



Feast on Jesus (Part 3) – Firstfruits

Pastor Jerry Gillis – May 7, 2017

So I'm pretty convinced that waving is an art form. Here's what I mean, like if you think about all the number of different waves that people give, we could probably give names to some of them. You would understand the differences, I'm assuming. So you've got the glass cleaner, right, there's that. What else do we have. We've got the windshield wiper, right? That's a style of waving. You have the sock-puppet, people wave like this, right? You have the Frisbee, s'up, s'up. I like that, what's up? You have to throw a what's up in there, what's up? You have the air-traffic controller. There's lots of different kinds, right?

All of them were on display when I was recently in New York City, it was actually this past Thanksgiving season. My family was meeting some other parts of my family, my sister, her husband and their kids in New York City. They were going as a family trip, it was a big surprise for, you know, they have four kids and so they were all young and it was a big surprise. They didn't know we were going to meet them over there and we were going to get to watch the parade together and all that stuff. We've never done that, so they were there, we surprised them at the airport, it was so much fun.

And then at the parade itself, which was really interesting, you've got all of these floats that are coming by and there's celebrities that are on the floats, many celebrities. Some of which I knew, some of which I had never heard of in my entire life, but apparently they're famous, but I had no idea.

They're famous with other people, not with me, because I didn't know who they were. But you should have seen everybody trying to wave all these people down, like. And of course, my sister and her husband and their kids are from the very southern part of Georgia. And so they're big country music fans. And there was a couple of country artists that were coming by, you know. You also had people like Tony Bennett, you know, coming by and I'm like, I know Tony Bennett. He's been around my whole life. You know, and so they're all trying to wave down. I don't remember who the country artist was. I can't remember who it was, but they were coming by and like all of my cousins, you know, my little nieces and nephews, my son's cousins were, they were just, you know, trying to wave. And of course, you know, they're this tall, like some of them, you know. And there's a sea of people, you've seen the parade, right? There's a sea of people there, we weren't on the front row or anything, we've like, we're like ten people deep and you've got, you know, kids that are this tall who are, you know, waving and doing all yelling and all that kind of stuff. Well, they can't see them, you know, so and that's really what they're trying to do, they're trying to be acknowledged. That's what we do when we wave, right? We're trying to be acknowledged, we're trying to be seen. And so whoever it is, they're yelling their name and they're screaming, whatever, and so then you know, both of my sons pick up a couple of the small ones and put them on their shoulders so that they can be you know, tall enough

to be waving, yelling out, you know, Waylon Jennings. It wasn't Waylon Jennings, I'm just, they're yelling out whoever the country music star is, you know, and they're waving.

And one of them actually looked over and like pointed and was like, you know, and waved and they were all like hey, he waved at me, he waved at me! He waved at me, I'm their friend, right? And then there were other times when they were waving and they did not respond and it was like, what, they did not even see me, or they saw me and they just ignored me, you know, it was a bad scenario, so, but the funny thing is that you know, they were so small initially that, I mean, the people coming by in the parade, they couldn't even see their hands, you know, but then we lifted them up and they were able to be seen.

Well, I tell you all of that to tell you this. That the feast that we're studying, we've studied the Passover and we studied Unleavened Bread, we're studying a feast today in kind of chronology basically and this feast has at its core an idea of waving and that's why I wanted us to think about that at least for a moment and kind of the purpose behind it and it's called the Feast of First Fruits.

Now to give you some perspective on this feast, in the book of Leviticus there is a chapter, chapter 23 if you want to turn in your Bibles there, in Leviticus where God begins to talk about the nature of some of these feasts and He chronicles the Feast of Passover and Unleavened Bread and then He gets to the Feast of First Fruits. I want you to see kind of the beginning part of that conversation here that God gives to Moses for the people, it's in

verses 9 through 11: 'The Lord said to Moses, 'Speak to the Israelites and say to the: 'When you enter the land I am going to give you and you reap its harvest, bring to the priest a sheaf of the first grain you harvest. He is to wave the sheaf before the Lord so it will be accepted on your behalf; the priest is to wave it on the day after the Sabbath.'" So, that gives you some picture at least, a beginning picture of what this idea was behind the Feast of First Fruits.

