

Good morning, everybody.

Good morning.

I want to try that again. Happy Easter.

Happy Easter.

It's good to have you all out here on this beautiful Sunday morning. I'd like to ask for the stand. We're going to start with the reading of the Gospel today. But before we do, I would love to just invite the presence of the Holy Spirit to be with us. Heavenly Father, we do ask for the Holy Spirit promised by your Son to all who ask to come in abundance. That it's your delight, Father, to give up of yourself. That we might know what it is to be your children. We might know what it is to praise you. We might know what it is to share in the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So now, Father, we offer ourselves to you wholeheartedly for this service. For your glory. In Jesus name, Amen. The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

According to Luke, glory to you, Lord Christ.

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.

They 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 enclosed the gleamed 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 look for the living among the dead? He is not here. He has risen. 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 and on the third day be raised again. Then they remembered his words. This is the Gospel of our Lord. Hallelujah. Christ is risen.

The Lord is risen indeed.

Nor does the perishable inheritable. Listen, I tell you a mystery. We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed in a flash in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound. The dead will be raised imperishable and we will be changed. For the perishable must close itself with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been closed with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true. Death has been swallowed up in victory. The King of death is sin and the power of sin is the law. But thank you to God, he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move. You always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord because you know that you're labeling the Lord is not in vain. The word of the Lord.

All right.

Can you hear me too? All right. I just want to let you know that homeland is a good story today. Is one of his favorites. And when I read it, I was just in all of it. And I thought, this is a story that every child of God and every agency. Before we get started, if you guys didn't know there are we're going to talk about them really quick at the end of the story. And then Easter coming. It's almost here. The day we celebrate God's love. This special day comes every spring. But it's beginning with long, long ago, before the world was even clearer. God made the world. Adam and Eve too. They did the one thing God said not to do. That was the very first thing. It brought sadness and badness into the world. But God had a plan to make things right again. Adam and Eve didn't know. Through the years, God sent special messengers called prophets. They told people to trust God because he had a plan. Some people listen, but many did not. Those people didn't know. But we know Easter is coming. Then when the time was just right, God sent Jesus, his son, to save us from our sins.

He came as a baby, not a soldier or a King. God's perfect plan had to done. The cows didn't know. The sheep didn't know, but we know either. It's coming. Jesus grew up from a baby to a boy to a man. She loved God and all the people, even those who didn't like him. Wherever he went, he was helped and healing. And he taught everyone about God because Jesus knew. And he knew too. Easter is coming. Jesus was good in every way. He never did anything wrong. Not one single thing. Many people love Jesus and welcome him. But some leaders didn't believe Jesus was God's son and they wanted to stop him. Those leaders didn't know, but we know Easter is coming. One night, Jesus and his friends shared a specialty. They prayed together and ate together. Jesus even washed her feet. But one man named Judas was not really Judas's friend. And Judas sneaked away to meet with the new meters and to set a track for Jesus. Judas didn't know, but we know Easter is coming. After the feast, those people lied about Jesus. They said he had to die. So Jesus was put on a rough wooden top and all the rolled things were placed on him.

Every bad day. Easter is coming. He gets his friends placed his body in a pan. For two days they waited.

They worried.

They wondered how could this. What a surprise. The crew was empty inside.

Jesus wasn't there.

He had some friends in New and we know too. The very first Easter had come. That's why we celebrate Easter. To thank God for his great love and to remember what Jesus did to send us. Because he decides all our sins can be forgiven. And if you see, God always knew. And now we know too. That's why Easter is coming. Easter is here today. And I want you guys just to remember when you hold that colorful cross in your hand and we sour this beautiful cross behind it, I want you to remember that we are celebrating today because God had a plan from the very beginning. We've got one for each of us. And I'm just so happy that we get to share this with our loved ones.

Thank you very much, Ms. Lily. Can you thank Ms. Lily? Yeah, that was wonderful. Let me pray for it. Well, Heavenly Father, thank you that Easter is here. Thank you for everyone that is here. And now, Lord, we offer ourselves to you that through the preaching of your word, our heart should be strengthened. Wherever there is doubt, faith would arise. Wherever there's unbelief, you would draw us to yourself. You would show us how good you are. And wherever there's pain and hurt, you would bring healing. Through the power of your Holy word, we pray this in Jesus name. Amen. Well, kids, I have a question for you. Just kind of on the tail of that because Easter is such a great day. One of the things that we read about this morning was Paul said, thank you to God. And Mrs. Suzanne just read this so beautifully. Thank you to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. You know what victory is? It's a win. How many of you like to win? Do you like to win? Raise your hand if you like to win. Oh, I saw a lot of adult hands go up, too.

