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GOOD MORNING/INVOCATION – (Bobby und Hannah Schuller)

BS: He is risen. Hello. Awesome.

HS: Happy Easter, church family. The same God who raised Jesus from the dead can take any hardship or trial you've been through and turn it around. Jesus is victorious.

BS: Amen. That's why we're here celebrating. There's millions of Christians, hundreds of millions right now gathered in church celebrating this single thing – that Jesus was raised from the dead for you and for me; that we can trust in the very strong, very victorious name of Jesus Christ, so we're here to worship that.

Let's begin with a word of prayer and praise. Lord Jesus, we thank you that you were raised from the dead by your Father on our behalf, Lord, to save us from our sins and bring us back into the garden, into eternal life. And so today we're rejoicing at that fact. We invoke and invite your Holy Spirit to dwell in this place and to fill our hearts with goodness and with joy and mercy and forgiveness and love for our neighbor, and Lord we thank you and it's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

HS: Amen.

SCRIPTURE – Matthew 28:1 - Hannah

Let's prepare our hearts for the word of the Lord found in Matthew 28:1:

After the Sabbath at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. There was a violent earthquake for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightening, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid that they shook and became like dead men. The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here. He has risen just as He said. Come and see the place where He lay, then go quickly and tell His disciples – He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him. Now I have told you."

So the woman hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy and ran to tell His disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," He said. They came to Him, clasped His feet and worshipped Him.

Church, He is risen! Amen.

DECLARATION (Bobby Schuller)

Hold your hands out as a way of receiving from God, 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. Amen!

Sermon Bobby Schuller „Easter: The Joy of the Resurrection!“

Hello! Welcome to Hour of Power. This is a special day, obviously Easter. It's the biggest day in the liturgical calendar, so we're so glad you're here. And very often, when you go to a church, you know, I've visited churches before and sometimes you get this feeling, I'm like am I doing this right? Am I supposed to kneel here, stand there, do this or that. No, this is really a church truly where we want you to feel welcome and loved, and want you to know that you don't really have to do everything right. This is a place where we're a hospitality church. We're a joy church. So don't worry about getting anything wrong. You don't have to pretend that you're religious or anything, just be you. We love you just the way you are, and we're so glad you're here.

When we testify to what we're talking about today, when we want to see people become followers of Jesus, we don't want anything from you. We want something for you. It's because God has done something so awesome and radical in our lives that we wake up every morning hoping that someone else can get a taste or a touch from Him in the same way. I'm just a thirsty man showing other thirsty people where the water is. That's it. And so we just really hope that you'll consider becoming a follower of Jesus and if not this year, hey maybe next year. Huh? No problem. Really, we're just so glad you're here. All that to say I'd like you to think about choosing to follow Christ today. What better time than Easter. Okay, today we're obviously talking about the resurrection. That Christ was raised from the dead for you and for me. Many Christians can very clearly explain to you why the cross is so important in the atonement and all this, but I actually find theologically a lot of Christians struggle to explain why the resurrection is so important. And the simple fact is that without the resurrection, the cross is an utter failure. Without the resurrection, death won, Satan won, sin won, everything. Everything that Satan thought ended up being true. But in the resurrection, we see that there truly is no tragedy God can't redeem, there's no death God can't turn to life, that we serve a miracle working, powerful God, who can do anything in your life, and that we serve a resurrected Savior.