Now, if I could explain this idea and kind of how this played out, the Feast of First Fruits was to happen when Israel was moving into the land, into the Promised Land. Remember, they came out of Egypt led by Moses and then they had a little bit of a forty-year detour and then they made their way into the Land of Promise under the leadership of Joshua and once they were to get into the land they were to observe this.

Now, the Feast of First Fruits was kind of the idea was this, is that the first things that would come up in the springtime that were kind of from the winter planting would be the grain harvest; barley, wheat, that kind of stuff would be what would come up first. It was the first to mature and so there would be this field and in the time of Jesus it was a very specific place right outside of Jerusalem where the priest would have a field that was designated to be indicative of the First Fruits. This field had to be left alone, in other words it was kind of superintended by the priestly class, but this field had to be left alone because everything that happened to it had to be natural, it had to be God given, God orchestrated. In other words, the rain that was provided, the sunlight, all of that stuff that would grow a field, it had to just be left alone. And so it was.

And so what the priest would do, like in the time of Jesus when the Temple was there and they were in Jerusalem, they would have a pretty significant religious festival to kick that time frame off. This would happen you know, kind of before the time of the Passover kicked off, they would be getting prepared and it kind of went in three phases. There was like a preparation phase, then there was a procession phase and then there was like a presentation phase.

And here's kind of how that went. The priests in Jerusalem would go to this particular field and when the field began to blossom, to bear fruit so to speak, they would go over to a section of the field, not the entire field, but just take a section of it, not just one stalk but an entire group of stalks and they would cord it off, they would put a cord around it and designate that as kind of the first of the crop, kind of the first-fruits of the crop. They would designate it that way. Well, when the day of First Fruits came, which would have been the week of Passover and Unleavened Bread, after the Sabbath day, the priest would get up and in the morning they would come to the field and in the field they would process with a bunch of other people coming with them because they were celebrating this Feast of First Fruits. And they would all make their way into the field and the priest would ask a series of questions to the people that they would affirm. Is today the right day, they would say yes, and they would ask it again to make sure and they would say yes. Is this a sickle in my hand? Yes it is. And so he would ask these questions, the people would kind of be a part of this, they would affirm those things. And then they would note that there has been a section prepared, that this field hasn't been touched, and that they

will cut this down. They take it then back to the Temple itself. And with rods what they would do is they would kind of thresh the grain. And then ultimately they would sift the grain, they would hold it up in the wind outside so that the chaff would be blown away from it, this was part of the whole Festival. And then they would kind of you know, grind it down, mill it down and it was very, very fine. It would be sifted at that point. And it would be bundled together and it would be waved before the Lord. Oftentimes the priest would actually turn in every direction to just kind of acknowledge that it's all been given by God.

You see, the purpose of this was the idea of a wave offering kind of in the Old Testament, which is not only used during the time of First Fruits, a wave offering is used in other places as well. But the idea behind the wave offering is this is representative of the whole. In other words, it's all yours and we're representing some of it to kind of recognize the whole. We know that You've given the harvest and we're taking the first of that harvest and we're recognizing you, God and demonstrating our trust in you for the whole of the harvest. This is indicative of the whole. That's kind of the idea behind the wave offering itself and behind this idea of First Fruits.

Now there is a ton that we could actually talk about and say relative to this particular day, but there's some other pieces that we might want to pick up from Leviticus chapter 23 as well. What we know is that this particular day, the Feast of First Fruits, was unlike Passover and Unleavened Bread in this way. We've talked about these two, Passover and Unleavened Bread in the last two weeks and if you haven't been here or if you're trying to catch

up, you can always go back onto the website and catch up on those if you'd like to do that, thechapel.com, that will get you there.

