

Transcription of 19TM1800

Acts 13:30 "But God. . ." April 21, 2019

We're glad that you're with us this morning, especially if you are a visitor. Welcome to our 2009 Easter morning service. What a beautiful place to gather. We're thankful to the college and being so gracious to us every year. Let's hear it for them, that they've been so accommodating. And Steve as well, and all the guys that are down here doing all the sound stuff. Sounds better than ever, doesn't it? They've done a great job.

Greatest event in history, the resurrection, for sure. Jesus rose as He said that He would. Today particularly for those of you that go to Morningstar Christian Chapel, it was on this day, April 21st, 1985, that we had our first service, so today we celebrate our 24th anniversary as a church. God has been good.

Back in 2009 here at the stadium we shared a message with you called "Three Words That Will Change Your Life," because so often great sentiments are expressed in just very few words. They are thoughtful, they are short sentences. "I love you" in any language may not sound the same, but it has the same impact. Powerful, more powerful maybe than any other words that you can speak. If you're a parent waiting for a child to be born and you don't know the gender of the child, for the doctor to come out and say "It's a boy," that would thrill your heart. It was Winston Churchill who spoke to the West Point cadets, and he encouraged them with the words "Never give up." Three words. They have a lot to say. It was Douglas MacArthur that spoke to heartbroken Filipinos when he left the island at the end of World War II with the words "I shall return." If you've watched the weather reports on the news in the mornings, they usually kind of break them down into little three-word phrases. It's going to be cold and windy; it's going to be hot and smoggy; there's an onshore flow; Santa Ana winds. There're a lot of them, aren't there? I think Clint Eastwood made his living with a three-word phrase. What is it?

Audience: "Make my day."

Oh, you guys are right there, "Make my day." How about Bob Barker?

Audience: "Come on down."

I'm not going to preach at all. You guys got this all figured out. I'm done. Wrap it up.

It was John Quincy Adams who was our sixth president, he was a true believer in Christ. He died in February of 1848. His final words recorded by a biographer were the words "I am content."

We Christians have three-word phrases as well. We say "praise the Lord" a lot. Or "God is good." All of them powerful. I'm sure you've all used the words "I am sorry." I know if you're married you've used them. They go a long way towards repairing damage or strained friendships.

So I guess it becomes no surprise that when you go to the Bible and you begin to read of God's great accomplishments in saving us, and the action of love that He showed towards us, you find them expressed in three words. On the cross Jesus said, "It is finished." And then on that Sunday Easter morning, it was the angel who said, "He is risen." Two and three words that carry so much power. "It is finished," "He is risen." One without the other wouldn't have been very helpful. "It is finished." It could have been finished for everyone had He not risen.

If you have a Bible with you, I'd like you to turn with me, if you could, to Acts Chapter 13 verse 26. And actually, maybe we'll look at verse 30 first and then kind of back up a little, because rather than doing a three-word phrase, we thought we'd reduce it to two. This way you won't stay as long. Next year we'll try for one word. Don't know if that'll work. You can see the two words we're working with right here in front of me. It is probably the two most significant words of all time.

If you go on the internet, there is a list of the 100 most powerful two-word phrases in our culture. I went through about five different lists. A lot of them, they

agree. Some of them on the top of the list I could not repeat here or anywhere else, but there were some good ones. "Thank you," "love you," "you're welcome," "call me," "of course," "my pleasure." You're hearing that a lot in the restaurants these days. "Ladies first," "bless you," and high ranking "shut up."

Paul on his first of what would become three missionary journeys preaching the gospel of Jesus throughout Asia and Europe came early on to Antioch and Pisidia, and he spoke to them here in Chapter 13 about Jesus' death, and they may not very well have heard about it ever before as Paul came to preach. And he talked about Jesus' dying, and having given His life in fulfilling the scriptures, and then he said this in verse 30: "But God raised Him from the dead." Probably no more powerful phrase that you'll find in the Bible than this term, "But God." It is found 45 different places in the scriptures. Whenever you find it, bad news isn't so bad anymore. Hopeless situations seem to have corrected themselves. Horrible circumstances are not so horrible. With only two words added, "But God." Two words, both three letters long, both one syllable, but when placed together and applied to difficult times, the radical truth of God's power emerges.

