burn! There'd be rioting! Because we KNOW "judgment"/justice is important! **How much more so with God, who being holy, can't let sin go unpunished.** When you sin, which is to say, you substitute yourself for God/choose to do life on your terms rather than His; you deserve "judgment." And not just ANY judgment, but death! Cuz see, when you sin against an infinite being like God - if the punishment's gonna fit the crime - then you deserve to be judged infinitely, which is to say, deserve death, since death is the only infinite judgment!...So **listen**/the question then is NOT: IF you'll be judged, but rather, which judgment will ultimately be APPLIED to you? Will it be the one of grace and forgiveness as established by Jesus on the Cross/in the Resurrection or the one that'll come when you have to stand before God and answer to what you did WITH that grace and forgiveness/whether you received and staked your life on it or not?

³ Insight adapted from quote by Bill Lane in his *Commentary on Mark*, *"This is the horror of one who lived wholly for the father, who came to be with his Father for a brief interlude before his death and found hell rather than heaven open before him."*

Cuz see, when Jesus died and rose from the dead/that first Easter, what it tells you is EXACTLY what HE'S telling you here: That it need not be the latter judgment! Because ON the Cross and IN the Resurrection, Jesus has DEALT with your judgment once-and-for-all! Put HIS head on the chopping block where yours deserved to go, so that YOU can now go free and go into all blessing! Not just forgiven, but justified - literally "just as if I'd never sinned." Or "just as if I'd always lived like Jesus." That's huge... There's an old episode of the TV show *NCIS* - ya know about military police investigations. There's this one particular episode in which the main character is this broken-down old former Marine - in his 80's. And his life is kinda down and out and he's ACTUALLY being accused of murder. And at one point, these other two big Marines along with a snarling Navy lawyer come to arrest him. And in the scene, they're kinda hovering over him as he's sorta cowering like a man accused of murder. And just as they're about to cuff him the old man's tie kinda brushes to the side...exposing...a Congressional Medal of Honor. Apparently, this old-former Marine had done acts of extraordinary valor and bravery, beyond the call of duty, on Iwo Jima, and as a result was awarded a Congressional Medal of Honor. WHICH when the other Marines and the snarling lawyer see it, causes em to totally change their posture. And of instead of looking at this guy as accused and condemned man, they snap to attention and salute him. Just like that.⁴ Judgment completed wiped away!...**2 Corinthians 5:21** and **Romans 8:1** say respectively, "*For (your) sake (God) made (Jesus) to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him (you) might become the righteousness of God...(So) there is therefore now NO condemnation/no judgment for those who're in Christ Jesus!*"...Friends, **THIS is why Easter/the news OF Easter is SO important**: Cuz it means, IN Christ, God has poured out His love on sinners like you and me...scandalously swallowed up your debt...and risen from the grave with the glorious declaration that you're now free from any and all judgment caused BY you or brought TO you!...I love the way that old hymn, "In Christ Alone" says it: "*No guilt in life. No fear of death. This is the power of Christ in me.*" THAT'S the news of Easter!

So **Finally**, How Can You Use This News/**What Does It Mean For You Today?** And maybe the best way to answer that would be to speak to a few groups of people, who I think are in the room today; ALL of whom, you see there in **v.32**, ALL OF US, in some way being "*drawn*" to Jesus. Jesus says, "*when I'm lifted up - which has already happened - I WILL draw ALL people to myself.*"...I think there's 3 groups of us in this room today; each of whom Jesus is "*drawing*" you to place your trust in Him in a new or fresh way. **First**, there's those of you who are here and you're hearing all this stuff about judgment, condemnation, Easter being about Jesus TAKING your judgment by being judged in your place, and you're thinking, "*It sounds a little weird... But...I need that/I need that. I need to be set free from this condemnation that's coloring my life.*" Maybe it's condemnation rooted in something you did or HAD done to you in the past. Some way you failed or it was communicated to you that YOU'RE a failure...Perhaps it's not something in the past, but rather something in your present/something you're struggling with now. Maybe a destructive or addictive behavior/a tendency you can't seem to get past and every time you fall to it, you FEEL that guilt/that judgment...Or maybe it's not even that palpable. Maybe it's just a kinda low-grade sense of not feeling good enough: as a mom, a dad, a spouse, a

