

SERIES: "It's More Like Falling in Love"

SERMON: "'Appearing in a Locked Room'"

SCRIPTURE: John 20:19-23 (Jesus appears to the Disciples)

TEXT: Revelation 1:18 "Jesus said, "'I am the living one. I died, but look—I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave.'" -Revelation 1:18

EGG: Each person gets an egg with a key inside that is engraved "Rev. 1:18."

GATHERING SONG: Choir

GREETING: David Christ has risen! ... [Response, "He is risen indeed!"] (3X)

WORSHIP SET: Sanctify, with readings of Jesus resurrection

WORSHIP PRAYER: Member of Sanctify

MISSIONS MOMENT & PRAYER

Kids Go to Kids' Church: Andrew Bonsel

Easter Offering: Feed My Starving Children \$, and Fri., 6-8.

Write down parts of our lives that feel stuck, trapped, areas we need Jesus to break free.

Bring prayers and offerings up; take egg back (don't open yet!)

Introduce Offering

OFFERING: Choir

**VIDEO INTRO:** *Clip from music video, "It's More Like Falling in Love" Jason Gray, artist.*

**PP#1:** "It's More Like Falling in Love"

"Appearing in a Locked Room"

Jesus said, "'I am the living one. I died, but look—I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave.'" -Revelation 1:18

"It's More Like Falling in Love." "Appearing in a Locked Room" Revelation 1:18 Jesus said, "'I am the living one. I died, but look—I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave.'" "

How are you all doing on your suspense? Something is in your plastic Easter egg, but you can't look inside yet. Is the suspense killing you? What could it be? How many have peeked, and will admit it? Not good with suspense, huh? Well, don't look if you haven't yet.

**PP#2:** *Image of the silhouette of Alfred Hitchcock, preferably with his big belly*

Speaking of suspense, on this Easter, let's talk of Alfred Hitchcock. Some have credited Alfred Hitchcock to be the most influential film maker of all time. To most of us who remember him—for he continues to live on Netflix!—we call him "The Master of Suspense." His films were psychological thrillers, usually with twist endings.

On his TV show, there would be the outline of his silhouette, and then he would walk into it. He was shaped much like I am! [Walk to stage right, then turn to the audience and say...] "Good Evening. The tale you are about to hear just may have happened."

**PP#3:** *Another image of Alfred Hitchcock, subtitled, "A Tale by Alfred Hitchcock"*

There was a woman who murdered her husband and was sentenced to life in prison. She vowed to the court that sentenced her that she would somehow, some way, escape.

As her prison bus approached the penitentiary, she saw an old man, another prisoner, filling over a grave in a small cemetery outside the prison walls. Right then and there, she hatched a plot.

Once inside, she befriended this prisoner. He was going blind and needed cataract surgery. She told him that if helped her escape, she promised to pay for his surgery. The next time the death bell tolled, indicating that a prisoner had died, they agreed that she would sneak down into the workroom where he made the caskets, and hide in the casket along with the body. After burying the casket, he would return later when no one was watching and dig her out. She would be free.

Well, late one night, the bell tolled. The woman snuck down to the workroom, and in the dark slipped into the casket. Sure enough, a few hours later she felt the casket being rolled toward the grave site and was buried. She had done it! She was outside the prison fence. She was going to be free! She could barely contain her excitement.

But time drug on. Finally, she began to worry. Why wasn't the old man coming to dig her out? Where was he? In a moment of panic, she reached into her pocket and took out a match. But when she lit it, she saw that the corpse beside her was the old man himself!

Sounds like Alfred Hitchcock all right, doesn't it? Twist ending!

**PP#4:** *An image suggesting we are trapped, locked up, prisoners.*

You know, this is actually a pretty good Easter story, if you think about it. Alfred Hitchcock's character represents all of us. On earth we are prisoners. We are alive and functioning, but we are trapped, bound in, and stuck. And we all face inevitable death.

This Easter, I ask you a very basic question, one that perhaps you don't usually give a lot of time thinking about. But it's important. Here's the question: "How are you going to escape the trap of death?" There will come a time when the bell tolls for you.

There are a lot of folks trying to tell you ideas of a way out. We call them religions. Do this. Believe that. Follow this. Go there. If you think about it, it's a common conversation topic. What do different people believe? But you know what? This ultimately is not a casual conversation. Oh, it can be if we believe our deaths may be years away. But when it strikes close to home, this is a very, very serious question indeed. How will you escape death?

If we were to ask Alfred Hitchcock's character, what do you think she might say? She would say, "Be sure your hope doesn't rest with a dead man!" Her only hope lay buried right next to her!

No, put your trust, and hope and life and future in the hands of one who is alive!

