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Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

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Easter Sunday - God's Superintending Power

Selected Scriptures

Prayer: *Father God, we just thank you and praise you for what a glorious day today is. It's a day of celebration, a day in which we can thank you for the empty tomb, a day in which we can thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ and his sacrifice accepted. And Father, today again we're going to look at just what was involved in that, we're going to look at one tiny angle of it and there's so many more angles to it, and Lord, as we do that, I just pray for your Holy Spirit, I pray that you would guide us, that you would accompany us, that you would enable us to see some of what you have done for us, that we would take it in and again, make it a permanent part of our lives. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

When India was under British rule, they adopted the bounty plan to reduce the amount of deadly cobras that were there in the country, and so what they did was they assigned a cash bounty for every single cobra that was captured and killed. And at first it was very, very successful, there was an enormous amount of snakes

brought in, but when it didn't seem to solve the problem, they started to investigate, and they realized what was happening was that people were now breeding cobras in order to obtain the bounty. That was called an unintended consequence. And after they realized the unintended consequence of this bounty program, they put an immediate stop to it. Well, the unintended consequence of that was that many of the snake breeders who now realized their cobras were worth nothing, well they turned them out into the wild, vastly increasing the population of cobras. Such is the problem with unintended consequences. You see, you simply cannot predict ahead of time how something is going to play itself out. Well, God's sovereignty precludes unintended consequences. You see, the story of Easter is often one told by painting a Jesus as a victim of consequence. I mean, he was a victim of the religious leaders, he was a victim of the imperial Roman system, he was a victim of his own people even turning on him or abandoning him in his moment of deepest need. Jesus was never a victim.

See, the story of Easter is really a story of consequences: intended, unintended, or superintended. And in this case the unintended consequences of Adam's fall is what brought Jesus to earth in the first place. You see, Adam was convinced by a serpent and that had unintended consequences to it as well. The consequences of his eating that fruit was that he thought he would

be like God himself. But you see, Adam had been lied to, and all of us today are bearing the unintended consequences of his action. When Adam ate the forbidden fruit, he wasn't the only one who fell from perfection into imperfection. Every subsequent child of Adam inherited from Adam a fallen will that from birth is shaking its fist in the face of God. And whether you call it the fall or whether you call it original sin, the effect is that every one of us is born captive to our imperfection. And God who is perfect knew the only way to resolve the unintended consequence of imperfection was to demand a full payment for it and thereby satisfy his justice. The problem was the payment was death. And Easter is the celebration of the fact that God's perfect justice met his perfect mercy at the cross. You see, the death that was deserved was paid instead by Jesus, and it was paid on the cross. And by offering up his life instead of ours, he perfectly satisfied his justice and his mercy as well. The story of Easter is the story of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And Jesus rose from the dead because his sacrifice had been accepted as perfect. See, he had come to the planet not as a teacher or a philosopher or a political leader but instead as God himself in the flesh determined by his own sacrifice on the cross to ransom and rescue his own chosen people who had been captured and held captive by the fall of the very first man Adam. You know, it's easy to look at the circumstances that surround the crucifixion and miss that

completely. It is easy to see Jesus as a victim of consequence, intended or unintended. And you know, you can choose to see the events of Easter as random chance driven acts that simply trapped Jesus and made him a victim. Or you can go to the other side, you can see God as a master puppeteer who's overwhelming the wills of the key players in the Easter drama so that they would do exactly what he wanted them to do. Actually both of those miss the mark. See, I submit to you that the events of Easter had consequences that were not just intended or unintended but instead were superintended. That is to say that God sovereignly worked through man's own free will in multiple ways to accomplish his will. And we've seen this many, many times in scripture. We've seen this in the way God worked in the life of Joseph. If you remember, Joseph gets kidnapped and he gets sold into slavery by his brothers. He then gets arrested and he winds up in prison and he's in prison, there he meets the wine tester of the very king of Egypt. Some of you know the rest of the story, Joseph through a series of divine events, he predicts this enormous famine and he provides a means of providing for it, and so he winds up becoming second in command to the very King of Egypt. Meanwhile, famine is stalking all the other countries except for Egypt, due to Joseph's brilliant planning, and his brothers, now years removed and no longer recognize him, come to Egypt seeking to buy food. There they meet Joseph. And Joseph eventually reveals himself to his brothers and

