

# **Your Best Days are Ahead!**

*By Bobby Schuller*

Well he is risen! (AUDIENCE – He is risen indeed!) You know today is a special day. I'm so glad that you're here to celebrate with us this morning, the most important event in human history. The fact that the Son of God in flesh was raised from the dead for you and for me! This morning, I want to remind you.. you can clap to that. This is a celebration.

Today is a lot less of a church service and a lot more of a party. And so, you know, I'm half Pentecostal, half Reformed, so my half Pentecostal side likes it when you clap, when you say stuff like he's risen and when you put one hand in the air and say glory! Everybody say glory. (AUDIENCE – glory!) Yes! It's good news that Jesus was raised from the dead, and that's something we can celebrate.

The thing I want you to hear more today than anything is this – that because Christ was raised from the dead, that same power is in you. The power that cannot be destroyed. That power that cannot be put to death. It's called a Pasqual Power. It means that when death comes to your life, that by faith it just means a doorway to something greater. Like a seed. That's what Jesus compares us to. He says unless you take a seed and kill it and put it in the ground, it remains only a seed. But if you put it in the ground and it dies, it becomes well much more, doesn't it.

Sometimes the deaths that we feel in our life are actually the very things that activate our purpose and our calling. And so I want you to know that whoever you are, that the power of Jesus is in you. Eternity is in you. Heaven is in you and you cannot be destroyed. When evil attacks you or darkness comes and puts you into the ground, just prepare yourself because it may be that your greatest potential is about to be activated. Isn't that good news? It's good news that in you and me the very life and spirit of Jesus Christ abides and it means that you cannot die. That is good news. That means your best days are ahead of you.

Are you sick? Someday you'll be healthy. Are you dying? Someday you're going to be more alive than you've ever felt. Have you lost someone you love? Maybe you're mourning them today. Maybe you're grieving the loss. You're going to see them again. The promise of the resurrection is that we serve a good God whose not going to just let you die. We serve a good God who gave his life for you and for me, for his kids. Who said there's no reason I'm going to let them die. He's come for you. Receive today the free gift of eternal life, and it is free. That same spirit that raised Christ from the dead is in you now. Heavens.. yes hallelujah! Heaven is in your body. And friends, that is such good news. Eternity dwells within you.

You know there is a psychological power of death that weighs on many people but it doesn't weigh on you. It doesn't have to because you are alive. Scientists have written extensively, especially psychology about

the power of this dread or fear of death on our behavior and on our mental health. Freud, who's the sort of father of psychology, originally believed that pathology or mental illness had its root in repressed sexual desires. Later on, that idea was rejected and replaced with another idea by a more talented psychologist, Hume, who said that well actually it's not repressed sexual desire, it's actually fear of death. It's dread. It's anxiety. There is this thing buried deep within our soul, this sort of looming fear, well the clock is ticking, the sands are running out. Every day I look in the mirror, there's another age spot, there's another wrinkle, the little sign that, well life is short. And we use phrases like that, don't we.

You see psychologists have already agreed that one of the main or if not the main source of mental illness in the world is constant fear or dread; anxiety, and particularly the fear of death. So death itself doesn't just ruin us, but the fear of death also is ruining us. And guys like Kierkegaard and even Hume believed that only religious people who had faith that they would live forever would be able to avoid the hero complex and actually be able to live healthy, good, whole lives.

I'm not bragging. Okay I am bragging. I'm bragging not on me, I'm bragging on Jesus Christ, the fact that he not only removed death, he can remove the fear of death – the dread that many of us feel; that worrisome feeling that many of us have. And many of us do have that. As time goes on and people live older, ironically enough, people hate aging

more. When you look more and more on television and the things; all the media that comes out in the world, you're only seeing younger people, right? Like younger people have more value than older people, as if, right? We have an older church and we love our older people because they're smarter, they've had more experience, they're wiser. Right? Yes! That's right. I love them.

And that's what the kingdom of God believes, right? Because the older you are, the wiser you are, the more experience you have. See we're spiritual people. We're not fleshly people. We believe that the body may age like milk but the spirit ages like wine. Yes! I like that. You can tweet that.

