JM Jason Mayfield

SERMON OUTLINE FOR PASTORS

YOU DON'T HAVE TO WAIT

An Easter Message: It Is Finished, He Is Risen, and You Can Start Today

> Everything required for you to be made right with God was finished at the cross, and the resurrection is the certificate that proves the debt is released. Because it is finished, you don't have to wait.

MAIN TEXT
John 19:28-30; Matthew 28:1-6

SERIES
Easter 2026

FIRST PREACHED
April 5, 2026

BY
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AT A GLANCE

THE MESSAGE

1. People find endless reasons to postpone the decision that would change their lives: tomorrow, next month, when the kids start school, when we sell the house. The message of the empty tomb is that you do not have to wait.
2. When Jesus said it is finished on the cross, what was finished was everything required for a person to be made right with God and for a life to start heading in a better direction.
3. The gospel starts with the fact that you are a sinner, by nature and by birth, and the wages of that sin is not a first death but an eternal second death.
4. The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus, and the mechanism that makes escape possible is the cross and the resurrection, not personal improvement.
5. Love is not what you do for God. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that God gave his Son as the propitiation for our sin. Righteousness by the law is exactly what Jesus came to take off of people.
6. The cross is a divine exchange. Jesus took our place on the cross so that we could take our place with him in glory.
7. The church's authority comes from neither the Pope nor the Bible. It comes from the resurrection of Jesus Christ, from a founder who is not still in the ground.
8. The resurrection is not just an event, it serves a purpose. The cross paid the debt and the resurrection is the release, the proof that the payment was accepted and the account cannot be reopened.
9. Jesus did not die for bad sinners, he died for dead sinners. There are no grades on this and no such thing as being good enough to walk into a church.
10. Salvation comes by calling on the name of the Lord, and the next steps after that are simple: come back to church, turn in the connect card, and get baptized in water.

WATCH IT PREACHED

youtu.be/AmFkzRfxsYU

READ THE ARTICLE

jasonmayfield.com/messages/easter-2026

PREACHING NOTES

Before You Preach

This is an Easter Sunday message for a room full of guests and people who come once a year. It does two jobs: it walks the basics of the gospel plainly, without assuming anyone knows them, and it calls people to respond today. The theme repeats like a refrain: “You don’t have to wait.” Say it often, and have the room say it to each other.

The opening story is a light, personal one about a childhood toy. Another preacher should use a story of his or her own about waiting years for something. Keep it fun; it buys the room’s attention for the gospel that follows.

The resurrection illustration comes from the church’s own life: IRS payroll tax liens on the church property, paid off in January 2026, and the Certificate of Release that followed. It is powerful because the document is real and can be held up. Another preacher will need his or her own picture of a debt that is paid but not yet released on paper (a paid-off car loan and the title, a paid-off mortgage and the lien release).

This message closes with a salvation invitation, a prayer said aloud together, and three next steps. Leave room for it, and plan the next steps (a connect card, a follow-up, a baptism date) before you preach.

Introduction

Later. Tomorrow. Monday. Next week. The first of the month. New Year’s Day.

At some point, we have all said it: “I’ll do it later.” Why do we keep putting things off?

Today’s message is called “You Don’t Have to Wait.” Turn to John 19 and leave it open; we will get there in a few minutes.

Illustration: the Dragon Dagger. Ask the room, “Who is the greatest superhero of all time?” (And don’t say Jesus.) Take a few answers: Superman, Spider-Man, Batman, Wonder Woman. Then give the definitive answer: Tommy Oliver, the original Green Power Ranger.

For anyone who was a kid in the early 1990s, the five-episode “Green with Evil” miniseries was more drama than we could handle. The Green Ranger starts as a villain, has a redemption arc, and joins the other five Power Rangers. He had a weapon called the Dragon Dagger, which he used to summon the Dragonzord.

Power Rangers took the world by storm, and the toys flew off the shelves. Pastor Jason desperately wanted a Dragon Dagger, but he never even saw one in a store.

