

And Such Were Some of You

Easter Service

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This morning, I want to invite you to open your Bibles to the book of 1 Corinthians chapter 6. Now today is what we identify, what we classify as Resurrection Sunday, better known in our culture as Easter Sunday. This is the day where we gather and we celebrate the day that changed everything. In fact, if it were not for this day, what you and I know as Christianity would literally crumble under a false foundation. And it may seem somewhat unusual or odd, why is it on this day that we're turned to 1 Corinthians chapter 6? Let's be honest with ourselves. This is not a traditional what we might call Easter passage. In fact, if you have a study Bible, it may share with you that the Lord gave us this some 30 years post-resurrection, and the reason that I want to address this passage today is that because we are very familiar with the attributes and the aspect of Resurrection Sunday and Easter Sunday, but sometimes we forget about the "why."

Now let's walk through the rest of the aspects of this very special day. It begins obviously with the "who." There is no resurrection Sunday without Jesus Christ. He should be, and rightly so, is the focus of everything that we've declared, everything we've sung, everything we're about to preach, and every decision that we need to render. That is the "who," and the second question is the "where," where did it take place. Not just in a general sense of the Middle East, Holy Land, a place we refer to as Israel, specifically Jerusalem, but the Bible makes it very clear that it was on a hill called Mount Calvary, a place by the name of Golgotha, the place of the skull. It was there where he allowed himself to be crucified for all the world to see. We know the Bible says it was outside of the city and it must have been a high trafficked area because at the time Pilate declared above his head written "This is the King of the Jews" in three specific languages. It was a time of great commerce. It was the Passover season. There would have been more people traveling the roads of Jerusalem that week than any other time on the calendar. That being said, today it's even a very busy place. In fact, there's a thriving bus station that sits at the bottom of what we know as Mount Calvary. But around the corner, there's a garden. Around the corner, there's a place, as described in the Bible, that a man by the name of Joseph of Arimathea owned. It was a place where he'd gone to great expense. He had bought a tomb for him and his family, but then he met Jesus. He saw the miracles. He heard the messages. And according to the gospel of John chapter 19, he was there that day when Jesus made his last statement, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." He went to Pilate, the same man that allowed the crucifixion to take place, he went to him

and he begged of him for the body. He was joined on the way back to Golgotha with most likely one of his running buddies, as we say, a man by the name of Nicodemus, a man who we'll talk about in just a moment, was very questioning of Jesus in the early days and began to spend more time with him. And on that day, before the sun set, they took that lifeless body of Jesus, they bound it, they wrapped it as it was customary, and they placed it in a tomb that no one had ever laid in before.

The next question is the "when." You know, Jesus made this very clear. In fact, in Matthew chapter 12, there was a lot of people disputing and debating with him was he really the one the prophets spoke of? Was he really the one that they hoped for? Was he really the one that they've been preaching and praying for all these years? In the midst of that, Jesus said, "If you want to know that I'm him," he said, "let me compare it to Jonah." Remember that famous prophet in the Old Testament who went the opposite way the Lord wanted him to, ended up in the whale's belly. You remember the time frame? Three days and three nights. What did Jesus say? He said, "The Son of Man," speaking of himself, "will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights." But what happened? You know and I know. He wasn't just laid in a borrowed tomb. He wasn't just wrapped in the proper ceremonial way. But after three days and three nights, the women came and the Bible says in Matthew chapter 28, the sun had not yet risen. They gathered there to anoint the body for its final burial. They were marveled, they were amazed that the stone had been rolled back. Who could do such a thing? And there they were, the messengers of God, the angels of God who made this great declaration. "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" How did it happen? According to Romans chapter 6, God himself raised him from the grave.

That, ladies and gentlemen, is what we know as the resurrection, the Easter story, the story that's probably familiar to most of you, and I dare say there are not many of you today, maybe a few, who heard it for the very first time. But today from 1 Corinthians chapter 6, I want to talk about the "why." Why was Easter so important that first Sunday morning? Why was Easter important 30 years later to a group of people in a city by the name of Corinth? And why today is this day more than just family gatherings? Why is this day more than just eating at a large table? Why is this day more than our, quote, culture has made it to be? Tucked in verse 11 of 1 Corinthians chapter 6, there's this little statement, "and such were some of you."

