

Hope - Easter 2026

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Prepared from the spoken message and lightly edited for readability. Scripture quotations and spoken phrasing are preserved as delivered.

You guys can go ahead and be seated. I love that song we ended on. It's the perfect one for Easter. I love that line right there in the middle that said, "You turn the grave into a new beginning. Our God is alive and breathing."

That's why we celebrate Easter, right? We believe with all that we are that Jesus Christ absolutely is, right now, alive and breathing. Because of that, we have hope. We have hope for today. We have hope for tomorrow. We have hope for eternity because of Jesus.

If you're taking notes today, that's our title: just the word "Hope." If you've got a Bible, open with me to John chapter 20. We're going to look at that very first Easter morning.

As you're turning, just think about hope. We know that hope is a powerful force in our lives. We know that hope shapes us. Hope changes us. Hope drives us. Our world today is searching for hope.

I read a study this week that fascinated me. It said that in the last six years - and I want you to think about the last six years. We're in 2026 now, so back up to the year 2020 and move forward. Just think about all we've experienced in the United States and in the world in those years. I don't need to recap it. You remember it. It's been quite a ride.

On that ride, one of the most searched-for terms on Google has been the simple word "hope." It's been searched for more than many of our political upheavals and problems, and more than many technological breakthroughs. I read that the word "hope" has been searched for more than this phrase: "How can I make more money online?"

Think about that. People are looking for hope when they go to Google. When I go to Google, I'm trying to figure out how to do my middle school kid's math homework, right? But there are people out there who are looking for hope online.

I want you to think about that. With the frequent searches for hope, do you think people are feeling more hopeful about their future? Or do you think people are searching for somewhere they can find hope? Context clues should help us with that.

The past few years haven't really been a breeding ground for hope and optimism in the larger part of our world. I read this week that the last few years have felt like, get this, "a slow-motion apocalypse set to a TikTok soundtrack." Sort of funny, but not really.

Think about the last few years: wars, disease outbreaks, division, hatred, anger. That's what's going on in our world. What are people typing into the search bar in the midst of all that? The word "hope."

It's clear that the world needs hope. The world wants hope. The world is looking for somewhere to find hope. Honestly, that's why we're here, right? Whether you realize it or not, deep down inside, you know that hope is possible for you because of what Jesus Christ did that very first Easter Sunday morning.

We know that Easter is special, right? We dress differently. We change our schedules and routines just a little bit. If your kids are young enough, you're still dressing them up in matching clothes on Easter. Family pictures are expected. All of that, right?

Here's a family picture from when I was a kid. You think I'd let them do that to me any day other than Easter? Of course not. Even as a kid, I knew that Easter was special. Even as a kid, I knew that in Easter and what Jesus Christ did, we could have hope.

Listen to the words of Jesus. This is what He Himself says in John 14:6:

I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

— John 14:6

Meaning, no one gets to heaven, and no one gets to eternal life, except through Jesus Christ. Jesus gives us hope for a relationship with God, and that hope isn't possible if Jesus did not actually rise from the dead.

First Corinthians 15 tells us this:

If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

— 1 Corinthians 15:17

Meaning, you are still separated from a relationship with God. But the passage goes on to say:

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead.

— 1 Corinthians 15:20

The resurrection of Jesus matters. Easter matters. Because Christ is raised from the grave, you and me - we get to have hope.

The Empty Tomb

Let's look at that first Easter. John 20, starting in verse 1, says:

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him."

— John 20:1-2

Remember, Jesus was crucified on Friday, Good Friday. Ultimately, He allowed Himself to die on a cross to take the punishment for my sin and for your sin. He was laid in the tomb, and Mary Magdalene came early Sunday morning, on the third day. She immediately saw that something was different. The massive stone was rolled back, and she ran for help. She didn't go inside to check things out. She just ran to find Peter and John.

At this point, they have no idea what's happened. Look at verse 3:

So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb.

Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

— John 20:3-4

This is John. John's our writer, and the other disciple is John.

Now, I love that detail. Our family's been to a lot of track meets the past several months. We've seen a lot of fast kids. We've seen a lot of races. Our writer here, John, apparently was pretty fast, and he was so proud of his speed that he had to record for all of history that he beat Peter to the tomb that very first Easter morning.

You can't tell me guys aren't competitive. John runs, he beats Peter, they get to the tomb, and they look inside. Verse 5 says:

And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in.

Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself.

Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed.

