

GRACE CITY — CHURCH —

HOMETOWN ²⁰²² EASTER JESUS AIN'T FAIR

Pastor Josh McPherson

Speaking to more than 3,900
at the Chelan County Fairgrounds

Easter Sunday

April 17, 2022

Luke 24:1-12

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On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. 5 In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? 6 He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 7 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' " 8 Then they remembered his words.

9 When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. 10 It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. 11 But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. 12 Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.



Jesus Ain't Fair, and You Don't Want Him to Be

I'm going to tell you about the most important person to ever walk the planet who accomplished the most important event in the history of humanity. The only thing that'll be left is the third most important thing in your life, and that is whether you believe that to be true or reject it. Jesus is the most important man to ever walk the planet. His resurrection is the most important thing to ever happen in human history. And the only question left is whether or not you believe it to be true.

The most important thing I'm going to say today can be phrased in three words: Jesus ain't fair.

A friend talked to me yesterday and said he ran that by one of his pastor buddies, and his pastor buddy said, "Well, that ain't right." News flash, pastor buddy, it is right. You need to read your Bible again. Because the good news of the Gospel is that Jesus ain't fair. I'm trusting by the end of this message, you're going to be cheering when you hear that phrase.

We live in a culture fixated with fairness, diversity, equity, inclusivity. We will not rest until everyone is treated fairly, to which I believe Jesus looks down on our petty demands for fairness and shakes His head and says, "Father, forgive them, for they do not have a clue what they're asking for."

Our Mission

Our mission at Grace City Church is simple. "We want to help more people meet Jesus, love Jesus, follow Jesus." And if you're here and you don't know Jesus, love Jesus, follow Jesus, it should begin dawning on you, this trap was set for you. We are here for you. We've been praying for you. We've been gunning for you. This day is about you and Jesus.

Because at the end of that phrase, helping more people meet, love, follow Jesus, there's a "so that", and the "so that" is, "so that more people might know God, live free, and do good in the world God made, so that lives and legacies might be transformed." You were made to know God and you'll be restless until you do. You were made to live free, which is why, whenever the Star-Spangled Banner is sung, something echoes in your heart. "This [freedom] is good politically." Friend, it's better spiritually, and you were made to do good in the world God made. Not do good as in goody two shoes; rather it's like live with a holy ambition and a purpose that's bigger than yourself, that wakes you up in the morning, thrilled that God still gave you breath on His earth to live one more day for the glory of someone bigger and better than yourself.

We want to help more people meet Jesus so they can know God, because you can't know God unless you know Jesus. We want to help more people love Jesus because you won't live free until you love something holy, because you become what you love. And if you love anything lesser than Jesus, you become something lesser than holy. And we want to help

more people to do good. And that goodness comes, and that purpose comes, and now holy ambition comes when you're following Jesus Christ.

The Resurrection

So, who is Jesus? We're going to read Luke 24:1-12. This is the 81st sermon working our way through the gospel of Luke and it's climaxing and *crescendo-ing* on this Easter Sunday in these 12 verses. And I read. *"On the first day of the week, very early in the morning," "while snow was in the enchantments,"* that's in the Greek translation, *"the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb."*

Context. Jesus has been bullied, blindfolded, beaten, and blasphemed. Then scourged, nailed to a wooden cross, crucified, heart pierced with a sword, stripped off the cross, wrapped in 100 pounds of linen, and stuffed in a borrowed tomb. He's dead. *"The women found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord, [Jesus]. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright, the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you ..."* This is amazing, *"Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here. He has risen."*

That's right. *"Remember how he told you while he was still with you in Galilee, the Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified on the third day, and be raised again? Then they remembered his words."* Remarkable. Jesus Himself said, "They're going to kill me, but buckle up. I'll come back." The ultimate "I'm back" moment. And yet their sorrow had been so deep that they forgot He'd said it until the moment the angels reminded them. Isn't that remarkable?

Have you ever found yourself buried under such sorrow, or shame, or condemnation, or tragedy, that you can't see? It's fog, and lies, and blindness. The truth is there, the sun's still shining. You just can't see it. Adam said earlier. He said, "We've kind of gotten the experience of the apostles this week, haven't we?" Tuesday was, "Oh man, this isn't going well." Wednesday, "14 inches of snow. This is getting worse." Thursday, 40 inches of accumulative snow on Wenatchee Heights. And we're pretty sure Jesus is dead in the grave not coming back. Friday's still snowing. Friday afternoon, six inches of frozen crust on this grass. Saturday we weren't sure. And today we're like, of course it's sunny out. God's in control. Yeah, don't be too hard on the disciples. We're right there with them.