We're going to build there in just a moment, but I want to begin with the problem. If you'll notice here in verse 9 of 1 Corinthians chapter 6, it says, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" Now there's a problem. because it declares that those who do not meet God's standard, those that would be deemed unrighteous when this life passes to the next, they shall not, they will not enter in or be a part of what the Bible calls the kingdom of God. Let me put that in Southernese for just a moment, there are none of us qualified for a place the Bible calls heaven. That's essentially what verse 9 says. Now, this is not a new problem. This is not something that came in the last couple of generations, centuries, or even farther. In fact, if you go all the way back to the book of Genesis, really the first story of humanity, you discover that this problem has been here for thousands of years. In fact, if you'll remember that story of the

Garden of Eden, there's humanity, have you ever thought of this, they were in a perfect place, with a perfect parent and things didn't take long to go sideways, did they not? And there in the garden, the Lord only had one very simple instruction. He told Adam, he said, "You may eat of every tree of the garden, every one of them, except for one. In the day that you eat thereof, you will, quote, surely die."

Well, if you pick up the story in chapter 3, the book of Genesis, verse 1, it says the serpent showed up, whom we know as Satan. He said these famous words, "Yea, hath God said." And it put us in a bind. It forced us to answer this question, did God really say what he meant and did he really mean what he said? Well, if you've read the story, if you've heard the story, you know what happened. Humanity began to rationalize. We began to justify. We began to make excuses. And here was our perspective, somehow, somehow, we collectively, humanity, we believed that somehow God was keeping us from living life to the fullest, somehow he was cheapening this existence because we couldn't participate in this one endeavor or activity. So we talked ourselves into it. We consumed that forbidden fruit. You know what the Bible says? That we, for those of you that watch cable TV, we, who meant we're the original naked and afraid, that's who we were. Have you seen that show? You know they stole that from Genesis. Adam and Eve hid themselves behind the fig leaves. They were fearful, for they knew that what they once possessed was gone forever. It was at that moment that unrighteousness entered humanity. There has not been one since who's even glanced, gleaned, or sniffed at being righteous, holy, distinct, or separate.

You know, it says here in verse 9 that because we are unrighteous, because we are just like our parents, our grandparents, and all the way back to those descendants in the Garden of Eden, that we shall not inherit the kingdom of God. You know, the Bible says in Genesis chapter 3, at the end of that famous story, that God sealed up the garden. The Bible makes it very clear there's a very certain classification of angelic being known as a cherubim that was placed there and according to the Bible there's a sword with fire on it going every which direction. In other words we no longer had access to the presence and the place of God. It's a problem that continues to this day. We as humanity are unrighteous at our core. We are sinful. In fact, the Bible says in Romans 3,:23, "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." But I want to draw you a parallel. I want you to notice in verse 9, beginning about midway through, it says, "be not deceived," and then I'm going to let you read on your own, either in your Bible or on the screen, the list of mannerisms, behaviors, and sins that are listed. Now can we be honest on this Resurrection Sunday, that'll cause you to blush, will it not? You know why that's an important parallel? Because we are communicated each and every day of our existence that humanity individually and humanity collectively is somehow getting better.

Now don't get me wrong, we've made some great advancements. Now I joke about this all the time, I love technology, I love the advancement of the sciences and medicine, but I think my two favorite advancements are indoor plumbing and air conditioning. I'm just gonna be honest with you. I'm a fan of both. That being said, think about all that's happened just in the last few hundred years. I mean, a couple hundred years ago, we said we got enlightened. You know, that was a fancy word for we got in education is what that

was. And then we decided that that which was automated was more efficient than the labor of our own hands so we had an Industrial Revolution and today we're calling it a Technological Revolution, that we live in a society that has advanced. We live in a society, if you'll let me say it with a lower case, not capital E, we are evolving with what we know and what we can experience. But let me ask you the obvious question: do you see anything on that list that's been solved today? Not a one. In fact, I might argue, we've actually gotten better at doing the things that are listed, net lists. This is an important parallel because I think oftentimes we think back to that first Resurrection Day or we think back to that early church and we see it through the lenses of all the advancements that we've made and all the progress that we've made, but here's what you need to hear: when it comes to humanity's righteousness, when it comes to our sinfulness, we have not made one iota of an advancement. Not one.