When God created all of this, the world, He created it as though heaven and earth were one. In fact in the Bible, we say colloquially very often heaven and hell, those two comparisons. But that phrase, heaven and hell is actually not in the Bible. It talks about hell separately, but the phrase heaven and earth is always together. You always see heaven and earth. It's always together like that, and it's because it's God's attempt that heaven and earth would be, in a way, the same experience, a similar experience in two different places. So that's even why Jesus in the Lord's Prayer says on earth as it is what? In heaven. Heaven on earth. And so this is what God created in the garden. He created that animals, the creation, that humankind would live eternally in His kingdom under the shade of the tree of life. That there would be something about this space that would maintain the life and the order and the dignity of every human being. And so what happened was when Adam invited sin into the earth, and Eve did by being tempted by Satan, the earth began to decay under the new authority of Satan. And so Jesus then, the scripture says, becomes the first Adam. He's the first human being to return to this kind of eternal life in His resurrection. And He's able to affirm in that resurrection promise that He'll do the same for you and for me, if we just hitch our wagons to Him; if we follow Him, if we become His friend. And all that to simply say too many Christians made going to heaven too complicated. Really it's just this: if you want to go to heaven, be a friend of Jesus! If you're a friend of Jesus, you'll go to heaven. I mean He will be waiting for you there when you cross the portals. It's an amazing thing to know the Lord. To live life in the kingdom of God; to have a life full of heavenly power and love and goodness; to have a friend in Him, even when you're in your darkest point. And there's something else great that happens when you become a believer. Not only do we believe and know that we go to heaven when we die, but there's something about, and hear me on this, the dread of death that hurts our souls. The fear of death that plagues our families, our decisions, our goals. This nagging fear of death, when that goes away, there's a second gift, as well, that comes in this life. That I don't have to wake up in the morning scared, that I can live with courage in every moment, and that I can do what God's called me to do and not be afraid. See that's the amazing thing about living in the easy yoke of Jesus. So Jesus truly was raised from the dead. I believe it and I actually know it. I know He was raised from the dead. With all my heart and all my mind, I know. When we think about Jesus being raised from the dead, oftentimes we think of a big blast of bright light and trumpets and angels and an explosion.

But I don't really think of it that way because when I see miracles in this world, they oftentimes seem, in a way, a little normal, as weird as that sounds.

It's hard to explain, but when I picture Jesus, this is just anecdotal, but when I picture Jesus rising from the dead, I picture His peaceful, still body there just laying as it had been for hours. And all of a sudden, His chest begins to rise and fall. And I always picture a smile comes on His face, and His eyes open and He gets dressed and He walks out – King of kings, Lord of lords, and then all of heaven rejoices. But I truly believe that that happened, and I believe that we can depend on it, and there's a good reason. Very often those who testify to the resurrection of Jesus, and by the way there were hundreds of them, not just the 12. There were 12 apostles, then there was a group of 70, and then there was an even broader group of hundreds that were just kind of all around all the time that weren't in the inner circle. And we think that these were some sort of backwater, gap tooth, idiot mystics that had no idea that dead people don't come back to life. And they weren't.

Israel had been Hellenized for 300 years; had been conquered by Alexander the Great, who sent missionaries into these regions, and later, when these regions became Roman, they doubled down on this so there's libraries, and academies, and coliseums, and hippodromes, and culture, and books, and access to all of this stuff, plus formal training. So first of all, we know for sure the 12 disciples and then these hundreds of people that they spoke four languages: Greek, Latin, Hebrew and Aramaic. How many languages do you speak? If you speak three languages, you're what? Trilingual. If you speak two languages, you are bi-lingual. If you speak one language, you are American. American. Exactly. Exactly. So they speak four languages, and they obviously were trained in rabbinic Judaism, but they were also trained in things like rhetoric, logic, reason, arithmetic, and everybody repeat after me: the formal discipline of skepticism. Say skepticism.

These guys know dead people don't come back to life. And most Roman citizens in the first era are not pagans. They're more like stoics. Anyway, I'm going down the road of history, it's stupid.

But my point is just to simply say, these were smart guys, and when Jesus was crucified, to show you how smart they were, they thought they got it all wrong, right? They see this rabbi that they're following, and He dies horribly, and they're all freak out and they all just scatter and leave. And when people ask them if they were students or whatever, they deny it, they deny they knew Him, they try and save their own skin, and they're completely cowardly. And so something happens between then and later on in life when all of them die martyrs except one, John. All of them die a martyr's death to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus. What happened between then and the other, and to me it just seems so clear that to not have one or two guys that were like actually Jesus didn't die, we made it all up. I'm sorry, I'm so sorry. To not have one of those, to have all them were like just.. kill me, no problem. I'm good, I know. Just whatever you want. You want to hang me upside down on a cross? You want to throw me in a coliseum? You want to burn me alive? I'm fine. It'll hurt, but I'll be fine. What happened?

