

**A Journey with John | “Why Are You Crying” | Pastor Craig Lawrence |
Easter Sunday, March 31, 2024 |**

Worship Greeter: Natani Contreras encouraged everyone that Resurrection Sunday and abundant life in Jesus are part of our worship today! Celebrate Jesus!

Worship Leaders: Sydni Gaspar and David Stanley led everyone in worshipping King Jesus, the Resurrected Son of God..

Worship song #1: *“In Christ Alone”* sang “Hallelujah to the King, Christ the Lord my song and cornerstone, my solid ground, my comforter, my all in all. This gift of Love died on the Cross. He died for every sin.”

Worship song #2: *“Forever”* sang “Give thanks to the Lord. His body on the Cross, the power of death broken. Forever He is glorified, lifted high, He is Risen and Alive! His perfect Love couldn't be overcome, the Lamb has overcome!”

Worship song #3: *“We Crown You”* sang “Open my eyes, I want to see Jesus, I want to reach out to touch Him, open my ears, I want to hear Him. To the One who overcame death, we Crown You and fall face down. We worship You and cry out You're Worthy God.”

Pastor Doug followed worship with prayer encouragement to remind us that today two women went to the tomb and found the tomb's stone rolled away. Behold, two angels asked *why are you looking for the living among the dead?* Pastor Doug shared that Jesus is the only One who knows how to get out of the grave and the One to help us get out of the grave. We pray for You to lift us out of the grave. You Lord sit on the throne at the Right Hand of the Father.

Jesus is Risen, and everyone repeated~Risen Indeed!

Pastor Jason opened announcements by reflecting on the power of Resurrection Sunday!! He shared Slides that showed a variety of events at our church for all to join:

1. Pathway: The three component way for getting involved.
2. Life Groups: New season starts the second week of April.
3. Ask the Pastor's for Prime Timers: April 3 - 9-11 am.
4. Young Adults Hike: April 6
5. Water Baptisms: April 7 Second Service
6. Healing Class: April 9th

Pastor Jason encouraged everyone to join with God's financial plan in Tithes and Offerings. This allows for each person to encounter God's personal plan and assists a wide variety of ministries to have an impact on the community.

There are many components in today's sermon. It is highly recommended to watch Pastor Craig's sermon video for his detailed presentation. There are several slides that focus on God's Word to spend time reading and meditating upon. As well, there are sermon video segments that highlight the impact Jesus had on a wide variety of people during Resurrection Sunday as well as the transformed lives of people who encountered Him.

1. Pastor Craig opened our *Easter Sunday* sermon “**Why Are You Crying?**” Our goal today is to encounter Jesus. In *John 20:1-18* we will reflectively ask the question *Why Are You Crying?* In the verses we see Mary Magdalene at the tomb, weeping because she found it empty. Pastor Craig prayed that today’s sermon goal would be to commence or accelerate the breaking off of belief systems or forgiveness of self that may prevent a deeper, more intimate relationship with our Risen King Jesus.

Pastor Craig reviewed the apostle John's life or as he called himself the one Jesus loved. We are taught that Jesus loves us too. John’s revelation of Jesus’ Love may have been qualitatively deeper than the other disciples experienced.

John wrote the book of *Revelation, 1st John, 2nd John, and 3rd John, plus the gospel of John*. He didn’t get martyred but the leadership tried to kill him by boiling him in oil.

The Lord had other plans for John’s life.

Pastor Craig asked reflectively~*why did Jesus have to die?* Wasn’t there another way? He reviewed the book of Genesis that highlights God giving Adam and Eve free will or the choice to choose good or evil. Adam and Eve tried covering their sin with leaves but that wasn’t an acceptable way to take away sin.

Jesus and the Father planned a Perfect Sacrifice to take away sin. Jesus takes away sin, guilt, and shame.

*We celebrate the Risen King Jesus from death at Easter. **Jesus is the Perfect Sacrifice.*** The Old Testament points to the death and Resurrection of Jesus as Perfect.

There are *two Slides* that highlight John’s teaching that Jesus was in the beginning as Creator. Also, that God used the shedding of blood to cover sin. The Perfect Lamb Jesus would be the sacrifice. Jesus is the perfect sacrifice and met the requirements of perfection from His Father.

Pastor Craig shared that since Adam and Eve these concepts have been misunderstood. Even though Jesus repeatedly taught and fulfilled the Old Testament teachings about His **Perfect Sacrifice**, it’s been misunderstood.

Pastor Craig also reviewed Mary Madelene’s place in Scripture. Aside from Jesus’ Mother Mary, Mary Magdalene is talked about more than any other woman in Scripture. She was bound by demonic strongholds and oppression, continually searching for emotional help and hope.