Verse nine. *"When they came back from the tomb, they told all of these things to the 11 and all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary, the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles, but they did not believe the women."* Classic. *"Because their words seemed to them like nonsense. Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away wondering to himself what had happened."*

Who is Jesus?

If you're new to the Bible story, this is what happened. Jesus was murdered, buried in a borrowed tomb, and then He came back to life, and it threw people for a bit of a loop because they'd never seen that before. Like Uncle Bob had never come back after the heart attack three days later. Once you die, typically you're dead. Jesus comes back to life. And now we're at the epicenter of Christianity.



Because Christianity is not an ideology, it's not a system of philosophy, it's not a set of virtues, or ethics, or morals. Christianity is about a person who is alive, and His name is Jesus.

There's nobody like Jesus. You simply cannot escape Him. You can't brush Him off as a good moral teacher. You can't dismiss Him as a political revolutionary. You can't ignore Him as a raving mad man. You can't accept the parts you like and overlook the parts you don't like. Jesus left have no such room. His claims were too lofty, His teaching too radical, His deeds too unrepeatable, His life too indescribable, His life's legacy and impact too global. The man, Jesus Christ, is simply undeniable. No one has caught more conflict, stirred more hearts, launched more movements, been the subject of more books, poems, songs, movies, art, debate, and worship than Jesus Christ. It's not even close.

He was the son of a blue collar carpenter born in a small rural town like ... Monitor. He thought I was going to say Cashmere, not even close. Let's just do this real quick. (Pause sermon. Any Bulldogs in the house? Give it up. Okay. That's great. You're done. That's fine. Any Kodiaks in the house? Come on. Jesus is still bringing enemies together.) Jesus owned no real estate, held no investment, sat on no boards, held no public office, had no formal training. Had a three year run at public ministry in the Middle East as a brown man under Roman rule, was murdered on a cross outside of Jerusalem between two thieves, wrapped in garment, stuffed in a borrowed tomb, died with the tide of popular opinion against Him, and yet, 2,000 years later, hundreds of millions of people will worship Him today as the living Christ. How do you explain that?

How do you explain that? That is beyond conspiracy theory. It is beyond one or 12 men's ability to crowd-manipulate. There is only one explanation, and that is that there is still one Man moving and working, introducing Himself to people all across the world so that when

they say I follow Jesus, and then you ask them why, their explanation is, "Because I've met Him. Because I met Him."

Common Objections

But some might say, "I'm not sure I can buy into the Christianity thing because of the faith piece. I'm a facts guy. I'm a science guy, and objective guy." "I'm a believe in tangible I can see kind of gal. I don't need faith. I have scientific reasoning, objective verifiable facts. That's how I live my life. I work with proof, substantiation, verification, corroboration, affirmation, attestation, and documentation. I refuse to place my faith in something I can't see and I can't verify." Some of you are there. That's your critique of Christianity. You don't need faith as an emotional crutch. You have facts and you live by what you can see. Let me address this objection as gently as possible. That's the dumbest thing I have ever heard.

It's a hypocritical argument requiring a standard of others that they do not require of themselves. Now, I'm not wanting to be antagonistic towards you, I want to love you. Don't get off the wagon yet, stay with me. Because if I'm wrong, you'll have more proof that you are right? So, don't give up yet, stay with me. You and I, and every other person on the planet, live our entire lives every day by putting faith in things that we have not seen and we cannot prove, and we have not personally verified. It happens every day of your life.

Faith is the universal experience of mankind.

You Live by Faith

In other words, life requires faith everywhere. That's how God made the world. The question is not, if you will live by faith, the question is only what or who will you put your faith in. Let me give you an example of things you put faith in every day, small examples that will give us kind of a smattering of evidence to help us understand what I mean when I say we put our faith in things we can't see or personally verify every day.

Bills. You put your faith in the postal service that they'll get your check on time to the bill collectors so you don't miss a payment and go into arrears and lose your credit scores. And with your credit scores on the line, you couldn't give an intelligent 15 second explanation for what happens to your letter once you drop it off the little blue box.

Savings. You put faith in the online banking system that it won't steal your money or accidentally transfer it to Sally's account next door. And you have no idea how it works.