So for us, even the source of not our mental illness but the source of a lot of our sin is rooted in our fear of death, our hurry, our desire to leave a legacy. The way in which you might steal or bend the rules because you're afraid you won't have enough, for whatever reason. There is this undergirding fear of death, and fear of sickness, and fear of aging, and all of this, a fear of losing my youth. As Mark Twain said, "youth is wasted on the young." You know you feel that as you start to get older.

And so aging and death, it has this sort of corrosive nature on the soul and on the mind. But I want to remind you that that doesn't matter for you. You're going to age and you're going to die in some ways, but that's just like going through the wardrobe into Narnia. It's just a doorway into the next part of your life. You are a ceaseless being with an

eternal destiny in God's great universe. That can't be taken from you. You know Jesus and his life dwells in you and his power is in you. The power that raised Jesus from the dead is within you.

And just as a mental exercise, let's pretend for a moment that we are in a comic book or a movie or something like that, and you couldn't die. What if you couldn't die? What if something happened, I don't know, an alien comes down or a toxic spider bites you or something like that. Something happens and now in this story you can't die. Not only can you not die, but you could give that gift to the people that you love and care about. How would your life change? Would you quit your job? Maybe you'd go back to school like you always said you would. Would you stop saving money? Would you maybe not save as much and give more? What would you do in your life? How would your life change? And my guess is that at the very least you're going to sleep better and that you're going to hurry less.

And the reason I say that is that fear, that the fear of death, the fear of aging, the fear of wanting to have a legacy, the fear of not having personal value, which is all rooted in the fear of death that this story is going to come to an end; that that looming fear is destroying your life. And Jesus says to you right now don't be afraid. You can't be killed, in a way. That the same power that raised Christ from the dead will raise you from the dead. You will rise as Christ was raised. It's a life. Amen?

We say things like life is short. Well Dwight from the office disagrees. There's a great meme on the internet. I don't know if you like "The Office." Like ten percent of you do, I'm sure. But there's this meme where Dwight from "The Office" says 'people say life is short. False. Life is the longest thing you'll ever do.' Isn't it true? This was the journey that the apostles experienced. They realized that what Jesus said was true; that we are ceaseless eternal beings when we have the indwelling of eternity, of heaven, of the Holy Spirit.

The apostles, when they were called to follow Jesus, it was in a day in which rabbis were like most important person in a society. And my dad wrote about this in one of his books where he talks about how the Dominie was like the judge, the ruler and the overalls person in these Dutch immigrant communities. That's how the rabbi was in the Jewish societies. That the rabbi was the most honored, revered person. He was the judge, jury and executioner. And so for every boy to become a rabbi would have been like becoming a superstar. And the only way to become a rabbi is if another rabbi asks you to follow him. And rabbis back then only asked the smartest, the brightest, the best looking, the Harvard.

And here Jesus' disciples, some of them who are women and tax collectors, were invited to follow him and it was not only a tremendous honor, but it meant that he wanted everyday people to be like him. And so to follow the rabbi was like enrolling in seminary. And here they are in preparation to become rabbis themselves, and they think I'm going to

learn Torah, and I'm going to become a rabbi, and then I'm going to have my graduation. It's going to be so awesome.

And then things start getting a little weird in a good way. Jesus starts talking about this thing called the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God. And he starts saying that everything we've been talking about as a Jewish people through scripture is invading its way into the world now. And that what was undone in the Garden of Eden is actually coming back. That eternal life in heaven is breaking into this world.

And he says things like I'm going to go and prepare a place for you if you die, but don't forget this is our future home and we're going to save it. And he starts saying things like this kingdom of God is breaking in and guess what – I am called to lead the charge, and I am called to be the king, and I am obeying my Father and his call to save this world and to save you. And I want you to know that you're going to live forever if you trust in me.

And he starts saying things like this, which feel a little weird, but then he does stuff like raises a girl from the dead. And then he turns a bunch of bread and wine, that's just a little bit like.. or bread and water and fishes and feeds thousands of people with it. And then he starts doing all of these amazing things – healing people, healing the sick, miracles. And then they're starting to feel like well maybe all the stuff that he's saying is real. And he's saying yes, all this stuff that is happening is because the spirit of life is invading a world that has been

darkened. And I'm going to bring an end to sickness and I'm going to bring an end to death.

And so he's talking about this and what's happening and its starting to drum up something, and now these disciples and this huge mob of thousands of people, who are basically wanting miracles, wanting to see what Jesus is doing, he's now moved from rabbi status, like pastor status, to being a prophet. Oh this is a biggie. This is a big one. This is going to be like Moses or Elijah, and now people are talking about it a lot.