And so we pick up the story in verse 11. I love these words, "And such were some of you." Now there's an important distinction there. In fact, I want to talk about the persons that are mentioned here because behind every one of those descriptions in verse 9 and 10, there is a person, there's a group, there's a society, there is a people who are engaged in, shall I say, performing and involved in such behavior, mannerisms, and activities. There's a couple things to note. The first one is a simple grammatical lesson. Notice what it says, "And such were some of you." Now when it comes to English language, it's beautiful in this sense and yet difficult at the same time that when you use the word "you," you realize that can both be singular and it can be plural. Okay? I could say simply today, I need you to come with me after the service. You realize if I made that statement, everybody would be looking around saying, "Which 'you' is he talking about?" Because most of us, when we hear the term "you," think of an individual, correct?

I want you to notice what this is followed by, "And such were some of you," but notice it says, "but ye are washed." Now I know that's an old somewhat archaic word, but it's an important distinction. Here's what that means. It means a collection of individuals. Now I'm gonna put this in a language that you and I can understand. Are you ready? If I today at the end of the service, I said, "I need you to come with me," every one of you would begin looking at each other saying, "Who's he talking about?" But what if afterwards I said, "I need y'all to come with me"? We understand that one, don't we? Because y'all is just a synonym for everybody. That's what it means. Now the reason that this is important is the Bible is drawing a very clear distinction. Such were some of you. In other words, what the Bible is recognizing is that most of you, we're all unrighteous, don't get me wrong, but most of us have never been involved in that list. In fact, most of us have done to the best of our ability to not get caught up in that list. In fact, there are times, and this is what we're gonna address in just a moment, we love to puff out our chest and compare ourselves to those that are on the list compared to those that are not. on the list.

"And such were some of you." Let me put it in this terminology, we live in a culture, I'm a part of it, that is just saturated, obsessed with sports. You know, one of the things that I've learned is this, did you know that 10% of a group gives 90% of its reputation? That group you can't stand, that fan base that you claim has certain attributes, it's really only about 10% of them. But they give 90% of the reputation and one of the struggles when it

comes to Easter Sunday is that we forget that it is a statistical minority position of those that have actually engaged in those behaviors that are listed or are part of the lifestyles that were on that video. Such were some of you. Now don't get me wrong, there are some of you as individuals. That's your story. That's your background. That's your upbringing. That's what you like to keep at bay. But can I make you a promise? That's not all y'all. Why? I would dare say that because of what the Bible says with "you" versus "ye," most of you, whether you believe it or not, most of you, your story's not only not on the list, it's probably more like mine.

Now remember, there are some of you that fit in that category, but let's talk about the rest of us. Most of us in this room, most of us grew up in an environment where we genuinely believed that we were cared for. We were loved. We were encouraged to do our best. We were encouraged to be generous to others and not to take from others. We were told to try our hardest, go the extra mile, make sure that others have at least what we possess. You know, in our culture, we call it the Judeo-Christian ethic. That's what it is. Basically, we're taught that if we look right and act right, it's all gonna work out right. Isn't that what we're told? Here's the problem. Notice the word before "washed." Y'all. That's what the Bible's saying. In other words, it is times like this where we talk about the empty tomb, where many of us, if not most of us, get caught up in saying, "Yeah, that person, that person needs Jesus but I'm okay. Compared to them, I'm doing great. Compared to what I see on TV, I'm doing fine. In fact, my life is even going better than my parents hoped it would, so I must be okay."

