

## Happy Resurrection Day!

Welcome all of our campuses

Alabaster, Fultondale, Grandview, Grants Mill, Chapel  
Greystone, Riverchase, Woodlawn and McCalla  
Auburn East and West, Gadsden, Huntsville, Montgomery  
Opelika, Tuscaloosa, Shoals, Oxford, Mobile, Sylacauga  
West Birmingham, Uptown, Troy, Columbus, GA  
Correctional Facilities – And those watching LIVE online

## Easter Survey

Before I share the message with you today

One of our traditions at Easter – Annual Survey – only once a year  
Take your Worship Guide out – white card inside  
Help us out with one question now – and at the end of the message

I'd like to hear messages on what the Bible says about...

This helps me as I study and pray – know what you're dealing with  
Questions you have – topics that you want to hear about  
I'll still pray and decide – but I want to learn from you

We'll do a series in September and answer these questions

Hold on to the card for now – come back to it at the end of the service

## Seven Days

We're in the last installment of our series – Seven Days

Studied the final week of Jesus' life on earth – Passion Week

## Seven Days

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Why? Because the Gospels focus more on the last week than any other  
Matthew – Mark – Luke – 1/3 of the Gospels on last week  
Nearly half of the Book of John – last week

Each Sunday we studied what happened on that day  
Ending today with the resurrection of Jesus

On Resurrection Sunday we reach the culmination of Holy Week  
The resurrection of Jesus is the most important event of Christianity

Here's John's account...

(John 20:1-8 NIV) Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed.

John is so funny – humor in the story

This is the moment that they thought the body of the Lord was stolen  
But then realized – He's alive  
One more time let's celebrate the fact that our God is Alive!!  
He is Risen!

## Easter Appearances

So that's the resurrection account of the Gospel of John – that's it  
And the rest of chapter 20 and chapter 21 is devoted to something else  
The other Gospels do the same

In fact – I read all 4 Gospel accounts at least a dozen times  
What I saw – really for the first time  
How much the Gospels are devoted to something else  
And that is – the appearances of Jesus after the resurrection

On the day of his resurrection – Jesus made at least five appearances  
At least 10 over a period of 40 days after the resurrection  
I'm intrigued by it  
And I think there is something significant for us to notice

Now before I share with you these appearances  
I had this thought...

Who would you want to appear to first?

My first thought was His mom  
Last time He saw her she was with John at the cross

Mom: "I'm okay."

Matthew's Gospel – while Jesus is being tried before Gov. Pilate  
Pilate's wife said – leave this innocent man alone – that's 1  
She had a dream – suffering – slips a note in at trial – that's 2  
I think if I'm Jesus I'd love to show up alive and say...

## Pilate: “That’s three.”

Lesson – husbands you better listen to your wives

The Sadducees were a member of a Jewish sect at the time of Jesus

They denied the resurrection of the dead

I think I’d have to come and say...

## Sadducees: “Boo.”

Jesus didn’t appear to any of those

John’s Gospel highlights 3 people

Jesus went looking for the discouraged, the doubters, the disappointed

And there’s a reason why

The first person that Jesus appeared to was Mary – a woman

Mary was discouraged

(John 20:11-14 NIV) Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. They asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?” “They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don’t know where they have put him.” At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

There are some of you here today that are discouraged – heartbroken

Some of you think He’s dead or at the very least dormant

Like Mary – you’ve lost hope

Jesus cares why you’re crying

Family – marriage – finances – some kind of pain

When you cry – heaven notices

But many times it's hard to see Jesus in the middle of our pain  
But what you would need to know is...

(Psalm 34:18 NIV) The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

And that's why when Jesus makes His first appearance  
The first was a woman who was heartbroken – crying

This first appearance reminds us – that when you're hurting...

Jesus isn't as far away as you think, so look for Him.

I love telling people who are hurting – to look for Jesus – presence  
Prayed this for this service

Here's another appearance – I did my whole message last year on this one  
Thomas – the doubter  
Jesus had the whole world at His disposal to appear to people  
And He looked for a doubter

Thomas represents those of us who doubt  
Everyone else gets it – and you don't – wondered what's wrong

Jesus appeared to the other disciples  
And Thomas wasn't there

(John 20:24-26 NIV) Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

Thomas drew a line in the sand concerning his faith

That didn't turn Jesus away – it attracted Him  
Your doubts won't keep Jesus away

But Jesus loved Thomas so much  
That Jesus intentionally came back just for him

(John 20:26-28 NIV) A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

Jesus comes to where Thomas is – and He didn't say...  
“Three years wasn't enough? I just walked through a wall!”  
He comes to where Thomas is – “put your finger here”

And he invites the doubter to take a step – “Reach out”

Jesus knows all about your doubts  
He's not offended – He actually understands  
And He's searching for you

The second appearance reminds us...

“Jesus isn't bothered by your doubts, so reach out for Him.”

For those that are here and still doubting – considering  
I invite you to take the steps  
Tell you the same things I've told tens of thousands of people  
Give us a year of your life – go all in  
You'll never know unless you do

## Seven Days

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Here's the last one – probably my favorite

Peter had just denied Jesus 3 times – decided to go back fishing  
He was one of the ones closest to Jesus – and he failed  
His disappointment was high – he was ashamed

Disappointment is the gap between expectation and reality

Because God has foreknowledge – you can't disappoint God  
He knew it was going to happen  
And He still loves you unconditionally

So many people think God is turned off by our failures

No – Jesus is searching for people who have failed

So John's Gospel finishes by telling the story

With the disciples as they were fishing  
Eats some of the fish they caught

(John 21:15-17 NIV) When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.” Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.” The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

Three times Jesus asks Peter – “Do you love me?”