they're terrified that at long last he's going to want to exact his revenge. And right then and there, Joseph sums up all of what took place that brought him to slavery to second in command of all of Egypt by saying to his brothers in *Genesis 50:20*, he says: "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good." You see, Joseph's brothers intended to do him evil. God superintended that evil for good. God working through the free will and even the evil intentions of others by his own sovereign grace, wisdom, and power, can still effectively bring about his will. I submit to you that's exactly how God superintended the events of Easter. And so this morning I want to walk with you through some of these events focused on God's ability to superintend those events.

The first and perhaps the most obvious instance took place shortly before Jesus entered into Jerusalem for Palm Sunday. If you remember, we've been speaking about this these last few weeks. Jesus has just raised Lazarus from the dead and the religious leaders are discussing what an incredible problem Jesus had become, what a threat he is now to them. This is *John 11:47*, it says this: *So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the Council and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."* But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them,

"You know nothing at all. Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish." You know, Caiaphas had one specific intended consequence of his words: *"that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish."* You see, he saw the potential that Jesus had to cause this uproar and dissent within the nation that he didn't have a real firm control of, and he saw Jesus specifically as a political liability, and his intent was -- his intent was to eliminate Jesus as a potential threat to his power and to the nation of Israel and he was going to do that simply by killing him. And every single word that Caiaphas uttered, it was directed freely of his own will to one intended goal: He wanted to get rid of Jesus. However, those exact words contained an entirely different meaning that Caiaphas was completely unaware of, but it was a meaning that God superintended prophetically. See, God himself had decided before the world had ever been formed that at the appointed time, it would be better -- quote -- *"that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish."* And Jesus had come to the earth for that express purpose. Not only was the entire nation but the entire world in the process of perishing. Adam's fall had cursed all the creation and God alone was the only man who could save us. And what is even more astounding about how God superintended the statement is that he put this profound truth unwittingly into the

mouth of a man who had no respect for truth whatsoever. God, however, had respect for the office that he had created. And wicked or not, Caiaphas was the high priest at the time. In verse 51 it says: *He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.*

A second unintended consequence that was superintended by God was that of the traitor, Judas. Judas was a very, very unhappy man. He was also a very dishonest man. In fact, he was an embezzler and the scripture even says so. And after he chided Mary for anointing Jesus with a very, very expensive ointment, it says in *John 12: He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it.* Okay. So why did Judas betray Jesus? I mean, there are lots of speculations as to what his actual intended motive was. Perhaps Judas expected Jesus to be some kind of a political figure, and in his frustration, he simply tried to move the process along by betraying him, assuming that that would force Jesus's hands politically. That may be a possibility. You know, I say that because the only shred of anything decent that you can find in Judas was his regret over having betrayed Jesus. But even

that regret went to its worst possible end with Judas committing suicide. Jesus himself described Judas in the most unflattering of terms. He said this in *John 6:65*, he said: *"Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil."* He spoke of Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the Twelve, was going to betray him. Now, no one can say for certain why Judas did what he did, but we know that his intention, as wicked as it was, was once again superintended by God to start the process of Jesus's passion by a betrayal and to pay the price of that betrayal with the exact same price paid for a slave. You see, hundreds of years before Judas made his infamous deal, God had already established what that price would be. He said in *Exodus 21:32*: *If the ox gores a slave, male or female, the owner shall give to their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.* Now, Judas intended to force Jesus's hand and perhaps make some money on the side. God superintended Judas's freely chosen, wicked decision, to start the process of Jesus's crucifixion. *Matthew 26:14* says: *Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?" And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him.*

A third superintended consequence that took place at that time came from one of Jesus's own disciples. It was the betrayal of Jesus by