The Christian religion promises an escape from death. And it backs up that claim with a Savior who went to the grave, and broke it open. Our Savior is not still buried. He is alive!

**PP#5:** *Images representing major world religion, or pictures of the tombs of their founders.*

You can visit the tomb of Mohammad in Medina. You can visit the Buddha's remains. Confucius still lays buried in his grave. Epicurus [ep-eh-CUR-us], Zeno of Citium [ZEE-no of CITY-um], Mani, Joseph Smith, Rev. Moon, Bahá'u'lláh [ba-ha-OO-la]. All have graves that are occupied. Now I know, they didn't claim to bodily live forever; just their souls, their life essence, lives on. But how do you know? They claim to point to the way. How can you be sure?

Christianity is the only religion with a Savior who defeats death, *and then comes back to tell about it*. Church, be sure your hope doesn't rest with a dead man! The stakes are high! Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:17: "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still [trapped] in your sins." We are like the lady buried with her only hope.

**PP#6:** *Image of the angel at the empty tomb talking to the women.*

But, at sunrise this morning, some of us gathered like the women that first Easter. You heard the story again as we began this service. They found Jesus' tomb vacant! He was not there. The grave cloths were empty. The angel reported, "'Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; He has risen, just as He said. Come and see the place where He lay. Then go quickly and tell His disciples: He has risen from the dead.'" (Matt. 28:5-7).

Jesus died to free those who follow Him from our trap, our prison, our death, and He rose again to defeat death, and then He came back to prove it! "He is not here; He has risen from the dead." Happy Easter!

**PP#7:** *Appearing in a Locked Room*

1. Put your hope in the Risen Jesus!

This year, you may celebrate the festivities of Easter: the chocolate, the eggs, the fun, the family, the food. But Church, do not miss the risen Jesus! Celebrate Easter by putting your hope for life eternally in a Man who is not dead, but alive. Put your trust, your life, your future in Jesus.

**PP#8:** *Image of a person chained to a chest drowning under water, or similar.*

But this Easter you may actually struggle to celebrate all the festivities. You may look happy on the outside, but there is much more going on deeper down. There are parts of your life that aren't right. You may be experiencing bondage that traps you, something that has a hold on you, choking you, suffocating you, killing you. You may hope that some day Jesus will free you from death, but right now you feel already dead on the inside.

[Collect the baskets of paper and put them in the box.]

A few minutes ago we each wrote down some way that we feel trapped, bound, a way that we need help. There are parts of our lives that are stuck. And nothing we do seems to make a difference. Oh we try, we commit, we resolve, but in the end, we are stuck.

**PP#9:** *Various images of locks.*

[Close the box and lock it.]

There are ways that each of us are locked up tight, trapped, dead. These things remain, stay with us, locked tight, and we are bound by them.

Friends, let me tell you what is so incredible about Easter. You see, Jesus just didn't defeat death. He also came to His disciples and freed them from their bondage.

Now, you heard what happened Easter morning at sunrise. But the Easter story isn't finished. Let's go back to John 20, and pick it up in verse 19.

**PP#10:** John 20:19-23

19 It was still the first day of the week. That evening, when the disciples were together with the doors locked because they were afraid of the Jewish authorities, Jesus came and stood among them. He said, "Peace be with you." 20 After He said this, He showed them His hands and His side. When the disciples saw the Lord, they were filled with joy.

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Did you catch that? The disciples were *behind locked doors*! The tomb was empty, but they were still afraid. They were still overpowered by their troubles, their lives crushed, their hopes dashed. They struggled with their faith, with God. What were they talking about, do you think? “Could Jesus really be alive? Should we continue to put our hope in Him? What do we do now?”

We are like those disciples! We are stuck behind the power of the lock. We are trapped with the reality as we see it now. Our hopes and dreams are crushed. We are worried, afraid, fearful what tomorrow may bring. We are locked in, buried, slowly suffocating.

And then Jesus—the one who was crucified, the one who was buried, the one who was dead—appears to them, visits them, comes to them *behind the locked doors*. He shows up to them, and He comes in to where they are stuck and bound. He meets them right where they are at, and then He blows open their lives, releases them from their prison, breaks them free from their despair.

#### **PP#11: John 20:19-23**

21 Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I am sending you.” 22 Then He breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive anyone’s sins, they are forgiven; if you don’t forgive them, they aren’t forgiven.”

Verse 21: “Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I am sending you.’ Then He breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone’s sins, they are forgiven; if you don’t forgive them, they aren’t forgiven.’”

He proclaims peace to their lives, peace to all of their inner turmoil, that inner dread, that deep down fear. He is alive, He brings eternal life, but He also brings healing to their lives where they are at! He restores their peace, their hope, their joy.

