

Introduction:

- Humor:
 - Three friends were discussing death and one asked the group: What would you like people to say about you at your funeral?
 - First guy: "At my funeral, I would like people to say: He was a great humanitarian, who cared about his community."
 - Second guy: "I would like people to say, He was a great husband and father, who was an example for many to follow."
 - Third guy: "I would like people to say, Look, he's moving!!"
- IE. Chicago Bears intro: <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/bears-beat-patriots-in-super-bowl-xx>
- *"But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay." (Matthew 28:5-6, NKJV)*
- The resurrection is the very center of the Christian faith. Without it we have no faith, or more accurately—our faith is vain.
- The resurrection is our hope that we too shall live.
- The resurrection is the message of the Christian faith! The cross contains the truth but the empty tomb contains our message! The cross contains the truth but the empty tomb proclaims it! The Resurrection gave birth to church on the third day. The church is made up of people who believe that Jesus rose from the dead, never to die again.
- The cross was but a gateway to the message of the third day—He lives! Jesus is the first to be resurrected! (There is a difference between being raised from the dead and resurrected.)

I. You Cant Keep God In A Box or In A Tomb

- A. *"So they sealed the tomb and posted guards to protect it." (Matthew 27:66, NLT)*
1. This event was very calculated. Tomb, Stone, Guards, Seal Gr.—*The seal serves as a legal protection and guarantee. It is thus placed on property, on wills, etc. Laws prohibit the misuse of seals, which owners often break just before death. Seals serve as proof of identity. They also protect houses, graves, etc. against violation.*
Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. (1985). TDNT (p. 1127). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.
 2. What the religious leaders were doing at this moment, post cross, or after the crucifixion of Jesus, is that they were literally putting God in a box. In their eyes, Jesus is now in the box and they do not want Him coming out, nor do they want anyone else getting him out. Let me ask this question...
 3. What does it mean to put someone in a box? For the most part it means to control. Religious people are really good at that.
 - a) when someone puts you in a box they seek to control what you see (misery)

- b) they seek to control what you feel (fear and loneliness)
- c) they seek to control your rights (no/limited freedoms to choices)
- 4. The religious leaders sought to secure the box with: 1. religious ideas 2. with knowledge 3. with all their human efforts possible. Jesus still blew it up!
- 5. The tragedy of the God box is this: We have made God in our image! Let me explain.
- B. What does it mean to put God in a box?
 - 1. The phrase "putting God in a box" is almost always declared as an accusation. Few people are willing to admit: "Yes, I put God in a box." But what does that really mean? I think we can learn some more from these religious leaders today.
 - 2. This God in a box we actually are speaking of is people box! This amazing box we put God in is actually a box that keeps people out.
 - 3. If I have a box that I put God in, it is actually a 'good box' that only allows the people I deem as 'good' in. Everyone outside the box is bad. I only allow in/let into the "God box" the people who make me feel good. The reason most often is that we fear that if we let everyone into the God box then it will invalidate our beliefs. But...
 - 4. If our beliefs do not empower us to love others, then our beliefs have no value at all, no matter how "right" they are. Accepting others does not invalidate or cheapen our beliefs, it is our ability to love others which proves their merit. If you want to get rid of your "God box" you have to let everyone into your box. When you do that you make both Jesus and Mr Rogers glad... *"Hi neighbor."*
- C. Jesus coming out of the tomb was God's way of saying, "Hi neighbors!" Jesus knew no strangers. All are welcome into His life. All you have to do is come.
 - 1. I think everyone has their own God box. Just be aware, Jesus is a "God box Buster!"
 - 2. This Easter, remember, God came out of the box so that everyone could be included.
 - 3. That *'whosoever would believe would be saved!'* Jesus takes off the limits.

II. You Can Box Yourself In

- A. IE. There is nothing more embarrassing than "boxing your self in."
 - 1. To box yourself in means to put yourself in a place where you none to little options.
 - 2. "I remember having a job for a season in college where I had to strip and wax floors. I was going from room to room after they had been stripped and waxed them. On the about the 3rd or fourth room, I entered, started waxing, was almost finished when I suddenly realized that this room did not have an exit door like the rest of the rooms. Yes, I waxed myself into a corner." The reason "boxing yourself in" is so embarrassing is that you have done it to yourself.

