

## **This Changes Everything!**

It's Easter Sunday morning, Jesus is risen, the tomb is empty, death has been defeated and nothing will ever be the same! Jesus' death and resurrection changes everything, but go back a few days and let's look at things from the perspective of his disciples. Last Sunday they arrived in Jerusalem with Jesus to the shouts of "Hosanna" from the crowds. They watched as Jesus confronted the moneychangers in the temple and healed the sick that came to him. They listened as he warned of coming judgment and destruction and spoke again of his coming betrayal and death but none of it seemed believable to the disciples.

On Thursday evening Jesus shares the Passover meal with his disciples and then leads them out into the night to a familiar place of prayer in an olive grove called Gethsemane (the olive press). After a long day and a big meal, the disciples catch themselves drifting off to sleep as Jesus prays. Their nap is cut short by a detachment of temple guards and the sound of a familiar voice. Judas says "rabbi" and quickly kisses Jesus on the cheek. Betrayed with a kiss, Jesus is arrested and taken to the house of Caiaphas, the high priest. The disciples scattered from the garden but some came close to the fire in Caiaphas' courtyard, hiding in plain sight in order to watch as Jesus is illegally tried and found guilty of blasphemy before the Sanhedrin, the ruling council of the Jews. He is then taken to Pilate, the Roman governor, for sentencing. After being mercilessly beaten and whipped, Jesus is forced to carry his cross to Golgotha, the Place of the Skull where he is nailed to that cross and left to die an agonizing, lingering death.

The disciples watched in horror. There was to be no intervention from heaven. The voice that thundered at his baptism "This is my beloved Son" remained silent that day. The miracle was – there would be no miracle. "It is finished" they heard him say and they watched as the Son of God died. John wrote, "With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit." John 19:30. But in case anyone would mistake that for being less than final, the soldiers were instructed to break the legs of the men being crucified in order to hasten their death but when they came to Jesus, John reported "he was already dead." To make sure, the soldier ran a spear through his side and into his heart. It was finished and final.

Hurrying because the Jewish Sabbath was approaching, two righteous members of the Sanhedrin, Joseph of Arimathea and a Pharisee named Nicodemus claimed Jesus' body, wrapped it according to Jewish burial customs and placed the body in a nearby tomb. Pilate had the tomb sealed and later posted guards. The disciples gathered behind locked doors to try to wrap their

minds around what had just happened!

**Jesus is dead. This changes everything.** Can you imagine what they were thinking? Their friend, mentor, teacher, rabbi, the one they believed to be the promised Messiah, was dead and he wasn't coming back. After all, no one comes back from the dead. The disciples were dealing with a profound sense of grief and personal loss. They had never known anyone like him because there was no one like him and now he was gone. They had to be dealing with their own crisis of faith and self-confidence. "We were so sure he was the Messiah. We thought he was the Son of God, but if he was, how and why would God let this happen? How could we have been so wrong? Now what? Go back to our old jobs, our old way of living? I can't believe it. Jesus is dead and this changes everything."

What they didn't yet realize was just how profoundly Jesus' death changed everything. What could his death mean? Luke tells of two followers of Jesus on their way to the village of Emmaus and the risen Jesus began walking with them. They didn't recognize him and they told him how disappointed and confused they were. They thought Jesus was the Messiah but he was dead and his death changed everything. Jesus said to them, "**Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory? And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.**" Luke 24:26-27

Imagine as Jesus explained to them the words of the prophet Isaiah, "**Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.**" Isaiah 53:4-5 Jesus' death changed everything because he died for us! He bore our sins, our iniquities, the punishment for our sins. Jesus referred to himself when he said "**...the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.**" Matthew 20:28. He gave his life for us as a ransom to purchase us from slavery to sin. The Apostle Paul writes, "**God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**" 2 Corinthians 5:21 "**But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**" Romans 5:8

