

How Easter Changes Everything

Introduction

Happy Easter King of Kings! This morning we celebrate the death and the resurrection of Jesus!

There are moments in time, when all of a sudden, something huge happens, and everything changes. Easter is just like that.

So I have called today's message;

How Easter Changes Everything!

The fact that, that tomb was empty, changes everything. Not only for us as individuals, but for who we are, how we live, and why we live the way that we live

Now I know that there are a lot of misunderstandings about the Easter story. And I'm very sympathetic to people who are skeptical, because honestly, it is a lot to take in! Even the people closest to Jesus, his disciples and best friends were getting mixed up during the Easter story.

Mary thought that Jesus' body had been stolen. Peter sees the linen wrappings and can't work out what it's all about. The disciples didn't understand the Scriptures. The angels questioned Mary, and she still doesn't know what's going on. Then she thinks Jesus is the gardener! Then, it seems, she reaches out to cling to him, and he tells her she mustn't. You could hardly get more misunderstandings into a couple of paragraphs if you tried.

The point is, of course, that ever since Easter has burst into our world—the world of space, time, and matter, real history and real people and real life—our minds and imaginations are too small to contain it, to understand it.

At one level, the continued confusion of the disciples is a mark of the story's authenticity. If someone had been making this all up a generation later, as some have suggested, they would hardly have had such a muddle going on.

More particularly, nobody would have been able to make up the remarkable details.

I think the first Christians just weren't really prepared for what actually happened. Nobody could have been, but the wonder of it all, is that at Easter, Jesus changed everything.

As a church we have been working our way through the book of Isaiah. We are starting a new series about family and relationships called 'Build to last.' But today, as we begin to wrap up Isaiah, we are going to see how easter changed everything, and how it was prophesied years in advance.

If you have your bibles, you can turn to **Isaiah chapter 53**.

If you can give me 25min, they might be the most important 25min of your whole life. Your eternal destiny might be hanging in the balance. Whatever you have achieved, whatever you know, whatever you have... nothing is as important as one thing: who Jesus is and why he died. Nothing is as important as that fact.

Unlike other religions, Christianity is not a system of theories or a ideology. It is founded on a person named Jesus Christ, and the fact of his death and resurrection.

So at Easter time, it's really important that you make the right decision about what you believe about Jesus, because here is the truth...

It changes how we see Jesus

This was prophesied from the very beginning;

Look with me at **Isaiah 53, verse 1**;

1 Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

This is a big question, posed to each of us. Who is going to believe this message about Jesus? Who is going to understand the grace of the arm of the Lord, extended to them, for salvation? Huge huge question.

What do you believe about Jesus? Who do you say he is? Just some great teacher who lived a long time ago? Some crazy man who made some wild statements? Or legitimately the Son of God, who has come to save the world from sin? Who do you say he is? And do you know him? Do you really know him? Look at **verse 2**;

2 He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

3 He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

How many of you have have tried to imagine what Jesus was like? What he looked like? If he was handsome and attractive.

Have you seen pictures of Jesus? I'm sure you know, but those are not real pictures of Jesus! We don't know exactly what Jesus looked like. This passage is the closest thing that we get to a description of Jesus.

Usually the pictures we have of Jesus are of him with long hair; probably not true. Nice European features; No. Constant glow about him, like he works at a nuclear reactor. Did he really look that? No.

Here's what he looked like. This is the closest we get in the whole Bible to a description of the appearance of Jesus.

He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

In other words, he looked normal! He looked like you and me. He wasn't going to be a super-model. He looked like a normal guy. Now, be honest. How many of you, if you were God coming into human history, as God, would not only plan this amazing entrance, but you'd also want to look pretty good! Right? With a God-like body. And muscles to match. Not Jesus. He came 'normal,' like you and me.

What a incredible attitude and heart. Zero arrogance. Zero ego.

And how did we treat him? Isaiah says this;

He was despised and rejected by mankind,

So some people loved him, and most people hated him because of what he said, and they rejected him.

Friends, I am so glad you are here this easter Sunday, and with all my heart, I pray you would not reject Jesus. Many people in the world do.

Isaiah says, Jesus was...

Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

Some of us still despise him and don't esteem him.

And it says, that he was **a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.**

Here is what I want you to understand. Jesus was both fully God, and fully man. Jesus experienced the full range of human emotion.

Sometimes people who try to be super-spiritual will say things like; "You should be happy! The joy of the Lord is your strength!" Friends, there are times in life to laugh, and times to cry. Jesus sometimes laughed, and sometimes he cried.