Well, my hand is always up when I'm asked if I like to win. I think we all do like to win, but unfortunately, sometimes we don't win. Isn't that right? Sometimes it seems like no matter how hard we try, we don't seem to win. And Paul in his letter, is saying there's a victory, that crisis comes to give that can lift you up and you can participate in that win, but it really flies in the face of so much of what we experienced in life. I had the really good fortune of being on a winning cross country team when I was in high school. They'd won States, and they were always competitive. And if you know about cross country, literally on a varsity squad, there's seven guys who can participate in a race. And when you race five of the top five out of the seven, their race counts, their points count towards the team total. If you're number six or number seven, that's okay. You got to run with the varsity. Well, oftentimes I ran on the varsity. I would be like the fifth runner or maybe the fourth, sometimes the third off in the 6th or the 7th.

But one day I had a miserable race. It was a dual meet. Everybody runs in a dual meet at the same time. The girls, the varsity, the JV, were all running, and I ran so poorly that the top JV runner ran faster time than I did. He beat me. So that week there was an Invitational where you're running

against tons of teams, and I had to run on JV. It was a little bit humbling. However, when the gun went off, keep in mind, I've never won a cross country race before in my life. When the gun went off, I took off, and in very short order, I found I was in the lead. I was like, oh, this is crazy. I'm running. I'm running, and I'm looking back, and the nearest guy behind me is, like, hundreds of yards back, 3.2 miles, right? And all the way I'm leading, and by a lot, I start coming around to the final part of the race. And some of the guys on varsity who are warming up for their skinny, and they start cheering, and some of the girls start cheering, and I'm like, yeah, this is still great.

This is wonderful.

I start taking it as fast as I can because I also want to have a really good time so I can get back on varsity, cross the finish line, I get a medal. It's all wonderful and everything, except it didn't really feel like winning. I actually had to lose to get to that privilege of winning. I had to lose part of JayZ win to get kicked off of varsity for a week. Do I ever feel like that to you, that you're competing at a level that you just can't compete at? And maybe it would be better to be a bigger fish in a smaller pond or just find somewhere where victory is probably a little more guaranteed? Lower your expectations come that's really the truth for the majority of people, majority of us. Maybe you are one of those people who win all the time. Like, winning just comes naturally to you. You've got that drive and that oomph. It just seems like you're always winning. There's a problem, though, with that. If you talk to anybody who wins a lot, they will often let you know that there's an insecurity about it. If there's a sense that people are gunning for you, that you have to kind of look over your shoulder because you never know who's coming around the bend.

Somebody younger, someone smarter, somebody more driven, somebody with more resources, whatever it is. And so in life, this idea of victory, of winning is something that can actually be really elusive. And when you have it can feel so impermanent. But Paul tells us in one Corinthians as he's speaking to the Corinthians, thanks to God for the victory that is given to us in Jesus Christ. And according to his tone, it seems to be a victory that we all share as believers. What I'd like to do is take a look at that passage, review it's written in your bulletin if you want to look at it, but it becomes like this. I declare to you, brothers and sisters. Now, it's at the end of a long section where Paul has been talking to the Corinthians. The Corinthians. They live in a winter society, right? They are like the New York of their day. It's the place where if you want to make a name for yourself, you go to Corinth. It's a place where if you want to get fabulously wealthy, that's where you're going to reside, where you're going to do your trade, where you're going to compete with the top dogs at everything.

And the Caribbean. Church was a winner. Church, by all worldly standards, was full of really talented and gifted people. People were so gifted at speaking, they actually looked down on the Apostle Paul. They said, he's really not much to listen to. How about that? Right? And he's speaking to them in this letter and he's trying to correct some misunderstandings they have. Because what happens when you're a winner is you often want to look around and see what are the best resources that you can use, what are the best ways of thinking? And so this winter Church wanted to go along with a winter society. And in that winter society, there were certain popular beliefs. And one of those beliefs is that everything we're sitting on right now is evil. All of creation is malevolent. Our bodies, our matter, the stuff that we live in is actually not good. And so the greatest thing that can happen for a person is to discover spiritual keys of knowledge, to escape as much as possible the realities of this world and be as spiritual as possible. So that one day when you die, your spirit will be set free from this prison called the body, this evil, evil thing.

And apparently some of the crankiness were buying into it. So Paul's gone into a long argument to tell, no, this matter that we walk on, it's good. This skin and these bones that you have, this flesh and blood, it is good now. It has been warped. It is perishable because of sin entering into the world. Our bodies are dying because of sin entering into the world. There are earthquakes, there are famines because of sin entering into the world. There are wars and hatreds and all kinds of things that go wrong. But basically, what God gave us was good. You can either use it for good and use it for God, or it can be used for evil. Just trying to correct their misunderstandings, as I declare to your brothers and sisters, but flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. In other words, because of sin, because of our brokenness, because of our rebellion to

God. There is not one, no, not one who deserves who deserves to be with God forever. We cannot inherit the Kingdom of God as we are. Listen, he says, I tell you a mystery.