Oh how his death changes everything for all who trust and believe in him. The disciples are still processing his death and their loss, still figuring out their next step when Mary Magdalen, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and some other ladies come bursting through the

door shouting that Jesus has risen from the dead! Imagine the scene. “Calm down! We can’t understand if you’re all speaking at once. Now what are you saying?” “Jesus is alive!” “What do you mean he’s alive?” “What do you think I mean? He’s alive! We took spices to the tomb this morning but when we got there the stone had been rolled away and the tomb was empty. We thought someone had perhaps stolen the body but then two men in clothes that shined like lightning stood right there beside us and said, ‘Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!’ They said ‘Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee, that he would be handed over to sinful men and be crucified and then on the third day he would rise again.’ Remember when he said that? Well...He did it! He’s alive!” Luke tells us, **“They did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense.”**

### **Luke 24:11**

“He’s dead and that’s all there is to it. That’s final.” To be certain, Peter and John run to the tomb and find it empty just as the women said. Luke says Peter “went away wondering to himself what had happened.” Later that same evening while the disciples were all together behind locked doors, two men showed up and told them about walking to Emmaus and a stranger whom they later realized was Jesus had walked with them and told them what the Scriptures said about the Messiah having to die. They had invited him to stay for supper and when he broke the bread and blessed it, they recognized it was Jesus and then he vanished from them. The disciples are still trying to process that story when suddenly, Jesus himself is standing right there in the room with them. Luke tells us they thought it must be his ghost but Jesus said, **“Why are you troubled and why do doubts arise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself. Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have...and while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, ‘Do you have anything here to eat?’ They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence.”** Luke 24:38-43

They were convinced. Do you know what they realized? **Jesus is alive! This changes everything!** The resurrection of Jesus from the dead changed everything for the disciples and it changes everything for us. The disciples went from doubting, questioning whether they had misjudged Jesus and his claims to an absolute certainty he was who he said he was. Thomas, the disciple who was not present when Jesus appeared to them, said, “Unless I put my finger where the nails were I will not believe it.” But when Jesus appeared to him a week later, Thomas cried

out with a new certainty, **“My Lord and my God!” John 20:28**

Jesus is alive and it changed what they believed about who he was. All doubt was settled by the resurrection. He was everything he said he was and more. You see, he had made some outrageous claims for a man to make but the resurrection verified them all. In his book, *Why I Am A Christian* John Stott wrote, **“By claiming to be the good shepherd who went out into the desert to seek his lost sheep, he was implying that the world was lost, that he wasn’t, and that he could seek and save it. In other words, he put himself in a moral category in which he was alone. Everybody else was in darkness; he was the light of the world. Everybody else was hungry; he was the bread of life. Everybody else was thirsty; he could quench their thirst. Everybody else was sinful; he could forgive their sins...Several of his parables implied that he expected to return at the end of history. On that day, he said, he would sit on his glorious throne. All nations would stand before him, and he would separate them from one another as a shepherd separates his sheep from his goats. In other words, he would settle their eternal destiny. Thus he made himself the central figure on the day of judgment. These are breathtaking claims. Jesus was by trade a carpenter. Nazareth was an obscure village on the edge of the Roman Empire. Nobody outside Palestine would even have heard of Nazareth. Yet here he was, claiming to be the savior and the judge of all humankind. He claimed to be the Christ of Scripture, the Son of God and the savior and judge of the world.” ...John Stott**

Outrageous. Yet I believe his claims to be true because the one who made all of these claims; the one who said he could forgive my sins; the one who said he had come that I might have life and have it more abundantly; the one who said he had come to give his life as a ransom for my sins; the one who said he was the resurrection and the life and even if I died, if I believed in him, I would live; the one that made those claims was crucified, died, was buried, and on the third day he rose from the dead! Talk about making a point. He rose from the dead! Listen, when a man is dead from Friday until Sunday and then gets up and walks out of the tomb, alive, seen by eye witnesses, by 500 people at one time, I’m going to pay attention to what that man has to say. He said he was light and life, master and lord over all, including death itself and the grave and he proved it when he rose again. Jesus is alive and it changes everything.