And then even crazier things start happening. He raises Lazarus from the dead and he walks on water. And then he starts to give his disciples the power to heal people, and to cast out demons, and they start doing some of the things that Jesus does. It's like it's rubbing off on them.

And then this terrible event happens where he's crucified. They think when they're going into Jerusalem they're going to set up a throne and a new kingdom that it's going to happen now but in this upside down kingdom, Jesus is killed by the Roman Empire. He's bullied and beaten and thrown away. And even though he said that he would die and be raised on the third day, they just kind of forget that and they scatter and they flee.

And when Jesus is raised from the dead, and when its women who recognize it first, four women who first proclaimed the gospel of the risen Savior, which back then was a no, no. I mean it's a really great testimony

to the validity of the gospel. Everything changes! Because everything he said is true and it is true. That since the moment of resurrection, Jesus became, in his very body, the first fruits of the kingdom of God on earth. He became in his very person heaven breaking into earth. Heaven and earth used to be one and it was torn apart by our sin, but Jesus in reconciling us from our sin is bringing heaven back into the world, and it's amazing! Its good, good news.

What he said about you is true. You don't have to be afraid. You're not afraid. You're brave. You have faith. You are stable and strong because Christ lives in you. You feel in your bones and in your body eternity and heaven and the Holy Spirit. You know when you look inward, that God is alive, alive in you and calling you to a purpose. You are God's treasure, chosen, picked. And he is even now preparing you for your fantastic future, for your new tomorrow. I'm so proud of you and I can't wait to see the ways in which heaven blossoms in your life as you face the challenges and overcome them in Jesus' name, amen.

This, by the way, was real history. This actually happened. I don't believe with the snake tongued preachers who think that the resurrection isn't something that actually happened, that it's just a symbol that helps us see things better, this really happened! And it's still happening all the time! We don't see it a lot but you see amazing things that God is doing.

Here in America, however, and in many part of the western world, we have gotten to this place where we.. I still couldn't think of a word. We d-wonder. We d-magic. We d-mystify the world in which we live. We take all of the magic out of it because what we do is make a scientific observation. We write it in a book and something amazing somehow becomes normative in our thoughts and vocabulary.

Let me tell you exactly how this would happen if Jesus were raised from the dead today. Let's say a president were in a foreign land and he was killed, or something happened to him and he died. And his body was brought back to America, to Washington DC. And there three days after his death, let's say he's put in a coffin and he's drawn by horses and all of this regalia. And people are crying and music is played and a dirge is going. And all of this is happening. And they take this coffin into a room, and flags are at half mast and its placed in this room and they leave it alone for a moment because they're about to have a viewing of the body, three days after he's died. And they come back in and imagine the flag is on the ground, it's fallen off and the coffin door is open and there's nobody there. And then people are wondering what's going on. Let's say there's a 150 people in that room. And then the president comes walking in and just goes.. I don't know.

Imagine if that happened today. You know what would happen? People would be amazed. It'd be on the cover of every newspaper. Everybody would be talking about it – for two weeks. That's how we are.

And I'm sad to say that's how we've become. That if that were a true miracle from God, let's say it were random. Let's say he just did it to show the world. We would have a small group of people who are in that room that would probably form a bizarre American religious cult. But from everybody else, either people would say he didn't really die, people would say it's a conspiracy, and when they were finally able to prove that he was dead and that he was raised to life they would basically create a new term. They would call it spontaneous anatomical reanimation. They would write a paper about it, they would put it in science books, and they would just change the rules and say sometimes people are raised from the dead.

And that's what we do. You see we take all the miracles out of the miraculous world. It's not a miracle that a baby is born. If you've had kids, it's like this is the biggest thing that causes people to believe in God. It's not a miracle that you put a seed in the ground and it becomes a tree and then fruit grows and that sustains me and gives me all I need to live. God has created a world that even today sustains us and miracles are happening all around us, all the time. And what we do is make a scientific observation and write it in a book and say there is no God, and then go on fearing death and doing whatever it is we want to do so that we don't have to submit ourselves to a moral authority or a higher power, and we feel alone and we look into the abyss and we say there is nothing.

