

# Sermon: Risingsun First Church of God

Robert Theis: 2025-11-09

## Introduction:

Hello. Thank you for allowing me to share with you today. It is a privilege that you allow me to stand before you and share God's Word.

For today's sermon, I'm taking a slightly different approach than I have in the past. When Pastor Paul gave me the opportunity to do pulpit fill, I asked him if he wanted me to cover anything specific. He answers with his typical reply of "Go wherever the Lord leads you." I followed up by asking him, "Is there any specific format you want me to follow?" His reply was, "Do what you think is best. Everyone must find their own voice and their own style of preaching."

Awesome, now all I had to do is figure out what to preach on. There are so many good passages to choose from, and so many great topics to talk about.

### **[Tonya singing meme]**

That is usually the time when my mind starts thinking about too many ideas. My wife then gave me some great advice, "Stick to one topic and do not confuse people!" Often easier said than done, considering I ramble a lot and when talking about Theology, I get sidetracked easily.

Hopefully, I can keep the topics for today somewhat manageable and not too confusing. If I do muck it up, that is OK. I'll chalk it up to a learning experience, enjoy reading your feedback, plus I convinced Tonya to sing us a song afterwards. I can always count on her to swoop in and save the day!

### **[IYKYK meme]**

God is good, and sometimes you burn the hashbrowns while preparing breakfast, and that is OK. There is always another breakfast to get it right!

## Message:

For today's message, I would like to discuss the passages that were read to us earlier, but I would also like to talk about the journey I went on when it came to those passages.

### **[Slide 1]**

Often, God teaches us more from the journey than just the lesson we learn at the end. That was the case when I began thinking about the Resurrection. Part of that lesson is allowing yourself to be humbled and submit to what God wants to teach you. It is better to acknowledge that God is going to teach us the lesson He wants us to have and submit to that teaching, because the alternative is for us to remain hardheaded and God will teach us that lesson despite our unwillingness to learn.

### **[Slide 2]**

Let's start by rereading those few passages from 1 Corinthians 15:12-14

- 12 Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?
- 13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.
- 14 And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.

### **[Slide 3]**

Some background leading to the Apostle Paul writing this letter to the Corinthians. Paul had gone to a city named Corinth. He shared the Gospel, evangelizing and telling them about Jesus. After a year and some months, he felt they were in a good spot, the church was established, so he moved on.

After a while, Paul received word that things were not going well for the people and the church back in Corinth. There were followers that were saying they believed in Jesus, believed the Gospel, but the way they were living did not align with those values.

Funny ... How often do we see that happening in today's society? 2000 years ago, they were proclaiming the good news of Jesus yet living an unrepentant lifestyle. Not so much has changed from 2000 years ago. Good thing God is patient, AMEN?

### **[Slide 4]**

There were instances where other teachers had come into town, Peter and Apollos, which caused favoritism to develop. Some people were like "We like Paul better!" while others were like "We like Apollos or Peter better!"

### **[Slide 5]**

Since Corinth was a hub for the trade route, this meant there was a lot of sin going on within its walls. Everything from sexual immorality, religious diversity, and corruption. This caused a divide in the church. The people of the church started arguing about topics like circumcision, spiritual gifts, marriage, food that was offered to idols, and the resurrection.

### **[Slide 6]**

When Paul heard about these issues, some of which is described in Acts 18, he wrote this letter to the church and its congregation. In this letter, you have Paul making a very strong statement concerning the resurrection, “If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, and our faith is in vain!”

What a powerful statement to help emphasize the importance of the Resurrection!

### **The Journey:**

Now, fast forward nearly 2000 years, you have a very confident and very ignorant man by the name of Robert Theis.

### **[Joke meme – my picture]**

Reading names in the Bible, some appear with “son of” and list their father’s name. I would be Robert Theis, son of Robert Theis. Sorry, I’m easily amused (haha).

Tonya and I have been rewatching the Lord of the Rings movies, extended edition of course, after more than a decade of not having seen them. If you have ever watched those movies, you know it starts off with a Hobbit in the Shire, and then he begins walking. Over the next 9 and a half hours, most of which he spent walking, he finally reaches his destination. A few interesting things happened within those 9+ hours, but to sum it up, we can say the hobbit started his journey with confidence, not knowing much, and ended his journey a lot less confident, but a bit more knowledgeable.

### **[Robert the Hobbit meme]**

So, for today’s message about my journey, I’ll use Robert the Hobbit to help illustrate.

It’s possible Pastor Paul never lets me do pulpit fill again, so I may as well make it a little entertaining! (haha)

### **[Dunning-Kruger Effect]**

Have any of you ever heard of the Dunning-Kruger Effect? If not, here is a chart I found on Wes Huff's website to help explain it.

The Dunning-Kruger effect shows a pattern that was identified by two psychologists named Dunning and Kruger. The experiments used humor, grammar and logic and the findings showed that the least skilled and knowledgeable participants rated themselves highest. As people increased in skill and knowledge, their confidence went down, eventually working its way back up.

Now, am I saying this graph represents all atheists and non-believers? No, not necessarily.

What I can tell you is after I became a Follower of Christ, after I started to learn the Truth, God's Truth, and after I found out about the Dunning-Kruger Effect, I was able to see parallels between these findings and my journey to Christ.

### **[Robert the Hobbit – Starting Location]**

When I was a non-believer, represented here by "Robert the Hobbit," I fell within the left most side of the Kruger-Dunning graph. I was VERY confident in my non-belief. I was VERY confident in my ability to ask questions, but in hindsight, I know my confidence came from a lack of knowledge and ignorance in what I was talking about.