So the reason that there's a difference here is specifically Passover was given a numerical date on the calendar in which it was to occur, the fourteenth day of the first month, the month of Nisan. Then the Feast of Unleavened Bread would begin on the fifteenth day, and that was specifically told by God to the people. It would begin on the fifteenth day and run through the twenty-first. That would all be the time of Unleavened Bread, alright? Those are given specific calendar dates, but First Fruits is not. It's not given a specific numerical date; it is only given a specific time that it's supposed to happen.

Look at what it says again in Leviticus 23 verse 11: "The priest is to save the sheaf before the Lord so it will be accepted on your behalf; the priest is to wave it on the day after the Sabbath." So, in the Passover week, wherever Sabbath fell, the day after the Sabbath and for the Jewish people the Sabbath was Saturday, the day after the Sabbath day is when the Feast of First Fruits would occur, which was a Sunday, right? So what we always know about the Feast of First Fruits is that it's always going to be on a Sunday because it's the day after the Sabbath. So it's always going to occur on a Sunday no matter what the numerical date might be.

Just like when we talk about, you know, we celebrate Christmas, even though it's not necessarily the day that Jesus was born, we celebrate Christmas on December 25th. Well we have a numerical date for it, but we know that the day of the week can change, right? It can be on a Monday or

it can be on a Wednesday or it can be on a Friday, right? Well, it was kind of that in the inverse with First Fruits. We always know it's going to be on the Sunday after the Sabbath of the time of Passover, but it might fall on a different date depending on the particular year, alright?

Now, that said what we also know is that nobody was supposed to touch the harvest or the grain until an offering was made to the priest where he would do the wave offering. You weren't supposed to touch it, you weren't supposed to handle it, you weren't supposed to hold on to it, you weren't supposed to do that. Notice what it says in Leviticus 23 verse 14: "You must not eat any bread, or roasted or new grain, until the very day you bring this offering to your God. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live."

And then there's kind of one other idea here that the Feast of First Fruits does and that's this, that it's actually kind of a time-marker in God's kind of timetable of Feasts. The Feast of First Fruits is a time-marker for the next Feast. In fact, you can kind of see it in verses 15 and 16: "From the day after the Sabbath, the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering, count off seven full weeks. Count off fifty days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath, and then present an offering of new grain to the Lord."

In other words, the Feast of First Fruits is what actually helps to mark the idea of what would be the Feast of Pentecost fifty days later, okay? That's where your marker is, that Sunday after that Sabbath it would take you fifty days out to that Sunday which would be the time of Pentecost, alright?

Now all of you are going okay, thanks for the history lesson, now what does this have to do with me? Well, we'll get to that, but what I want to help us understand first is what this has to do with Jesus. Because what we're doing in this series is we're looking at these feasts and we're saying, these are actually pointing us to Jesus. That He is the actual embodiment of these things. These things teach us something about God, but they are specifically seen in the person and work and ministry of Jesus. So how do we do that with the Feast of First Fruits, because you may be going, based on what you just said I'm not sure, I don't know what you're going to do with that. Well, there's a few things that we could do that I want us to pay attention to.

Now we remember that Jesus was the Passover Lamb, right, we established that in week one. And so we know that He was crucified as a Passover Lamb on the fourteenth of the first month of Nisan, because that was the time of the Passover. That was the assigned date that God gave to it. And then we know that He would have been buried through a portion of the time of the Unleavened Bread, fifteenth, maybe even a portion of the sixteenth, there's a possibility as well, depending on the year.

Now here's the thing, it's extraordinarily complex when you start getting into the time sequence of crucifixion, burial, resurrection. Very complex because the Sadducees and the Pharisees observed different dates. Back in about, you know just prior to the time of Jesus in about 1 BC, the Pharisees ended up collapsing the two dates of Passover and Unleavened Bread into one day, so it's almost like you lose a day at that point.

Now the readers of the gospels would have understood all of these things, that there's a way that the Pharisees, you know kind of do this, and there's a way that the Sadducees do this. And then there's the complication that John tells us about that there's a high holy day in this time of that particular year that also is to be observed as a Sabbath, which makes two Sabbaths, right? The normal Sabbath that you already have which is Saturday, and then the high holy Sabbath which is also there as well. So it makes it for a bit of a complicated kind of understanding of how you look at all of these things.