We have, like I said, been a church today for 34 years. We met at a house in Whittier our first meeting, had six people at it. I said to those who were in attendance, all six of them, "Maybe the Lord would have us to start a church," to which four replied, "We don't know anything about that." And then my wife and I said, "Oh, yeah, but the Lord could do it." And we have met over the years at various places; at campuses, in school fields, in parks. Many of you have joined us over the years. It's nice to talk to folks who were with us from the first service. Some of them are still here. Certainly, from the first year, and every year, we've met on Easter. Sometimes the weather has been beautiful. Sometimes it's been really cold. One year I think there was a monsoonal rain. I had to wrap my notes in cellophane and cover them up. This thing dripped right here (indicating). And through it all, God continues to work, and you're still here. You keep coming back. We gather to talk about His Son, to talk about His accomplishments. Every year we meet folks who came and gave their lives to Jesus because of Easter Sunday; decisions that changed their lives. Whatever they came with to the service, they ran to a

"But God" moment. I did like this, I live like that, I went here, I said that, But God took me anyway, cleansed me from within, came to my rescue.

"But God." Pretty powerful words. And Paul uses them here, "But God raised Him from the dead." What looked like a certain defeat turned into a great victory. And so we've offered to have people make decisions about Jesus. We're going to offer that to you this morning as well. That you can say before you go home, "I need a 'But God' moment." If God can do what He says, if God is as real as you claim, if God can show me who He is, I want Him in my life. And you can bring a life that maybe has been struggling and run into "But God." "But God."

Martyn Lloyd-Jones, who is a famous Bible commentator, most of us as pastors love his books that he wrote, said that these two words, "But God," contain the entire gospel. Doesn't really matter who you are or what you've done or how you've lived or what mistakes you've made, how you failed others or how you failed yourself. Maybe addiction has grabbed hold of you and have plagued you for most of your life, But God can change that. Changed my life more than a couple of years ago. And He can take who you are and make you who He wants you to be.

The first word, "but," is a conjunction in English. It's a word that simply connects two phrases and causes them to be compared. It's a distinction word. It's a word of comparison or contrast. I thought he was coming to visit, but he wasn't. That car is very expensive, but this one's not. When you add "God" to "but," though, everything becomes possible.

Jesus in speaking to the disciples, who said to Him in disbelief at one point, "Who in the world then can be saved?" Jesus said, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." With God.

I don't know if you've ever read across, and I was amazed to read it a few years ago, a story on the internet of a young Canadian boy named Kyle MacDonald. He was a social blogger. It seems to be a -- I don't know, a career goal these days. A social influencer. But he had played a game as a Canadian boy at home where would you barter with others to try to advance the value of what you started with to something greater. So he thought when he got older and when he was on the radio and very exposed

to others, he said, "I wonder if I could make this work in real life." And he had a single red paper clip that he traded in the office for a fish-shaped pen. He took it out that weekend and he was able to deal with someone for a sculptured doorknob. Eventually that became a Coleman stove. Traded that for a Honda generator. Traded that for an instant party, with a keg of your choice of beer and a Budweiser neon sign. Over the next year, he traded 14 different times. Like I said, he had exposure to a lot of people. His final trade was a role in a film for a two-story house in Saskatchewan. And over 11 months he took a single paper clip to a beautiful house for himself. You can read it on the internet. Just look up on Wikipedia Kyle MacDonald. Amazing guy. But that's not an impossible task. That's just a really well-driven, resourceful, creative, and amazing young guy.

