So God’s been dead now 50 years. How’s that going?

A. Well, I guess to be more accurate, it was 50 years ago that TIME magazine ran a cover article with a title, *Is God Dead?*

B. It was an article that shocked a nation at its foundation.

1. For some this signaled a bright new morning of realism.
2. For some it was a dark day of mourning God’s death.
3. For others it was a communist plot.
4. Many denied it.
5. Most probably didn’t understand it.

C. So what do you think? Did God Die?

D. Well, it may be a surprise to some of you, but for many people of faith, that answer is “yes.”

E. And that means that for some of you God has died.
AH....but does that mean God is dead?
F. There’s this thing called the resurrection – and so for many of the same people for whom God did die, God is more alive now than ever.

II. But let’s start at the beginning.

A. That means we go back to 1882.

1. In *The Joyful Wisdom* by Friedrich Nietzsche, we find the conception of the ‘death of God’ as he writes,

   *After Buddha was dead, people showed his shadow for centuries afterwards in a cave,—an immense frightful shadow. God is dead: but as the human race is constituted, there will perhaps be caves for millenniums yet, in which people will show his shadow.—And we—we have still to overcome his shadow!*

2. Later in the same book he depicts the parable of the madman who is searching for God. This madman accuses us all of being the murderers of God.

   ""Where is God?' he cried; 'I will tell you. We have killed him—you and I. All of us are his murderers..."
B. In these and other writings Nietzsche was making the point that developments in science and the increasing secularization of European society, in which he lived, had effectively 'killed' the Abrahamic God, who had served as the basis for meaning and value in the West for more than a thousand years. Leaving many in an abyss of nihilism – meaninglessness.

C. And Nietzsche was right; that God had died. But many gods have died over the span of human existence.

1. The nature Gods
2. The mother Gods, like Tiamat, that preceded the Father Gods, like Yahweh.
3. Also dead - The sky God
4. The gods of the Greeks and Romans
5. The god of vengeance died for some.
6. And yes the God of Abraham and Moses died for many people.
D. The God to which Nietzsche, and 20th and 21st century theologians and atheists like Dawkins, Altizer, Robinson, Hamilton, Hitchens and Harris referred died -- with the help of Copernicus, Galileo, Darwin, Freud, Schopenhauer, Strauss, literary critics and geologists and so many more.

E. It is so clear that God has died in our country where if people really believed in God, they would do more to protect life—all life—all creation and fear their own death a whole lot less.

F. Yes – God died.

III. But, the fact is, God must die for God to be resurrected.

A. One of the most profound quotes that got me through seminary as I buried so many gods, one after another, was from UCC predecessor theologian Paul Tillich when he wrote, “The courage to be is rooted in the God who appears when God has disappeared in the anxiety of doubt.”
B. It is sort of standard operating procedure in one’s first year at Iliff School of Theology, where I went to seminary, to kill off any gods you may have arrived with so that God can be resurrected.

C. For some people it is theological reasoning that kills off God. For others, it is that all of God’s jobs have been assumed by nature and reassigned by science and philosophy.

D. For others, God died when God became useless; when God didn’t avert some horrifying human or natural disaster or save a loved one.

E. For all of these people God disappeared, or died, in the anxiety of doubt. Doubt won and their relationship with God ended there.

F. But for others, myself included, they found that their recently deceased God was just too small and the God that resurrected from the ashes of the funerary pyre was a very different kind of God.
IV. Of course one could argue that God didn’t die; only our conceptions of God, images of God, ideas of God, died.

A. But then it could also be said that God, the God that died, never did exist. It was only our idea of that God that existed and that was only in our heads.

B. But that God; the God that was only in our heads had a huge effect upon our reality as our values, meaning, behavior, political affiliation, foreign and domestic policy, the rise and fall of nations, and how we treated nature were all affected by that God.

C. That God did exist, at least it seems to have had an real effect upon reality, so a real effect must have had a real cause.

D. But perhaps it was like the hallucination that drove the madman to leap off the cliff.

V. So what is your God like?

A. Are you still clinging to a God that part of you is telling you makes no sense?
B. Are you still clinging to a corpse that died long ago but you refuse to give it up? You refuse to let it die and so you refuse to let God be resurrected in a totally different way – as indescribable, as eternal.

VI. So many times in the Bible we hear the words, “Do not be afraid.” The other side of that is “Take Courage.”

A. Be courageous. The courage to let God die is found in the God who appears when god disappears in the anxiety of doubt.

B. You can’t learn to fly unless you have the courage to let go.

C. It’s not until you let go, that you find that you are still OK; that there is something that is still supporting you.

D. The courage to continue, the courage to live, the courage to be, is found in what is still supporting you when you’ve let go, but you can’t know that until you let go.
E. But from whence does the courage come to let go?

F. Well some find it in reason, some find it in mystical union, but most often it comes from nowhere.

G. Most often the God dies and is ripped away from you like a child’s pacifier; ripped from you by reason, by science, by some tragedy that your god is no longer capable of dealing with.

H. No courage is required.

I. Courage is needed to continue on.

VII. As I said, there have been lots of gods that have died for me.

A. Losing a god can be very painful and despairing.

B. A feeling of darkness and meaninglessness.

C. Hope disappears and nothing seems to have value.
   Life has no value.

D. It is a feeling more horrifying than any other.
E. But whether by luck, providence or grace I have always felt loved.

1. Not by people, it’s often people who have assisted in killing God.

2. No, it is a feeling that I am loved.

3. It is a feeling, that my very being is grounded, surrounded by love.

4. It is a feeling, and I don’t know what else to call it, it is a feeling that in life or in death, that love is what is eternal.

F. The god that has always been there is love.

It’s not that God is loving, it is not an attribute of God, but rather as the scriptures say, “God is love.”

G. Jesus was an incarnation of that love.

H. We too are called to be incarnations of that love.

In fact, we are commanded to do so.

Jesus told us,

“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another.

Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.
By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

VIII. God’s not dead.
God’s not something that can die. And each one of you is commanded to be an incarnation of God.
No pressure.
Just love one another.
AMEN.