Now, regardless of whether the crucifixion happened on Friday or maybe happened on Thursday, it's not really a big deal as far as we're concerned. Just like we know that Christmas, Jesus wasn't born on December 25th, it's a day for us to celebrate the work that He did on that day, right? But I would share with you that the Passover, which would have been on the fourteenth, and then we know that the burial, which the unleavened bread was indicative of would have been on the fifteenth and probably the sixteenth. I would suggest to you that I think that the seventeenth of Nisan was the day of First Fruits and the day of Jesus' Resurrection. I'll show you why in just a few moments and there's always the possibility that I could be wrong about that, but I'll show you why I'm telling you that to begin with.

Now, obviously you know the Passover speaks to Jesus' death. Unleavened Bread speaks to His burial and His lack of decay. First Fruits speaks to His Resurrection. That's the picture that we have as we walk through these kinds of ideas. Now, I can just tell you very quickly that when you look at

Jesus as the First Fruits, here's what you recognize. That Jesus was marked out from before the foundation of the world. That Jesus was chopped down in His crucifixion. That Jesus was sifted in the grave. And that Jesus was waved before God as an offering in His Resurrection. This is the picture of the Feast or the Festival of First Fruits and how it points us to the life and to the work of Jesus who is, in fact, not only the priest, but also the offering. We say that at the time of Passover, right? Jesus is the Lamb that is offered up, but He's the priest that offers the Lamb at the same time. And He is also in the Feast of the picture of First Fruits, He is the priest that offers the offering and is Himself the offering itself.

So, are we okay? Alright, good because it's about to get more complex, in case you're wondering. No, I'm kidding. We're going to try and make this understandable in a way we can all grab hold of, because it's important that we're able to do that.

See, what Jesus does, is He fleshes out the reality of this feast, even in His life and ministry. There are some passages of Scripture around the time of Jesus' death and resurrection that occasionally when we read them, they feel a bit complex to us. We read them and kind of go, okay, yes, I believe. But I don't know how this fits in with everything. I'm not sure what to make of this. I don't know fully how to process making sense of this. My hope is that the context of what Jesus is doing in His Resurrection as the First Fruits might help us to see a couple of these passages in a clearer light because we understand the context of what Jesus is doing and what this Feast actually pointed to.

So for instance, on the very morning of Jesus' Resurrection, which would have been on Sunday, on that very morning the priests would have been taking their offering and waving it, this First Fruits offering before the Lord. When Jesus was resurrected from the dead, there was a woman who was coming to see Him, there were a few, but in this particular story, there was one woman who was coming to see Him. And her name was Mary and she was from a town called Magdala or Megdal. That's why she's called Mary Magdalene, because she is from Magdala or Megdal. That's why she's named that, right? It wasn't her actual name, it's just where she was from.

And so Mary, from Magdala was coming to see Jesus. And she comes and she sees an open tomb. The stone has been rolled away and inside there are two angels, one is sitting at the feet of where the body was and one that's sitting at where the body was. And she's kind of like, whoa! And the angels are like "He's not here! He's risen!" And she's trying to process what's going on. And she turns around and she actually sees Jesus but she doesn't know it's Jesus, she thinks it's the gardener. I mean you think about it, right? You don't expect to see cruising around the place someone who you saw die and was buried. You don't expect to see Him walking around. Like you don't just you know, have somebody that you know that died and then you know, three days later you're at Walmart, and you walk around the corner and you're like hey! You wouldn't be expecting that, right? It's not something that she was actually thinking about or expecting.

But I want you to notice the conversation that happens because she's weeping, right? She thinks maybe the body got stolen or whatever. Notice the conversation in John chapter 20. "Jesus asked her, 'Woman, why are

you crying? Who is it you are looking for?' Thinking he was the gardener, she said, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.' And Jesus said to her 'Mary.' And she turned toward Him and cried out in Aramaic, 'Rabboni!' (which means teacher). And Jesus said, 'Do not hold on to me'. Some of your translations say, "Do not touch me for I have not yet 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 to your God.'"