Peter. And here we have in this one act, we have an intended consequence, an unintended consequence, and a superintended consequence. Let me just paint the scene for you right now. Jesus has just been taken captive, he's just about to submit himself to the beatings and the mockings. This is *Luke 22:54*, it says: *Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house, and Peter was following at a distance. And when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them. Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, "This man also was with him." But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him." And a little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not." And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, "Certainly this man also was with him, for he too is a Galilean." But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed.*

Now to start out, we look at Peter's intended consequences. His intended consequence was to get as close to Jesus as he could without really exposing himself as one of Jesus's followers. His unintended consequence was being identified by the servant girl, and then by some other onlookers. You know, he wanted to be close enough to Jesus to know what was taking place but when that put him

in a position of being identified as one of his followers, his fear began to overwhelm him. And just as Jesus predicted, he denied him three times. But you know, Jesus superintended Peter's decision, and he superintended it this way. I mean, we all know Peter was always known as this impulsive kind of personality types and many times he said things without actually thinking them through, and one of the worst instances of bad thinking leading to bad statements occurred shortly before Jesus's passion. Now, to understand, Jesus knew exactly what he was getting into and he's explaining it to his disciples, and as he begins to explain it to his disciples, we see Peter's sin begin to unfold. This is *Matthew 16*, it says this, it says: *From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."* You know, amazingly after three years of living with Jesus, Peter still didn't grasp what his mission really was. I mean, he couldn't believe his ears when he heard Jesus speak of his upcoming suffering and death and he wouldn't hear of it at all. So Jesus not only puts Peter in his place but he warns them of the very events that are going to take

place during his suffering. He says this in *Luke 22:31*, he says: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." Peter said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death." Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me."

I mean, we've already seen, we already know that's exactly what happened, but I want to focus on one little detail that occurred during Peter's denial and what happened after Jesus rose from the dead. So we pick up on Peter's actual denial in *Luke 22:59*, he says this: *And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, "Certainly this man also was with him, for he too is a Galilean." But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.* See, Peter intended to stay close enough to find out what happened to his Master, but not so close as to be implicated as one of his followers. Jesus superintended the exact time and the exact circumstances so that as

he was being abused by his captors and denied by Peter, a rooster crows. And as verse 61 says: *And the Lord turned and looked at Peter.* See, Peter had freely denied his Lord. Jesus had freely given up his freedom to his captors and yet at the precise moment of Peter's denial, his eyes and Jesus' eyes meet. Peter's absolutely crushed, and he goes out and he weeps. Fast forward to Jesus's having been raised from the dead. Jesus has risen from the dead and the risen King of the universe is cooking breakfast for his disciples. Just ponder that for a second. One of the first things Jesus did was to serve. After the breakfast, he has this conversation with Peter and then focuses in on his healing and restoration. It starts in *John 21:15*, it says this: *When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him a third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep." Here we have Peter's three denials being met with Jesus's three affirmations of his restoration: "Feed my lambs," "Tend my sheep," "Feed my sheep." You know, it's hard for me to*

get my head around the fact that the victorious risen King of the universe is serving breakfast to the one who denied even knowing him and in the process he's restoring him fully. For the rest of Peter's life and ministry, he would remember that night and those eyes. And he would know from personal experience that God is a God of mercy and grace and that he chooses broken vessels like Peter to minister his grace to a fallen world. See, the sins that Jesus had gone to the cross to pay for included Peter's vehement denials. And Jesus had paid that price already, and because he had paid that price, Peter was now free. Peter had intended only to get a safe enough distance to find out what was happening to Jesus. Jesus superintended Peter's cowardice with just one look, and it forever broke his arrogance and confidence in his own strength in a way that would affect his ministry for the rest of his life.

