

Our prayer for you is that you would have the same experience and encounter that the disciples did that first Easter, that you would find rest for your soul. You see, it was just three short years before that first Easter that Jesus came to the disciples and invited them to follow him. "Come follow me," he said, "and I will make you fishers of men." He promised to show them the kingdom. He offered them abundant life. And so they left it all to follow Jesus. And for the next three years, things were amazing. They watched Jesus do things they had never seen before. They heard him say things they had never heard before. They experienced things they had never experienced before. For three years, life was incredible. And then one day, seemingly out of nowhere, Jesus is arrested. He's put on trial. He's judged.

He's condemned and sentenced to death even though he hadn't done a single thing wrong. The roman soldiers, they beat him and they whipped him. They put a crown of thorns on his head. And then they nailed him to a cross. And the disciples stood helplessly by, watching as Jesus gave up his last breath, cried out, "It is finished." And they saw as they put a hard spear into his side. Jesus was dead. He was buried. And he was gone. The disciples were disoriented, they were confused, they were broken, they were lost and so they locked themselves away in this little room and they were all sitting there just like in the seat you're sitting at. And in each one of their seats there were so many different questions, so many different emotions, so much different pain and brokenness.

Peter's seat was full of failure and regret because he had just denied Jesus, his best friend, to a servant girl. John's seat was full of shame and embarrassment because when they came to arrest Jesus, they grabbed a hold of John also and he pulled away and they ripped his robe off of him and he ran away naked. James's seat was full of apathy because James was a man of passion, a man of purpose. He thought he was going to change the world with Jesus. And here he sits thinking, all that was for nothing and none of this even really matters anymore. Thomas's seat was empty because he had so much doubt, he didn't even want to be around the disciples. All of their seats were full of the bitterness and the pain and the rejection of the betrayal of Judas. And here they sat, in their pain, in their brokenness, in their anguish.

And then out of nowhere the resurrected Jesus appears. And he comes to them in their seat and he says, "Peace be with you." And he shows them the nail holes in his hands and the spear hole in his side as if to say, guys, look I was dead but I am now alive. I have defeated sin, death and the grave. I have destroyed the works of darkness. I am making all things new. And he breathed on them and said, receive the Holy Spirit and then he sent them back out into their life with faith, hope and love. You see, Easter came to their chair. And much like the disciples over these past few years, we've gone through a lot.

We have lots of disorientation, and brokenness, and pain and confusion. And today we all come in here and we all sit down in a seat and in all of our seats, there are different questions and pain and brokenness. And so the question I just want to ask you is, what's in your seat today? Is it anxiety and depression? Is it worry and fear? Is it shame and guilt? Maybe

brokenness and bitterness? Maybe anger, disillusionment, apathy? Like what's in your seat? What's in your chair? You see, the seats that we sit in, the chairs that we occupy, they represent so much. They represent the responsibilities that we have, the roles that have been placed on us, the burdens that we carry.

Our chairs represent the expectations that have been placed upon us, the demands that are on our life. They represent the pride that we carry, the stereotypes that follow us, the judgments that are upon us, the pressure that we feel like we are under. Our chairs represent so much. And just because you're sitting doesn't mean you're at rest. Just because you're quiet doesn't mean you're at peace. And just because you're still doesn't mean that you're settled. You see, I love that Jesus tells us, "My grace is sufficient for you. My power is made perfect in your weakness." In other words, Jesus is saying, my grace is enough for any and everything that is in your seat, that is in your chair. You see, I believe this Easter just like that first Easter, the resurrected Jesus has come.

And he is walking up and down the aisles and he has come to your seat. And he is looking at you and saying, peace be with you. And he wants to show you his hands and his side as if to say, I have overcome. Look at who I am and look at what I have done. And he wants to breathe his Holy Spirit into your life and he wants to send you back out with faith, hope and love. Easter has come to your seat, to your chair, regardless of what's going on in it. You see, what I love about the resurrected Jesus is that what we watch in the gospels is that he is always going to people. He didn't expect them to come to him, he goes to them.

He goes to Mary who is devastated and he just says her name. He goes to the disciples who are terrified, locked away and he shows them his hands and his side. He goes to Thomas who is so full of doubt that he says, Thomas, it's okay, touch me and see that I am real. He goes to Peter sitting in his boat and he overwhelms him with kindness. Jesus came to seek and save the lost. He doesn't make us come to him. No, no, the resurrected Jesus comes to us. You see, the problem for so many of us is that if we're honest, we feel like Easter is really irrelevant in our seats. Like every year, we go through a whole lot to try to put a big Easter together. We try to bring the creativity and media and a message and music and art and all the different things with this big Easter experience. And if we're honest, we kind of come but we see Easter as a religious event, a one-hour church service.

And we're often more focused on where we're going to have lunch and did we wear the right dress, and did we get the family selfie and all those things. Easter just feels irrelevant in our own seat. And even if it feels relevant for the hour you are in church, if we're honest it feels really irrelevant from the other seats we occupy, like our seat at work, our chair at school, the seats we sit in in our family and in our daily life. But nothing could be further from the truth. You see, I love that the Bible says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of salvation for all who believe." For I am not ashamed. In other words, it's the most relevant

thing in my life. The gospel, what is the gospel? The gospel is good news. It's not good advice. It's not a good suggestion. It's not a good idea. It's not a good hope. It's good news.