I've read that passage a number of different times, and to be quite honest with you, it can be a challenge to know what to make of it. We know that it actually happened, this is the truth of God's Word. But understanding the context in which it happened helps me now immeasurably. Because this is happening at the time and the celebration of First Fruits. And Jesus says to her, don't lay hold of me, don't hang onto me, don't touch me, multiple ways that you could translate that. I have not yet ascended to my Father in Heaven. And all of a sudden my ears began to perk up because I realized that the instruction in the Festival of First Fruits was that you are not to touch any of the grain or the offering, any of the grain or the field or the harvest until the offering was made. And Jesus says as the Lord of the Harvest, as the firstfruits of new creation, don't hold on to me, don't touch me because I am ascending to the Father. To do what? Wave. I'm going to wave the offering before the Father of new creation and new life. Now, are you seeing the picture a bit? I think with context it actually helps us.

Now, one thing for us to remember is that in the actual cutting down of the firstfruits of the fields it wasn't just one stalk that they took, because this

was a sheath, actually. This was multiple stalks that were taken. I actually think the same thing happened with Jesus. The Priest who also was the Offering did not come empty-handed in what He waved to the Father.

Another kind of gnarly passage of Scripture that happens around the time of Jesus' death and Resurrection is found in Matthew's gospel. And it's interesting what it says, and I want you to see it in light of the Feast of First Fruits. Notice Matthew 27. It says: "When Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice," (This is Him being crucified), "He gave up His Spirit. At that moment the curtain of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom and the earth shook and the rocks split and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many" not all, "of many holy people who had died were raised to life. And they came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people."

Now you've may, just like me, may have read that passage of before and gone cool. But not really sure, like what's going on here? What I think may be going on it may be helpful for us to understand in the context of firstfruits. That what Jesus was doing upon his resurrection is he was going to now stand before the Father as Priest and be able to present himself as a wave offering, but also to present a sample of what was going to be of the whole. Many holy people, not all of them, but some of them, many holy people in that place in Jerusalem, after Jesus' resurrection came out of the tombs raised to life.

Here's what I don't know. What happened to them after they appeared to everyone and all that kind of stuff? Did they die again? I don't know. Well,

did Jesus just take them with him? I don't know. Would you stop asking me. I've already told you twice, I don't know. It would be speculative to say what actually happened to them, because the Bible actually does not say. It says nowhere what actually happened to those people.

But when we look at this in light of firstfruits, it seems now that Jesus has taken a sample of his people and he has held it up to be a demonstration and a wave offering before the Lord, so that it would be accepted by God. That the whole harvest is going to look like this, raised from death to life. Now. Well that's four of you that are impressed, that's great.

So, if I were if I were bottom lining this for you, here's something that you need to remember. It's this. When Jesus waves, God sees his hands. When Jesus waves, God sees his hands. Now I'm going to come back to that thought in just a few minutes, but I want to boil this down quickly before we finish up today. Because I've given you a lot to think about and some context for you to think about, but I want to ask the question okay, what does that look like and mean for me right now? Jesus as the firstfruits, what does not challenge me toward? What does that encourage me toward? What does that look like in terms of impact on my life? I want to give you three quick things, and then we'll be done. It won't be as quick as I just said.

Here's the first. In Jesus, the harvest has begun. In Jesus, the harvest has begun. You see, that was the picture right of firstfruits. It was the idea that the harvest had come. And now this harvest is being presented before the Lord, a portion of it, is being presented before the Lord in representation

of the whole. So in Jesus our firstfruits, the one resurrected from the dead, the harvest has begun.

In fact, when you listen to the words of John the Baptist when he's talking about Jesus, he says a number of things. Remember he called Jesus the Lamb of God right? And so we knew kind of that Passover illustration. Jesus referred to himself as the Bread of life. And so now, listen to the words that John the Baptist uses in Matthew chapter 3. He says, "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me John the Baptist after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire." He's actually speaking in the terms of firstfruits and harvest and those kinds of things.