Now, the next unintended consequence occurred during the actual crucifixion of Jesus, but to put it into perspective, we have to go backwards in time almost a thousand years. King David is under assault. We don't know if he's fleeing from King Saul or if he's fleeing from his rebellious son Absalom, but he is in desperate straits and he feels as if God has deserted him. He's intending to pour out of his heart the pain that he is in, and he writes in *Psalm 22: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? O, my God, I*

*cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest. David's writing about his own personal agony. He's writing about his own feelings of abandonment from God, and almost a thousand years later, Jesus hanging on a cross speaks the very same words. Matthew 27:46: And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" God superintended those words. He superintended the very same words and he put them on the lips of Jesus. Now the cynics and the critics might say, well, you know, Jesus was a student of the Old Testament and he knew the Psalms inside out and backwards, why not speak the words that had been spoken over the ages and claim them as your own? Well, let's say that Jesus did intend those words to support his claim to be God? By the same token, there were many other events that took place while Jesus was hanging on the cross that he couldn't possibly have had any control whatsoever over. Once again, these were events that were superintended by God. And again, we don't know the exact events that caused David to write the following statement in the same Psalm, Psalm 22, but he said this, wrote this in verse 16, he said: *For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet -- I can count all my bones -- they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.* See, David intended to describe the circumstance he was in.*

God superintended what David had written to describe something that David could never have even dreamed of. You see, verse 16 says: *They have pierced my hands and feet.* And one thing that we know about crucifixion is that it, of course, pierces hands and feet. But another thing we know about David in the time when he wrote this Psalm was that crucifixion as a form of punishment was not even known. They had never heard of it. It wouldn't be known or even heard of for hundreds of years. Jesus hardly could have intended the particulars of his own punishment, but again, let's just play the role of the cynic. Let's say that he arranged his time and place of his arrest in such a way that the chances are that his hands and feet would be pierced through crucifixion. Okay. Perhaps he did. But what David writes next could never have been intended or unintended by Jesus. It could only have been superintended by God. David wrote in verse 18: *They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.* And almost a thousand years later, John wrote in *John 19*: *When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfill the scripture which says, "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots."* So the soldiers did these things. Now,

the soldiers intended nothing more than to preserve a valuable garment. I mean, they had no notion whatsoever of who it was they were crucifying or what historical significance their actions would have. I mean, they freely chose to ignore the brutality and even the humanity of their victim by gambling for his clothing right in front of him. Jesus could have hardly understood or intended the outcome of this, but God could superintend it.

Now, thus far we've seen how many of the key players in this drama freely of their own will intended one thing but they wound up producing a series of unintended consequences, all of which were superintended by God. The result was that these men acting only in their own self-interest with absolute freedom, they all wound up playing a crucial role in the unfolding passion of Christ. To suggest that all of this happened by chance is to stretch credulity into a pretzel.

See, to understand God's superintending power is to see him work his will through the free wills of fallen man. And we saw this in Caiaphas, we saw this in Judas and Peter and the soldiers, but the next character in this drama was not even human. It was the enemy of our souls, it was Satan himself. You see, Satan intended many, many different things to happen, but God superintended them to suit his glory and his plan and still preserve our freedom to choose

badly. You know, most folks see Easter in terms of chocolate bunnies and Easter eggs and stuff like that, and Christians see it in terms of war. You see, Easter is the ultimate celebration of the victory in the war between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. And it was a war that started all the way back in the Garden of Eden. As Adam and Eve are standing before God, they're receiving their sentence for the disobedience and they're standing right there with the serpent who was the embodiment of Satan, and so we need to go back there and just watch what's taking place. We're just kind of peering into the courtroom as it were in *Genesis 3:11*. It says this: *He -- that's God -- said this, he said this to Adam and Eve -- "Who told you that they were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."*