Travel. You put your faith in other people that they'll stay on the right side of the road. (Pause sermon. I was a little late this morning, driving here from my home, way over on the other side of Monitor. And I was driving here and I hit the intersection. I thought, good Lord, what's up with the traffic? In a moment of honesty, I was annoyed because there's never any traffic on

Sunday morning, ever. And all of a sudden, all these cars are on the road, I'm like, "Why aren't you in church?"

My little self-righteous judge comes out, judging all these cars using Easter Sunday to go do something fun. So, I weave out into traffic and I need to get somewhere because I'm supposed to preach a sermon. So, I'm madly weaving my way through traffic, cutting people off in Jesus' name, until a little bell went off in my head. It was confirmed when every single car on the highway put on their left turn signal, and I followed every one of them in here, so I apologize. My bad.)

How about **Your Car**? You know how much faith you put in your car? It's unwarranted. How about the Les Schwab guy who took your brakes off so that for a moment in time when you weren't looking, your car didn't have any brakes? Then he put them back on without you looking and then he smiled with a missing tooth, "It's good to go." And then you left and you headed towards a busy intersection at 50 miles an hour, and you went to put your foot on the brake, and that was an act of what? Say it, faith in something you hadn't seen nor could you verify.

How about **Flying**? You put your faith in pilots flying your plane. And your faith is they trained well, they paid attention in school. There's some sort of check and balances to weed out the weasels. They made good decisions last night. And they're in a place fully capable of flying a 910,000 pound plane with 280 people aboard and 48,000 pounds of jet fuel safely to 30,000 feet and back down again, and you couldn't even tell me the pilot's name. That's called an extraordinary act of say it, faith.

How about **Shampoo**? Some of us don't use it. Thank you, Rob. This illustration might be a little painful, but for those of us who still have hair, you're trusting that what they put in the can is shampoo and not, I don't know, poo-poo, or glue-glue, or something other than what you hope is put in there. Every morning when you take a shower, or for me, every third day when I take a shower, it's an act of say it, faith.

How about **Rocky Reach Dam**? Did you know there's a guy and there's a button? And that guy is in charge of the button. And that button is connected to these gigantic gates. And if he pushes the button, the gates go up, and Wenatchee becomes the largest municipal city swimming pool in the State of Washington. Any of you know that guy's name? Yeah. And yet every night you go to sleep as an act of what? Faith that he'll do his job.

How about the **Ladder** in your garage? Who built it? What specs did they use? Who engineered it? Who tested it? Will it hold you the next time you use it? You've never even thought to ask that question because you are such a deep person of say it, faith.

Bad Definitions of Faith

Now, there's a lot of bad definitions of faith. I read one this week on a Man Site because masculinity's under attack and so there's all these uprisings of men saying, "You can't attack my masculinity, I'm going to roar louder." And they're making the problem worse. This particular website said, if you're going to be a man, you got to live by the four F bombs: finances, physique – classic guy move – finances, physique, family, and faith. I thought, oh, he's a Christian. And then I read his definition of faith. "Faith is an unbreakable attitude that you can do, be, or have anything you are willing to work for, or believe in a higher power."

What? I'm not arguing for a generic nebulous kind of faith. I'm arguing for you to consider a very specific kind of faith like Hebrews 11:1 talks about. *"Now, faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for, for it is by grace you have been saved through faith. This is a gift from God, not by works, so that no man can boast."* The kind of faith that saves you is a kind of faith that is anchored squarely in the person of Jesus and His work of rising from the dead.

Some Questions

Question Number One: Who or what are you currently putting your faith in? Yourself, your own performance, your own religious duties, your morality, your resume, and ideology, a religion?

Question Number Two: How's it going for you so far? Are you happy, satisfied, content, fulfilled? Are your relationships rich? Are your ambitions pure? Are your dreams being realized? Are you free and flourishing? Is there a transformative reality in your life that's keeping you on a trend ever upward as you move from glory to glory and deeper levels of character to richer presence of personhood? Or are you running a scientific experiment to reverse the evolutionary cycle going from image bearer of God, to monkey flinging poo at people in the zoo? Because that's where humanity goes without the intervention of Jesus.

Question Number Three: Would you be willing to consider an alternative option, a different source of, and foundation of, and object of your faith? Because to be a Christian is not to get your act together. To be a Christian is not to align with a political party. To be a Christian is not to go to a particular church.

To be a Christian is to place your faith solely in the finished work of Jesus Christ. And when that happens, friend, it only changes everything.