And in fact, it shouldn't surprise us that Jesus when he's talking about this idea of resurrection, he actually speaks very clearly and carefully to it about those who have chosen to do good, which he which would ultimately be defined as put their faith in him, and trust the Lord for the whole. And those who have done evil, and he talks about the resurrection of both in John chapter 5. Notice what Jesus says. These are Jesus' words. "Don't be amazed at this, for at times coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out - those who have done what is good will rise to live and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned." This is the picture of the idea of harvest that Jesus is talking about.

And what you and I need to understand is that the harvest has begun. In Jesus, new life, the harvest has begun. And we now are people, if we have put our faith and trust in Jesus, we are now people who are entrusted with being seed carriers for the harvest. That we are communicating to the world that God will reconcile them to himself through what Jesus has done as our Passover lamb, as our unleavened bread, as our firstfruits. That this is the message that we've been given.

That's why we've been told to pray along that line, because there's a big harvest, and there's not enough people that are actually doing something in it. Listen what Luke says, or Luke chronicles. Jesus said, the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest therefore to send out workers into his harvest field.

See the question that I would ask you is this - are you a worker in the harvest field of God? You see, that's why firstfruits matters to us, because the harvest has begun. And are you actually a worker in the harvest field of God? And if you're not, why not? Why not? The harvest has begun. And there are people that are in need of hearing the message of the Gospel, so that the Lord of the harvest might bring them in as he so sees fit. And he has chosen to use us, his people, as a vehicle for his message. If you're not involved in the harvest as a worker, why not? Because Jesus is our firstfruits, and in him the harvest has begun.

Let me give you a second thing. In Jesus, new life has come. This should be obvious to us. But one of the things that I want to remind you of is sometimes we don't we don't let that land on us quickly enough.

By the way, I think God was trying to teach his people Israel about this all through the course of biblical history. When you begin to look at the Old Testament, you begin to see this pretty clearly. In fact, when you look at Noah coming through the flood, do you know when it was that the ark actually rested on Mount Ararat? Well Exodus tells us very clearly. Here's what it says. The water receded steadily from the earth. And at the end of the hundred and fifty days as the water had gone down, and on the seventeenth day of the seventh month the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. Is that seventeenth day sound familiar? It may, but what you're saying is yeah but it wasn't the seventh month, Jerry. We're talking about when we talk about the feast of First Fruits, when we're talking about Passover and Feast of unleavened bread, we're talking about the 14th and the 15th and the 17th of the first month. But that says, it said the seventh month. But what you and I fail to remember is that when God was leading his people out for Passover, he took the seventh month and made it the 1st month. And he said, this will now be the beginning of your year. So the picture of the ark coming through the flood and finally resting is a picture of new life that points us to the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

When you look at Joshua who carried the people into the new land of promise. Notice exactly what happened in Joshua 5 on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month. While camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, the Israelites celebrated the Passover. Right? 14th day of the first month. The day after the Passover, that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land: unleavened bread and roasted grain. The manna stopped the day after they ate this food from the land; and there was no

longer any manna for the Israelites, but that year they ate of the produce of Canaan.

So there's the Passover. The day after Passover, the fourteenth, day after Passover the fifteenth. They eat a little bit of the produce of the land. On the 16th, the manna stops. On the seventeenth, they are now feasting on the land. New life.

If you're not already convinced, let's go to Esther. In the time of Esther, there was a king named Xerxes. You know that Esther became the queen. She was of Jewish background. Her people were Jews. Mordecai was a Jew. So I'll put it for you this way. Esther good. Mordecai good. Xerxes - heh. Haman - frdrdt. Okay there's a quick rundown of the cast of characters there if you're not familiar with the story.

Haman was on a mission to see the Jewish people, God's people, exterminated. He wanted them gone. Starting with Mordecai, he wanted them gone. And so he convinced the King to sign this royal decree that had his ring insignia on it that basically said at a certain point in the future, then the you know, the Jewish people they're going down. Okay?