So right from the start, right all the way back in the book of

Genesis, the very beginning in the Garden of Eden, God is identifying two warring parties. The battle is to be between the serpent and his offspring and the woman and her offspring, and the woman is Mary and her offspring is Jesus. God announced all the way back in the Garden of Eden that Jesus would be at war with Satan. And as Jesus is about to enter into his passion, he clearly and plainly identified who it was he was going after, how he was going to fight him, how difficult it would be, and how he would ultimately claim victory. I mean, he did all of this in *John 12:23*. Let me just read it to you. It says: *And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of*

this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

Well, first we have the "who." Jesus is going after -- quote -- *"the ruler of this world."* Well, that's the name that he gave to Satan. Secondly, we have how he was going to fight him. Jesus said, *"When I am lifted up from the earth."* It is the cross that's going to lift Jesus up. Verse 33: *He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.* And thirdly, Jesus addresses how difficult it's going to be. In verse 27, he says: *"Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour?' But for this purpose I have come to this hour."* And lastly he describes how he's going to claim ultimate victory. In verse 31, he says: *Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.* So we ask, how would Jesus' death on the cross be the judgment of the whole world and the casting out of its ruler? Well, like all the others in this drama, Jesus took what the devil intended for disaster and defeat and he superintended it for his own victory. You see, the enemy knew that God's justice was perfect because he knew that God was a perfect God. And that means that every single infraction, every single time any one of us falls short of the glory of God from a stolen paper clip to the act of murder itself, it has to be paid for. And

I'm sure you've all heard this many, many times, people say well, you know, if God is all powerful, then why doesn't he just forgive everybody of everything? Well, the simple answer to that is if he does that, he's no longer perfectly just. I mean, think about it for a second, I mean, should Hitler get a pass? What about ISIS? Or Boko Haram? Or about Al-Shabaab? Just this week they murdered 147 students. They confronted people and asked them if they were Christians, and if they said, "yes," they shot and killed them on the spot. Now, should God forgive those murders just because he's all powerful? I mean, where would his justice be? You see, every single sin we commit, it incurs a cosmic debt that must be paid for by someone, and either Jesus will pay for it or you will, but no sin will ever go unpaid. I admit, it's easy to see the need for justice when you talk about wanton acts of murder of students and children and that it's much harder to see in a stolen paper clip, but the fact is, everything less than perfect has to be accounted for in the moral universe that God occupies, and God knows that. But guess who else knows that? Satan knows that. Now, Satan has no power over God whatsoever and God owes Satan absolutely nothing. But God does owe his own sense of justice the perfection that stems from his character. And Satan's quite happy to point out each and every time we fall short of that perfection. That's why he's known as the accuser. *Revelation 12:10* says: *And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom*

of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God."

You see, God in his omniscience and justice had to deal with our sin. And he did it by the one thing that caused Jesus to say: *"Now my heart is troubled."* You see, Jesus didn't do it by nobly shouldering the burden of our sin; he did it by becoming our sin. *2 Corinthians 5:21* says: *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* The perfect son of God, the flawless one, who delighted in the fellowship with the Father from all eternity had on the cross become every single repulsive thing that sin represents. And so when God looked down from heaven, he no longer saw his precious son, instead he saw rape and murder and pride and envy and gossip and pornography and drug addiction. You name it, Jesus had become it. And God poured out his collective righteous and just fury going backwards to Adam and forwards to the very last believer who will ever be born, and God poured out that fury not on the heads of those who belong to Christ but on Christ himself.

Do you realize that there's a personal dossier, a personal dossier of sin for every one of us, that it's been added to every single day from the day that we were born to the day that we die? God's

made that abundantly clear in his word. This is what he says in Romans 2:5, he says: *But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. He will render to each one according to his works: To those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek. In Ecclesiastes 12, it says: For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil. Matthew 12:36: "I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." Luke 12: "Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops."* Those words spell catastrophe for every single person on the face of this planet who doesn't know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. You know, the stark truth is this: every single sin ever committed is going to be paid for either by Christ or by you.