We will not all sleep euphemism for death, but we will all be changed in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, for the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised and perishable, and we will be changed. That's amazing good news, right? Because if you have ever struggled with compulsions, if you've ever struggled with things that you do that you wish you hadn't done, things that you said, that you wish you hadn't said, things that you think, even that you think, why are there thoughts in my head? Paul is telling you, you will be changed in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye. Wives, look at your husband. He will be changed in a flash. It'll happen. And our bodies will be changed. That was just perishable. He said, we'll put on the imperishable like we're putting on a jacket and putting on a new pair of jeans. But as we put them on, we're absolutely changed. Which is great news, because right now my body is covered with poison. I see. I'm not making an illustration. This is true. I got poison Ivory, like, two weeks ago, and it's been miserable.

It's been popping up all over my body. I've got this bandaid because what under that Band Aid look so gross it would freak you out. But whatever is wrong with your body will be set right on that final day. Paul's argument is, if Christ is not raised, then our faith is futile. But if Christ is raised, he is the first born from the dead. We too shall be raised. So he says, when the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true. Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where O death is your victory? Where O death is your state. Now, this is a passage that's often read in funerals. And I can imagine somebody in a funeral saying, Well, I can tell you where dust thing is. It's right here. We're saying goodbye to my loved one. We're putting her in the ground. We will no longer be able to hold and to hug her. Anybody who's lost a dear loved one knows the sting of death. So how can Paul cry out, Where O death is your victory? Where O death is your sin?

He goes on to explain, the sting of death is sin entered into when sin entered the world, death entered the world. And so this thing of death is sin. And the power of sin is the law. You know what I'm saying? The Bible, God's commandment is the power of sin. What does it mean? I'll tell this elsewhere that the law is good. Why is it good? Because it tells us what the standard is. It's perfection. You should not lie. You should not kill. You shall not commit adultery. You shall honor your father and mother. You shall love the Lord your God. With all your heart, mind, soul and strength. The law tells us all that is perfect. You should be generous and open hearted to the poor. But sin according the promise of the law, shows us how we fall short. Every one of us. In fact, the Bible says that all our righteousness, not all our sins, but all our righteousness is like filthy rags before God. That's how far we fall short. But even when we're trying to do our best, there's always mixed motives involved. There's always the paint of sin. The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

But thank God for the boss, right? He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Notice he doesn't say you earned the victory by being the fastest on the team. You earn the victory, but by being the smartest among you, you earn the victory because you're the most beautiful. No. The victory is given to you by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who took on sin and death upon the cross, took it on him and went down into the grave and conquered sin and death there and rose again to life victorious. And now says, I will give you that victory. It's not a vicarious thing. Do you know what the word vicarious means? It means that you kind of live your life through somebody else. If they do well, a grandma can live vicariously through her grandchildren. My wife and I were talking to our grandson the other day, and we were telling him, we were talking about sports, and we tell them we love to root for the underdog. And he looked at us like we were crazy. He said, Poppy, I always root for the team that wins. He was smart, right?

He knows that, vicariously, you can feel victory when your team wins. But Jesus doesn't give it to us by carriers. Because I give you my victory. I welcome you on to the team. You're not watching this sport. You're engaged in it with me. And that's why Paul ends the way he does. Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Don't let anything move you from this truth. You are a winner in Christ. In Christ, all glory and victory is yours. He's given it to you. We are running a race, my brothers and sisters. So always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord, because you

know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. What is your labor in the Lord? You know it. It's everything that you do that comes from God. It is the taking of the matter of this Earth, of the matter of your body. It is your mind, it is your heart. It is everything that's been given to you and saying to the utmost and to the fullest as best I can in this life. I give it to you, God, to the utmost and fullest I want to do the works that you have given me to do.

I want to live my life like Jesus running the race with him on his team. And Paul says, always give yourself fully for that because it's not in vain. It matters. You matter. And that's why one day, brothers and sisters, we will be raised from the dead. And these bodies we have as imperfect as they are will be transformed, transfigured and glorified and will be raised as spiritual bodies yet with matter as real physical beings. And all that is wrong and broken and lost in this world should be made right. That's the glory of Easter that's what we celebrate every Sunday when we come to this table Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed Hallelujah we give you ourselves this day, Lord Jesus because you gave your life for us we pray that you would awaken our hearts to you that we would live our lives fully and for any that don't know you Lord all they need to do is turn to you all they need to do is say yes, Lord I want to follow them and you will in no way turn away anyone who calls to you so, Lord, we ask you to awaken faith today raise the dead and all that is dead in us, Lord make a lie that we might fully live for you in Jesus name, Jesus, Amen.