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GOOD MORNING – Bobby Schuller (BS) and Hannah Schuller (HS)

BS: Wow! He is risen! (AUDIENCE – He is risen indeed) Happy Easter, welcome to Shepherd's Grove. We're so glad you're here.

HS: Yes, welcome church family. We are joy to have you celebrate this day of victory with us. Victory. Jesus walked out of that dark tomb into the sunlight that we may also have life and light in our bodies. Hallelujah.

Would you turn around and shake the hand of the person next to you and say God loves you and so do I.

BS: This is my daughter, Haven. She has something to say.

HAVEN: He is risen! (AUDIENCE – he is risen indeed)

BS: Yes! Awesome! Terrific. Well its Easter. It's a happy day, though, and let's pray. Whatever you're bringing into the church today, God's arms are strong enough to hold it.

So Lord, many of us come into this place bringing loss, heartache, hardship, illness, bad surprises. Some of us come with great things: new jobs and new relationships, exciting things. Whatever it is, Lord, we know that today we can check all our stresses at the door, and that we can trust these things to you. We don't have to worry about them, that you are alive, you are at work, and we thank you that you rose from the dead and we trust you, it's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

SCRIPTURE – 1st Corinthians 15:3-11 – Hannah Schuller

You may be seated. First Corinthians 15:

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, and then to the twelve.

After that, He appeared to more than five hundred of brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all He appeared to me, also as to one abnormally born.

For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace to me was not without effect.

No, I worked harder than all of them – yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed. He is risen. (AUDIENCE RESPONDS – He is risen indeed)

SCRIPTURE – John 20:1-10 – Hannah Schuller

John 20: Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we don't know where they have put Him." So Peter and the other disciples started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw strips of linen lying there, as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. They still did not understand from scripture that Jesus had to be raised from the dead. Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

Be Reborn

SCRIPTURE – John 20:11-18 – Hannah Schuller

John 20: Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put Him." At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize it was Jesus. He asked her, "Women, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking He was a gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have put Him and I will get Him." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward Him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" which means teacher. Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them I am ascending to my Father, and your Father, to my God and your God." Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that He had said these things to her.

DECLARATION – Bobby Schuller

Hold your hands out like this as a sign of receiving, and we're going to say this together: I'm not what I do. I'm not what I have. I'm not what people say about me. I am the beloved of God. It's who I am. No one can take it from me. I don't have to worry, I don't have to hurry, I can trust my friend Jesus and share His love with the world. Thanks, you can be seated.

MESSAGE – Bobby Schuller "Be Reborn"

So guess what: He's risen! (AUDIENCE RESPONDS – He is risen indeed) Yes! Amen to that! Today is Easter and of course every Sunday we remember that Jesus was raised from the dead, but Easter is the day; the big day that we commemorate this important moment. And many of us don't really know the answer to why the resurrection matters so much, and it's very simple. The resurrection matters because Jesus is alive. Literally, He's alive right now seating at the throne, at the right hand of God, and Jesus is good. And He's your advocate, and He is working on your behalf. Easter is good news because it is the anchor of hope for every believer. We serve a God who believes in bringing dead things back to life by faith, and that's good news. Isn't that good news? That today, whatever death or loss or tragedy that you've experienced, we serve a God who turns those things into good. That we serve a good God who does miracles. The resurrection matters because when Jesus was raised from the dead, all who believed in Him and all who believe in Him today, heaven was opened up to everyone. Not only that when we die we go to heaven, but that heaven can come to earth now. And it was happening all the time in Jesus' day. It happened with His disciples, and even today, heaven continues to open up to everyone who believes in Christ as their Savior, and even to some who don't. In fact, it's amazing. I have seen in my life, you know I believe in science, I'm an academic person, but God breaks the rules and it is cool when He does. I have seen many miracles in my life. Many of you have, too, and these are testimonies to the resurrection, not only that Jesus was raised from the dead, but that this is His intent for this world – to raise it back to life. That we could be a hopeful people that believe in miracles and I've seen it. And look, today if you come to church and you say you know that's not really for me, can I just tell you today is a wonderful day to become a Christian. The most important thing I want you to know is that Easter happened, and that it's affecting your life, and that heaven is available to you right now, not just when you die, but now! Right now! That Jesus made available through His death and resurrection and ascension the availability of the Holy Spirit to you. And I know what you're thinking. Many of you here are like I'm agnostic or I'm not really religious, or I grew up Catholic but I haven't been to mass in forever, or whatever. Whatever reason you're here, you might think I'm a sinner, I'm a mess up, I'm a screw up, Bobby you don't know my past, Bobby you don't know all the stuff I'm hiding, you don't know what I'm currently selling on the street, and I'll just tell you it doesn't matter who you are, I want you to know that man, Jesus is a friend of sinners. Man, Jesus is a friend of sinners and misfits and broken, hurting people. Jesus is a friend of addicts. Jesus is a friend of people with depression. Jesus is a friend of quadruple divorcees. That's a real story in the Bible. Four times she divorced and He blessed her, as well. Jesus is a friend of those who are hungry and thirsty. That's all He wants is a spiritual hunger. He'll give you bread that will nourish you the rest of your life. He'll give you living water and you'll never thirst again. He is the source of all life and all goodness and He is telling you that you belong. You have a family, you have a home, and you have a calling. You have a calling.

