

Easter 2025

The One Moment that Changed Everything: The Real Meaning of Easter

Revelation 1:17-18

Summary: Experience the true meaning of Easter as we explore how the cross of Jesus turned ultimate defeat into ultimate victory—and how that victory can transform your life today.

Main Ideas:

Easter is about victory.

Jesus showed us what God's love is really like

The King who conquered the empire of sin and death wants you to know, love, and enjoy him personally and completely.

Jesus is not inviting you to believe something. He's inviting you to know HIM.

Discussion Questions:

1. Favorite thing(s) about Easter... Go!
2. If someone asked you what Easter means to you, what would you say?
3. Read Revelation 1:17-18. What stands out to you about Jesus' victory statement?
4. What are some practical, real-world ways you can live out, enjoy, and be shaped by Jesus' victory this week?
5. How can your group pray with you?

Transcript:

Intro: Come out of cross blossoming... Life conquering death.

Easter is about victory.

A victory we are invited to live out and enjoy and be shaped by every day.

Near the beginning of the last book of the Bible, Rev... we see what is almost like a victory speech by Jesus.

- **Rev. 1:17b-18** *Don't be afraid! I am the First and the Last. 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*

Let's look at this for a minute... B/c the Easter story isn't just something that happened; it's something that's happening—and it's something you're invited into.

WE: **"Don't be afraid"**... something Jesus said so often.

Easier said than done, though, right?

We have so much to fear...

- World/national events
- Health, money, relationships

- Fear of not being who everyone wants, expects, needs us to be.
- Fear of benign rejected/punished for our failures.

But Jesus says don't be afraid... why? B/c of what Easter proves.

GOD: "I am the 1st and the last" = God

Jesus said, "The Father and I are one. When you see me, you are seeing God."

If someone claims to be God there are three options... Either liar, crazy, or telling the truth.

So why have people for 2000 yrs believed he was telling the truth?

B/c of what he says next... **"I am the living one. I died, but look- I am alive forever and ever!"**

Jesus predicted his death and resurrection... and no one believed him or thought he was serious.

And then he was executed on a Roman cross.

And everyone, including his closest followers, believed he would do what everyone has always done when they die... stay dead.

But this true story didn't end there...

Matthew 28:1-10

Early on Sunday morning, as the new day was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went out to visit the tomb. Suddenly there was a great earthquake! For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, rolled aside the stone, and sat on it. His face shone like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. The guards shook with fear when they saw him, and they fell into a dead faint. Then the angel spoke to the women. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead, just as he said would happen. Come, see where his body was lying. And now, go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and he is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there. Remember what I have told you." The women ran quickly from the tomb. They were very frightened but also filled with great joy, and they rushed to give the disciples the angel's message. And as they went, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they ran to him, grasped his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Don't be afraid! Go tell my brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see me there."

See, God saw the empire of sin and death—everything that separates us from God, love, and true life

He saw we were stuck in and enslaved by this empire of evil, the pain, and suffering.

He knew we couldn't do anything to free ourselves.

So God entered into our world as a Jewish peasant named Jesus of Nazareth... and experienced all of it with us to rescue us from it.

Jesus showed us what God's love is really like... all are invited, all are loved.

- There's healing for the broken hearted
- There's hope for the hopeless
- There's rest for the exhausted

Jesus faced the worst the world has to offer... lived under an oppressive, murderous invading empire, was mistreated, lied about, betrayed, abused, tortured,

He took that evil, hate, and suffering onto himself as he was executed in one of the worst ways our depraved human mind could come up with.

The powers of his day: the Roman Empire and the Jewish religious establishment...

- Unleashed the full force of their power and crucified him on a cross.

The empire of sin and death thought it had won.

- The author of life. The source of true love was dead.

But Jesus had Trojan-horsed them...

- Death swallowed true life... and was destroyed from the inside out
- Darkness swallowed true light only to be shattered from within.

On the 3rd day after his death, Jesus came back to life.

- Proving that life is stronger than death. Love is more powerful than hate. Darkness can never withstand light.
- Didn't just defeat the empire of sin and death... Jesus utterly conquered and humiliated it... taking complete control of it.

"And I hold the keys of death and the grave."

Keys represent authority...

B/c he conquered death, he is now its ruler. It has no more power.

He is the boss and will do what he has promised he will do...

- **John 11:25b-26b** *I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die.*

And he now invites EVERYONE to enjoy this new life... now and forever.

To enjoy, live in, and be shaped by his victory.

- **John 10:10** *The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.*

We can live in this full life now, bringing Jesus' kingdom to those around us right now as we wait for the full and final culmination of it forever.

Jesus said this eternal life that starts now and lasts forever comes from believing in him...

But what does that mean? How do we wrap our minds around this?

YOU: This idea can feel so vague and so OUT THERE, SO BIG...

I mean, Jesus the king, God in a body, conquered humanity's greatest enemy: the empire of sin and death.

For me, Jesus used to feel like a celebrity you'd love to hang out with and get to know...

- But you only see through a screen or, if you're lucky, you run into and get a picture and an autograph.
- Mr. Beast, Jack Black, Sports, Musician.

We can know a lot ABOUT them but...

- How cool would it be for them to actually know you and like being around you?

Listen... The king who conquered the empire of sin and death...

- already knows you completely, loves you completely, and enjoys you completely.
- AND he wants you to know, love, and enjoy him personally and completely.

A lot of us know about him, but he invites each of us personally to KNOW him... and experience and enjoy him and the life he offers now and forever.

But it's not, as many people assume...

- Something we have to earn by being extra good,
- Being religious enough
- Bribing God with how great we are.

He offers this life and relationship and this rescue from the empire of sin and death for free...

He's already given us the gift, we just have to unwrap it.

He's already unlocked the prison door... we just have to walk out through it.

He's already paid off our debt... we just have to accept it.

Jesus is not inviting you to believe something. He's inviting you to know HIM.

To enjoy a lifelong relationship... of acceptance, confidence, closeness, support, understanding, trust, security, and joy

- To start a lifelong journey of discovering the one who loves you more than you can imagine.

No matter who you are, how old or young, how much you know about the bible or not, whether rich/poor, whether you have had an easy life or a hard life, whether you have made all the right choices or have failed over and over...

You are invited to experience true life in Jesus now and forever.

In the very last chapter of the Bible, it is written...

Rev 22:17 *The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." Let anyone who hears this say, "Come." Let anyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who desires drink freely from the water of life.*

"Drink freely". Nothing to earn... simply drink.

I can attest, as I know many in this room can, that it is the best drink in the world

- It brings healing, hope, peace, comfort, courage... even in the darkest times.

If you're done running, done just trying to figure it out, done with guilt, shame, fear.

If you are thirsty for true life, peace, and love... come and drink.

Jesus is ready today, right now.

- Not to judge you, not to coerce you... but to embrace you.

You can stop trying to earn your way to him

You can stop carrying what he has already carried for you

He's not waiting for a better version of you.

- He's ready right now — just as you are.
- Not to shame you. Not to judge you.
- But to embrace you, restore you, and give you life.

If you are feeling a tug/an internal quickening, that just might be Jesus preparing to embrace you.

If you are ready... tired/thirsty/and done striving... He is ready too...

Tell him in your heart right now...

"Jesus, I believe You are alive.

You died for me, and You rose again.

I need You. I trust You. I give my life to You.

Forgive me, rescue me, and make me new.

I want to follow You, Jesus—now and forever."

WE: End with reading (Late 300's AD)

The Paschal Homily of St. John Chrysostom

If anyone is devout and loves God,

let them enjoy this beautiful and radiant festival.

If anyone is a grateful servant,
let them enter joyfully into the joy of their Lord.

If anyone has practiced fasting,
let them now receive their reward.

If anyone has labored since the first hour,
let them today receive their just reward.

If anyone came after the third hour,
let them celebrate with thanksgiving.

If anyone arrived after the sixth hour,
let them have no misgivings, for they shall not be deprived.

If anyone delayed until the ninth hour,
let them draw near without hesitation.

If anyone came only at the eleventh hour,
let them not be afraid because of their delay—
for the Lord is gracious and receives the last even as the first.

He gives rest to the one who comes at the eleventh hour,
just as to the one who labored from the first.

He shows mercy to the last, and heals the first.
To the one He gives, and to the other He gives freely.

He accepts the deed, and welcomes the intention.
He honors the act and praises the purpose.

Therefore, let all enter into the joy of our Lord —
first and last alike, receive your reward!
Rich and poor, dance together!

Sober and slothful, honor the day!
You who have fasted and you who have not,
rejoice together!

The table is fully laden — feast upon it all of you!
The calf is fatted — let none go away hungry!

Let all enjoy the feast of faith.
Let all receive the riches of goodness.

Let no one grieve their poverty,
for the Kingdom has appeared to all.

Let no one weep for their sins,
for forgiveness has dawned from the tomb.

Let no one fear death,
for the death of the Savior has set us free.

Christ is risen, and death 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 tomb!

For Christ, being raised from the dead,
has become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep.
To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever.

Amen!

This is Easter. The victory Jesus won and now invites all of us to enjoy and live today and forever.