So what happened there? And to me it's a testimony. It's good evidence that something special really happened. And of course the greatest testimony so many of us in here have is just what Christ has personally done in our lives. There's a sort of deeper thing that happens to the believer. You should hitch your wagon to Jesus. You should get to know Him. You should become His friend. You should learn from Him. There is such a wonderful gift waiting for you, such a wonderful gift, and the Lord wants you. I don't think anybody, anybody is in this room on accident. Everyone is supposed to be here. According to God's providence, every single person is here because they're supposed to be here. Everyone's supposed to hear this. And what I want you to hear is that maybe you've been a Christian your whole life, and it's become dry and stale and rigid, I want you to come back to the Lord, or maybe you say Bobby, I can't follow Jesus. You don't know what I've said, you don't know what I do for a living, you don't know what I've done to others, you don't know my past, you don't know what I've bought, you don't know what I've sold, you don't know what I was just selling on the corner over here five minutes ago. No, but my point is so many of us, you look around a church like this full of well-dressed people, and it's easy to picture perfect families and perfect marriages, and perfect Christians, but it's not there. This is a room full of thirsty people looking for water. It's a room of imperfect people wanting to do a little better, wanting to draw a little closer, wanting to take one step closer to God. Join this journey that we're on. Join us. Or join a church and follow the Lord, and watch what God can do when you give Him a little bit of faith, He can do a lot in your life. So many people say, yes, I just can't believe in this stuff. I think if one percent of you believes, and 99 percent of you doubts, just give that one percent to God and see what He can do with it. Jesus said if you have the faith of a mustard seed, you can move a mountain.

If all you've got is a mustard seed, give it to Him and see what He can do in your life. You'll testify to the gospel in the same way Hannah and I do. We are so grateful that we serve a Lord who loves sinners. Jesus loves sinners. He loves sinners just like you and me. And this was a major problem in Jesus' day. It's all over the gospels, but in Luke chapter 15, one of my favorite stories, it finishes with a famous story of the prodigal son. And it goes like this. See Jesus is a real conundrum for His peers. There's a problem theologically in Jesus because on the one hand, this guy is clearly from God. I mean He is doing miracles, He's so knowledgeable and full of wisdom, thousands of people just want to hear what He has to say, they want to get close to Him, and everywhere He goes, He heals, restores, repairs. He's clearly carrying with Him something special. And so the pastors of His day, the Pharisees, they could totally see that. But on the other hand, He did what you're not supposed to do. He was associating with sinners and not only associating with them... everybody repeat after me, partying with them. He was partying with sinners. And this is what's crazy is like they're not just sinners, like we: oh they're sinner.. a lot of them were really bad people. The thieves, they were people that hurt others, they did shameful things. And so He's sitting at this table, and He just seems to genuinely like them and enjoy eating with them, and drinking wine with them, and laughing with them. And so here's the Pharisees, that are like this guy's supposed to be from God, but how is He okay with them, this might be how they would frame it. How is He associated? Doesn't He know? And so there Jesus is, He's eating with a bunch of sinners, tax collectors and thieves, and prostitutes and others like that, and He's there eating with them and having a great time, and He sees these Pharisees, these pastors kind of standing a far off observing, looking down their nose, trying to sort it all out, and He just tells them a story, looks at them across the room, and He tells them three parables. It's actually brilliant the order. It goes from a hundred to ten to one.

He starts with a hundred and He says there were a hundred sheep and this shepherd, he lost one. And he left the 99 to go find the one. Now in Jesus' day, sheep were wealth, very often the shepherd was not like a full grown man like this. He was usually more like a 15 or 14-year-old boy who was.. for them shepherding was a rite of passage. They had to be tough, they had to defend their sheep, and they had to keep them all together, and they usually didn't own a sheep, but they were close to them. They were like pets. One sheep disappears and Jesus says it's like this boy or shepherd went out to find the sheep and when he finally found him, he threw him over His shoulders and coming down the hill was rejoicing because he had found the lost sheep. And the whole town gathered and they all celebrated because this one sheep had been found.

Have you ever lost a dog? It's the worst feeling ever. If you've ever lost your dog and you're driving around your neighborhood at night calling the dog's name out, you don't know if he's hurt or stolen or dead or in a pound somewhere, and you just trying to find the dog, and then if you find the dog, oh what a great feeling that is, you know, when the dog's get all excited and they jump on you and they're heads kind of going like this and the tail and they're kind of going (MAKES DOG NOISES), and you know they were scared. It is such a great feeling.

