

Faith. Tear down rotten and moldy structures and find a firm foundation. A foundation built on the resurrection of Jesus. Recreate with the strength of God's people and hope for the future. Ready to reconstruct.

Christ is risen. Hallelujah. Yes, Christ is risen. Hallelujah. Yes. Happy Easter. This is actually the day that the Lord has made. And we are rejoicing and we are glad and we are just. It's been a great day today.

Well, we are going to be talking about the resurrection today. Yes, of course. And we're going to be looking at the John Chapter 20 version. Now, there are other accounts of what happened after Jesus died on the cross and was buried in the tomb. But today, we're going to focus on John's account. So we begin chapter 20, verse one.

It says Early in the morning of the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. She ran to Simon, Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved and said they have taken the Lord from the tomb and we don't know where they've put him.

Peter and the other disciple left to go to the tomb. They were running together, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and was the first to arrive at the tomb, bending down to take a look. He saw the linen cloths lying there, but he didn't go in following him. SIMON Peter entered the tomb and saw the linen cloths lying there.

He also saw the face cloth that had been on Jesus's head. It wasn't with the other clothes, but was folded up in its own place. Then the other disciple, the one who arrived at the tomb, also went inside. He saw and believed how they do that. I've never seen anything like that before. That was unbelievable. Well, that was unexpected.

That was amazing. What just happened. Mind blown. Now, these are some things that people might have said after seeing the magician's show. So you thought I was going to say resurrection, but I didn't. So and you may think that I'm going to say that the resurrection wasn't some sort of magic trick, which I will say later, But I actually want you to think about the psychological aspects of magic.

Now, magicians and good storytellers, they have something in common and that is a good setup. You've heard good storytellers, right? You know, they there's something about them where they just pull you in like you lean in. You cannot wait to hear what the rest of the story is. You know, maybe something funny is going to happen or something inspirational is going to come out of their mouth, depending on who you're talking to.

But good storytellers pull you in. Now, when you go to a magic show, you go with expectations and experiences, and the magician needs to remove those prejudices to manipulate the audience so that the audience can be amazed. Dr. Gustaf Koon He studies the psychology of magic, and he said this magic relies on powerful psychological illusions, and magicians create their tricks by exploiting gaps and errors in our conscious experience, he says.

For example, magicians use misdirection to manipulate what you attend to, and this allows them to control what you see and what you miss. Magicians use manipulation like redirection when it

comes to their tricks, and in this case, manipulation is not necessarily a bad thing. Magic is fascinating because of the psychology in it. It's remarkable even sometimes when you know the trick.

I know magicians are never supposed to reveal their secrets, but sometimes you know the secret and you still see and you see the trick and you still think, How did they do that? When you go to a church, you go with expectations and experiences, and the church or the pastor needs to remove those prejudices, to manipulate the audience so that the audience can be amazed.

It's not a great thing for me to stand up here on Easter Sunday morning and say that churches manipulate you. But it's true because churches are made up of imperfect, flawed humans. Now, churches sometimes use manipulation for good, just like in the magic show. But sometimes churches use manipulation and cause some pretty significant harm. Sometimes it's simply just to keep up the image in order to protect the churches or the pastors' reputation.

Sometimes churches use manipulation to try to shame you or scare you into doing something or not doing something. TV evangelists have been caught doing some not great things. Sometimes during their revivals or during their shows, they have been caught using earpieces in order to be fed information to heal people in the name of Jesus. Now, I'm not saying Jesus can't heal because I believe that, but I'm saying that sometimes church leaders have manipulated the system.

Peter Popoff and his wife, he was a pastor and his wife, they were the ones that were caught with this earpiece and so they kind of went quiet for a while. But then they came back and they started this business selling little baggies of Miracle Spring water, claiming that if you purchased this and you drank it, your debts would be gone.

Sounds pretty good. This is what we call the prosperity gospel. The idea that the more you give, the more God will raise your debts and send you surprise checks in the mail. This is what they claim. Now, many people prosper from this. There's churches, there's pastors with private jets and fancy cars. But unfortunately, some of these churches and some of these organizations are targeting the poor and the vulnerable instead of helping the poor and the vulnerable.

