

Sunday Sermon – May 11, 2025

Texts: Acts 9:36–43; John 10:22–30; Revelation 7:9–17

Title: “Jesus Is Your Firefighter”

Be grateful for the worship team that sets up the sanctuary and changes the décor according to the church seasons. The “He Is Risen” banner that was hanging on the wall at Easter has now been taken down, but the truth it proclaims is imprinted on our hearts—the faith in the resurrection remains alive in our souls.

It’s been four Sundays since we celebrated Easter. Mornings and evenings in Wrightwood still carry a chill, but soon we’ll begin to see the seasonal flow of people—some arriving for summer, others leaving.

In today’s three Scripture readings, I am eager to proclaim a message that I believe will provide great strength and encouragement to the saints—especially as they continue to follow the Lord’s leading, regardless of the season or where they may be.

I. What effect does resurrection faith have on people of faith? (Acts 9)

In Acts, we meet a woman named Tabitha, who lived in Joppa. She died from an illness. Her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. She was clearly dead. But why put her body upstairs instead of making funeral arrangements immediately? This detail invites us to consider their intentions.

Funeral practices have changed over time, even in Korea. Nowadays, most large hospitals have morgues and funeral facilities. But when I was a child, funerals were held at home. My father, a lay elder in the Methodist Church, was a long-time member of the church’s Funeral Preparation Committee.

He was often present when someone was near death, guiding the family through the process. He and other committee members prepared the body with care—washing and dressing it according to Christian tradition. This ministry brought great comfort to grieving families and had a strong evangelistic impact.

Going back to the story in Acts, it seems that Tabitha's fellow believers in Joppa were hoping for something more. They did not anoint her body with perfume, which would typically be done quickly to mask the odor. This delay suggests they were holding onto a hope for revival.

I've never smelled a decaying body, but I can imagine it would be unbearable. I doubt even several cans of Febreze would make a difference. Normally, you'd expect them to call a funeral director or the church's funeral team. But instead, they sent urgently for the apostle Peter, who was in nearby Lydda.

When Peter arrived, he didn't pray for the comfort of those grieving. He didn't offer eulogies. Instead, he prayed directly over Tabitha's body and said, "Tabitha, get up." Miraculously, she opened her eyes and sat up (v. 40). It's easy to read this story without a sense of awe, but imagine if someone you knew rose from the dead. Wouldn't that be astonishing?

This leads me to a personal question. Why is it that my father—who served faithfully for decades in funeral ministry—never saw someone raised from the dead? Does that mean his faith was weak?

Let's look at what the Scripture is really teaching. Yes, Peter's spirituality is evident in this miracle. But the real conclusion is in verse 42: "This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord."

We may wonder why such miracles don't happen in our time. But we should also note that nowhere in the New Testament does Jesus command us to pray that the dead be raised. What He does promise is that all of God's people will be raised at His return.

Peter, Tabitha, and the believers in Joppa were people who lived with resurrection faith. Acts shows us what can happen when the people of God live with that kind of faith: restoration. Through the risen Jesus, we experience life in the midst of death, joy in sorrow, hope in despair, and reunion in times of separation.

Resurrection is not just a theological idea—it's the power that fuels our daily lives. It is the reason we can live in victory, be faithful witnesses of the gospel, and help others come to believe in the living Lord. Today, the Holy Spirit still performs miracles through Jesus' modern-day disciples to advance the kingdom of God.

II. In the Gospel of John, we find this truth: "The guarantee of our most secure life is in the resurrected Jesus."

The Bible teaches us how to know God and how to trust Him. God and Jesus are one. Jesus, through His life on earth—recorded in Scripture—reveals the very heart of God to us. Through Jesus' words, teachings, and actions, we come to know who our God truly is.

John 10:28 tells us what happens when we believe in Jesus: "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand." This promise became reality when Jesus rose from the dead.

Isn't it amazing to think that through faith, we have such a strong and secure promise of life? I bless you today to believe in this truth and rejoice that God's promise still holds firm for you.

But not everyone who heard Jesus during His earthly ministry believed in Him. In verse 26, Jesus explains why some did not believe: "You do not believe because you are not my sheep."

Does that mean the number of Jesus' sheep is predetermined? Not at all. But those who refused to believe forfeited the blessing of belonging to Him.

Jesus goes on to say in verse 27: "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." His sheep recognize His voice—not because they knew it beforehand, but because they chose to listen and obey. From that moment on, they could distinguish His voice.

In truth, our entire life of faith is a journey of following Jesus—the Shepherd of our souls—by listening for His voice in our daily lives. He speaks to us in many ways, but the clearest and most consistent way is through His Word, the Bible.

III. In the book of Revelation, we see this message: “Our salvation comes from God and the grace of the risen Lamb, Jesus.”

We know that Jesus’ resurrection and our salvation are the work of the Triune God, even though today’s passages focus especially on the roles of God the Father and God the Son.

Revelation presents the saints who have endured trials, persecution, and suffering to keep their faith. It also portrays the glory and praise given to God and the Lamb, who saved them through the victory of the resurrection. And it describes the overwhelming joy and peace that these faithful saints now enjoy before the throne of God.

In verse 12, we read the worship of the angels: “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.” What a powerful litany of praise! Is there anyone else in the universe who could be worthy of such a description? The answer is no. Only our Creator God holds all these attributes. By His mighty hand and according to His perfect will, all blessings are distributed rightly to all creation.

I believe the words in verses 16 and 17 are blessings the Lord has prepared for us today at our church: “They will hunger no more and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

No matter what season we are in or where we find ourselves, let us hold onto this promise. Jesus will walk with us through every step of our life’s journey. He will protect, help, and comfort us. That’s why nothing can separate us from God’s love—not even the power of death.

Do you think this promise is only for life after death in heaven? If so, why? And how could it be fulfilled there? It is possible because of the perfect reign of Christ. But even now—here in our present lives—as we fully trust in Him, we can begin to recognize that this promise is already being fulfilled. Eternal life doesn’t just begin after we die. It begins the moment we walk with the Risen Lord.

The title of my sermon, based on today's texts, could naturally have been "Jesus Is Your Shepherd." However, as I reflected on the specific mountain community of Wrightwood—where our church is located and where our congregation lives—I chose to use "Firefighter" instead of "Shepherd."

We cannot fully measure how much help we received from our local firefighters during last October's wildfire threat, nor how much we may rely on them again in the future. Even though our local firefighter is not actually Jesus, the resurrected Jesus becomes our true Firefighter—the one who watches over us, protects us, and rescues us in times of danger.

So today, I bless all of us to expect and enjoy the rest and blessing that the Risen Lord has prepared for His children who live in resurrection faith.
Amen.

Reflections and Applications for Today's Sermon:

- 1) Meditate on the passage from Acts. Identify areas in your personal life, your family, and your church where spiritual restoration is needed. Bring these areas before God in prayer.
- 2) The sheep's recognition of the shepherd's voice is more about understanding His instruction than simply hearing a sound. When and through what means does Jesus speak to you? What does the promise, "*No one can snatch you out of the Father's hand,*" mean to you personally?
- 3) Listen to Handel's Oratorio No. 53 – Chorus: "*Worthy Is the Lamb That Was Slain.*" Reflect on how you will allow the resurrected Lamb to reign over the rest of your life.