- B. In Mark 16, the disciples boxed themselves in. *“And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe.”* (Mark 16:11, NKJV) They did not believe!
1. By not believing the disciples boxed themselves in. They put limitations on themselves! By not believing you limit yourself from God’s potential/best for you.
 2. You can refuse to believe even though you have been told. That is what the disciples did. Be careful that is not you.
 - a) You see even demons believe. James 2:19 *Even demons believe there is one God.* But that is not going to help or save them.
 - b) Many believe there is a God. But that will not save them. We must put our faith in what Christ has done for us and let that belief change us!
 - c) Believing in Christ takes off limitations! It makes all things possible!
 3. By not believing the disciples boxed themselves in. They put limitations on themselves!
 4. You can put God in a box or you can put yourself in a box. Neither one is encouraged. And the embarrassing thing is that you have done it to yourself.
- C. Faith in Jesus will remove your box!
1. In reality to be without faith is to ‘box yourself in’. But to be in faith is to remove all boxes!
 2. Jesus said, many times in the NT that all things are possible for those who believe. All things are possible! That is the ultimate in ‘box busting’ statements! If all things are possible with God, to those who believe, then all limitations have the potential of being taken off.

III. The Resurrection Is the Ultimate Box Buster!

- A. A resurrected Jesus changed the lives of many in just one moment. They knew He was crucified. They knew He had been put in a tomb. On the third day, when the tomb was found empty—they were shocked! When they saw Him—they believed!
- B. Their testimony builds our faith. Many saw Him after he had died and they touched Him. It was not a ghost they saw. Proofs that Jesus destroyed the “God box”:
1. Mary on resurrection morning. She thinks he is the gardener at first. Jn 20:15, Mk 16:9 *He appeared first to Mary Magdalene.* Isn’t it interesting that Jesus chooses to reveal himself to a woman whom He cast seven demons out of. He who has been forgiven much loves much! She was seeking Him.
 2. Luke 24:34-35 the two on the road to Emmaus.
 - a) He vanishes. They see and they go back to Jerusalem.
 - b) Lk 24:34 They declare to those in the room Simon has seen Jesus. And Jesus walks through door.

3. Luke 24:38-43 Jesus told those in the room, Touch me... give me fish to eat. The disciples in that room were seeing all of this! Now if you were the one seeing this you would have one awesome story to tell!
 4. Thomas who was gone but later sees Jesus is asked to touch Jesus' scars. Jn 20:27.
 5. Mt 28:4 the guards saw the angel at the tomb and were so scared they fell as though dead.
 6. I Cor. 15: 5 Peter saw Him and then the 10, then He was seen by over 500 fellow believers at once (some of those were still alive). He was seen by James and all the apostles and finally Paul says, I saw Him.
- C. Their changed lives validates the message of the Gospel to us. Proof enough for me!
1. The transformation of the lives of the disciples (who had put God in a box, and boxed themselves in) has to be the most telling proof of all that Jesus was raised from the dead, resurrected!
 2. These men all had the history of running from trouble and willingness to deny Christ yet they all end up dying for Him. All the apostles died a martyrs death but John and he died on Patmos in exile. How many people do you know that would die for something they did not believe in?
 3. From the time they saw the resurrected Lord they devoted their lives to him and proclaiming salvation is here, Jesus is alive!
 4. Would Paul the apostle endured all he did for nothing?
- D. The tomb was empty and the body was never found.

Conclusion:

- *"until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."* (Acts 1:2-3, NKJV)
- Some put God in a box. They create God in their own image. It excludes everyone they don't like.
- Some put themselves in a box by not believing and unknowingly limit themselves.
- Others in faith believe! They strip away all limitations because trusting in a man who can't be killed is good thing. Jesus is a box buster! May He shatter our boxes today.