— John 20:5-8

There it is again: "who had reached the tomb first." He also went in, and he saw and believed.

If your Bible's open right now, underline those last few words of verse 8: "He saw and believed." He saw the empty tomb. He saw the grave clothes folded, and immediately he believed.

Now look at verse 9:

For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

Then the disciples went back to their homes.

— John 20:9-10

The tomb is empty. Peter and John saw and believed. I want you to understand that transformation happened in that moment. Immediately, these men went from being scared, terrified men to hopeful men. They were scared. They saw what happened to Jesus, and they just assumed they were next. These were men who saw Jesus arrested, tried, and crucified - men wondering when their enemies were coming for them too.

But in that moment, when they saw the empty tomb, all of that fear went away, and immediately they believed.

They were infused with a new kind of hope because the tomb was empty.

Now, here's a little wrinkle in verses 8 and 9. You might have seen it if you're reading along with me. You might have heard it as I said it. This is important for us to understand as we begin to look at this from a historical perspective.

The guys saw that the tomb was empty. They saw that the grave clothes were folded. It says they saw and believed. That's how verse 8 ends: they saw and believed. But look at verse 9. It then goes on to say they didn't understand the Scripture that said Jesus must rise.

How is that possible? How could they, in one breath, see and believe, and then in the next not understand? It's a great question, and it has a really, really good answer as well.

It doesn't say they didn't understand He rose. It says they didn't understand that Scripture said He must rise. Here's what that means: The disciples, Peter and John, didn't show up that day with a preconceived notion about what was going to happen and then start telling people what they had already decided in their minds was going to happen anyway.

This was not a premeditated plan from the disciples. No, they encountered the reality of the empty tomb. They saw, they believed, and they knew that Jesus had risen. Later, as we continue to read the Gospels, it says they sat down with Jesus after the resurrection, and He explained to them all of the Scripture that said one day He would rise.

But that first Easter, all that happened for them is they saw and believed. In Luke 24, I love this, it says they saw and believed, and they went home marveling at what happened.

That's a great word. I love that they use the word "marvel" here. I just want to ask you: When was the last time you marveled at something?

A lot of us go through life at a pretty fast pace, and we miss some really, really cool things right in front of us. When was the last time you marveled? When were you stopped in your tracks? When were you blown away or overwhelmed with the size or beauty of something in front of you?

What is it that overwhelms you? What is it that causes you to marvel?

Maybe it's a mountain range. You're a mountain person, and you just like to be outside. You like to be in the mountains. You like to see the creativity and handiwork of God on display. When you take in the landscape, you just sit back and marvel. You're filled with awe and wonder about how God could make all of that.

Maybe you're not a mountain person. Maybe you're a beach person, and you like to listen to the waves as they crash on the shore. You like to look out over the water as the sun's going down. You like to think about how incredibly big our God is and how very small we are. You just marvel in the reality of nature.

Maybe you're not a mountain person. Maybe you're not a beach person. Maybe you're a baseball person, and you marvel at the way Jose Altuve can hit a fastball as hard as he can hit it. I don't know what it is for you. We're all different.

But one thing we should all marvel at is the fact that the tomb was empty and Jesus rose.

Peter and John went home marveling. They weren't focused on what they were having for lunch. They weren't focused on a family picture or an egg hunt. Not at all. Their entire hearts, souls, and minds were wrapped up in the reality that Jesus rose. They're thinking, "What does this mean for us now that Jesus is alive?"

Let's do that today. Let's leave this place in just a little bit marveling at the resurrection of Jesus. Let's slow down long enough to be amazed at this miracle. Let it be the topic of your conversation at lunch. Talk about it today.

Ask one another, "What would it have been like to be Peter, John, or Mary that first Easter morning, as they went and saw that the tomb was empty? Who would you tell first? Who would you call first? What would you do? What would your reaction be if you were one of the first people on earth to experience the hope that can be found in Jesus?"

Listen, don't let the fact that you've heard this story before cause you to lose your sense of wonder. Don't speed through this. Don't rush through this. Slow down and marvel at the miracle of the resurrection like Peter and John marveled.

Mary Encounters Jesus

They went home, but Mary stayed back. Look at verse 11:

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb.

And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet.

They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?"

She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him."

Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?"

Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away."

Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" which means Teacher.

— John 20:11-16

Now she's there. Now she's marveling as well. Jesus is alive.

If we keep reading, we see that she jumps into His arms. She doesn't want to let go. I want you to build that emotion up in your heart for just a moment. Put yourself in Mary's shoes.