And Peter answers – “You know I love you.”

It's actually deeper than that

NT written in Greek – four words for the word love

Storge: natural affection

Like that felt by parents for offspring – or for your brother/sister

Eros: physical attraction

Physical cravings – sexual pleasure – chocolate

## Seven Days

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Phileo: friendship  
The love between friends

Agape: unconditional love

The first two times – Jesus used the word “Agape”  
And Peter responds “Phileo”  
Before his failure – Peter could have said yes to Agape

But Jesus still says – I can use you – “Feed my lambs”  
Your past is your past and I want to use you

The third time – Jesus says – “Do you Phileo me?”  
That’s fine – I’ll come to where you are  
God knows that we can’t measure up to Him  
So He comes down to us

In fact – 50 days after the resurrection  
Jesus picks Peter to give the very first sermon  
The church today would have never picked him

Jesus’ appearance to Peter reminds us...

“Jesus isn’t giving up on you, so love Him.”

Jesus had the whole world to appear to  
He went to the hurting – doubting – those that failed

## God is Still Making Appearances

God is trying to show a consistent theme that is throughout the whole Bible  
He isn’t far away – He isn’t bothered – He won’t give up



God will never stop searching for you

Let me say it this way – He’s still making appearances

So look for Him

So reach out to Him

So love Him

The very first story of the Bible

Adam and Eve sinned by eating the fruit of TKGE

(Genesis 3:7-9 NIV) Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?”

Vs. 7 – two things happened – loss of innocence and shame

Even when they hid – God called out to them

“Where are you?” – God knew where they were – He’s God

He just wanted them to know

And that’s the question God is asking today

Where are you?

I’m not talking about geographically

I’m talking spiritually

You need to know – God is searching for you

He loves you and wants a relationship with you

He has more for you

In fact – He’s knocking right now

## Seven Days

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(Revelation 3:20 NLT) “Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends.”

This is the true picture of God

He takes the initiative – He comes to you

He makes another appearance – we were hoping this service was one

And if He’s a thousand steps away – He takes 999 – and knocks

Here’s what Jesus said

If you open your heart’s door – I will come in

Always – always

And the reason He wants to come in – not just to save

He wants to be your friend

Because...

God is still making appearances.

And He wants to appear to you today.

## The Invitation

We’re going to close a different way today

Normally – “every head bowed – every eye closed”

Ask that for the next 5 minutes (music begins playing)

No one move or distract others – very important moment

Take the “Highlands Response Card” out – in your worship guide

I want everyone to take this spiritual survey with me

On the card – it has an A, B, C, and D

Let me explain these and then I’d like you to check one

If you'd say, "Chris, I am certain that I am a Christian. I have made Jesus the Lord of my life – I Know God intimately. I'm in a real relationship with Jesus." You check A – I'm **already** a Christian – I **already** know God personally.

If you'd say, "Chris, I'm ready to Know God intimately. I want to receive what Jesus did for me. I want a real relationship with God." You check B – I'm **believing** today – I need a fresh **beginning** today. Check B – I'm **beginning** a real relationship with God today.

If you'd say, "Chris, it sounds good but I'd like to **consider** it a little bit more. I'd like to **check** it out." I'd appreciate you checking C – I'd like to **check** it out – I want to **consider** what God wants to do in my life.

If you'd say, "Chris, I **don't ever** intend to give my life to God. I don't think I need God in my life. In fact I intend to live my life my way." I'd ask you to be honest and check D – I **don't ever** intend to make this decision.

I want to ask you to respect those around you  
Stay seated, quiet and fill out this card right now

(Instrumental music playing – campuses take service)

If you checked "B" – I want to pray with you right now

First, I'm going to pray for you then you can follow me in a prayer

"Lord, thank you for searching for us – and knocking on our heart's door. And Lord I pray for those who need to open the door. I pray that You'll give them the courage to open that door to You so they can know you personally and experience real life."

Now you pray...

“Dear God, I need You. I need a real relationship with You. Today I open the door and I’m letting you in my life. Forgive me, for living my life my way. Today I invite Jesus, to be the Lord of my life. Jesus I want to know You. Be the Lord of my life. I believe you rose from the dead. And today I put my faith in You. In Your Name I pray. Amen.”

Let’s celebrate those who made that decision!

If you prayed that prayer with me and you checked B on that card  
Please fill out all details – name – address  
We give you the “hassle-free guarantee” – no calls – no visits

We want to send you some information this week in the mail  
Important information about your “next step”  
Book written by Pastor Chris – “What’s Next?”

Also – next Sunday – opportunity to be water baptized  
Available at every service next Sunday

## Prepare your tithe and offerings

In just a moment – we’re going to receive our tithes and offerings  
Everyone put their “Highlands Response Card” in the buckets

If you’d like to worship God with your giving  
Get it out and ready right now

3 Ways to Give – in this service – give online – text  
You’ll see the details on the screen

As always – just obey what God tells you to do  
If you are a guest – please feel no obligation to give  
This is for those who call Highlands “home”

## Announcements

Again – Water baptism – Next Sunday

We have more Easter services this weekend

    Come back with a friend – someone who needs this message

Pray for offering

Song

Benediction

(Numbers 6:24-26) The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.