And then, watch this now, *He unlocks their doors*! He sends them out of the locked room. He bursts open their locks! He breaths on them, giving them the power of the Holy Spirit.

#### **PP#12: Appearing in a Locked Room**

1. Put your hope in the Risen Jesus!
2. Let Jesus burst your locks

Church, you are not stuck in your problems. Your world is not the way it looks to you right now. Jesus is live, and He opens your locks.

[Show the key to the lock, then unlock the box, and fling the slips all out of the box.]

When Jesus burst open that tomb, He also became the Key that breaks open all of your locks. The power of Easter is that Jesus is your Key. He gives you the Holy Spirit within you to conquer whatever is binding you. The Holy Spirit within you is stronger than whatever you wrote down. None of these things have power over you. The tomb is empty, and so is this lock box. Jesus took care of it all! You have the Holy Spirit within you.

#### **PP#13: John 20:19-23**

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But there's a little more here. Jesus gives them the Holy Spirit, not just to break open their locks, but also to *send them out*. He says, "As the Father sent me, so I am sending you." God sent Jesus to restore people back to God, to usher in God's Kingdom on earth. Jesus started it, and then hands that off to His followers. We carry on that work. It's now up to us.

Remember, Jesus forgave sins? Now He sends His followers out to also proclaim that in Jesus, God has forgiven their sins. We share the hope and joy of Easter, the life eternal won by the Jesus when He rose from the dead, and for life abundant right now, offered by Jesus who frees us from whatever has a hold on us and gives us the Holy Spirit within. We must share this good news. If we don't, people won't know their sins are forgiven in Jesus, and they will remain stuck in them.

**PP#14: Appearing in a Locked Room**

1. Put your hope in the Risen Jesus!
2. Let Jesus burst your locks
3. Be sent and forgive sins in Jesus name

Church, the celebration of Easter includes forgiving people their sins. You need to pass on the forgiveness that you have received. You are to forgive as Jesus forgave you. And this may well be one of the ways you are bound. You may need to forgive someone in order for Jesus to heal you, and to release that bondage that is strangling you. You need to live a life of forgiveness, wherever you go. Be agents of compassion, of grace, of mercy. Jesus' followers are sent to forgive. This is Easter.

**PP#15:** *Close up image for an open plastic Easter egg and looking like a key inside, subtitled,*  
Jesus said, "I am the living one. I died, but look—I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave." -Revelation 1:18

OK, the suspense is finally over. At last it's time to open your eggs. Inside you will find a regular key to a regular lock. No, I have not given you each a new house! These keys are no longer keyed to any lock. But if you look closely, you will see an engraving on the key. It says, Revelation 1:18. In that verse, Jesus says, "I am the living one. I died, but look—I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave."

Jesus is alive! Yes, He died, but He is alive forever! Put your trust in Him!

Do you remember Caiaphas? He was Jesus' chief accuser and the one who claimed Jesus was dead and His body stolen. He was the Jewish High Priest during Jesus' trial. He served in that position from 18 to 37 A.D. It was Caiaphas who accused Jesus of blasphemy for claiming to be God, tore his clothing and handed Jesus over to Pilate to be killed.

Did you know that just 20 years ago, archaeologists were digging in Jerusalem. They just so happened to uncover the burial grounds of Caiaphas and his family. Think about that. Caiaphas' grave we have. But what we do not have is Jesus' grave!

A Muslim in Africa became a Christian, and some of his friends asked him, "Why have you done such a thing?" He answered, "Well, it's like this: Suppose you were going down the road and suddenly the road forked in two directions. You didn't know which way to go; and there at the fork were two men—one dead, and one alive. Which one would you ask to show you the way?"

When you follow the risen Jesus, He gives you the keys of your grave. He also shows you the way to abundant life right now. He unlocks what has chained you. He frees you from you

bondage, right now, right here. The power of the lock has no power over you!  
His tomb is empty, and so is the lockbox!

**PP#16:** *This image of Alfred Hitchcock holding a giant key.*

The woman in Alfred Hitchcock's story was stuck trapped in a coffin. She needed someone to come and let her out. We are like that woman. We are trapped and need a key to release us. I love this image of Alfred Hitchcock. I think it makes a splendid Easter picture. He's telling us that we each need a giant key to free us.



In John 11:25 Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, even though he dies, will live." And then, in Revelation 1:18 Jesus proclaims, "I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave."

These keys can be yours, if you take the one holding them as your Savior. It's more like falling in love!

Christ has risen! ... [Response, "He is risen indeed!"]

Amen.

LOVE MOMENT: Amelia Buschena

CLOSING SONG

BENEDICTION

RECESSIONAL