Now, there's some scripture that best backs, backs this up. There's the scripture that says give and you will receive. There's the scripture that says that God loves the cheerful giver. Now, I do know that letting go of your money does. Bless you. I'm certainly more generous with my money today than I was ten or 15 years ago.

And it does bless you, not because more money is coming rolling in, but rather I have a feeling and a certainty that God provides more in this life than an abundance of wealth. So here's what I really want to say is I want to say that we can get caught up in things that may misrepresent the gospel. And as individuals supported by a community.

As we gather together, we should allow for a time where we tear down on the preconceived notions, just like a magician does before his show. We should tear down everything that we were taught or everything that we believe and think about the significance of Christ's death and sacrifice on the cross. We think about the empty tomb, and we relate to the emptiness that we sometimes feel inside of us.

Sometimes we feel broken and unworthy. And we realize that this empty tomb is a sign. And then we turn away from the empty tomb. And we find the man standing there in the garden, the resurrected man. So let's turn back to our scripture. Now, remember Simon, Peter and John and Mary Magdalene had arrived at the tomb and they found it empty.

It says John went inside to see the empty tomb and believed. And then it says they didn't yet understand the scripture that Jesus must rise from the dead. Then the disciples return to the place where they were staying. John believed that Jesus was resurrected. He didn't understand how this was tied to the written scripture and remember that the scripture was different than what we have today.

But He knew that Jesus had been resurrected. So we continue on. It says Mary stood outside the tomb, crying as she cried. She bent down to look into the tomb. She saw two angels dressed in white, seated where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and one at the foot. The angels asked her woman, Why are you crying?

She replied, They have taken away my Lord, and I don't know where they've put him. As soon as she said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there. But she didn't know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her woman, Why are you crying? Who are you looking for? Thinking he was the gardener, she replied, Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him and I will get to him.

Now, it seems that Mary didn't immediately think resurrection like John did. And I don't blame her. She's grieving. She's distraught. She had just experienced a couple of days before her friend in this gruesome, awful, awful death. So logically, it doesn't make sense for her to think that Jesus is standing before her. Then the scripture says Jesus said to her, Mary, she turned and said to him in Aramaic, Rabbouni, which means teacher.

Now, maybe Jesus looked different intentionally to prevent people from recognizing him. Or maybe it was because Mary was so distraught that she didn't recognize him, but either way, Mary doesn't recognize Jesus at first. Not until she heard her name. Her own name was spoken by Jesus. There is power in hearing your name spoken. Now, here is an example.

Pippa Miller is our office manager. Many of you know her. You know that she is a beautiful person on the inside and the outside. You also know that she has lots of energy in her and around her. Well, Pippa and I, we take turns making coffee in the office during the week. We don't always make coffee. It's not an everyday thing.

But when one of us is in the mood for coffee, we'll go to the kitchen and we'll make coffee. So I felt like, it was the coffee day. And so I went to the kitchen and I started to look at the coffee pot and I whip. I was going back to my desk and on the way back by Piper's desk, I said, Hey, I started coffee.

Now, again, if you know Pippa, you know that she has a lot of energy. Well, I think Pippa really needed coffee this day because she was really excited. She was really animated. And so when I said, Hey, I started coffee, she she now she could have said this. Thank you so much. I love you. But she didn't. I said, I started coffee and she said, Thank you so much.

I love you, Mandy. Barkhaus. She said my name and I felt special hearing my she said my full name and I wasn't troubled by my parents. Right. This was a good way. But I felt special. I didn't make the coffee for Piper. I selfishly made the coffee for myself. But yet when she said my name with those words, I felt appreciated.

I felt special. I felt loved. There is power that is deeply personal when you hear your own name and it can have a psychological effect. When you remember somebody's name and you say it, it can make somebody feel important and valued and seen. So churches that use the power of names kind of are manipulating. But I think that this is an okay thing because relationships are a critical part of being a Christian.