He shared a video Slide from *The Chosen* movie that highlights Mary’s lifestyle before knowing Jesus. The video shows Jesus assuring a confused Mary that He Redeemed her.

The real Mary begins to open up when realizing Jesus Loves her without judging her.

Pastor Craig reminded everyone that Jesus lovingly chases us everywhere. He knows our real name and embraces us with Love and Freedom, without judgement.

The movie video can be seen in the sermon video.

Share your testimony when you realized Jesus loved you without judging you.

How do you share about the Perfect Sacrifice from a biblical perspective with people who may have no biblical experience?

2. Pastor Craig shared the Slide highlighting The Empty Tomb as taught in *John 20:1-18*. Several slides focus on the 18 verses.

Slide 1: vv 1-2 teaches Mary's discovery of the empty tomb and running to Peter and John to share the news.

Slide 2: vv 3-6 teaches both disciples responding to Mary's news by running to the empty tomb and only finding strips of linen. John said he ran faster than the other.

Slide 3: vv 7-10 teaches Peter and John also discover the burial clothing.

Slide 4: vv 11-12 teaches that Mary has returned to the tomb but is now weeping and crying, along with meeting two angels.

Slide 5: vv 13-14 teaches that the angels ask Mary: "*Why Are You Crying?*" Next, she meets the Risen King Jesus. At this point her weeping affects her vision and she doesn't recognize Jesus.

Slide 6: vv 15-16 teaches that Jesus calls her name to get her attention. *She knew His voice!*

Slide 7: vv 17-18 teaches that she finally recognized Him. Jesus instructed her to share the news with the disciples of meeting Him.

Pastor Craig shared that Mary's hope was empty because her King and Messiah had been put to death. But on Resurrection Sunday, her hope was restored.

Share an experience you have had that caused hope in Jesus to be restored. Or, describe how you have ministered to another person and be the person that God used for the restoration to occur.

3. Pastor Craig added reflective support to the sermon that Jesus wept during His ministry. This support is found in *Luke 19:41-42*. Its focus is on how the then world misunderstood much of Jesus' teaching which was a major reason for His weeping.

Pastor Craig shared that our contemporary world has the entire Bible to read and be taught from in contrast to the time of Jesus, yet we still often don't understand or accept it.

Pastor Craig elaborated by sharing that God is misunderstood in today's world. The world's belief systems are often commonly accepted and prevail. These are common reasons for people not believing 100% of Scripture originating from entrenched belief systems.

God wants to reach us and to change our belief systems. He wants us to believe that He is a God of Love but our belief systems often portray God as a punisher. The world teaches that when experiencing pain in life it's the pain with and from God.

Pastor Craig asked, *do you see yourself the way God sees you* or through the world's lens of thinking? The enemy wants everyone to sever relationships with God because he wants us to believe that God doesn't love us.

Pastor Craig shared that we often break God's Heart with false belief system thinking but not His Love and desire for a relationship.

Share how you may have ministered to another believer or non believer that thought God was a punisher, and used the pain of life to punish someone as a consequence of behavior.

4. Pastor Craig next shared a slide video of Mary Magdalene meeting Jesus in a tent in the Chosen movie after some time of restoration.

Mary is still distraught thinking Jesus may be judgmental and shame her. Jesus sees that she's still struggling. He encourages her to look at Him and assures her that He and the Father forgive her.

All she needed at this point was to *hear I Forgive You Mary. You have a new identity*. He invites her to give Him her heart.

Forgiveness is partly when we engage and exercise forgiveness of ourselves.

This movie scene is about forgiveness of self and the resulting freedom and joy that occurs.

Pastor Craig encouraged everyone to be like Mary. Courageously repent, ask the Lord for His new lifestyle to live in according to His plan.

He shared that forgiveness of self is often experienced as a war inside in our mind and spirit that continually plagues us. *Engage Jesus, ask for strength to forgive yourself.*

Share an experience that describes forgiving yourself of a belief system, or, past lifestyle behavior. Share with a trusted friend how forgiving yourself changed your view of God and brought about transformation in your life. If you have taken our Discipleship church course: Healing, how did the Biblical Forgiveness chapter empower you to forgive yourself or others?

5. Concluding today's Resurrection Sunday sermon Pastor Craig invited everyone that may be struggling over a sin or past lifestyle of sin to repeat this prayer:

“Jesus, help me to see what You see. Help me to receive Your forgiveness. Help me to break views that aren't of You. Help me to celebrate what's good from You. I receive You to be my Savior. In Jesus' Name, Amen.”

Our final worship song revisited **“We Crown You”**:

“We crown You and fall face down. You are worthy God, to the One who gave His very own life away, took our guilt and shame by hanging on the Cross. He did this for the world He loved with His precious Blood. We worship and cry out, You are worthy God.”