If your life is only always crying, and dark, and hard, and depressed, something is not right. But likewise, if your life is only happy-clappy, and smiling, and jovial, somethings not entirely right either.

In life, there'll be days and moments of rejoicing, and mark my words, there'll be days and moments of weeping. There were for Jesus. There are for the people of

God. Our God, fully felt the full spectrum of human emotion. He was both fully-human, and fully-God.

And here is what keeps on blowing my mind about this passage in Isaiah, more that 700 years before Jesus came as a man, the prophet Isaiah told Israel, that God was sending His servant to come and rescue them, but the rescue mission would not follow the plot that they believed it would, the messiah, would not be like a glorious superhero from a marvel movie swooping in to blast all the bad guys, instead, he would come as a suffering servant.

When Jesus came, he was as an ordinary man – the son of a carpenter from a rural town. Not like a great Kings son, born with a silver spoon in His mouth. In that first Easter week, He was rejected by everyone, even the religious leaders – the very ones who should have recognised Him!

Then He was rejected by the crowd and finally, he was rejected by most of his disciples who ran away scared.

Friends, the reason that easter changes everything, is because at this time, we celebrate the one who was sent from God, Jesus Christ, God's one and only son, that whosoever would believe in him, would not die, but have eternal life.

Don't reject the only one in all the world who can save you.

Here is the next reason I believe easter changes everything, through Jesus Christ...

It accomplishes our justification

But let's read on in Isaiah 53. It amazing to read the prophetic account of Isaiah in Isaiah 53, **verse 4**;

Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted.

⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Isaiah says; **“By his wounds we are healed.”** What does that mean? For some, that means physical healing in this life. So we pray for the sick, and sometimes, all praise to God, God heals!

But it also means that at the resurrection of the dead, all of God's children are fully healed, forever! Amen?! And there is healing eternally for the people of God, because of the sufferings of Jesus.

This is the great exchange. Isaiah says, Jesus...

was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Isaiah prophesied it, and in the New Testament, Jesus Christ fulfilled it. God substituted himself for us, and he suffered and died in our place for our sins, as our substitute, our servant, and our Saviour. Jesus never sinned, and Jesus died for my sin. The death he died, is the death I deserved to die.

This is called, justification. This is what he did for us.

Why is this all necessary? Well,

Take a look at **Verse 6**;

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

We have all turned our back on God and done whatever we wanted to do. And like foolish sheep in the path of danger, we have jeopardised our own eternal soul, but praise God,

the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

So, here's the good news, friends: There's an answer for sin, and that's the suffering of Jesus. You don't need to punish yourself. Jesus already suffered. You don't need to deny your sin, blame others, or ignore your sin. You need to confess;

"I have gone astray, and the Lord has laid on him, my sin."

He is the suffering servant. He is the Son of God. He is the Saviour. Its so important that you understand that today. Its so important that you trust that today.

Thank you Lord Jesus.

It changes the way we view death

So lets read on in **verse 7**;

7 He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

Throughout the trials of Jesus, with the Sanhedrin and the Roman Governor, Jesus did not say very much. He did not defend Himself or try to get out the situation. He was silent before his accusers.

He wasn't whining and complaining. He was suffering and dying for us.

Why? Why did Jesus not say anything? I believe Jesus accepted what was happening, because it was not a surprise to Him, and he knew it needed to happen to bring salvation. It was His love for us, that kept Him quiet and willing.

Because of what Jesus did at Easter, your future can be certain. Death has lost it sting!

Let me explain it like this. If someone goes jail, and the judgement for the crime says ten years in jail. The day that you come out of jail, that means it's paid. Right? That law has no more claim on you at all, right? You've been in jail for ten years, and now the day you walk out it's paid, it's gone.

Jesus Christ went into death, the wages of sin is death, and when he came up out of the grave that meant it was paid. That's how you know it was paid.

You can think of the Resurrection as a receipt. If you're in a shop and you buy something, you always ask for the receipt, right? Because if you're still walking around the store, and a security person stops you and says, "Hey, have you paid for that?"

You can then hold up your receipt and you say, "Yes Mr security, trouble me not, because this proves that this has been paid for and I do not have to pay it again."

In the same way, the Resurrection is a giant receipt stamped across history for all people to see, that you can know that your future is certain if you believe in Jesus Christ.

Look at

Verse 8

By oppression and judgment he was taken away.

This was his arrests. He was hauled before the people, and they cried; "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished.