Notice when that happened in Esther chapter three. Then on the thirteenth day of the first month the royal secretaries were summoned. And then it tells you that you know that the king did what he did and kind of sent out this note. Well what was Esther's response to this? Well she's obviously flabbergasted right? This was the day before what we would call in Jewish timeline, the day before Passover, the 13th, right? Passover is on the 14th.

And so what does Esther do? Well, she calls Mordecai and some of the Jewish people and friends she calls them to fast and pray. Notice what it says it beginning in chapter 4. She says, go gather together all the Jews who were in Susa, and fast for me. Don't eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish. What courage. So Mordecai went away and carried out all of Esther's instructions. On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace, in front of the king's hall. On the third day. So right? The thirteenth, she went fast for three days. 14, 15, 16, and on the 16th this is what she's doing. And the King was sitting on his royal throne in the hall facing the entrance. And when he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand. So Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter. Then the king asked, "What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you." "If it pleases the king," replied Esther, "let the king, together with Haman, come today to a banquet I have prepared for him."

So they did. So the king came, and Haman came, and they had a banquet. And here's what happened at the banquet. It's really interesting when you read it. She has a banquet, they enjoy their meal. And then the king says, "Esther what's your request?" And she says, my request is that you and Haman come to a banquet tomorrow where I'll tell you what my request is. That's what she said. And the king was like ok, we'll do that.

Now as that it is over, going into the next day, some events unfold during the course of the night. And what ultimately happens is, they come back to a banquet on the 17th day of the first month, and God turns the whole thing upside down. Haman who was looking to kill them, all of the Jews, beginning with Mordecai, whom he had already set up a pole to impale him, ends up getting exposed, and Haman himself is actually executed on the thing he set up to execute God's people. New life for the people of God on the day of firstfruits.

You see, what we have to understand when Jesus is our firstfruits, here's what this picture helps us to see. That he is the one, he is our ark of safety that takes us through the flood and brings us safely home. He is the one that leads us into the land of promise, and helps us to feast on a new land. And he is the one that takes the enemy that wants to destroy us, Satan and death, and uses the same tool the cross that was meant to kill him and ends up killing death by death because he is alive and is the firstfruits.

You see this is a message that we need to be able to grab a hold of, because it helps us to frame what Paul is saying when he talks about Jesus' resurrection in 1st Corinthians 15. Notice what he says. "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in turn Christ, the firstfruits, then when he comes those who belong to him."

You see, what this reminds us of is about our opportunity to be made like Jesus, because he is representative of the whole. We will look like him if we have put our faith in Him, we too will be resurrected, we too will have immortal and imperishable bodies. Because he is the firstfruits, we then are the beneficiary by faith of receiving what he has already established. This is glorious truth for us. But I'm not done. I want you to hang with me I'm going to be done in just a minute, but just stay here. Just don't move.

I need to give you a last thing right? Here it is. In Jesus, we are accepted and secured. This is super important for you to be able to hear. In Jesus, we are accepted and secure. If you go back to Leviticus 23, I want to point your attention to verse 11. It says the priest is to wave the sheaf before the Lord, listen to this, so it will be accepted on your behalf. In other words, that the firstfruits was representative of the whole, but gave an acceptance for the whole. It actually sanctified the whole harvest. That was the idea. That this first portion sanctifies the whole harvest.

Here's the good news. If we put our faith and trust in Jesus, here's what you can rest on. Because of his resurrection, and because he's even demonstrated the firstfruits of resurrection with some holy people that came out of their graves to new life, you can bank on the fact that that too is going to occur in our lives. Because God has accepted the offering. He has accepted it. You see, what I want you to understand and one of the things that I'm so encouraged by is that the hand as Priest that waves the offering before the Father, that hand is secure. Anything in that hand is secure.

Didn't Jesus say those very words in John chapter 10? I give them eternal life, Jesus said, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me is greater than all; and no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one.

You, if you have faith in Jesus, you are in good hands. You are in secure hands. You are accepted and beloved in the Father because of the Son. This is not based upon what we have done. This is because of who Jesus is. And if you have come to faith in Jesus, I want to just remind you of something. Quit trying to be acceptable. If you've come to Jesus, you can't make yourself acceptable. He has made you acceptable. It is because of his work, not your work. It is because of his victory, not your failings. If you've come to faith in Jesus, stop trying to earn God's love, because he is our first fruits.