What we're talking about this morning is far more than that. It isn't genius; it's God's work. It isn't creativity; it is the celebration of impossibility. Jesus died, and three days later He was alive. It is the ultimate "But God" in history. And Paul doesn't let it escape us. If God can do that, I don't know what you're going through, but I know He can fix it. I don't know where you've been, but I know He does. I don't know what you think can happen, but what you think can happen is only half of what can happen. "For it hasn't even entered into the hearts of men what God can do in the lives of those who look to Him." Verse 26 of this little section says this: "Men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to you the message of this salvation has been sent. For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they did not know Him, nor even the voices of the Prophets which they read every Sabbath day, have fulfilled them in condemning Him. And though they found no cause for death in Him, they asked Pilate that He be put to death. Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the tree and they laid Him in a tomb. But God raised Him from the dead." Love the story, don't you? Notice in verse 26, though, that God has a message for you. Notice what it says. "Those of you who fear God, to you the word of this salvation has been sent." God sent the message of His son to those who might very religiously live their lives, but don't really know Him as they should. Paul said here in verse 27, You dwell in Jerusalem. It is the capital of religious

practices, and yet you don't know Him. You don't know the voice of the Prophets, even though you've read them for years, every Sabbath. All you've been able to do is fulfill what was written there by condemning Jesus, the One that was promised to death. God has a message for you. The Pharisees, not willing to hear the message, sought to have Him killed, didn't want to listen to what He had to say, didn't want to respond to His invitation. For 1,500 years God had spoken through the prophets. In the last days He would speak through His Son. But Paul said to the crowd there gathered in Antioch, God has a message for you about salvation. You who should have known all along that He was coming, it's been written out.

In the Old Testament God spoke through a burning bush, and through lightning and thunder at Mount Sinai. He spoke in a still small voice to Elijah. He spoke to the judges, spoke to the kings, sent powerful prophets. He made known His desire, His longing, His value, and His wishes. God spoke because He loved man. God speaks to you because He loves you. He'd like to guide you through this life. He'd like to rescue you from the ravages of sin. He loves you enough to continue to speak to you, even if for years you have run away, closing your ears and determining not to listen. But in these last days, God has only said one thing: Look at the cross and look at the empty tomb.

And I suspect that you are here this morning either because you love Him and you know that He loves you, or you know that you should be here, and it's been a long time since you've been in church, but hey, Easter. You can't miss Easter or Christmas. Chreasters we call them. Twice a year. This morning He wants to tell you about His great love, and what He did to prove it.

So Paul writes, you religious folks took Him. You fulfilled the scriptures you ignored in having Him killed. And when you had fulfilled all that the scriptures said about what you would do, though they found no cause for death in Him, they laid Him into a tomb. "But God." "But God."

When Jesus forgave the sins of that paralytic that was dangling from the roof on a bed held by his friends, who wanted to get him to Jesus because he couldn't walk -- can you imagine? They tore the roof off a house and kind

of let this guy down in front of Jesus, who was speaking to a full house. And the Lord said to this man, "Your sins are forgiven you." And then you read that the religious folks sitting nearby began to shake their heads, and they said to each other, "Only God can forgive sin." They bristled at Jesus' words. And so the next thing Jesus said was this: "Rise up out of that bed and take it up and walk, because you should know that God has the power to forgive sins." And He did something that they were moved by so that He could justify and explain something they couldn't see: That God would forgive our sins. So Paul in speaking here in the synagogue says to those gathered there religiously, "I've been sent to talk to you about this word of salvation, which though you could have known, if you haven't -- though you had a Bible, it didn't move you. Not only do I have a message for you, I have a messenger for you." Notice verse 27. They didn't know Him. They condemned Him. They didn't know Him, but they condemned Him. God's messenger, according to the scriptures, according to the prophets, was that when He came, He would die for the sins of man. He would be that sacrificial lamb. He would be the Passover lamb.

Ultimately for you this morning, God's message is not a sermon, and it's not a law, and it's not a set of instructions. It's a person. It is the person of Jesus Christ. Every prophet pointed to His coming. Every prophet warned of His one day bringing judgment. And yet every prophet declared that when He came, He would be God's hand held out. "Here's My Son. He's your Savior. He loves you and has come to pay the price for you." It is the Old Testament God story that leads to the New Testament, where the story is completed. Christianity is not a creed, it's not a ritual, it's not a religion, not an institution. It is a relationship between you and Almighty God through His Son Jesus.