She was there Friday. She saw the trial. She saw everything that was said about Jesus. She saw Jesus

beaten. She saw Jesus trying to drag that cross up to the mountain where He was crucified. She saw the nails go into His hands. She saw the crown of thorns on His head. She saw the spear go into His side. She saw the Romans confirm that He was dead, pull Him off a cross, put Him in a tomb, and seal it off.

She saw Him dead, and He was gone. But now He's not. He is alive once again.

She, like Peter and John, is infused with this new kind of hope. We can learn so many lessons about hope right here in this moment, but here's the one lesson I want you to walk away with this morning: With Jesus, hope is personal. It's about the individual.

When did she believe? When He spoke her name. When Jesus called her name, she believed.

If you're here today and you've been searching for hope, and you don't yet know Jesus as your Savior, I'm telling you He is calling your name through His Word this morning. Respond in faith, and I promise you will experience the hope that our world has been searching for. I'll tell you how to do that as we conclude our time together.

Mary found hope. It was personal with Jesus. Look at what happens next, in verse 17:

Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord" - and that he had said these things to her.

— John 20:17-18

That day, Mary found hope, and she found it in the same place I pray that you'd find hope: in the fact that Jesus is alive. That is where all her hope was found.

Here's more good news for us this morning: We know, as we read the Bible, that Jesus is alive in order to make us alive as well. That's why we have hope.

If you haven't read the entire Bible yet, I'll just tell you: This is the pinnacle. It all builds up to this moment right here, where Jesus dies on the cross for our sins and then rises from the grave three days later.

Here's the summary of the Bible in 30 seconds. Page one, God creates everything, including me and you, and He creates us in His image to be in a relationship with Him. Page two of the Bible, sin enters the world. We choose our way over God's way, and the Bible says that separates us from a relationship with Him.

But because God loves us and desires us to be in a relationship with Him, He sent His one and only Son, Jesus, to live a perfect life and then die a death in our place on the cross, only to rise three days later, defeating sin, death, and the grave once and for all.

The Bible tells us that if we trust in Jesus Christ alone, our sins are forgiven, we're brought into the family of God, and we have the promise of heaven and eternal life.

That's the Bible. That's the summary. It all builds to this moment right here, to Easter. If you've been searching

for hope, here it is.

I just want you to know this morning that in every season of my life - in the good seasons, the bad seasons, the hard seasons, the ugly seasons, the confusing seasons, all of it - the hope of Jesus has been constant.

I believe the Bible. I believe the miracle of the resurrection. I believe what happened on Easter. I believe it with all my heart, and I believe it for more reasons than I have time to tell you about this morning. But I do want to share three of them with you.

If you're looking for hope, let me tell you why you too can believe in Christ.

If you're here this morning or watching online with us, I just want you to know that I've been praying specifically for you, and I've been praying three things.

First, I've been praying that you would be filled with hope - that as you leave here today, you would have a hope that only comes from Jesus.

Second, I've been praying that as you are filled with hope, you would be equipped and inspired by God's Word this morning to go and share that hope you have in Jesus with other people in your life. We all know people in our lives who are looking for hope. We all know people who don't know Christ. I've been praying that you'd take this hope and go share it with them.

Finally, if you came in here and have never trusted in Jesus Christ as your Savior - maybe you've been around church a little bit in the past, maybe you've never been in a church, or maybe you're here every week and you've just never trusted in Christ as your Savior - wherever you're at, I've been praying that if you've never trusted in Jesus, this morning you would believe in Jesus. That you'd place your hope in Him, trust Him as your Savior, and start a whole new life as a child of God.

Many have done that in our services already today, and I'm believing that many will do that right here as well.

Why I Believe

Why do I believe? The first reason is historical evidence. There are so many historical reasons when you do the work and trace it through history.

Peter and John saw and believed. Mary saw, spoke to Jesus, and believed. This wasn't a dream for them. It really did happen. When you begin to inspect this and do the honest research, I'm telling you what you're going to find is that the resurrection of Christ that Easter morning has yet to be discredited in any legitimate way.

A lot have tried. Lee Strobel is a journalist-turned-author, and he made it his mission in life to prove that Christians were crazy and that the resurrection of Jesus did not actually happen. He traveled the world, reading everything he could. He found original documents. He found firsthand accounts. He found sources inside the Bible and outside the Bible, all throughout history.