THREE THINGS THAT FAITH IN CHRIST IS:

NUMBER ONE, faith in Christ is a factual exercise. If you're here and not a follower of Jesus, I want to explain as clearly as I possibly can, you have no concept for how loved you are in this moment. You have no ability to comprehend the plans that have been made and the prayers that have been prayed, and the 10,000 pieces on the board of your life that God sovereignly moved to get you here in this moment. You are loved. I want to explain as clearly as I can what it would mean for you to leave here today changed forever.

Number one, faith in Christ is a factual exercise. Let there be no mistake about it. This is not us putting whimsical hope in myth, legend, lore. This is us basing our life on fact. This is not us building our life about what the most recent expert has to say that will be proven wrong in about 13 seconds. This is about us placing our faith in historical, immovable, undeniable, verified-over-and-over-again facts, specifically these three.

Three Facts

#1: Jesus lived a perfect life. Think about it. He claimed multiple times in His life, "I am the only one to come and live without sin. And no one stood and challenged Him." If that doesn't blow your socks off, just run a little experiment this week at home with your wife. And the experiment goes, "Honey, I've had an epiphany. I've never sinned in my life." And then duck, brother. If I stood up and said that, people who love me would come out of the woodwork saying, "He's lost it." Jesus lived a perfect life, fact one.

#2: Fact two, Jesus died. Most verifiably beaten, bullied, blindfolded, blasphemed all night, scourged 40 lashes minus one, to the point of critical loss of blood, hikes a mile, is nailed and impaled to a cross, hoisted up in the air, bleeds out in front of thousands of people in a crowd like this at about eye level. As blood and feces and urine pile at the bottom of his cross until quite literally the lifeblood drains out of him, he gives up his spirit saying, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do," – which is a remarkable statement to say over the people who just nailed you to a railroad tie – and then He died. To make sure He was dead, the Roman soldier took a spear and pierced His sixth rib and impaled Jesus' heart. Blood and water flowed, which historians account for, as conclusive medical evidence that Jesus died. Friends, what you need to know is that these Roman soldiers were paid to kill. They were professional killers, and their life was on the line if they didn't finish the job. "If Jesus comes off that cross and isn't dead and His disciples steal His body and they start spraying the rumor that He rose from the dead, we will nail you to that same cross." They were motivated to make sure He was dead, and dead He was.

#3: Fact one, Jesus lived a perfect life. Fact two, Jesus died a substitutionary death in your place. Fact three, Jesus rose from the dead on the third day. Those are the facts. The resurrection is isn't optional. Paul said, if Jesus hasn't been raised, you're still dead in your sins. If Jesus hasn't been raised, we, above all, are most to be pitied.

Christianity is not about making Pascal's wager. "Well, I'll make a bet that He is still alive, but if He isn't, it'll still have been a good life." Baloney, following Jesus is taking up your cross and following Him into His death. And yes, His Spirit will be with you. And yes, His anointing and blessing will be upon you. And yes, His principles will go to work in your life, turning upside down all the brokenness and the pain, but friends, make no mistake, in following Jesus, you also invite attack. Satan doesn't care about you. As long as you're destroying yourself and destroying the image of God and others and ignoring God, you're not even on his radar. But when you say, like Jake is saying, I'm all in for one name, you are on his radar. Buckle up. Faith in Christ is a factual exercise.

NUMBER TWO, faith in Christ is an intellectual exercise. Christianity is not where we come and check our minds at the door. It's not a sentimental belief system. It's based squarely, in fact, built on intellectual rigor. I have 30, I'll give you 12 proofs that Jesus rose from the dead, because if Jesus rose from the dead and you're not following Him, you will see Him one day and that will be a topic of conversation. And you want to get that issue dealt with today. And you can, friend, you can. If He wasn't raised from the dead, do not bother wasting your time. So, you need to know what you think about whether or not He rose from the dead.



12 Intellectual Proofs of the Resurrection

#1: Here's 12 proofs for you to consider that you would at least need to have good answers and rebuttals to ignore His resurrection. Number one, Jesus' death was predicted in the Old Testament over 2,500 times by different men, over different time periods, in different cultures, in different languages, with no means of communication, which makes it a statistical improbability or impossibility.

#2: Number two, Jesus predicted He would die and rise again; meaning His death was not an event that took Him by surprise. He was not a revolutionary that had a bad day. Jesus was not surprised, taken back, scrambling, pivoting, innovating, adapting. While Jesus was being crucified, He was ruling and reigning.

#3: Proof number three, Jesus died (because you got to die before you can resurrect).

#4: Proof number four, Jesus was buried in a tomb for three days, wrapped in 100 pounds of linen. Even if Jesus had swooned on the cross, or passed out from loss of blood, which He didn't, He would've been in no physical shape to unravel Himself from the mummification

process, roll away a 6,000 pound stone, wrestle through the seal team six Roman guards and get away.