Be Reborn

You say Bobby, it's just not for me. I just, I came with my mom today. Just please, leave me alone. Bobby, I lost a bet and that's why I'm here. God's calling you and I hope the Holy Spirit convinces you of that by the end of this message. Jesus shows us what God is like. Jesus didn't hurt people, He healed them. He didn't reject people, He called them. There's this great story, it's one of the most famous parables in the Bible of what's called the prodigal son. Prodigal does not mean sinful, prodigal means almost wasteful; extravagant, over the top. Jesus shows us what God is like and He tells us the story of this wasteful, extravagant son. And it goes like this: Jesus is, in Luke 15, hanging out with a bunch of sinners and misfits. They're actually eating and drinking together. And the religious leaders, they can't wrap their mind around Jesus because He's incredibly wise. He knows the Torah better than any of them. He's just intellectually brilliant. And then beyond that, everybody's saying He's a prophet because He's doing miracles and these amazing things. And yet He's doing something you're not supposed to do: He's communing and befriending misfits and sinners.

And they actually say in Luke 15, there He is, eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners, and they say this man welcomes sinners and eats with them. I picture Jesus standing up and He walks over to them in almost a compassionate way. Usually He's angry with the Pharisees and the religious leaders of His day. But here He responds with compassion and He tells them three stories. It goes a hundred, ten, one.

The first is a story about a hundred sheep. Jesus says there was a shepherd and he had a hundred sheep and he brought them to pasture, and when he came home, he realized that there were only 99. And so he left them there with the town and with the other shepherds and he went off to find that one missing sheep. And you picture this shepherd out in the hills with all the dangerous stuff and the elements looking for this one sheep. He knows the sheep by name and he's looking for it. He's crying out for Lambchops. Or whatever.. saying something, I don't know. Walking around calling his name out, looking for the sheep, and you got all the townsfolk at home, everybody's waiting, where is Joe the shepherd and his sheep, and then all of a sudden you see, usually a young kid, this young shepherd coming over the hill with a sheep over his shoulders. His pet, really, coming down the hill. Everyone's cheering. He's coming down and he's like I found him! I found him! He was down by the river. I got him! It's okay! And everybody cheers and everybody celebrates because he found that lost sheep. And Jesus looks at these religious leaders and He says let me tell you, friends, there will be more celebration in heaven over one sinner who repents than over the 99 who live perfect lives. And the subscript there is that we're all lost sheep, by the way. But the joy of coming home with that lost sheep. And so He goes from a hundred sheep to ten. Ten coins. He says there was once a young woman, and you get the idea that she might be poor, and she's lost one of ten silver coins, and so she sweeps and she's looking everywhere for this lost silver coin, and she finds it. And when she finds it, she pulls all her friends together and they celebrate because she found this one coin.

It could be one of two things. The first could be that she was just poor and that she really needed that silver coin, which is very possible. But a more romantic thing is that also back in those days a common type of wedding ring was a headdress. It was a silver chain with ten silver coins on them. And these women wear it everywhere. They would wear it to the market and to bed and to work and whatever it was they were doing, they'd always have this beautiful headdress on from their wedding. And it was like one of the coins fell out. So now its incomplete.