At the end of his research, he wrote a book entitled **The Case for Christ**. His research led him to the

conclusion that Jesus did, in fact, die and rise on that first Easter. He found hope in Christ.

When you study this, if you were to study it like Lee Strobel, there's not one person inside the Bible or outside the Bible who would debate the fact that the tomb was empty on Sunday after Jesus died on Friday.

That is a rare thing in today's world. People like to argue for fun. People will find reasons to argue about anything and everything.

We're hosting a big lunch at our house later on this afternoon. Chelsea and I - neither of us wanted to cook. We decided we were just going to order food and bring it in. Our family of five - me, Chelsea, and our three boys - actually agreed on the type of food. By the grace of God, we decided we were going to have Tex-Mex. We all got on the same page.

Now, between the five of us, there were three different restaurants that we were sort of arm wrestling over. We were trying to decide between Gringo's, Pappasito's, and Lupe Tortilla. That's been the ongoing debate in our house.

I shared this last night, and a guy in the back, in this section over here, must have owned a Gringo's franchise or something. He stood up and gave us a full-on commercial about why we should order Gringo's. He did it in the middle of the service. It wasn't super helpful.

But listen, I chose Lupe Tortilla because that's the best. Do you guys agree with me or what? Of course you don't agree with me. We can't agree on anything. Somebody after the last service, whom I had never met in my life, told me I made the wrong decision about lunch today. He wanted to argue with me out there.

Why? That's just what we do.

That's why it's so wild that no serious scholar argues about this. They don't debate about whether or not the tomb was empty. The question in history isn't, "Was Jesus still in the tomb?" The question is, "Where did He go?" That's the conversation.

Some argue the disciples stole the body of Jesus. That doesn't make sense. There were guards all around that tomb who wouldn't have let the disciples in. Every single one of the disciples died because they proclaimed that Jesus rose from the dead. If the disciples had just stopped saying Jesus rose, they would have continued to live. But they all died. None of them would have died for a lie.

Others argue that the enemies of Jesus stole His body. Well, they wouldn't have had a motive to steal it. If the enemies of Jesus had stolen the body, the minute the disciples began to proclaim that Jesus had risen from the dead, His enemies could have said, "Actually, no, He didn't, and here's His body to prove it."

The tomb was empty that first Easter, and it still is today.

A second reason I believe, and that you can believe, is fulfilled prophecy.

All through the Old Testament, God promised that He was going to send a Messiah. He promised He was going to send someone to save us from our sins. As God promised this, God gave us prophecies about the

Messiah so that when He sent somebody, we could know that we know that we know: This is the One whom God promised.

All throughout Scripture, we have prophecies about His life, His death, and His resurrection. There are 332 of them from the Old Testament fulfilled in the life of Jesus Christ.

To help us understand how big of a deal that is, there's a mathematician named Peter Stoner. He wrote a book called **Science Speaks**. In the book, he wanted to apply the science of probability to just eight of the 332 prophecies we find in the Old Testament.

What are the mathematical odds that any one man could fulfill just eight of them? Here's the number: It's one in 10 to the 17th power. That is one in 100 quadrillion.

I don't understand that number. To help us feel the weight of that, Peter Stoner gives us an illustration. He says, "Take 100 quadrillion silver dollars and lay them across the surface of the state of Texas. If you were to do that, they would be two feet deep across the entire state. Then mark one of them, blindfold a guy, tell him to walk as far as he wants and pick one up, and the odds of him picking up the silver dollar you marked are the same as one man fulfilling eight of these prophecies in the Old Testament."

Jesus did not fulfill eight. He fulfilled 332 of them. All of Scripture, written hundreds and over a thousand years before Jesus was born, points to Jesus, and He fulfilled all of it.

Finally, I believe Scripture, and I believe my hope is in Jesus, because of the lives I've seen changed among those who have placed their faith in Him.

I'm telling you this morning, so many people are just different after they've trusted in Christ as their Savior. They're not who they were.

You can begin to look at that with the disciples and those in the first century. Historians have gone back and looked at first-century Israel, Jerusalem, and that area. As they read, they are blown away by something they call "the Easter effect," meaning people began to live differently after the resurrection of Christ.

Socially, their society began to be different because of the influence of Christians - from how women were treated, to how people were willing to care for the sick and even put themselves in harm's way caring for the sick, to how they were willing to die for what they believed in.

All of these are changes that historians say only make sense if the resurrection of Jesus actually happened. So many lives were changed.