#5: Number five, Jesus was buried in a tomb, easy to find, and yet, the Roman government could not produce His body to prove that He was still dead. Think about it. The disciples start saying they've seen Jesus, this could create significant problem for them. No problem, exhume the body, produce evidence, and they never did.

#6: Number six, Jesus's tomb was guarded by Roman soldiers, making it an impossibility for the disciples to steal His body and then spin a tale.

#7: Proof number seven, Jesus's empty tomb was discovered by women. Follow me here. If you were creating a conspiracy theory that you wanted to take hold in the culture, you wouldn't send the gender that at that time in history wasn't even allowed to testify in court. Jesus valued women more than we could possibly know because He made them in His image, and He said, "I'm going to give you the privilege of being the first to know that I'm not dead any longer."

#8: Proof number eight. There's no shrine to Jesus to this day. Think about it. Muhammad, Gandhi, Abraham, for the Muslims, for the Jews, for the Buddhist, all have an enshrined grave that people make tributes at and pilgrimage to. And yet, for Jesus, there is no tomb enshrined. We do not make spiritual pilgrimages because there is no body in the tomb.

#9: Number nine, Jesus appeared to more than 500 different people after He rose from the dead – family, friends, enemies, strangers. There were public, eyewitness accounts of the living Christ with nail-pierced wrists and nail-pierced feet, and a sword-pierced side.

#10: Number 10, Jesus' disciples transformed from cowards to courageous overnight. One night Peter was denying he knew Jesus when he was put on the spot by a 12 year-old girl, the next day he was saying, "He's alive, I've seen Him." Fearlessly street-preaching the Gospel. And when they said stop, he said, "You'll have to kill me." They said, "We'll crucify you." He said, "Great. Just do it upside down because I'm not worthy of dying in the manner of my savior." And 11 of the 12 disciples went from cowards to courageous overnight. You explain that event, unless they had seen something that created such a conviction in them, they could not be turned.

#11: Proof 11. Jesus's followers remained loyal. Three people died on the cross that day, two criminals, one man claiming to be God. 2,000 years later, there are not billions of people worshiping the two criminals. There was something different about the Man in the middle.

#12: And number 12, and this is the most compelling, I believe, evidence for the risen Christ, which is the improbable, unexplainable rise of the Church led by disciples who were changed

and empowered men. Family was changed. Friends were saved. Strangers were saved. Enemies were turned.

Paul hated Jesus. Paul was killing Christians until he met Jesus, had a change of mind, and said, I think I'll follow the dead guy who's now alive. I want to be on that guy's team. How do you explain Jake – pornography, girls, alcohol, a self-centered life, and then, out of the blue, a turning of the coin, a changing of the page, turning over a new leaf? You spend 10 seconds with Jake, and you'll go, something is different about this man. There's something supernatural happening in this man because men don't change like that on their own.

NUMBER THREE, faith in Christ is a personal exercise. So, follow me, faith is a factual exercise. Jesus lived, He died, He rose. Faith is an intellectual exercise. He rose from the dead and we have verifiable proof. And lastly, faith is a personal exercise in that it is something that you experience personally. Yes, participating in community is a part of the glorious good news of the Gospel, but it starts inside of you personally. And you ask, "How is it personal?"

Four Personal Movements of Faith

#1: To this I say, number one, you feel the weight of your sin personally. Not this collective guilt crap going on in our culture right now. You feel the burden of your own sin that you acted out yourself. You sin in thought, word, action, deed, and that's the guilt, that's the shame, that's the condemnation that you feel.

1973, legendary Tonight Show host, Johnny Carson, interviewing Billy Graham on his show. It's a sweet 23 minutes that you should watch. At the front end of the interview, Billy Graham turns to Johnny Carson and says, "I heard you've been reading the Bible recently, that's very encouraging." To which Johnny Carson in his ever self-deprecating humor says, "Well, it's quite embarrassing to admit this in front of someone such as your own stature, but I'll bet if I was to asked, I couldn't even name all of the 10 commandments. I'm sure I'd forget one and leave one off."