This world is amazing. If you live in the city too long, you forget that. All it needs is one trip to Yosemite and you'll be fixed.

You know miracles are happening every day. I've seen them with my own eyes. And miracles are a sign that God is at work in this world, and that since the resurrection of Jesus heaven is still breaking in to our world all the time.

The first time I saw with my own eyes as an almost adult was in Thailand. I went with this missionary group. I turned 16 in Thailand. And I remember the first thing, it was on our first day, the leader of our group, project director, she was a college student, she was dressed up like a sailor because we were doing dramas for kids. She had these white pants on. And we all watched, she was in front, as a car hit her at high speed, and she went flying through the air like a rag doll. She was hit in the side in the hip. And we watched as she tumbled on the ground and we all thought she was dead. And when she got up, she was wearing white cotton pants, okay? When she got up, she was crying, she was upset, obviously, but she was fine. Her pants weren't even dirty. She didn't have a bruise, she didn't have a scratch, a broken anything. God just protected her. Why? Well she had a job to do. Doesn't get to go to heaven, yet. Not yet.

And that really kicked off a trip where we saw a lot of this kind of stuff that completely changed my world-view. I came back a totally different person because being in Thailand I just saw with my own eyes

these incredible miracles that they're just happening in front of all of us. And we all wrote them down and we talked about it and we've never forgot it. But I risk when I talk about the scientific mind saying he's either crazy, or he's lying, or he didn't see what he thought he saw. And that's what every person of faith has to deal with, including the apostles when they have the joy of seeing a miracle and heaven breaking into our world.

I remember on that trip we were praying once and there was a lady who had a tumor on her neck. And we laid hands and we prayed for it and the guy took his hand off and the tumor was gone. Another time when we were praying in this village that they relied on rice for the economy and so they needed rain and the monsoon seasons hadn't come, and it had been three months of dry nothing. The sun was out 100% and we gathered and we all started praying for rain and we prayed for about an hour and by the time we were done, it started sprinkling as we started loading up our van. And some of these people who were Buddhist or pagan started worshipping our team saying these are gods or these are angels who brought rain to us. We're like no, no, no, no. There's only one who makes the rain.

I remember when we got back from another trip like that, there was a girl who'd gone to Africa and she had fallen off a car and she broke her neck. And she said that the doctor, it was in Nairobi, which is a legit city. I mean I know its Africa but they have real doctors that are trained

in real medicine, they did real x-rays, and they said you're never going to walk again. She wasn't able to move anything from the neck down, and they showed her these x-rays. And so the missionary group I was with sent an ambulance plane to go pick her up and take her back to a hospital. And before that happened, the local pastors and the guy that was leading the trip; can you imagine, by the way, sending your 17-year-old teenage daughter to Africa and you find out she comes home a quadriplegic? Thanks a lot, God. Right? I mean you'd feel angry, you'd feel frustrated. These guys that gather around her and they start praying for her, and she said I felt like fire went through my whole body, and she got out of bed and she was fine. And she came back and told us the story and showed us the x-rays.

Friends, we live in a miraculous world. And I know that all the time kids with cancer don't get healed and our prayers often don't get answered, and I don't always know why. I know heaven answers a lot of that, but still I know it's tragic, but these things are signs that God is at work in this world and that like heaven is pressing in against the firmament of this world, and it's breaking in through you and through me.

And I want you to know the same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is in you. For some of you, it's just a little pilot light. For some of you, it's a big fire. And I want to encourage that you stir that gift up and you allow the heavens to begin to swirl around in your body

because you have within you the same spirit that raised Christ from the dead. You trust in Jesus. Your home is heaven. Eternity and all the power of the universe is dwelling in your body. God has given it to you. To break chains, to speak things that don't exist as though they were. You have faith. If you had faith of a mustard seed you can move a mountain and it's true. That the faith and the power of Jesus Christ that raised him from the dead is in your body, it's in your fingertips right now. Believe, have faith, and trust that heaven is breaking in and it's breaking in through you. Every day, heaven gets a little closer. Every day, Jesus is a little closer to this world. And we say even now come Lord Jesus. We can't wait to stand before the throne of a risen Lord in which heaven and earth become one again.