But I want you to notice it says, but "ye, y'all are washed, y'all are sanctified, y'all are justified," and there's an important procedure that's mentioned here in verse 11. It is a procedure, a surgical procedure that all of humanity needs to sign up and undergo to remove an obstruction that the Bible called unrighteousness or sin. So when we talk about the empty tomb, when we talk about Jesus shedding his blood on Mount Calvary, staying dead and buried three days and three nights and gloriously raising from the grave, what procedure is he able to enact or perform in all of our lives and we all need him to do so? The first one is this, it says, you are washed. Now don't get this confused with that large body of water behind me. This has nothing to do with the baptism. This has nothing to do with what you or anybody else can do to you or for you. In fact, let me quote an old gospel hymn. "What can wash away my sins? Nothing! but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow." That's a quotation from Isaiah chapter 1 verse 18. Then you go to Titus chapter 3 verse 5. It says that we are washed by his regeneration. Now let's be honest with ourselves, that kind of sounds like a big fancy theological term, but you know what it means? To be born again. That's all it means.

I mentioned earlier a guy named Nicodemus. He was a part of the "where" story. He's the one that helped Joseph of Arimathea take the body to that empty grave. You know Nicodemus first shows up in your Bible in John chapter 3, one of the most famous places in the Bible because in verse 16 Jesus made this statement, "For God so loved the world he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." He responded in that statement to Nicodemus. Now Nicodemus was not

like some of you. Nicodemus was like most of y'all. He went to church. He tried his best in school. He tried to respect others. He tried to be generous. He tried to do more right than wrong. But you know what happened? Nicodemus meets Jesus one day and he says, "Jesus, I know that you're come from God. Nobody would do or say the things you're doing unless you did come from God. I don't get this." You know what Jesus said? "You must be born again." Nicodemus said, "I don't get that either. I mean, my mom took care of that years ago. How can I return to the womb?" Jesus said, "You're missing it," and then he quoted that famous verse 16, that to be born again is to recognize that we are unrighteous, to recognize we have a sin problem, recognize that Jesus Christ is the only one who can solve it, and we call on him to save us. When that happens, according to 2 Corinthians 5 verse 17, you and I, y'all, become a new creation. You become a completely new person on the inside, still wrapped up with this flesh on the outside.

So in other words, what this passage is saying is, for all of y'all, we all need to be washed. We all need to be sanctified. That's a word that basically means to be holy, to be pure, to be without blemish or error, to be distinctive, to set aside for a special purpose. I know most of you figured this out by now, but humanity at its core is predisposed to mess up every single time. You know that the only way you're ever going to be holy, the only way you're ever going to do anything the way you should do it is because the Spirit of God working in and through you. That doesn't happen until he washes you. That doesn't happen until he regenerates you. That doesn't happen until you're born again. And all of a sudden, you're not only a new creation, but you actually possess the capacity to do and to be all the things that you were striving for in your own energy and efforts all along.

But there's one last final word. It says you're washed, you are sanctified, and ye are justified. Now before I talk about this word, allow me just a brief recap. Humanity, y'all, we have a core problem, sin and unrighteousness. It hasn't improved in thousands of years and it's never going to get any better. Some of you have a story that's listed here. Most of you have a story that didn't make the passage but is of equal problematic purpose. Jesus said if you'll believe in him, he'll make you new, he'll set you aside and give you a direction you could have never done on your own, and then this last one, "ye are justified." You know what that means? It means you are presented faultless. You are presented without error. In fact, if I can draw a real quick picture for you, imagine a courtroom scene and imagine that you are brought forth on charges that may not be as bad as somebody else, but you know you're guilty as charged. That's the scene, that's the picture. You know the Bible says in Hebrews chapter 9 verse 27, it says that all men and ladies must die and face the judgment. Can I put that in our language? That means when you breathe your last breath here, you're going to face the Judge there. And guess what? We're all unrighteous. We hadn't improved on anything. We're all guilty. But for those who believe, for those who've called on the name of Jesus, can I tell you the picture of what justified is? Here's the picture, that you show up, and by the way, without word, without rebuke, without debate, because all of us know deep down inside we got a sin problem. We know it. It's at that point with our head hung and the gavel begins to swing that Jesus steps forth. This is the picture. And says, "Father, don't hit that gavel. This one's with me. I already paid the price for their sin. I paid the price for their rebellion.