First-century lives aren't the only lives that have been changed. My life's been changed. I am a completely different person because of Christ than I was before Jesus. I can see the effects of Jesus in my life and in the life of my family.

I know that I've personally experienced the goodness of God, the grace of God, and the hope of God in my life in every season - from the mountaintop, exciting moments of life to the darkest, most anxious valleys.

Jesus has always been there through every trial that life has thrown my way. He has fulfilled the promises we have in the Bible to be there, to give me peace and joy and life and, ultimately, hope.

It's not just me. So many of you have experienced that as well. You've trusted in Jesus Christ, and you're different because of the relationship you have with Him.

Looking around the room at our services this weekend and knowing that just a year ago so many of you trusted in Christ as your Savior on Easter, and then walking with you over the course of this past year and seeing the changes Jesus has made in your life - you're a new person.

Just one year ago, you trusted in Christ, and your marriage is different now. Your family is different now. Your home is different now. The way you're raising your kids is different now.

Why? Because when we encounter Jesus, when it is personal with us, He changes our lives and gives us a hope unlike anything else we will ever find in this world.

Hope in an Impossible Situation

There was a young pastor named John Harper. He was a widower living in Scotland, and he was invited to come preach at Moody Church in Chicago. They wanted him to come preach a revival service, so he bought a ticket for himself and his young daughter on a boat.

They got on this boat and were coming across the Atlantic to be a part of this conference. The name of the boat was the Titanic. A lot of you know that story.

The night before the Titanic struck that iceberg, John was out on the deck of the ship. He was holding a church service and telling anyone who would listen about the hope that could be found in Jesus alone.

Later that night, the ship struck an iceberg. It ripped a massive hole in the side, and the ship began to fill up with water. It was clear that the ship was going to sink.

When you read the accounts of several survivors, you see several different people stating that John Harper was running around on the deck shouting, "Children to the lifeboats! Women to the lifeboats! Those who do not know Jesus as their Savior, get into the lifeboats!"

He took his daughter to a lifeboat and put her in there. The people in the boat begged him to jump in with his little girl, saying, "She's already lost her mother. You have every right to be in this boat. You need to be in the lifeboat as well."

But he stepped back. He did not want to take the seat of someone who did not know Jesus.

His daughter went off in the lifeboat, and she was saved. John drowned with 1,500 other people that night as the ship disappeared into the water.

Four years later, there was a man named Aquila Webb. He was at a gathering of Christians in Canada. In this small gathering of Christians, they were, one at a time, telling everybody, "This is how I trusted Christ. This is

my story of when I placed my faith in Jesus."

Aquila Webb said, "I was on the Titanic when it hit the iceberg and began to sink. I did not have a spot in the lifeboat. I did not have a life jacket. I found myself in the freezing cold water, holding on to a floating piece of wood as the night grew darker and darker.

"By chance, the waves pushed a man named John Harper close to me. This man yelled out and said, 'Man, are you saved?'"

Meaning, "Do you know Jesus as your Savior?"

Aquila Webb looked at him and said, "No, I'm not."

John Harper's response was clear. He said:

Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.

— Acts 16:31

With that, the waves pulled them apart, and he didn't see Harper anymore. But as God would have it, later that evening the waves pushed them together again. Harper looked at him again and said, "Man, are you saved now?"

Aquila said, "No. I can honestly say that I'm not saved."

So John Harper took off his life jacket and gave it to Aquila Webb that night, saying, "You need this more than me."

The waves separated them once again. As Aquila shared that story, this is what he said: "The hope in John Harper's face in an impossible situation was unmistakable. So that night, as I floated with two miles of water underneath me, I believed in Jesus. I found hope in this life and hope for eternity that is deeper and stronger than anything I have ever experienced."

I want to ask you this morning: Do you have hope like that? Do you have hope that is deeper and stronger than anything you have ever experienced?

I'm telling you, you can. You absolutely can, because Jesus rose. He's alive, and He's alive to make us alive and to give us hope that only comes from Him.

Do You Believe This?

I'll ask it another way: Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus?

In John 14, Jesus said:

I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

— John 14:6

He's the only way to the Father, to heaven, and to eternal life.

A few chapters before, in John 11, He's having this conversation with one of His friends - someone who had been around Him for a while, someone who had heard His teaching for a while. He looks her in the eye and says:

I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?

— John 11:25-26

Remember, with Jesus, hope is personal. He said, "Do you believe this?" Not, "Does your spouse believe this?" Not, "Do your parents believe this?" Not, "Do your friends believe this?" Not, "Do your children believe this?"