And sometimes what we get into the habit of is we continue to worry that somehow God doesn't see us. How is he going to see my little hands in the crowd and throng of people all over the world? When he passes by he's never going to be able to see me. You've made a mistake in thinking! Because when Jesus waves, God sees his hands. And if we are in Jesus, God sees us.

When Jesus waves, God sees his hands. He sees the hands that have the nail prints in them. As our sacrificial substitute Passover lamb slain for us. He sees his hands when they are laid across his chest and the clothes of the grave are wrapped around him. Because he goes to the grave as our unleavened bread, our spotless non-decaying pure bread of God. And he sees his hands as the resurrected new living Christ, standing before him as

priest and offering, waving before Him the offering that says all things have become new. He sees his hands.

So stop trying to get God to see you, because if you're in Christ, he sees Jesus. And he definitely sees you. Stop trying to earn His favor. Stop trying to earn His acceptance. Your only hope is Jesus. You can never make yourself acceptable to God, ever! But the precious Passover lamb who is the pure undecaying bread of God, is also the firstfruits of great promise for what we will be when we put our faith and our trust in him. We will be made like him.

You see, stop trying to do all of that stuff, because Jesus has won. Jesus has been victorious on our behalf. Jesus has overcome. Jesus' offering has been accepted. Jesus is loved. And if we're in him, so are we. Let's bow our heads together.

As our heads are bowed in this moment, if you've never come to a place where you've entrusted your life to Jesus, I'm reminding you again you'll never save yourself. Only He can save you. He's the spotless, blemishless, pure, unleavened, undefiled, new creation. The firstfruits of new creation. And he alone is the Lord of the harvest.

If you've never put your faith and trust in him, resurrection comes for us all. Jesus said those who have put their faith in him, they will be resurrected to live. But those who do not will be resurrected for condemnation, because of a rejection of the Son of God. For in essence saying that we are a better God than he.

So if you've never before entrusted your life to Jesus, I pray that when we walk out of these doors, that you would come by the Fireside Room. Speak to one of our pastors or prayer partners in there. Just say you know what, I want to know what it means to be to be forgiven, to be changed, to be new, to be accepted by the Father. We can only be accepted by the Father if we are in Christ.

Maybe for others of us, we've been walking with God for some time. And maybe it started to get away from us a little bit that we've started trying to earn God's favor. We've started trying to earn God's acceptance. We've forgotten that Jesus has done all of this on our behalf. And instead of continuing to pour ourselves out in faith and in trust of who he is and letting his life live out through us, we've tried to somehow impress God. God's not impressed with us. He's impressed with His Son. And our faith in him we find our lives hidden in Christ in God. That's what God's desire is for you.

So whatever it is that has been hanging on to your heart trying to say He doesn't love you. He doesn't see you. He's not paying attention to you. You're not accepted. Whatever that is. If you've really yielded yourself to faith in Jesus Christ, all of that fades into the background. And you know that it's He who has done this on your behalf. You could have never done it on your own. And that life of gratitude, that life is what allows the Spirit of God to live his life out through us. And that's what a world needs to see. They need to see that we are workers in the harvest field. And that because of Jesus, the harvest has come.

So Father, I pray that you would take whatever portions of what we talked about today that are needful for every human heart that I could never begin to understand or do, but by Your Spirit, You can. Would You please Lord, speak life and challenge and encouragement and whatever into the lives of people right where they live. And that all of us would be receptive to what You want to say to us.

Jesus we want to thank you for being the overcomer, for being the firstfruits of new creation. The firstfruits of resurrection. That you have broken in to this world and brought the kingdom of life. May we live for you, and may we live in your power so that the world will be able to hear the seed of the Word of God, and that a harvest might be brought in their lives that yields beautiful, eternal, lasting fruit. We trust You to write this on our heart now in Jesus' name. Amen.

Love you folks. God bless you.