It changed not only what they believed but how they lived. No longer living in fear, they boldly began to proclaim the truth of Jesus’ life, death, resurrection and ascension. They told the

world that salvation could be found only in Jesus Christ, God's Son and the risen Savior and Lord. They found their purpose in life because he rose from the dead. They found meaning and an eternal destiny that motivated and inspired them, that kept them going in spite of persecution and opposition. They lived and overcame every challenge through the power of the resurrected Savior. His resurrection changed everything for his disciples and almost 2,000 years later the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is still changing us.

**Jesus is risen. He is with us. That changes everything!** It was after his crucifixion and resurrection, just before he ascended to heaven, Jesus said to his disciples, **“Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:20** He is risen and he is with us. Jesus promised, **“Where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.” Matthew 18:20** If Christ is risen from the dead and he is with us, all things are possible. He can do all things and now we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. Jesus is risen and his resurrection power is at work in us. His resurrection is the ultimate game changer. He rose from the grave, he is with us and he gives us victory. Everything changes.

Jesus is alive and we don't have to live in fear anymore. He conquered death and rose in triumph and that means even in the face of death, we don't have to be afraid. From the cross Jesus said, “It is finished” and he died. His resurrection means it (redemption's plan) was finished, but he wasn't. Not even death could stop Him and the grave couldn't hold him. The risen Lord told John in Revelation 1 **“Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. 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 Hades.” Revelation 1:17-18** I was dead and behold I am alive for ever! Jesus is risen and all things are possible. It is finished, but it isn't over. Jesus the risen Lord is here!

In your circumstances - It may be finished, but it isn't over. It may look like your marriage is dead. It may be finished, but it isn't over. The doctor said there is nothing else to be done. It is finished, but it isn't over. It looks like your hopes and dreams and plans have been dashed to the ground and shattered. It may be finished, but it isn't over. I know a God who brings the dead back to life! A know a God who turns night into day, weeping into rejoicing, who turns deserts into gardens. I know a God who turns defeat into victory. It may be finished, but it isn't over! Jesus is alive and that changes everything!

After Jesus showed up, the disciples walked out of that upper room where they had locked themselves away with a new outlook. Jesus is alive and everything is different –

everything is possible. Fifty days later they are baptized in the Holy Spirit and the church found its voice. Instead of hiding in fear they stood on the public street and in the temple and proclaimed the Jesus who had been crucified was in fact the risen Savior, Messiah and the coming King. The disciples could face death for their faith because they knew Jesus was alive. They weren't relying on a dead rabbi, they were trusting in a risen Savior.

Jesus is alive and that changes how we face life and death. Jesus is alive and that means every one of his promises are true. Jesus is alive and that same power that raised Him from the dead dwells in us by the Holy Spirit. That power enables us to live for Him and to serve him and to live a holy and obedient life, a life that is pleasing to Christ.

Jesus died and that changed everything because he died for us as the sacrifice that atoned for our sins. Jesus rose from the dead and is alive now and this changes everything for us. All things are possible through Christ. And you know what else? Jesus is coming back and that changes everything for us as well. Jesus is coming, we learned from the apostles' creed, to judge the living and the dead. Jesus is coming back and we want to be ready when he returns.

**Jesus is alive and coming back and this changes everything!** Are you ready to meet him? On this Easter Sunday morning, if this should be your last Easter, are you ready to meet the Lord? If Jesus should return or if you should die today, do you know where you will spend eternity? Jesus is alive and that changes everything, including your eternal destiny. Let the risen Savior change you today. If you've not made Jesus the Savior and Lord of your life, I invite you to open your heart to him today. Acknowledge that he died to atone for your sins. Repent and ask his forgiveness, then receive his pardon, placing your life in His hands.

I think I've quoted from St. John Chrysostom's Easter Homily every Easter for the past few years. Let me quote again this morning. **“Christ is risen and hell is overthrown. Christ is risen and the demons are fallen. Christ is risen and the angels rejoice. Christ is risen and life reigns. Christ is risen and not one dead remains in the grave.”** ...St. John Chrysostom

And I would simply add, **Christ is risen and this changes everything!** Hallelujah. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed!