

“Because He Lives”
John 20:19-31

Have you ever wondered what bunny rabbits and colored eggs have to do with the resurrection of Jesus?

Tradition is that rabbits and eggs were both symbols of springtime and of new life in many ancient near-eastern cultures.

In fact, some historians claim that the tradition of hiding colored eggs in a field for children to find dates back to ancient Babylon many centuries before Jesus was born.

And no one is quite sure where the name Easter comes from either.

There are several theories about the origin of the name Easter.

Some say that it comes from the ancient Germanic calendar because their word for April is actually Easter.

Others believe the name Easter is derived from Esther, the Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring.

And a spring festival was held annually in honor of this goddess named Easter.

In order to Christianize these pagan springtime festivals, early Christians intentionally choose to establish a rival holiday to celebrate Jesus’ resurrection from the dead.

And Easter was to take place on the Sunday morning following the Passover celebration in early spring.

Jesus resurrection has usurped all pagan springtime celebrations all across the world.

Early Christians readily adopted the eggs as symbols of new life and birth.

As you know I have used Resurrection Eggs in order to tell the story of Jesus’ death and resurrection with all the children.

And while the world has all but forgotten the gods of ancient mythology, the world is reminded every Easter that when Jesus Christ rose from the grave that two thousand years ago Jesus changed the world!

But the important question is; *“How has Easter changed your life”?*

“How does Easter impact the way you live your life on a daily basis”?

While some Christians believe that Jesus rose from the grave on the third day they have difficulty articulating how Jesus’ resurrection applies to them and their outlook on the day to day events in their life.

The resurrection story is a very familiar story to most of you.

The resurrection story is recorded in all four of the Gospels and the resurrection story is read every Easter.

No matter where you are in your walk with The Lord we all need to carefully read the Easter story with an open mind.

We all need to meditate on the Easter story so that we will not miss what The Lord wants to say to us today and how the Easter story should affect the day to day events in our life.

When Jesus rose from the tomb on that first Easter morning Jesus changed everything for you, for me, and for the whole world..

There are three ways that Easter should change the way each of us live each and every day of our lives.

And these three ways can all be found in our scripture lesson for today from The Gospel according to John.

In verse 19 and 20 we read; *“On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw The Lord. Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you!”* (John 20:19 – 20a)

The first way that Easter should change the way we live each and every day of our lives is Jesus offers us peace.

Because He lives I can have **PEACE**.

When Jesus appeared to his disciples that first Easter Sunday, the first words out of His mouth were, *“Peace be with you!”* (John 20:19).

The peace Jesus spoke of is far more than just a sense of calmness or the absence of fear.

The Hebrew word translated as peace here is *“shalom”*.

Shalom means wholeness, completeness, serenity, and harmony of life.

At the very center of this peace is peace with God.

I have visited with people who are dying and with family members who have said *“I know they will go to heaven because they made their peace with God.”*

But the truth is we can **not** make peace with God because God is holy and we are all sinners. (Romans 3:23)

Sin separates us from God.

You and I can never meet God’s standard of righteousness and we can never do enough good deeds to get into heaven.

When God created Adam and Eve, God gave them the Garden of Eden as a perfect paradise.

God came and walked with them, talked with them, and they had peace with God.

But when Adam and Eve sinned sin entered the world and all humanity was alienated from God.

We all inherited a sinful nature, we all commit sinful acts, and we all live in an imperfect world.

No matter how hard we try or what we do, we always fall short of God's standard of righteousness.

And those shortcomings result in spiritual and everlasting death.

That is the bad news.

Our sins separate us from God, so if peace with God is ever going to be restored it is up to God to provide a way.

The good news is that God loved us so much that He provided a way for sinful people like me and you to have peace with Him and to have fellowship with Him.

That's where Jesus comes in. ***"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall no perish, but have everlasting life."*** (John 3:16)

Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins.

Jesus died and rose from the grave so that you and I could have peace with God.

Because He lives, I can have peace with God.

When anyone asks Jesus to be their savior and to save them from the penalty of their sins they can have a relationship with the Creator of the universe.

When we are at peace with God we can know The Lord personally, we can talk to Him, we can lean on Him in times of trouble, and we can experience The Lord's blessings and His promises.

As Christians we can experience God's inner peace in spite of our outward troubles, and we have the privilege of sharing the peace of Jesus Christ with the people around us.

Jesus said, ***"Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."*** (John 14:27)

Because of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection you can have peace with God.

And when we have peace with God we can have peace with our fellowman.

That is because the Hebrew word peace is based upon a relationship between the two parties.

Without a relationship there is no basis for God's peace.

In Isaiah 48:22 we read; ***"There is no peace, says the Lord for the wicked."*** (Isaiah 48:22)

Secondly because He lives you and I have a **PURPOSE**.