⁴ Adapted from Tim Keller, *The Power of the Gospel: Bible: The Whole Story—Redemption and Restoration—February 8, 2009: Romans 1:1–7, 14–17*

boss, in your career, with your education...And sure you can put on a good face/project/posture, but deep-down, you know, if life was a game of Survivor Island, you'd be kicked off the island... Or maybe it's none of that/nothing in your past or present. Rather, it's how you think about the future: You're scared! You don't know HOW God feels about you/how you could ever stand before Him. And sure, you believe He loves you, cuz ya know that's kinda what He does. You're just not sure He actually likes you. And so you fear the future/fear death/fear having to stand before Him...Friend, whatever it is, what our culture would tell you is, "*Oh it's ok. You're a good person. Everything'll be fine. Don't feel guilty.*" But you know that's not true. As C.S. Lewis said, "*anyone who's tried really hard to be good KNOWS just how bad they actually are.*" Heck, every time you try NOT to feel guilty, ya just end up feeling MORE guilty for NOT feelin' guilty right? No! Friend, Jesus is "*drawing you to Himself*" and He's using that sense of guilt and judgment this morning, to get you to see your need for Him! Don't push it off. Agree with it SO that it leads you to simply look on and believe in Him who's been "*lifted up*" to REMOVE your guilt. After all, as Tim Keller says, "*It's only because of the (reality) of judgment and hell that Jesus' grace and love are so brilliant and astounding.*"

Second, there's those of you who are here and you're hearing all this and it ALSO might sound a little strange to you, but even IN sounding strange, you sense there's something really beautiful about it/about the idea of someone dying so you can live...You might remember some years ago, an airplane that crashed into a frozen river. And upon impact, people were of course thrown out into the water and were...dying, cuz even if they were able to get to shore, a lot of em couldn't survive the hypothermia. There was this one man/a rescuer, who was just determined to save as many people as he could. So he'd jump in the water, swim as fast as he could to whatever person he could get to, grab em, and swim back to shore. And then he'd do it again...And he did it 3 or 4 times. But EVERY TIME he was about to go back in the water, people would say, "*Don't do it. You're gonna die.*" But he just kept saying, "*I think I can save one more.*"...until finally...he went back in...and never came back...And in the aftermath, a helicopter ended up pulling his frozen body out of the water. And I remember, as he was "*lifted up*," everybody just looked at him. Cuz of course their hearts were "*drawn*" to him. ***I mean how could you not be?*** Even if sad, there was just something so attractive about it!...Friend, if when you look on JESUS "*lifted up*," you find it attractive AT ALL, that's proof that He's "*drawing*" your heart to Him. ***That's what it means to FIND something attractive right?*** It means to be "*drawn*" to it...Recognize that!...Recognize that there's no greater beauty than that of Jesus Christ - the King of Glory - allowing Himself to become crushable, killable, and "*lifted up*," so that YOU don't have to be crushed in judgment! Receive that!

And then ***Finally***, maybe you're here and you HAVE received that! You know beauty of the Gospel - this Easter news that by His life, death and resurrection, Jesus Christ sets you free from the penalty, the power, and the presence of all sin and judgment. If that's you, then the call is very simple: Glory in it/Glory in it! Cuz you see there in **v.28**, that was Jesus' whole trajectory. Everything He was about and did was to "*glorify*" the Father! The same is true for you. That's WHY God's brought you to faith in the first place. To "*glorify*" Him! Which simply means, make Him and what He's done for you the most important thing in your life. Cuz the reality is,

we all glory in something: It might be your career, a relationship, some accomplishment, your looks, ANYTHING that leads you to a sense of acceptance and “enough’ness.”...But what you gotta understand: is that ONLY the Gospel actually MAKES you enough. And therefore, only the Gospel is TRULY worth glorying-in. ***So how do you do it?*** You simply behold/and KEEP beholding Jesus Christ “*lifted up*” for you...UNTIL it becomes the thing that drives your soul upward to God in worship and outward to others in love and service!...THAT’S news you can use!...***Let’s Pray:***