Wes Huff labeled this as "Mount Stupid," falling in the confidence range of "I know everything!" while having the knowledge of "Huh?"

### **[Robert the Hobbit – Point 2]**

After spending two years looking into Christianity, I found myself reaching the new milestone. It was somewhere between "There's more to this than I thought" and "I'm never going to understand this" that I gave my life to Christ!

### **[Slide 8]**

It was during this time I happened to know just enough to realize I didn't know very much, but what I did know is:

- 1) God is real.
- 2) God is the standard of goodness and morality.
- 3) God is perfectly Just, and because He is Just, my sin brings with it a debt I cannot pay.
- 4) Jesus paid that debt so I may have life!

### **[Robert the Hobbit – Point 3]**

Over the next few years, I grew in my faith, read a little more of my Bible, and spent a lot of time talking to God in prayer. This this part of my journey, I put myself between the “I’m never going to understand this” and “IMPOSTER SYNDROME.”

It was around two years ago I found myself hitting that “Imposter Syndrome” point. I was reading more, gaining a little more knowledge, and listening to a lot of apologetic videos. I found myself getting comfortable. I was able to answer some questions people had. I was finding answers to the questions I was struggling with. It was the perfect time to be humbled a little bit.

I was looking into someone’s question about sin and sin debt by watching apologetic videos on Easter, the Passover and the Resurrection. That’s when I had a moment of despair. It did not come from the question I was researching, but a follow-up realization I had.

### **[Slide 9]**

Looking into Jesus’ death on the Cross and the payment for our sins, it is easy to get into a pattern of giving answers without fully thinking them through. As someone would ask me about sin, I could relate it to God and how Sin was “missing the mark.”

Romans 3:23 tells us, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

### **[Slide 10]**

I could explain that the debt for sin against an eternal God is death, and it was Jesus who paid that debt so we could go to Heaven.

Romans 6:23 tells us, “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

All that was making sense, and I felt confident with my understanding. It was then I thought to myself “Yea, but ... why is it important that Jesus raised from the dead?”

### **[Slide 11]**

Jesus, the Son, Second person of the Trinity, came down, was born of a virgin, and took the punishment we deserve ... I got all that, but why was it important he came back 3 days later?

### **[Robert the Hobbit – Valley of Despair]**

It was a fun, yet very humbling, realization. I did not know how to answer that question. I could talk about sin, sin debt, and Jesus paying that debt, but what if someone dug a little deeper and asked me, “That’s cool and all, but why was the resurrection essential?”

It humbled me and left me thinking about those three passages in 1 Corinthians 15. Paul writes about this very topic!

### **[Slide 12]**

Paul is saying if Christ was not risen, my faith was in vain, and here I am not knowing the answer to a question I should know the answer to! If I do not have the answer, what does that say about my faith? What an enjoyable learning experience!

### **[Slide 13]**

Here is the GOOD NEWS God helped me realize after that moment of despair ...

1. I am never going to have all the answers, and that is OK.
2. No matter how much I think I know, I know WAY less than what I think, and that is OK.
3. And most important of all, I’m not JUSTIFIED by my ability to understand it all.
4. I’m JUSTIFIED by Christ and Christ alone.
5. My Salvation comes from my faith in Christ and His completed work on the Cross, apart from my understanding on every little aspect of theology, apart from my ability to answer questions people have, and apart from any work I can or cannot do.
6. That fact is what gives me assurance.
  - a. Trust me, if I could have mucked up any part of being justified by Christ, I would have done so.

Now that I had assurance and Robert the Hobbit was no longer stuck in the Valley of Despair, what about that script from Paul regarding “Why is Jesus’ Resurrection essential?”

### **[Robert the Hobbit – back on track]**

The Resurrection is essential for several reasons, many of which Pastor Paul will likely discuss around Passover and Easter. I do want to end with this answer:

#### **[Slide 14]**

God is LORD over death AND over life!

1. 1 Samuel 2:6 tells us, “The LORD kills and brings to life; He brings down to Shoel and raises up.”
2. Deuteronomy 32:39 tells us, “See now that I, even I, am He, and there is NO God besides Me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.”
3. And Revelation 1:17-18 tells us, “When I saw him, I fell at His feet as though dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying, ‘Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the LIVING ONE. I died and behold, I am alive forevermore! And I have the keys of Death and Hades!’”

#### **[Slide 15]**

Let’s take a moment to dive into Revelation 1:17-18.

- Who is the one who saw and fell as though he was dead?
  - That was the Apostle John.
- And who did John see, ALIVE, and who has the keys of death?
  - Our Lord, Jesus Christ.

That is where I would like to wrap up today, with mentioning how important scripture and prayer is.

#### **[Slide 16]**

What we have in the Bible is God’s revealed Word to us, and God’s Word is Truth.

If Christ would have remained dead, then we cannot trust the Bible.

If Christ would have remained dead, we would have no affirmation of Revelation 1.

If Christ was still dead, He would not be LORD over LIFE AND DEATH.

We CAN have faith and we CAN know that we will have eternal life because we have a LIVING GOD who is LORD over LIFE and over DEATH.

With that, thank you for allowing me to share today, and Tonya will bless us with a song. It is titled “What an Awesome God” by Phil Wickham. I think she will confirm, feel free to join in the chorus as she sings.