When the Psalmist wrote in Psalm 49 of those who lived in the world and whose trust was in riches and in accomplishments, he went on to tell them that all of that would one day be left behind. And then in verse 15 of Psalm 49 he said "But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave." God will receive me.

God has a message, and He has a messenger. And notice what we read here in verse 28 and in verse 29, that God was well aware of our sinfulness. We read there "And

though they found no cause for death in Him, they asked Pilate to put Him to death. And when they fulfilled all that the scriptures had written about what they would do to Him, then He died."

God knows our sinfulness. Jesus gave His life and then was raised from the dead, but God raised Him from the dead because we needed a Savior. When Paul wrote to the Romans in chapter 5, he wrote about our sinfulness, and then he said in verse 8 of Chapter 5, "But God demonstrated His love for us, or towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "But God."

Jesus was innocent. We read that here. They found no cause of death for Him. He lived a perfect life, yet the people sent to execute Him and condemn Him were as the prophets foretold: Criminals, sinners. They didn't want to hear God's message. They didn't want to submit to God's ways. They wanted Him dead. Get Him out of my life. People still do that kind of stuff. Talk to them about the Lord, "Don't talk to me about that. I don't want to hear that." As we went out to hand out fliers these last couple of weeks to invite folks to our service this morning, very few people were unkind, but there's always that one guy who knows better. "Oh, you don't have to give me one of them. I know what that's all about." All right. Tell me. Then I can keep this. They don't want to hear about the Lord. They don't want to respond to His love. John in writing his gospel starts in Chapter 1 with the words, "He was in the world, the world was made by Him. The world didn't know Him. He came to His own. They wouldn't receive Him."

God has a message, a Messiah who gave His life and then rose from the dead. He has a messenger. It's a person. He sent Him because God knew our sinfulness. He was aware of our plight. Jesus came to shine His light upon men's hearts to reveal our need so that we might turn to Him. Right after that verse that everyone knows about God so loving the world is the word that says, "And this is the condemnation that has come upon the world." Light has come into the world, but men love darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil. They know. You should know this this morning: God knows your sinfulness. I don't know it. In fact, I'd rather not know it. If you could just smile at me and sing like you mean it, I'll just go home happy. You can fool me. I'm

a dummy. I'd believe it. But God knows better. And that's the issue, isn't it? There's a message. There's a messenger who's aware of our need. So the words "But God." When man had done all that he could do, God was just beginning to work.

One thing you discover as you read through the New Testament especially is that the crowds were always wrong about Jesus. Every time they missed the boat. Some said He was a good man -- oh, no, far more than that. Some said He was a deceiver -- way wrong. Some said He was Elijah -- He wasn't. Or Jeremiah -- nope. Or one of the prophets -- not really. Some said He was Moses -- not even close. Other said He was possessed -- oh, I guess He was, by the Spirit of God.

Today the world is still wrong about Jesus. I don't know if you've noticed, but every Easter television shows air the dumbest specials. "Who's the real Jesus?" "Getting to the bottom of it." "Who's the historical Jesus?" Was He a guru, a zealot, a fanatic? Maybe He's an avatar. Really? Swing and a miss. He was the Savior come to shine His light on the hearts of men, because He saw that we had a need and we were not going to be able to get back to Him without His help.

So we read in verse 30, "But God." When they had done all that they could, when they had taken Him out, when they had done all that the scriptures said that they would do to Him, then we read "But God." "But God raised Him from the dead. And He was seen for many days by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses to the people. And we are willing to declare you glad tidings -- that promise which was made to our Fathers. God has fulfilled this for us their children, that He has raised up Jesus." He has raised Him up. Despite all that the world tried to do and in getting rid of Him, we read in verse 30 "But God." He was seen for the next 40 days by His followers. The chief priests did not have the final word. Neither did Pilate, nor the fickle crowd. God has the last word. I love this. "But God." They killed Him, did exactly what the Bible said they would do. They had no reason to do it, but they did it anyway. And when everything He had gone through was fulfilled, every word that was spoken about Him; when that happened, He said "It's finished."