Easter weekend 1994, his family did not go to church. For Easter, they went to Opryland in Nashville. He remembers nothing about the trip except a commercial in the hotel room: a sweepstakes to win a Dragon

Dagger. There was no way to enter in time. So he turned to the one person who could surely come through: the Easter Bunny. Easter morning came, the Easter Bunny came, and there was no Dragon Dagger.

Fast forward nearly 15 years. He was living on his own, working and making his own money, and his 21st birthday was coming up. The stores had failed him, the sweepstakes had failed him, and the Easter Bunny had failed him. So he turned to a more powerful source: eBay. Hold up the original 1994 Dragon Dagger.

He waited almost 15 years for that toy. And when it comes to making real changes in our lives, we wait as long as we can too. Tomorrow. Next month. When the kids go back to school. When I get a job. When we get a house. We keep putting off the very thing that would change our lives.

But I have come to tell you this morning: **you don't have to wait.**

1. It Is Finished

> JOHN 19:28-30 ESV
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> [28] After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." [29] A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. [30] When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

On the cross, Jesus said, "It is finished." It is nice to toss that phrase around, but what is finished?

Everything required for you to be made right with God, and for your life to turn around from wherever it is now. That is what was finished at the cross.

Because it is finished, you don't have to wait.

Today is a high holy day in the church. We are celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the resurrection is a high point of the gospel message. So I do not want to take for granted that everyone in the room has a clear understanding of the gospel. We can assume everybody in the South knows the Bible, and we can find church after church preaching everything but Jesus Christ. So let's take a few minutes and walk through the basics.

2. You Are a Sinner

Most presentations of the gospel start here, and it is a cold splash of water.

> ROMANS 3:23 ESV
>
> [23] for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Everybody has sinned. You may say, "I'm not as bad as the guy next door." I'm not talking about him. I'm talking about you. You are a sinner by nature; you were born into it.

Because you are a sinner, you will die an eternal spiritual death. That is a polite way to say that a sinner is headed for hell. Hell is a real place, and you do not want to be there.

The Bible says, "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Not a small death, not the first death, but the second death (Revelation 20:14).

But there is good news. The verse does not stop there: "but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). Through Jesus Christ there is a way of escape from eternal punishment.

3. The Cross: A Divine Exchange

How does Jesus provide a way of escape? What is the mechanism? That is what this weekend is all about.

> **ROMANS 5:8** ESV
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> [8] but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

The cross shows the love of God for us.

> **1 JOHN 4:10** ESV
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> [10] In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Many people think they have to get their act together before they can come to God or come to church. But "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us" (1 John 4:10). Slogans about loving God and loving people sound good, but on their own they put the weight back on us. Trying to be righteous by keeping the law is exactly the demand Jesus came to take off of us.

Love isn't what I do for God. It's what I see God do for me at the cross.

Jesus:

- is God in the flesh;
- was born of a virgin;
- lived a sinless life;
- was crucified on a Roman cross to pay the price for your sins.

Your sin had earned you death and hell, but Jesus stepped in and paid the price on the cross so you would not have to.

> **2 CORINTHIANS 5:21** ESV
>
> [21] For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Jesus took our place on the cross so that we could take our place with Him in glory. It is a divine exchange.

Quick review: you are a sinner, and Jesus went to the cross to pay the price for your sin. But it does not stop there.

4. He Is Risen

> MATTHEW 28:1-6 ESV
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> [1] Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. [2] And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. [3] His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. [4] And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. [5] But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. [6] He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.

(Notice that the guards "became like dead men," but the women were still standing.)

Easter is the celebration of Jesus not only dying on the cross, though that is worth celebrating on its own, but being raised from the dead. He died, but He did not stay that way.

The resurrection is what everything in Christianity hinges on. Someone once asked Pastor Jason, "Does the church get its authority from the Pope, as Catholics believe, or from the Bible, as Protestants believe?" His answer: **"Neither. Our authority comes from the resurrection of Jesus Christ."** Other religious founders are still in the ground. They put Jesus in a tomb, and He got up.

> 1 CORINTHIANS 15:17 ESV
>
> [17] And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

If Christ did not rise, this is all for nothing. But He did.