To which Billy Graham responds, without missing a beat, "No you wouldn't, Johnny." And Johnny looks surprised and acts kind of, "oh, well, thanks for being nice." And Billy says, "You know all of them because you've broken all of them." And the crowd laughs and Ed McMahon laughs, and watch Johnny Carson's face. I'm telling you something landed. He said, "What do you mean?" And Billy goes on to explain. "You see, the Bible says that if you've broken one command, you're guilty of all of them. Furthermore, Jesus came in the New Testament and said that committing sin is not only an act you do with your hands, you do with your heart. So, if you look upon a man and you wish violence against him, you're guilty of murder. If you look upon a woman lustfully with your eyes, the whole, I shop don't buy line won't work. You've committed adultery in your heart. You violate one, you violate all."

He said, "Even Ed McMahon here is a sinner." And Ed said, "Well, no surprise there." And you could see it hit Johnny like "I had never considered myself a sinner. I've always done the good, avoid the bad thing, and figured, according to my calculations, I was okay. Then Billy dropped the bomb on him that he wasn't.

You see, Jesus did not come just to make us better. Jesus came to make us new. First movement of this personal faith is to feel the weight of your own sin. Now, somebody here is going, "I don't need to be convinced of that. I carry guilt, shame, condemnation every day." Friend, good news. You're five minutes from letting it go forever.

#2: Movement, number two. Movement one in this personal expression of faith is a feeling of the weight of your sin. Movement two is you see the glory of the risen Jesus as savior. You see that He said things like "I came from Heaven as God's Son, lived a sinless life so I alone can forgive sins, died, and came back from the dead so as to conquer Satan, sin, death, Hell, and the wrath of God, and you, for the first time, see it and go, "That makes sense." Jesus said, *"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry. And he who believes in me will never be thirsty."* And you say, I've had a soul hunger and a soul thirst I've been trying to satisfy for 36 years – for 56 years, for 72 years – and you're telling me that Jesus can fulfill my needs and make me satisfied?"

And Jesus says, yes. Jesus says, *"I'm the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* You're saying, "Right now I'm in darkness, but I can walk in light if I follow Jesus?" The answer's yes, Jesus said, *"I am a gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved."* There's only one way back into paradise that was lost and is through the gate, Jesus Christ. He said, *"I'm the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for His sheep."* Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one come to the father, except through me."* You hear Jesus saying that and you go, "It sounds too good to be true, but if it is, I'm in.

#3: Third movement, you repent of your sin. And here's why it's important for me to explain this. There's two words that describe how you can handle your sin. The world gives you one; the Word of God gives you another word.

Tolerance vs Repentance

The world's highest value right now in relationship to sin, others or your own, is the word *tolerance*. You need to be tolerant of other's sin. You need to be tolerant of your sin. If you're tolerant, then it'll all get better. The problem is, when you're tolerating something, it means you're putting up with that thing's presence in your life. Which means if you tolerate sin, the cancer of sin will not be taken away. The only way that sin is removed is through the Word of God's word, which is *repentance*.

Tolerance says, "I'm not wrong and don't need to change." Repentance says, "I am wrong and I need to change." Tolerance says, "You're fine the way you are." Repentance says, "You're

wrong and dead in your sins apart from Jesus." Tolerance says, "Stay." Repentance says, "Move." Tolerance says, "Settle and lie down." Repentance says, "Rise and run." Tolerance leaves you stuck with and in your sin. Repentance leads to forgiveness of and freedom from your sin. Tolerance leaves you to die in your sin. Repentance leads you to life and salvation from your sin.

The world says that's not very loving. Of course it is loving to call you to repent because there's nothing more loving than people meeting Jesus, because God is love. They don't even have love until they've met Jesus. Love isn't a feeling. It's a Person who died on the cross and rose to forgive your sins. So, what do I do next? You might say. I'm trying to describe what happens to you when you get saved. It's not so much that you make conscious steps to do this. It's that it's happening to you right now, I believe, with dozens and dozens of you across this place. It's happening right now. And I'm trying to put words to what's happening. You're being convicted of your sin. You're beginning to see Jesus as the only savior from your sin. And if you ask what's next, you're not alone. And they asked Peter, *"Sir, what must we do to be saved?" And he replied, "Believe in the Lord, Jesus Christ, and you will be saved."* Movement one, feel the weight of your sin. Movement two, see the glory of the savior, Jesus. Movement three, repent of your sin.

#4: Movement four, place your faith in Jesus. *"For it is by grace you've been saved, by faith, and this is not of yourselves. It is a gift from God."* And if in this moment, you're saying to me, that doesn't seem fair, it's just that easy? Friends, welcome to the good news of the Gospel.