And because I conquered the grave, allow him, allow her to walk right into the eternal kingdom of God."

Ladies and gentlemen, that is why the empty tomb is so important, that is why the Easter story is so critical, because left to our own devices, there's not one of us qualified, there is not one of us worthy apart from the fact that Jesus paid the price, Jesus rose from the grave, and according to John 3:16, if you believe in him, you will not perish, but have everlasting life today. Today, most of you, if not all y'all, knew the story. You knew the "who," the "where," the "when," and even the "how," but today, some of you have learned the "why." It's not just an annual celebration of the facts, it is an eternal opportunity to experience the faith, the only faith that can save us from our sin.

Let's pray with our heads bowed, our eyes closed. Today as we come to this time and place in the service, you may be here in person, you may be watching online, today may be the day that even though you've been to church a hundred times, even though this is your umpteenth Easter Sunday celebration, today may be the day that the Spirit of God took the word of God and did a surgical procedure, not in your flesh, but in your hearts. The Bible says in Romans chapter 10 verse 13, whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. That's an important declaration, and I want to be clear, the Bible doesn't say whoever gets religion, whoever gets baptized, whoever joins a church, whoever starts this, whoever stops that. The Bible says whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Maybe today's that day where you realize the "why" of Easter, the "why" of the empty tomb, and maybe today's the day where you need to cry out to him. If so, you can be at the bottom, the top, the back, the middle, the sides, the front. It doesn't matter where you are, right where you are just cry out. You don't have to do so out loud. You don't have to say the same words that I or somebody else would say. You don't have to read a script. This is your heart's cry where you confess your unrighteousness and that Jesus Christ is the solution. Maybe your heart's cry today, this day, Resurrection Sunday, would go a little something like this. "God, today I recognize that though I put up a pretty good image, I'm unrighteous. I have a sin problem. God, I've been places I shouldn't have been. God, I've acted out in ways I should have never done so. I've spoken words that should have never left my mouth. And God, you know I've had thoughts between my ears that are so contrary to you. And God, I understand your Bible says, your word says, the wages, the result of my sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. God, today I believe I have a sin problem that only Jesus can fix. I want you to know I also believe that Jesus loved me so much that he came on my behalf. God, I believe that Jesus loved me so much he lived a sinless life rejecting all temptation on my behalf. And God, today I believe that when they walked him up Mount Calvary and he allowed himself to be crucified on that old rugged cross, he was bearing the pain and the punishment of my sin and my rebellion. And God, today I believe and what a day to declare it, I believe that after three days and three nights the tomb was discovered empty, Jesus was alive and he made it possible for my sin to be forgiven and my soul to be saved. God, today I don't have all the answers to the struggles, the problems, the issues of this life, but I know that I know that I know that I've got a sin problem I can't fix and nobody I know here on earth can either. Only Jesus Christ can. I'm asking you to forgive

me. I'm asking you to save me. In the best way I know how, I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed, our eyes still closed, in a moment I'm going to pray for us. We're going to stand and sing together. But I want to invite you, if you had that conversation with the Lord, just to step out and step forward. I'll be here. We'll have others as well. We just want to celebrate with you. We want to pray with you. We want to pray for you. Or maybe today you're already a believer but as we studied the word of God it made it clear not just in saving faith but in sanctification and walking in obedience, and maybe today's the day to have a conversation about baptism like we'll see observed in a moment. Maybe today's the day to have the conversation what it means to be a part of this incredible church. Or even today, a day of celebration, a day of gatherings, maybe there's so much heartache and so much pain you just need somebody to pray with you and pray over you. Whatever the decision, we just want you to know we're here for you. We just want to be a part of what God's doing in your life.

Lord Jesus today, of all days, thank you. Thank you that according to 1 Corinthians 15, we are not like others who are miserable but we have hope knowing that our Messiah Jesus Christ has not only shed his blood but conquered the grave. And God, my prayer is simply this, that however your Spirit used your word to speak to our hearts, that we would simply respond with a reckless abandonment. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.