5. The Resurrection Is Your Release

The resurrection is not just an event. It serves a purpose:

The resurrection is the means by which you are released from your obligation to pay for your sin.

Illustration: the Certificate of Release. Pastor Jason became pastor of the church in August 2025. Early in 2026 he told the church what they had learned from the IRS: payroll taxes for employees had gone unpaid for some time, and the IRS had placed liens on the church property. While those liens stood, the church's rights to its own property were not secure.

That is our sin debt: a violation of the law, and a debt we owe.

By the grace of God, the church had $0 in savings in January 2025, and by January 2026 it had enough to pay off the liens. That is the cross: the debt we owed was paid. (A good place for a double praise.)

But even after the liens were paid, the lien was still on record against the property. The church could not deal with the bank, real estate people or the city until one more thing came in the mail: the **Certificate of Release of Federal Tax Lien**. Hold it up. That paper gave the church its full rights to its property back. It released the debt.

That is what the resurrection is. You had a sin debt, and Jesus paid it at the cross. Without the resurrection, someone could still dispute the payment: "I don't know if that payment was accepted." But Jesus did not stay in the tomb. He rose from the dead to give you complete freedom to walk in newness of life.

So when someone says, "You still act like the same person; I don't think Jesus has done anything in your life," you do not have to point to yourself. You can point to the risen Jesus at the right hand of God and say, "I serve a risen Savior who says otherwise." When anyone sins, "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1). **He is the receipt. He is the final word.** The work is finished, and the word is final because He rose from the dead, and His blood "speaks a better word than the blood of Abel" (Hebrews 12:24).

And just as the certificate can be held up, you can point to the empty tomb and say, "He is not here, for he has risen!"

Conclusion: You Don't Have to Wait

Tomorrow. Next week. Next year. When we have kids. When the kids are grown. When we sell the house. When we change states. Friend, how long will you put it off?

Some of you came today knowing beyond the shadow of a doubt that you need to get right with God. Others are just doing the Easter thing: you came to make Mama happy, life is going well enough, you think you are a good enough person, and you are willing to roll the dice on judgment day.

It does not matter how good or bad you are. There are no grades on this. **Jesus did not die for bad sinners. He died for dead sinners.** The Bible says you were "dead in the trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). It has been said that Jesus did not die to make bad people good people; He died to make dead people alive.

Illustration: a collision in the dark. Pastor Jason and his wife have been married more than 18 years. For 18 years, whenever either of them got up in the night, they navigated the house in the dark so they would not wake the other. It always worked, until this week: he got up in the dark, did not realize she was already up, and they had a full-speed collision in the middle of the bathroom.

Some of you have been wandering in the dark, and it has worked for you for who knows how long. But you are headed for an eventual, inevitable collision: a lost job, a money crisis, a sick loved one. When that moment comes, you want to be right with God. And you don't have to wait.

THE INVITATION

How does what Jesus did get from Him to you?

> **ROMANS 10:13** ESV
>
> [13] For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Is there more to the gospel and the Christian life? Absolutely. But in this moment, all you have to do is call on the name of the Lord, and the church will call with you.

With every head bowed and every eye closed: if today is your day, lift your hand on the count of three. One: you already know who you are. Two: lift your hand high so I can see it. Three: lift your hands.

Salvation prayer (said aloud together): “Dear Jesus, I have a sin debt. I understand You can settle it. I ask You to step into my life. Be my Savior. Be my Lord. Be my God. Thank You for dying for me and for resurrection power. Today I believe I’m saved by the grace of God. In Jesus’ name, amen.”

NEXT STEPS

This is not one and done. Give three next steps:

1. **Come back to church.** You do not have to be good enough to come to church. The Lord will take you just as you are, and so will we. 2. **Fill out the connect card** and mark “I gave my life to Jesus today,” so the church can send a devotional to help you start well. 3. **Get baptized in water.** Jesus commands it, so we do it. Give the date of the next baptism service and how to sign up.



ABOUT

PASTOR JASON MAYFIELD

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