In verse 21 Jesus said; ***"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you"*** (John 20:21).

God created each one of us for a specific purpose.

Jeremiah 29:11 states; ***“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”***

Jesus saved you from spiritual and eternal death and in return Jesus expects each of us to share the good news of Jesus with their friends, neighbors, and relatives.

As Christians we all have a general purpose of telling other people about Jesus.

Acts 1:8 is a command. ***“You shall be my witnesses.”***

We are witness when share the good news of salvation.

We are witnesses when we love and forgive other people.

We are witnesses when share what we have with those in need.

Jesus also sends us out as His ambassadors. (2nd Corinthians 5:20)

The Bible is clear as Christians our citizenship is heaven. (Philippians 3:20)

We are all on a temporary assignment while we are living on this earth.

And as you know an ambassador is the official representative of another person or a country.

An ambassador tells other people about their country and /or the person they represent.

They only do and say what the person that appointed them wants them to do or say.

As Christ’s ambassadors we are to tell other people about Jesus and we are to tell them about the Kingdom of God.

As Christ’s ambassadors we are to represent Jesus Christ to all of the people we come in contact with.

We are to share the love, the peace, the joy, the hope, and the forgiveness of Jesus Christ with everybody we come in contact with.

Everything we say and do should reflect the character and desires of Jesus Christ.

Every Christians is on a diplomatic mission no matter where they are.

Sadly many of us have lost our calling as an ambassador for Christ and we have become content to be ordinary citizens of this world.

And in addition to our general purpose of sharing the good news of Jesus we all have a specific purpose in this life.

God designed each of us with specific gifts and abilities.

God put us here on this earth at a specific time in history so we could accomplish a specific job for Him.

If God made you, God loves you, and God has a plan for your life, then God must certainly want you to know what His plan is so that you can fulfill the purpose He created you for.

The Bible is God's inspired Word that was given to us so we can know God and know how God wants us to respond to Him, then it is only logical to conclude that God's will for us is clearly revealed in His Word to us.

God's Word gives us clear truths about God's will.

Knowing God's will for your life is not about knowing what is in store for you 10 years from now, 10 days from now or 10 minutes from now.

God's specific will for your life is about right now; living every moment for Jesus by listening to His voice leading you to take the next step.

It is no accident that you are here at Mt Paran today.

You are here today because God has specific plans for you.

God has a purpose in mind for you to serve Him wherever you are and what ever you are doing.

Because He lives, I can know why I exist and I can know what I am supposed to do with my time here on earth.

Because He lives we have peace and we have a purpose in life.

And because He lives we have a **PROMISE**.

We have the promise of eternal life.

In John 20:31 we are told; ***“these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name”***.

We also have that promise of John 3:16. ***“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall no perish, but have everlasting life.”***

All throughout Jesus' ministry Jesus promised everlasting life to all those who believe in Him.

The promise of life everlasting is the heartbeat of hope.

In addition in John 10:10 Jesus said; ***“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly”***.

Because He lives we can do more than just exist. Jesus rose from the grave so we can enjoy life on earth.

It's that abundant life now and throughout eternity that we anticipate as believers.

Many people today hope for a long and happy life, but Jesus offers so much more.

Jesus offers us abundant life both now and through eternity!

Because He lives we have the promise of our resurrection.

Jesus' resurrection insures that we too will be resurrected.

In 1st Corinthians 15:12:20 & 21 states; ***“But if Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.”***

We can read more about our resurrection in 1st Thessalonians 4.

Because He lives we have the promise of The Indwelling Holy Spirit.

Earlier when Jesus was with His disciples Jesus promised to send The Holy Spirit.

“If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever, the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. (John 14:15 – 20)

Then in John 20:22 we read Jesus' words; ***“And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”***

Jesus came to earth to show us how to live a life pleasing to God and to die on the cross to pay the price of our sins so that sinful people could enjoy fellowship with our creator God.

When Jesus was physically on earth Jesus was limited in time and space.

But after Jesus' resurrection God sent The Holy Spirit so that He can be with all believers all the time.

The Holy Spirit lives in all believers to comfort us, to help us, to encourage us, to teach us, and to convict us.

You see Easter is so much more than colored eggs and candy bunnies.

At Easter we celebrate Jesus defeating death by rising from the grave and providing a way for us to have peace with God, we have a purpose for life, we have the promise of eternal life in heaven, the promise of abundant life while we are here on earth, and the promise of The Indwelling Holy Spirit.

That's what Easter is really all about.

That's why we are here today.

God loves each one of us more than we can ever imagine.

Jesus died on the cross so that we could live with Him forever.

Apart from Jesus we die. With Jesus we live.

If you want to experience the power of Easter in your life I invite you to bow your head and in silent prayer ask Jesus to be your savior and for Jesus to be the Lord of all aspect of your life right now.

AMEN