Why? Because Jesus Ain't Fair

Jesus isn't fair. You say, "But wait, that can't be right. I'm imperfect. I'm tardy. I have personality quirks." We know. "I'm unorganized. I'm OCD. I'm nitpicky. I'm obsessive. I'm overly self-aware. I'm totally unaware. I'm too loud. I'm too quiet. I'm too blunt. I'm very passive aggressive. I'm embarrassed. I'm insecure. I'm overly confident and obnoxious. I'm too serious. I'm too silly. I'm undisciplined. I'm not fun to live with. I'm short tempered. I'm forgetful. I'm fearful. I'm anxious."

"And you're telling me, Jesus says, 'I love you?'" Yep. "But why?" "Because Jesus isn't fair." "But you don't know what I've done. I'm a sinner, lust, idolatry, adultery, bitterness, unforgiveness, impatience, all kinds of sexual immorality, religiosity, self-righteousness, haughtiness, pride, arrogance, greed, envy, gluttony, wrath, sloth, jealousy, drunkenness, materialism, sensuality, idolatry, false worship, anger, worry, anxiety, power lust, money lust, sexual lust, prejudice, hypocrisy, selfishness, stubbornness, gossip, slander, blasphemy, maligning, boasting, murdering, stealing, cheating, lying cowardice, revenge, gluttony, disrespectful to my parents, conceded, coveting. And I've not just done these things a few times. I've done them multiple times a day for the entirety of my life, and you are telling me that Jesus turns to me and says, 'I love you and I forgive you'? But why?



Because friend, Jesus isn't fair. You earn punishment, which was the wages of your sin. And that punishment was death, and Jesus said, "I'll die in your place." You deserved and earned death, and Jesus said, "I'll give you eternal life." You rebelled against God, and Jesus said, "I'll make it right with God." You separated yourself from God, and Jesus said, "I can reconcile you back to Him." You ran away from God, and Jesus said, "I can make a way back to God." You had no righteousness of your own, and Jesus "Here, you can have mine." You have created and carried the burden of sin, and Jesus said, "I'll carry that for you." You deserve to be nailed to a cross, and Jesus said, "Let me up there." You are unlovable in your sin, and Jesus says, "I love you anyways."

Friends, thanks be to God, say it with me, Jesus ain't fair. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification because Jesus ain't fair. You see, *"At just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will someone*

die for a righteous person though, for a good person, someone might possibly dare to die, but God demonstrates his own love for us in this, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Why? Say it with me? Jesus ain't fair. People can conceive of someone dying for a good person, but dying for a bad person? And yet, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

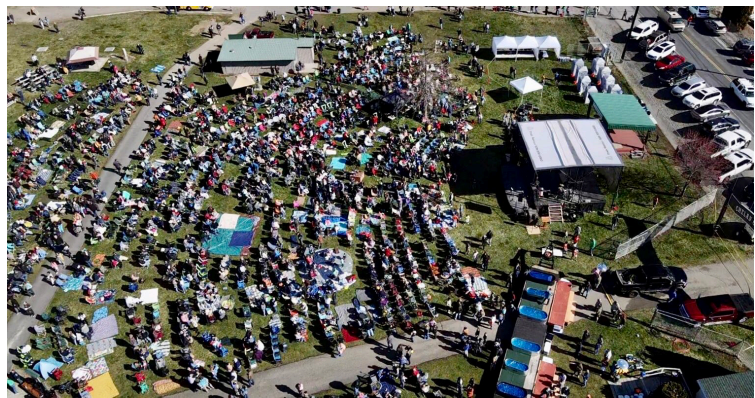
Colossians 2. *"You were buried with Christ when you were baptized, and with him, you were raised a new life because you trusted the mighty power of God who raised Christ from the dead. You were buried because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away, but then God made you alive with Christ." For he forgave us all our sins, he canceled the record of the charges against us with its legal demands that condemned us and took it away, nailing it to the cross.*" In this way, He disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by His victory over them on the cross and offered that free of charge to every sinner on the planet. Why? Because Jesus ain't fair.

"So, now there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. And because you belong to him, the power of the life giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death." Why? Because Jesus ain't fair. Jesus is full of grace. He will always love you. Always pursue you, always reach out to you, always be with you, always provide for you, always extend grace to you, always uphold you with His righteous right hand. He will never let you

down, disappoint you, fail you, betray you, gossip about you, talk about you behind your back, mislead you, misguide you, misdirect you. He will never forsake you, abandon you or leave you behind. He will never overlook you. He will never ignore you. And best of all, if, and when you acknowledge your sin, repent of it today, and place your faith in Him, He promises never to judge you or treat you as your sins deserve ever again, so that once and for all time, the punishment that you earned would get put on Jesus. Because quite frankly, God isn't fair. He's merciful, and gracious, and kind, and long-suffering. Your move.