Now, Satan intended to see Jesus's ultimate sacrifice of himself be

somehow made less than flawless by a failure in Jesus himself. See, if Jesus's sacrifice had not been transcendently flawlessly perfect, then God's justice could not have accepted it, Jesus would have stayed in the ground, he would have remained dead. And so from the moment that Jesus gave up his spirit to the moment that he rose from the grave, the entire universe was holding its breath as it awaited the final proof that Jesus' sacrifice was accepted. And what we are celebrating is the fact that the empty tomb proves that it was accepted. And that dossier that Satan has for each of us? It was taken by Jesus and nailed to the cross. *Colossians 2:13* says: *And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.* Paul is painting for us this triumphal portrait of the cross. He sees Jesus for what he's actually accomplished with your record and my record of sin nailed to his cross. The rulers and authorities knew all too well the legalities of God's perfection. They know full well that the wages of sin is death, and they were prepared for justice's sake to demand that that debt be paid. And at the cross, God figuratively and literally shut them up. Again, *Revelation 12:10*:

And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God." You see, Satan could accuse us day and night, but Christ had now the ultimate response, Romans 8:33: *Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died -- more than that, who was raised -- who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.* So Paul completes this note of triumph in verse 15, he says: *He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them open shame, by triumphing over them in him.* See, Paul saw Christ and the cross as it really was: intended by Satan as the ultimate defeat not only for us but also for the son of God. Superintended by God as a victory for us and a triumph for Christ. The enemy saw the shame but the kingdom saw the triumph in dying the death of the crucifixion. And where the enemy intended only shame in Jesus nailed like a common criminal to a tree, well, the kingdom superintended triumph. They saw King Jesus nailing our sins to that tree. And where the enemy intended only shame in the king of the universe subjected to the scorn of the religious leaders who mocked him, the kingdom superintended triumph. They saw King Jesus disarming the spiritual rulers and authorities by removing their right to accuse us. And when the enemy intended only shame in a

public display of beatings and mocking and nails and nakedness, the kingdom superintended triumph. They saw King Jesus displaying a humility and a obedience that stunned the whole universe into silent worship. And when the enemy intended only shame in the King of life itself having bowed his precious head in death, the kingdom superintended triumph. They saw King Jesus openly and willingly displaying the splendor of God's justice and mercy. So the enemy gloated in what it intended to be in its view the ultimate display of shame and humiliation on the cross, and yet the kingdom triumphed in superintending the very same display to showcase and to publicly display to the universe the height and breadth and width and depth of the love of God in Christ Jesus.

You know, in his ministry while he was here on earth, Jesus frequently told us that heaven's economy was exactly the opposite of what we could expect of earth's. He said, if you want to be exalted, you need to be humbled, but if you're humble, you will be exalted. He said if you want to lead, you have to serve. If you want to be rich, you've got to become poor. If you want to be wise, you must become as simple as a child. If you want to live, you better be willing to die. If you want to understand God's economy, just take planet earth's and turn it upside down. That's exactly what Jesus did throughout his life and ministry, and that's exactly how he turned the shame of the cross into the triumph of

the cross. Quite frankly, the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly realms never even realized they were being had, even though they thought they were gloating in victory. *He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.* The Chinese say, "He who laughs last laughs best." God actually says something close to that in Psalm 37, he says this, he says: *The wicked plot against the righteous and gnash their teeth at them; but the Lord laughs at the wicked, for he knows their day is coming.*

Here's the good news for every one of us. You see, God's superintending power, it's not just for Caiaphas or Judas or Peter and the rest. God says in *Romans 8:28*: *We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.* So if you love the Lord Jesus Christ, then God has been superintending your life in the very same way from the very beginning. If God hasn't touched you, then all this is going to seem like a weird, silly fairy tale that's going to mean nothing to no one. But if God is speaking to you today about things that you intended in one way and he's superintending in another way, speak to me, speak to a deacon, speak to someone. You see, his superintending grace can turn Easter from a day of chocolate bunnies and Easter eggs into the day he intends it to be or should I say superintends it to be: The celebration of the

resurrection of the King. Let's pray.

Father, we do thank you for your superintending power. Father, we have seen so many times intended and unintended consequences and we've seen them superintended by you. Father, thank you for your overwhelming grace, strength, and power, as evidenced through all of the superintending work you did through the passion, through the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Help us to understand and to thank you for that superintending power. And if anyone here is sensing the touch of God superintending his life, I pray that they would come, speak to me, get this thing squared away today on Easter Sunday. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.