And the idea there is that when you, yes you, are brought into the kingdom, without you, we're incomplete. You belong here. You not being here at home with us is like having that piece of jewelry but missing something. And in many ways, Jesus is saying you're that missing piece and He is searching for you. He is calling you. And there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who says I'm giving my life to the Lord, then there will be over 99 who have been perfect church goers their whole lives. It's very good news. And this is what Jesus is saying to these Pharisees. A God who searches after His people, a God who loves His people, no Pharisee had ever dreamed of a God like that. And Jesus finishes with the most dramatic of the stories. He said, and then there was this one son. His father was wealthy and he had an older brother, and he went to his father and he said 'father, I want my inheritance and I want it now.' In a shame and dignity culture, shame and honor culture like Judaism, especially in those days, this was an incredible insult. In the old law, if you had two sons, you would give two thirds to your older son and one third to your younger son, and you could divvy it up before you die, sometimes they did that, but it was sort of your choice. Naturally, you would do it when you die. And so this younger boy insults his father, which honor your father and mother is like one of the core teachings of biblical Judaism and Christianity. So to dishonor someone is already bad, but to do it to your father was horrible.

Be Reborn

And so he basically says to his dad, I wish you were dead. Give me my money. The crazy thing is that his dad actually does it. Sells a third of his family's, who knows how many generations its gone back, family's land, hands over a bunch of cash to his son, and this young son takes that cash and goes to a distant land. And he diversifies and invests it in a sound portfolio so it grows over time to bring a great return. No he takes that money and he spends it on prostitutes, gambling and drinking. It's gone in no time and this guy finds himself homeless in a foreign land, feeding pigs. So this Jewish prince doesn't have shoes, and is feeding pigs. Pigs are the worst thing in Judaism. They're unclean and to feed a pig, I mean he's looking at the pig food and wishing he could eat it, the Bible says. But they won't let him eat the pig food.

And then it says he comes to his senses and he says my father treats his hired hands and servants better than I'm being treated here. And he comes up with this speech, it's a great speech. He says all right, this is what I'm going to do. I'm going to go home, I'm going to take a long journey back, and this is going to be super embarrassing, and I'm going to eat crow, and I'm never going to be a part of my family. I did it to myself but this is what I'm going to say to him. I'm just going to say father, I have sinned against you and against heaven. I am not worthy to be called your son. All I'm asking is just make me a hired hand so I can have a square meal every night.

Have you ever had like maybe you've rehearsed a speech, you maybe had to admit something to a boss or a spouse or whatever. Maybe when you were a kid, and you think over and over about what you're going to say. And so here's this kid, you picture him going home rehearsing this speech in his head over and over: father, I've sinned against heaven and you. I'm not worthy to be called your son. Make me a hired hand. Father, I'm not worthy to be called your son. I've sinned against you and against heaven, etc.

When he comes in sight of his home, the father is standing on the porch and the Bible says he sees him from a long way off and he runs out to him. In those days, old men of honor wouldn't run, they would wear a tunic or a robe, similar actually to the one I'm wearing now, like this Geneva robe. So in order to run, you got to pick it up like a dress and you got to run like this across a field. It was appropriate at all. And so this son is on a far distant and it's like that father had been looking every day hoping his son was alive and that he would come home. And when he sees his son, he abandons all dignity and runs to him. And it's like as the father's getting close, running to his son like this, he begins: father, I have sinned against heaven, and he doesn't even listen to him. He interrupts his little speech and he throws his arms around him and kisses him and says you're alive! You've come home! And he hollers back at the house, bring him a tunic! Bring him a robe! Bring him a ring! Bring him sandals! Kill the fatted calf! My son who was dead is alive! I mean the image is so beautiful because here the son is really a bad person and the father forgets it all. He is just so overjoyed that his son is alive, and is home. And it's such an amazing image, too, what he offers his son, right off the bat. There's no like training or like let's ease him back into this, we'll let him work and see if he's serious. No! He just floods him with dignity and honor and authority! That's what those symbols mean, by the way. The robe means dignity and honor. You are a proud person and you belong. The ring is a symbol of authority. It's what you would use to like put on wax emblems, and it's the symbol that you can do things on behalf of your family like declare war and make contracts. And the fatted calf is like the best meal ever. The fatted calf would be today like prime rib, plus lobster, plus truffles on a Louis Vuitton tablecloth. It is a once in a lifetime amazing meal. Amazing.

The point is this: that young man, when he's home, is the son. He belongs. He cannot be a servant and be under his father's house. If he's in his father's house, he has belonging, he has dignity, he has love, he has authority, and he has joy. It's an amazing symbol. The Pharisees can't imagine a God who would be this way towards sinners, and Jesus is looking at them and He's saying this is what God is like towards these tax collectors and these sinners.