That's what it's about. And from this account that we read in John, these are some of Jesus's very first words saying Mary's name. Now, I am sure that Mary hearing Jesus saying her name was even more spectacular than Pippa, thanking me for making coffee. Let's finish up this scripture passage. Jesus said to her, Don't hold on to me, for I haven't yet gone up to my father.

Go to my brothers and sisters and tell them I'm going up to my father and your father to my God and your God. Mary Magdalene left and announced to the disciples, I've seen the Lord. Then she told them what he said to her. And I'm guessing it probably included he said my name because there's power in that. Christ is resurrected.

Jesus was resurrected. And without the resurrection, we just have Jesus as a good role model, but instead we have Jesus as our Savior. The resurrection isn't some sort of magic trick. It's not some sort of smoke and mirrors. Rather, that's the only reason that we are gathered here today. That's the only reason that we are gathered on every Sunday.

If Jesus was just a really wise teacher, it wouldn't matter. But instead, today, we can say with confidence, Christ, the Lord is risen. Hallelujah. Now this is the good news of Jesus. This is the supernatural thing happening in our natural world. God breaks down death's door by raising up God's one and only son. Breaking something down in order to build it up can be an advancing force.

It's not always easy, but it can be a powerful force. Now I'm going to say a word that some of you are very, very familiar with and others you may not be as familiar with it in the context of religion, but that word is deconstruction. Now deconstruction. It's not a new concept in Christianity, but it's certainly becoming more and more mainstream to hear about.

Simply put, and I say, simply put, because there are a lot of layers to deconstruction and sometimes these layers are very, very painful. But simply put, deconstruction is working through the understanding of how religious institutions have failed and failed in some pretty significant ways. You may have heard somebody say, Well, I'm still a follower of Jesus, but I'm done with the institution of the church.

And some people have just said, I'm just done with Jesus, too. We when we read the news, when we have maybe our self experienced church abuse, when we hear about some of the things that the churches are promoting or standing for, no one can blame people for stepping away from the church. Now, for some churches, for some pastors, they feel very threatened by this whole idea of deconstruction.

Now I feel like it's really important that we have this conversation. I think it's important that we go through deconstruction, that we break down our faith to the very bottom that we take time to tear it down. So that we can build it up. I say this to two confirmation classes every single year. I say, okay, kids like this was your parents faith.

And now you need to figure out what your faith is. And I think that adults need to hear this sometimes, too. In churches need to be more supportive and accepting of the various places that we are on our faith journey. Renovations can be a mess. If you've ever done a house renovation, you've done redone your kitchen. It's it's awful.

It's messy, it's inconvenient. Sometimes it's painful. But reconstruction starts with our belief in the resurrection. Like Jesus is not a quick fix, but a forever fix. It's the foundation. And if we don't build upon that foundation, it won't last. Jesus restores broken things like sex trafficking and racism and addiction and abuse. And it's not some magic formula that, oh, I believe in Jesus.

And now I won't suffer anymore. It doesn't work that way. It doesn't work. We wait. We don't say, well, I believe in Jesus. And that's all I need is faith in Jesus. Now my job is done. That's not how it works either, but rather it's the church coming together, all pursuing the kingdom of God together with transformed hearts, building relationships that sometimes start with simply saying someone's name.

All humans are searching for truth. This is why. Maybe. Maybe this is why you are a Christian. Or maybe this is why you come to church and maybe this is why you seek another faith tradition or seek wisdom in another way. Everyone searches for truth, and we communicate our truth from what we know from our past experiences and what we know from those who came before us.

We communicate our truth in certain moments of time, which then spills into our relationships and spills into our cultures. It spills into our politics and so on. For Christians, we base our truth on the resurrection and we find these accounts in the Bible. Trentell mentioned that, you know, this has been around for about 2000 years. You think after 2000 years we'd be pretty clear on what is the truth and what is not.