News. Think of what news is. News is something that's already happened. It's a fact. It's taken place and because of what's taken place, everything has changed. You say, so what's the good news? The good news is that Jesus, the Son of God, stepped out of heaven, came to this earth and took humanity upon himself. He moved into our neighborhood with grace and truth and he came to sit in our seat. He came to sit in your seat and he was tempted in every way that you're tempted. And he faced every struggle that you face. He went through every circumstance, every situation, all of the pain, the brokenness of this world, it was all placed on him. And where we fall short he was victorious. He was arrested, and judged and condemned on our behalf, sentenced to death. He went to the cross, he was dead, he was buried in the grave and three days later, he rose again that all who believe shall have everlasting life.

You see, Jesus came to sit in our seat so we could sit in his seat of rest. That's why it is the power of salvation. The gospel has the power to save you, heal you, make you whole, set you free from any and everything that is in your chair. Jesus says, "The thief comes to steal, kill and destroy. But I have come that you might have life." Jesus wants to give you back what's been stolen. He wants to resurrect what's been killed and he wants to rebuild what's been destroyed. You see, the problem for us is we take Easter out of its context and that's why it feels irrelevant. But you have to put Easter back into its context.

You have to put it back into the context of the three fundamental questions of humanity which are simply: where did I come from? Why am I here? And where am I going? Those are the three fundamental questions of humanity. Like where did you come from? Like come on, do you really think you came from a monkey? Like do you really think that you are a coincidence of this universe? That you came from an amoeba or the two cells collided together, it's such a way to create a bang that somehow created you? Come on, inherently inside yourself, you know that's not true. You are made in the image and likeness of God. You came from God, from God's heart and His mind and His spirit. God made you because He wanted you, because He loved you, because He saw you, because He believed in you and He gave you the great privilege of carrying His image and His likeness in this world.

Why are you here? Do you really think that you're here to eat, drink and be merry? I mean, do you really believe that the point of your life is just to do what you want, when you want, how you want? To take the path of least resistance and personal happiness? Come on, inside you, you know that's not true. You were created for the purposes of God. You were created to rule and reign with God, commissioned by God to bring His kingdom to this earth, to destroy the works of darkness, to do the good works which He prepared in advance for you to do. You were created to create, and lead, and love, and design, and build, and inspire, and preach and prophesy. You are made for a great purpose. So you came from God and you are created for the purposes of God, but where are you going?

Because you see, you can't change where you came from and you can't change why you're here, but you get to decide where you're going. See, the Bible tells us the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus." When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, they released sin, death, shame, brokenness and the kingdom of darkness into this world. They brought the consequence of rebellion and sin. And so heaven and hell are real places, and every one of us makes a decision of which place we're going to go, which is why Jesus came. "For God so loved the world that he sent his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."

In other words, Jesus isn't mad at you. He's not out to get you. He didn't come to condemn you. He came to save you and offer you new and everlasting life. "For God made him, Jesus, who knew no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." In other words, Jesus came to sit in your seat, to take upon him all of the sin, and all of the shame, and all of the brokenness, and all of the dark things of our lives upon himself that we might have his righteousness, his peace and his Joy. "Christ died for our sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God." He died to set you free that you might be forgiven. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – this is not of yourselves. It is the gift of God – not by works, so that no man can boast."

In other words, there is nothing you have to do but believe and receive that Jesus is who he says he is and did what he said he did. "Because of God's great love for us, God who is rich in mercy, made us alive even when we were dead in our transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved. God raised us up with Christ and seated us in heavenly places with him." In other words Jesus came to sit in your seat so you could forever sit in his seat of righteousness, peace and joy. So where are you going?

You see, the thing we'll say sometimes is how could a loving God send anyone to hell? It's the wrong question. The right question is how could anyone choose to reject the salvation of a God who is full of love and mercy and grace? So can I just ask you, what's in your seat today? Is it pride and pain? Sin and shame? Brokenness and burdens? Jesus has come to set you free. He offers you rest from your past, rest in the present and rest for your future. He wants you to be able to sit and be at rest, to be quiet, to be at peace, to be still and to be settled.

Maybe today he's whispering your name. Maybe he's showing you who he is and what he has done. Maybe he's coming to you in your doubts and saying, it's okay. Or maybe he's just overwhelming you with kindness. But this year, Easter has come to your chair. So you close your eyes with me for a moment. Can I just ask you, what's in your seat? What'd you bring into your chair today

what's the brokenness, burden, the pain and the sorrow, the fear and the shame? Can you now just picture the resurrected Jesus coming towards you, looking at you with eyes of love and mercy, and just whispering to you, peace be with you? Can you just see him showing you his hands and his side, showing you that everything that has ever been required from you has been paid in full, that you don't have to sit in the seat of the chaos of this world, but you can sit and rest in the finished work of Jesus?

And then can you just feel his Holy Spirit being breathed upon you? Can you just breathe in the very presence of God and experience his salvation fresh today? You see, all we have to do is invite Jesus into our seat, to say Jesus, I believe that you are who you say you are, that you did what you said you did. That you died for me to rescue me from this seat that I sit in, that I might have everlasting life with you. This is what Easter looks like, an experience and an encounter with the resurrected Jesus.

May you have eyes to see, ears to hear and a heart to receive the resurrected Jesus in your chair.