Do you believe this?

Hope is personal. Every one of us has to answer that question for ourselves.

So I'll ask you today: Have you placed your faith and trust in Jesus?

Maybe you're like Aquila Webb. Maybe you've heard about Jesus, but you've never trusted in Jesus. If you're here today and you've never trusted Christ, I just want to share with you, from the Bible, the simplest way possible that you can do just that - how you can enter a personal relationship with Him and find the hope that this world is searching for.

Around here, we say it's as easy as saying your ABCs to trust in Christ. That's what it takes.

First, you've got to admit you're a sinner.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

— Romans 3:23

Every single one of us - me, you, and everybody else - has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, meaning our sin has separated us from a relationship with Him.

Then you've got to believe that Jesus died for you.

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

— Romans 5:8

You've got to believe the Easter story - that Jesus really did go to the cross to take the punishment for my sin and yours, and that He really did rise on the third day.

Then you've got to confess that Jesus is your Lord.

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

— Romans 10:9

Romans 10:13 says:

For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

— Romans 10:13

Find your hope in Christ alone.

Would you bow with me this morning? I'm going to ask you to bow your head, and let's go together into a time of prayer across this room.

If you have trusted in Christ as your Savior, I want you to marvel on that for a minute this morning. Just be in awe over the fact that He loved you enough to send His one and only Son for you. Marvel at the reality of Jesus and the reality of the resurrection.

If you're here today and you'd say, "You know what? I'm not sure," or maybe you'd say, "You know what? I've never trusted in Christ before, but now I know, and now I'm ready," if you're ready to trust in Christ this morning, I'm going to ask you to pray with me here in just a minute.

Maybe it's the first time you've prayed in a while. Maybe it's the first time you've ever prayed. But if you're here and you're ready to find hope in Jesus, if you truly believe in what He did on Easter, if you want to get to know Him personally, if you want the life that's only available in Him, and if you're ready to become a child of God with the promise of heaven and eternal life, I'm going to ask you to pray this prayer with me.

You don't have to do this out loud. This is between you and the Lord, just in the stillness and quietness of your heart this morning.

If you're ready to trust Christ, say, "Lord Jesus, save me."

Pray that to Him in the stillness and quietness of your heart. Tell Him, "I know I'm a sinner and that my sin has separated me from You."

Keep praying. Say, "I believe that You, Jesus, died for my sins."

Confess that to Him today. "Jesus, I believe in Easter. I believe that You rose on the third day. I believe that by trusting You, I have a relationship with God that will last forever. Thank You for entering my heart and saving me today."

Now, with our heads bowed and our eyes closed, let me just tell you that if you prayed that prayer, here's what the Bible says about you now.

The Bible says in John chapter 1 that you are a child of God, that you're brought into the family of God. You have a heavenly Father who loves you more than you will ever be able to comprehend.

The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5 that when you trust in Christ like that, the old is gone and the new has come, meaning your past is wiped clean. Your sins have been forgiven. You can let go of that guilt. You can let go of that shame. You can move forward knowing that you have been made new by Jesus Christ.

That's what the Bible says about you if you've just trusted in Him as your Lord and Savior.

If that is you, I'm going to ask you to take a bold step here in a minute. I want to be able to celebrate with you. If you've trusted Jesus alone as your Savior, in just a minute I'm going to ask you to slip your hand up. Kids, students, adults - it doesn't matter. It's not to embarrass you, but so that I can celebrate with you.

When I count to three in just a minute, you don't need to wait on anybody else. You don't need to look around. If by faith you've placed your hope in Christ alone, let me celebrate with you.

If that's you, slip your hand up on three. One, two, three. Just slip your hand up wherever you're at. Back of the room, side of the room - keep them up. That's amazing. From the front of the room to the back of the room, kids, students, adults - all of you. I love it.

You can go ahead and slip those down there, guys. I'm so excited for what Jesus is doing in your heart and in your life. You have been made new by what Jesus has done.

Heavenly Father, we love You so much. God, we are grateful for who You are. We're grateful for what You've done. God, we're grateful for the hope that we have, not because of anything we've done. God, we're grateful for the hope that we have because of what You have done.

Father, for those who just trusted in You, for those who just became Your children, God, we celebrate, thanking You for what You're doing in their lives this morning.

It's in Your name we pray. And everybody said, "Amen."