But the further we go from the events, of the events and the writings, the harder it gets for us to interpret the meaning behind the author's words. And so we have to do as Christians, we have to do a better job of looking at our text with a critical eye. Now, there is an overabundance of of scholars and theologians.

The first thing that I was taught in seminary, you can find a theologian and a scholar who will back up anything you want to believe almost. And the church has been kind of given this power, which they have abused at times. So for some of you, maybe you're questioning what you were taught growing up or what you believe now.

And for me, here's where I'm at. I think, okay, well, now I'm the authority and I use that in quotes. And I think, who am I that you would believe me? Who am I That I can stand up here and tell you what to think? So here's what I hope happens. I hope that on Sunday mornings I hope that you come to church and I hope that you listen to me.

And then I hope that you go home and you talk to your family or your friends or your life group and your coworkers. And I hope that sometimes you say, Pastor Mandy said this. I have never thought of it that way. And I totally agree. She's awesome. But I also hope that you leave here on Sunday mornings and you go and you meet with your family or your life group and you say, Pastor Mandy said this.

And I'm not sure I agree with that. What do you think? Let's talk about it. Let's reread the scripture and bring our own experiences of it and see for ourselves. Because your point of view matters. Because we all have our own expectations and experiences and prejudices and values. But reconstruction is hope and new life and unity. And that is the story of the resurrection.

That is the foundation for us as Christians. New life offered to all which comes from growth. So whether you're deconstructing, deconstructing your faith, or you're just solid on your faith. What does growth look like for you? Maybe it means making a commitment to worship. We have the rest of the sermon series coming up. Maybe it means taking the upcoming growth track class, which helps you determine your unique gifts, and it helps us understand your unique situation.

And it allows you for an opportunity to grow your faith in Jesus by connecting or building relationships or serving. Maybe you join a life group where people know and speak your name and where you have an opportunity to speak the name of others. Maybe you join us for our Nehemiah Action Assembly at the Lancaster Event Center on May 4th.

This is where Horizons and and and other faith communities are going to come together and we are going to be talking about how we can make mental health a priority in our community and what the criminal justice system looks like and how we can make a difference. So what is your growth look like? So what do we know?

Because of the resurrection, we know that this isn't the end, that there is more to the story. There's more to your story. There's more to my story. There's more to Horizon's story. There's more to the church's story. So we reconstruct from the resurrection. We build up from here. And the next two weeks will continue to reconstruct. We'll reconstruct our confidence of the power of God's people, will reconstruct the hope for the future.

And here's what I want to leave you on. These pictures up here are from my trip to the Holy Land last June. And this church is the Church of the Beatitudes in Capernaum. So where Jesus gave his Sermon on the Mount. So that's where they believe this happened. And the church was not spectacular. Like we went to lots of other churches that were way ornate and bigger and all of these things.

But this church impacted me in a way that I wasn't expecting. Walking into it, we were told that the church was it was built in. It's like an octagon shape. And you'll notice in the center is the altar and there's a cross on the altar. Altar and they're seats that go all the way around to the altar. It's kind of a, you know, octagon, octagon, circle shape.

And so you sit and you all sit in a circle, which is great, right? That's such a great symbol of community. But everywhere you sit, there intentionally is a window beyond the cross. So you sit and you see the cross because that is the foundation. But beyond that, you see the mission field, you see outside. That's where we go.

So. So let's be the church that focuses on the outside by tearing down all the preconceived notions we've learned over time. Let's start with our faith in the resurrection of Jesus, creating spaces here for us to grow in our faith so that we can be the light of the world. That is my hope for horizons through our faith in the resurrected Jesus Christ.

Would you pray with me? Holy God, I pray an Easter blessing over all of those who are with us this morning. I pray for those who are traveling for Easter. I pray for those who are not with us because they are sick or ill or unable to get here. And we pray that the resurrection story will transform our hearts.

Maybe for the first time, or maybe it will just rekindle the Holy Spirit light within us. May we be the people who understand stand the power of names, beginning with the name of Jesus Christ. As we share with the world around us and in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ, we say Amen.