I want to invite the band out. We're going to close with a word of prayer, and here's what I want to do. For some of you, today is the most important day of your life. We've talked about the most important man. We've talked about the most important event. And now we're at the point of you making the most important decision in your life.

Some of you are thinking, yeah, but if I raise my hand or say this prayer, or come forward to get baptized, what will other people think? Friend, that's why we came. Let me just ask you, is there anybody here who would love nothing more than to see someone come and give their life to Jesus? Would you let them know it?



You're thinking, "But I didn't bring any clothes to get baptized in." We got you covered. We refuse to baptize people naked. We have clothes. "But I still have a few more questions to get answered." Some of the sweetest, most kindest, loving people I know on the planet are waiting over there in that space, praying that you'll come talk to them. I know them personally. You'll be better for knowing them. They have come prayed up, and God has put your name on their heart. You have a divine appointment at those white tents. Do not miss it. You're like, what are you saying? I'm going to pray in a moment and if you want to pray this prayer with me and accept Jesus Christ as your savior by acknowledging your sin and placing your faith in the risen Christ that gave you this beautiful day to come out and hear this beautiful good news, you can come forward and you can get baptized today in front of your new family.

You're like, well, that'll be awkward because the people next to me think I'm already Christian. Brother, it doesn't matter what they think. It matters what God thinks and He says, "If you disown me before men, I will disown you before the Father." This is your chance to make a public statement to God the Father, to Jesus, and to your friends that "I am in". You're like, "Well, if I get up, they're going to say, "What's that guy going up there for? He's a mess." That's the point. It would be more weird if you didn't get up and come. People know you're a mess. God knows you're a mess. It takes a man to humble himself and say, "I'm broken and

need help." It takes a supernatural act of God to take a woman to a place where she can say, "I care no longer for my reputation. I need Jesus."

Faith is personal. It's experiential. And faith moves you to action. Faith is not this internal thought process I had. Faith changes how you move and how you live. So, I'm going to invite us in a moment to bow our heads and to pray. If you pray this prayer and it's the first time you've prayed this prayer, and you've never been baptized, I'm going to invite you, in a moment, along with everyone else who's going to get baptized here in a moment to come join the party. You're going to walk over to these white tents. There are people waiting to talk with you, to pray with you, to clothe you in some clothes, and to get you baptized.

Here's what'll happen. I'm going to pray in a moment and I'm going to ask all of you to pray along with me. We're going to verbalize this cry of our heart. And then, if you prayed that prayer for the first time, or if you are signed up to get baptized, I'm going to ask you to stand, I want you to come forward, head toward those tents and we're going to cheer you home. And then we're going to worship king Jesus, we're going to raise a shout of praise to God. We're going to cry, weep, celebrate.

If you're a dude and say, "I don't cry," welcome to Grace City. You're going to cry. That's just kind of how it happens around here. I talked to this big dude last week. He's like, "I'm so frustrated with you." I said, "Why is that?" "I've cried more in the last three weeks than I've cried in my whole life, and it's your fault." Mission accomplished, bro. We're going to baptize, sing, worship, celebrate. We'll stay as long as you want to stay. As Billy Graham used to say, "The buses will wait," except there are no buses, because we're going to stay around for another four hours and eat hot dogs and party like the new creation has come down like a comet burying itself in this beautiful valley, and shooting light and life all around. Just look around. Friend, if there was ever a day for you to lay down your sword and come to faith in Jesus, you will not find a better day. The sky is blue, the hills are green, the mountains are white with snow, the people of God are ready and praying and leaning in, and Jesus is here saying, "You're mine. I'm not fair. I don't give you what you deserve. I forgive you." Would you bow your heads and pray with me? Every head bow and every eye closed, and every voice praying this prayer with me.

Prayer of Faith

Dear Heavenly Father, I thank You that You aren't fair. I thank You that You don't give me what my sins earned. Father, thank You for sending Jesus. Father, thank You for killing Jesus in my place, in my stead, and for my sin. Jesus, I see You now as Savior. I repent of my sin. I place my faith in You. I ask You to make me new, to fill me with Your Spirit, and to send me on a new path. Thank You for rescuing me. Thank You for loving me, thank You for forgiving me, thank You for adopting me, and thank You for rescuing me from myself and my sin. In Jesus' name. Amen.