But the story's not done. This huge party is going on because this son has come home. There's music and celebrating, the whole town has come out. Everybody's rejoicing. There is dancing, and it smells delicious, and the son who has been out working didn't know any of this was happening. And so he's coming back to the house and he's coming closer, and he sees all this going on and he wonders what on earth is happening.

And he looks to one of the servants, he pulls him over, he says, Joe, what is going on in that house? And he says your brother, your brother, sir, he's alive. And your father is celebrating his return. And you can see.. I sympathize with this brother. He's been faithful, he's been true, he's done what is right constantly and this screw up comes home. He's out there and he looks at that house probably more angry with his dad than he is with his brother, and he just goes no. No.

Be Reborn

I am not going in there. No. No. After what he did? No. I'm not doing that. The father hears that the son won't come in and celebrate and is missing out on the party, so that father then goes out to the son, the older son, and says what are you doing out here? The elder son says, I love this line, he says that son of yours. Notice he doesn't say my brother. That son of yours blew our family's inheritance on prostitutes, and you've killed the fatted calf for him? I never even got a small goat for me and you've given him the best meal possible. that's actually what it says. You gave him the fatted calf and you didn't even give me a small goat? And the father says, my son, you've been so faithful. Everything I have is yours. Everything. But this brother of yours, is what he says, this brother of yours, your brother, your family, your flesh and blood, he was dead and now is alive. He is home. Come, rejoice and celebrate with us. Jesus is telling this whole story to basically the pastors of the day who are angry that He's hanging out with sinners. And these pastors look at Jesus and you don't know what their response is. The story is just hung there. We don't know if the older brother goes in and celebrates. But you get the idea that if they don't, they're missing out on something really important.

Resurrection opened up heaven and hundreds of people saw it, and we think sometimes that these people who witnessed the resurrection like they were dumb, or they were backwater people, or didn't know that dead men don't just rise from the dead. Many of these Jews were in a post Hellenized Israel. Many of them spoke four languages. How many languages do you speak? I'm not talking to you, grandpa. He speaks seven. But everybody else. They were trained in skepticism, in reason, in mathematics. They didn't have a TV back then so they had to read all the time. Unbelievable. It's like we don't think that people knew dead men didn't rise before Voltaire or something. It's silly. And hundreds saw it, hundreds testified to it, and hundreds died defending that it actually happened because they just weren't afraid of dying. Because they believed in the word of Jesus Christ because they saw His body, they touched Him, they ate with Him, and they spent like several months hanging out with Him after He died. And they knew He was coming back.

And so the message on this Easter for you is you belong, you have a family, come home. Come home. In a moment I'm going to give you an opportunity to stand and become a Christian. Many of you here today say Bobby, it's just not for me. You're a nice person and all, I just not going to do that. But maybe you're here today and like you just, you know, its Easter. A lot of people go to church on Easter as a cultural thing. And God has a word for you. You belong, you're loved and you're chosen. You think I'm an agnostic, I'm an atheist, I don't know, I went to mass when I was a kid and this is the first time I've been in awhile. I think that many of us, when we know God, there's like a rubber band that's attached to our heart and to heaven.

And there's always this tugging that's pulling us back home. And maybe that's you today and you need to come home and know the Lord, or maybe today you just want to make a decision for Christ. Jesus says if you have the faith of a mustard seed, that's enough. If 99% of you doubts and 1% of you believes, God can use that and He can make it grow in your heart into something really special. Well to become a Christian means to start by doing something very brave. Standing or doing something in front of a bunch of people and confessing your belief in Christ. So in front of all these people, if you want to do something that you'll never forget the rest of your life, and you want to become a Christian, or you want to come back to your faith, I want to invite you just right now to stand where you are and stay standing. God says anyone who stands for me before men I will stand before my father, but anybody who denies me, I'll deny before my father. Life is too important to waste people pleasing. If you feel a tug on your heart to do this, do this for the Lord. Amen. Thank you.

We're gonna do this together. Hold your hands out like this as a sign of receiving, and all of us are going to pray this together, and we're going to say this so just repeat after me: Jesus Christ, son of God have mercy on me, a sinner. I am the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. I am your beloved child. Only by grace. Give me your Holy Spirit. Teach me your ways. I love you, God, in Jesus' name, amen. Let's give them a hand! Love you guys! Love you! Yes! Amen.

BENEDICTION – Bobby Schuller

And now may the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift His countenance upon you and give you His peace in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, amen.