And this is the thing is Jesus is like saying this is what it's like for God when He finds you. It's like He's out looking for you. He's searching high and low. He's left the 99 to find the one. And Jesus says there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one lost person, than over 99 perfect people. Isn't that amazing? God's thinking of you when He says that. He goes from a hundred, and then He goes to ten. And the ten, He says there's a woman who had ten lost coins. In those days you had these headdresses, and the ten coins were probably a symbol of the headdress, very often it was coins or jewels or something, depending on how wealthy the woman was. And so silver would have been a very normal woman, and she had ten silver coins, and it was a symbol like a wedding ring that she was married, and so she had to wear it every day. And it was like she lost one of those, and just looking everywhere for her coin. You know that feeling, don't you? Just looking for something, your car keys or something, you just can't find it. And then the worst thing, she has to still wear this thing every day, even though it's incomplete, so all of her friends are like, hey Suzanne, you're missing a silver coin on your headdress. She's like I know! Leave me alone. I know, I'm looking everywhere. Care to give me a silver coin? And one day she moves a pot or something, and she finds it, and she's like I found it! Yes, I found it! Hey guys, everybody, I found the silver coin. And they're all excited for her, and she pops it back into place, and everybody's thrilled. And Jesus says this is what it'll be like for those who are lost when they are found. Anyone who's lost a remote control, you know this feeling. There it was, behind the couch in that one spot I didn't look.

And then Jesus makes it even more personal. He goes a hundred sheep, ten coins, one son. Actually two sons, but we're going to get there in a minute. It really revolves around this one lost son. There's this son who looks to his father, his father is probably wealthy, maybe a king, and they've had this land in their family, maybe for hundreds of years, and the son says to his father, father, I want my inheritance now. Now in those days, to ask your father for your inheritance was one of the most shameful, sinful things you could do, especially in a face culture where you're supposed to honor your father and mother. It's like the worst thing you could do. It would be like saying to your father, I wish you were dead so I could have your money. It's just like whoa, what?

And his father incredibly sells a third of his land, gives the money to the son, and then the son goes to a far away land, and spends this money on lascivious living, it says: prostitutes and maybe gambling and drinking and partying until it's all gone. And he finds himself completely impoverished, starving, and he's actually wishing he could eat the pods of the pigs that he's feeding. He's wallowing in a pig trough. For his Jewish mind this is like the lowest of the low. Pigs are the most un-kosher animal. It's just like the lowest you could be, just covered in pig filth.

And it says he finally came to his senses and thought to himself if I go home to my father's house, and I just become his servant or even his slave, I will do much better than this. And so coming to his senses, he just begins to walk home barefooted, bruised, dirty, filthy, starving. And he's rehearsing this speech over and over. Maybe you've been in trouble with your parents before you and remember what it was like rehearsing what you were going to say to them when they got home, how you going to get out of this mess.

So he's walking back and the speech is 'father, I've sinned against heaven and earth. I'm not worthy to be your son. Make me a servant.' He just says it over and over on his long trip home: 'father, I'm not worthy to be your son, I've sinned against heaven and earth. Make me your servant.' And so he's coming home. And it says that the father was looking over the horizon. It was almost as if every night since the son left, he before going to bed would look out to see if his son was home, and would be disappointed, but not today.

And it's like he's standing there and he looks out on the horizon and he sees a young man covered in filth, gaunt and skinny, ragged clothing and no shoes and wonders who this man is and then recognizes him – it's his son. And abandons all dignity. He begins to run, which for an old powerful, wealthy man was just a total abandonment of pride and dignity. Because in those days when you ran, you had to like lift your.. if you had a robe on, you had to lift it. He didn't care! He's just running right out to his son, and he throws his arms around him, and his son of course is like 'father I've sinned against heaven and earth, and I'm not worthy to..' and just like mid sentence, his father doesn't even hear it, doesn't care, throws his arms around him weeping, and he says 'bring out a robe! Put it on his back! Put a ring on his finger! Put shoes on his feet! Kill the fatted calf. This son of mine that is lost is now found. This one who is dead is now alive!' And just weeps and this huge party just breaks out, this massive celebration by everyone that this guy who blew it, who harmed the family, who did something truly wrong, is just like we're so glad you're home. We love you. We love you. We love you. This is where you belong. Wow. And that's not where the story ends. There's a second son. It's the older brother. Anybody here have an older brother, or older sister, or maybe you are the older brother or the older sister. You probably empathize with this guy; I kind of do. He's coming home, maybe he's got a shovel over his shoulder and he's walking home, he's been working all day because he's a hard worker, and he's smart, and he's responsible, and you can count on him. He's been faithful to his dad, he's the ideal son. He's coming back and from a distance, he hears music, and he sees lights and people gathering around his house, and there's tents out, and there's this smell of delicious food, and he's wondering what is going on. And he looks at one of his co-workers and he says 'what is going on here.' And he says 'haven't you heard? Your brother's home and your father has killed the fatted calf for him.' Now the fatted calf, of course, is the best thing you could.. it's the most expensive, most over the top amazing thing you could do for a meal. And the son, hearing this, is almost disgusted. And then he just ostensibly begins to maybe work on something, pretends to mend a fence or is digging something, he's just angry. He's like no, no, no, no way. And the father then, hearing about this, in the same way he runs out to his younger son, he runs out to his older son. And he says what is going on? And the older brother says 'this son of yours!' Notice how he says this son of yours, not my brother, huh? 'This son of yours sold a third of our land and squandered it on lascivious living, and you kill the fatted calf for him?'