And of course heaven is your heartbeat. Heaven is in your body. And when that happens, it changes the way that you spend money, and it changes the way that you view suffering and all the relationships in your life, they're eternal. It affects how you view your aging. Aging is good! That should be like a new Easter rant. Aging is good. Aging is good. Cause it is. It is a good thing. The world is so wrong about that. That every year is another year of experience, another year of wisdom, another year of gravitas with young people and other more spiritual authority, the ability to bless the next generation. This is a good thing.

And I just want you to know don't be afraid. Let the rain of heaven wash over you and let it melt away all of your fear, dread and death and

aging. Death is just a season, like winter. It comes and it goes. If you trust in Jesus Christ, you have a future calling in his world. But you have to trust in him. You have to choose. You have to make a decision. You can reject this if you want. Don't reject it. He's not going to just let you die. God loves you. He'd do anything to save you. Nobody wants you to go to heaven more than he does.

So friends you are alive. You are free. You are healed. You are called. You are eternal. You have a godly destiny and your best days are ahead. Do you believe it? Do you want it? Amen. Then if you believe it, then say so.

Today is a fantastic day to become a Christian. I think that Christianity, at its roots, requires an act of courage, a leap of faith; that to truly become a Christian, you have to start by doing something brave. Like standing up in a church in front of a bunch of strangers and your family and your friends; admitting that you're not where you want to be and that you need something from God in your life.

And many of you, you come here today, some of you got dragged here by your mom or your girlfriend, and I just want to say God is calling out to you, you can feel it now, even as I'm talking you know what's coming. And I'm going to ask and invite in just a moment that if you are here and maybe you're in a place where you used to believe in God but you need to come back. You need to say you're sorry. You need to get right with God. Or maybe you're here and you've never made that leap.

You've never made a decision to become a Christian, to follow God with all your heart. You don't feel heaven in you and you want it, you want Jesus.

Some of you say I can't do this because I still kind of doubt. Welcome to the club. I doubt, too all the time. But Jesus says all you need is the faith of a mustard seed and you can move a mountain. That's all he needs. He doesn't say you need a faith of a mountain to move a mustard seed. Or even faith of a mountain to move a mountain. You need just a tiny bit, a tiny little seed of faith, and if you respond and act in faith, God can use that. He can use that and build inside of you eternity, the kind of life he's called you to.

And so a lot of times in these types of things in church, I'm not going to ask you to get in that water, don't worry, that's for the next service. And by the way, if you want to get baptized, come to the next service. We only do it in the last one because of the time issues. But I am going to ask you to make a public confession of faith and that requires courage. It requires that you be brave and what a better day than Easter to make that decision.

And so now if you want to make that decision, I'm going to ask every head up, every eye open, everybody looking around because this is an act of courage and faith. Look – if you can't stand up for Jesus in a church, how are you going to stand up for him in the world? He said anyone who acknowledges me before men, I will acknowledge before the

Father, but anyone who denies me before men, I will deny before the Father.

So I'm asking you now. Wherever you are, if you want to get your life right with God, if you want to receive this free gift, he believes in you, he wants you, he's not disappointed in you, stand up and come here and I want to pray for you and bless you. Right where you are. Just stand and come. He's waiting for you. He loves you just as you are. Your family isn't worried about you coming forward. This is why you're here. It's going to be an extra two minutes. I'm not going to make you go back, I'm not going to dunk any water, I just want you to stand and acknowledge Christ before your neighbors. How good is God? He can save you. Keep coming, you're not disturbing us. The clock is ticking, the moment has almost passed. Don't let it slip. Come forward. Be obedient to what the Lord has for you. Don't miss out on this gift. It's a free gift, just say yes.

So I'm going to ask that you pray with me to receive this gift, and as we do, church, I'm going to ask that you pray with everyone that's up here, and say Father in heaven, I need you. I need you to save me. Save me from my fears and from my sin. Fill me with your Spirit. Let eternity be in me. Mark my name in the Lambs book of life. I trust you, Jesus, in your name I pray, amen.

And church, would you extend your hands towards these people who have come down and so brave.. I'm so proud of you. God loves you and this is great. That's great guys, yes. In the name of Jesus, I pray in

the name of Jesus that every chain would be broken. That fear would no longer dwell in these people. Bless them. Let all that they do succeed. Drive them into holiness and to your loving arms. Illuminate their prayer lives and help them, Lord, to walk every day according to your word, in Jesus' name, amen. Let's give them a hand! Thank you, friends, we love you. God bless you.