And then you get to Sunday, but God had greater ideas.

Jesus was on the cross, left for dead, but God raised Him up. The people put Him in a tomb, But God got Him out. They walked away believing they had won, had gotten rid of this irritant, But God had other plans. And I think ultimately that's what this day should mean for you and I. We should have and be "But God" people. You fail. You fail, But God. Others write you off, But God. Few have hopes for your future, But God.

When Paul wrote to the Ephesians he said, "You are now made alive, who were dead in your trespasses and your sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, and according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that works in the sons of disobedience, among whom you also once conducted yourself living in the lust of your flesh, fulfilling the desires of your flesh and mind, you were by nature the children of wrath, as others." And then it says, "But God, who is rich in mercy, with a great love with which He loved you, even when you were dead in your sins, God made you alive in Christ (by grace are you saved)."

Every Christian should have in his basic testimony, this is what my life was like, But God. Is that your testimony this morning? But God. Was dead in my sins, But God. I was running for Him, and away from Him, But God hunted me down. I was deceived. I thought the world had everything I needed, ended up blind and hopeless, But God opened my eyes. Had a lot of baggage, But God. I failed myself, I'm disappointed in all that I've done, But God. You see, if God raised a corpse that had been laying in a tomb for three days alive again, He can change your life. I know what the world says: Impossible. You see the way he was raised? You see the kind of parents he had? He'll never come out of the ghetto. He'll never come out of that place of sin. He'll never come away from that drinking lifestyle. He'll never be able to be delivered from the things that he has seen. It's his culture. It's his environment. The society has made him what he is. And then the words "But God." God can change your life.

Joseph was a man that was raised in a home with great competition amongst the brothers, great jealousy amongst them. God had favored Joseph. He was sold by his brothers; told dad he was dead. Everyone spent years living that lie out. Joseph was jailed for doing a good job in an Egyptian household where he was accused of

raping a woman. He had not. He was left in prison for years. He's the perfect example of someone that should point all around him and say, "I can't get out of this life. Look what I've grown up with. My brothers sold me as a slave. Then I spent years in prison, accused of a crime I didn't commit. I'm completely dysfunctional." But God. Made him second in power to Pharaoh, made him the deliverer of the people in times of famine. The world says impossible, But God says otherwise. The world says it can't happen; God says it can. The world says you're hopeless; Jesus said no, no, no, very hopeful. Because God is able to do what we cannot and change the situation the way we cannot.

45 times, "But God." What was God, and what does God, and what should God do in your life this morning? If you could write the script, you could deliver the message, the prayer, God, this is what I need in my life. I can't do it. I don't know if you can, but if you can, do it. "But God." Financial trouble, health challenges, strain in relationships, dissatisfied in this world, getting older, getting sorer, getting sicklier. Oh, But God is so able.

What do you want God to do with you this morning? Because I love verse 30. It just kind of sticks out, doesn't it? Here's the best the world could do. They take Him out, But God. God has a message for you, a message of salvation. That message is found in the messenger Jesus Christ. He came because He knew your sinfulness. He knew your needs. He made you, wanted to have fellowship with you. Sin separated you from God, But God had other ideas. And so despite what the world might have said -- He's dead, He's buried -- beside from a worry of stealing His body, they pretty well thought they had this won. But God. But God.

This morning that can happen with you. God can step in and change the direction, the outcome, the attitude, the outlook, your situation, if you let Him. If you let Him. And maybe for years, like these that Paul was talking to, you've known the story. In fact, I bet we could bring most of you up here, you could tell the Easter story, but if it hasn't affected your life, it really is just a story, isn't it? And Paul said to those who had the scriptures and the prophets and years of being taught, they didn't know Him. And that's the key. Here you are at another Easter service. Pretty sunny, not too cold.

And it looks like I'm going to quit early. You're going to be in great shape. Life is good. Breakfast is waiting. "But God." More important than all of that, what's God doing in your life?