What does that mean? Cut off from the land of the living? That's death, right? This prophetic word from Isaiah, written 700 years before Christ was born, detailing the death of Jesus. He would be cut off from the land of the living. We would kill him.

Cut off, for what? Isaiah says, for... **'the transgression of my people.'** Once again, why did he die? For our sin. In the grace of God, Christ died for our salvation. That's how great God is.

And then Isaiah says in verse 9;

⁹ He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death,

Here is what we know from the easter story. Jesus was crucified between two guilty thieves - between the wicked, and with the rich. Was Jesus rich? Yes or no? No. Was he was buried in a rich man's tomb? Yes or no? Yes.

And here's how it worked. The Scripture prophesied how Jesus would live, how he would die, and where he would be buried, seven hundred years before he was born! Isn't that amazing?

So dear friends, please don't hear this and say, "I don't believe the Bible. Men wrote that book" when there are things that men could not possibly know.

Men don't know the future. Men don't control the future. Men don't predict the future, not with this kind of painstaking detail.

This bible, this is the book that God wrote about the Saviour that God provided. That's what it's about. And it says that he would be buried with the rich, and that's exactly what happened.

Jesus was poor, died, did not have a burial plot, and someone, a man named Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy man, gifted to Jesus his own personal burial place, and Jesus was buried with the rich in fulfilment of Isaiah, but three days later, he gave it back. He never needed it :) It was just a temporary stay.

In **verse 9**, Isaiah says Jesus;

though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

Did Jesus ever sin in word or deed? No.

Verse 10;

Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.

This was the plan of the Father, that we might have salvation. Here is where things get even more interesting. Isaiah says;

'He will see his offspring and prolong his days.'

What is that? That right there is a prophetic word in scripture about the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead! That's the victory over Satan, sin, death, hell, and the wrath of God! He would once again see his offspring, and prolong his days.

Let me sum this up, here is what it is saying: Jesus would live. We would treat him brutally. He would die. He would be buried in a rich man's tomb, and then he would keep on living. That's exactly what it says. Jesus rose from death! Seven hundred years in advance, God wrote a book and told us that it would happen. And Isaiah says;

and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.

People will be saved. Sin will be forgiven. Satan will be crushed. Eternity will be altered. And then,

Verse 11;

After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied

Once again, that's resurrection! He will see the light of life, and be satisfied.

by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

Here's the big question.

How can God, who is holy and just and true, possibly look at guilty sinners like you and I and declare us justified, righteous, acceptable, holy, and pleasing in his sight? He can't. He just can't. And so the servant comes. The Lord Jesus comes, and he lives and dies in our place, and he exchanges places with us, and he takes our sin, and he gives us his righteousness. He justifies us.

And it says here he's the righteous one. He's the only righteous one. You and I are unrighteous, but through faith in Christ, all of the righteousness of Christ is counted, reckoned, granted, given toward you and me. So, we can stand before the Father, justified.

This is why, friends, we always tell you it's all about Jesus. It's not about becoming righteous through punishing yourself, through being moral, through trying harder, through vain spirituality, through self-help and pop-psychology, and even religious devotion.

There's one who's righteous. You trust in him. His righteousness is given to you. That's amazing! Then you live from your righteousness, not for your righteousness.

This is the crux of Easter – why did Jesus have to die? He had to die because it was God's will – not to punish Jesus, but to make Him a sacrifice for our sin.

On Easter Sunday, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, we don't just focus on His death. You see death could not defeat Jesus – while He suffered and submitted Himself to a horrible death, the grave could not hold Him!

Look at Isaiah **verse 12**;

¹² Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Make no mistake. There will be a great reward in the kingdom for the servant, Jesus, the Son of God. and make no mistake...

Today we can celebrate, that because of Jesus, our sins can be forgiven, and we can have a relationship with God. Jesus is our Saviour, we can be free, because Jesus is alive! Amen!

Finally today, if easter changes how we see Jesus, it accomplishes our justification, it changes the way we view death, here is the last thing it does.

It challenges us to arise and shine!

The call to live as the Easter people of God is ringing out through the world. The Resurrection of Jesus, is a real, paradigm-shattering, impossible to dismiss fact. You know what facts are like. Facts are like this. There is a fact. Even if you don't like it, it's there. Its a fact.

How will you live in the light of what Jesus did for you?

I want to conclude like Isaiah in Isaiah 60.

Isaiah 60:1

“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. ² See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you.

Lets pray.

Come Holy Spirit...