You never even killed a goat for me.' That's actually what the scriptures say. And the father looks at him and he says 'my son, everything I have is yours. You've been nothing but faithful to me, but this brother of yours.' See? Turns it back on him. 'This brother of yours was lost and now is found, was dead and now is alive.'

And in the phrase 'this brother of yours' was its own accusation. You see in that culture, it's the job of the big brother to go after the little brother. When the little brother or the little sister mess up, big brother, who's the heir to the family, is supposed to go out and find him. He's supposed to be like that shepherd. He's supposed to be like that woman looking for a coin. He's supposed to go out and find his brother, and everybody knows that. And when the dad says this brother of yours, who you never looked for, who you never worried about, who you never looked out for, who you never believed in. I think there's something about that older brother that in order to feel holy, he needs a sinner. He needs someone like his younger brother to say I told you so. I'm better than him. Maybe you've experienced that in your own life; religious people who do that to you. They almost need you to be the black sheep in your family so they can be the white knight. Anyway, God loves them both. And it ends with come and celebrate with us. And do you know, does the older brother go in and celebrate with them? Nobody knows because Jesus finishes the story there. He leaves it hanging, and there He is, looking across the hall at these Pharisees. And the question is: will you come down and have a glass of wine with me and these prostitutes and these tax collectors? Will you seek after these people the way that older brother should have gone after that younger brother. And I think the answer is and was no. I think that there is a certain religious person that needs sinners around to feel good about themselves. They're not about to do any favors, they're not about to go looking for anybody. And Jesus is saying I am that older brother. I am the good older brother who is going after the younger brother. He's coming after you. And just like the father, he's saying to you come to the party. Come to the celebration. Come and rejoice on Easter. That some good things are going to happen in your life and the life of your neighbor. And so you say to me well, maybe you've been religious your whole life and you feel sort of dead on the inside. Maybe the Lord is asking you to lighten up a little bit and to come to the celebration. And maybe if you say I am a sinner, I messed up, God doesn't want to do anything in my life, just remember what St. Augustine said – there is no saint without a past, there is no sinner without a future. That's it, man. God loves you and He's inviting you. Would you bow your heads with me? I'm not going to invite you to stand. I'm not going to invite you to raise your hand. I'm not going to invite you to write anything down or sign anything. When I gave my life to the Lord, it was in a church service like this, and there was an altar call and I didn't go down, I didn't raise my hand, and I didn't pray. I just made a decision in my heart. I made a decision – I'm going to follow Jesus. I'm going to stop riding a fence. I'm going to follow Him. Becoming a disciple of Jesus is a decision. When Joseph entered the Promised Land, he said to them you have to choose; you have to make a decision. And he said as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. What decision do you make today? And I just want to give you five seconds that if you want to become a Christian, that even in your own heart, with whatever faith you've got, you would simply say quietly, and you don't even have to say it out loud, in your mind, I choose to follow Jesus. I choose to follow you, Lord.

And if you did that this morning, I want you to remember it and I want you to tell somebody. Father, we love you. We thank you that you're like this prodigal father, just so giving, so generous, so loving that you would run out to us, that you'd search for us, that we're never far from your reach, that you're always with us, that your love never leaves us. That nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Lord, we ask in Jesus' name to help us to do better, to take one step closer to you and to be more like Jesus every day. Lord, we love you, it's in Jesus' name we pray, amen. Love you guys. This is a great Easter. He is risen! Amen.

BENEDICTION (Bobby Schuller)

And now 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. He is risen! Happy Easter!