

The Easter Difference

Romans 6:1-4

➤ Introduction

Easter is a Sunday when everyone turns out for worship. All across the country pastors enthusiastically go to their churches because they know today, on Easter Sunday there will be a crowd. Easter is a day when people come in their best clothes and happiest faces. Many churches must have two and three services on Easter to accommodate the large crowds. It is a wonderful day for churches across the US. But, what is so different about Easter Sunday?

Read Scripture Romans 6:1-4

¹What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ²By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? ³Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Romans 6:1-4 NIV

Prayer

➤ What is the Easter Difference?

You've been here before. This is not your first Easter Sunday service. You know the Easter story of the death and resurrection of Christ. You know about the tomb stone being rolled away and the great discovery that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. Today I will skip the story of the resurrection. Today we will go straight to the meaning of the resurrection and we will ask this one question. What difference does the resurrection make?

Illus: A Sunday School teacher was finishing a lesson with third graders about how Jesus was crucified and placed in a tomb with a great stone sealing the opening. Then, wanting to share the excitement of the resurrection, the teacher asked: "And what do you think were the first words of Jesus when He came bursting out of the tomb alive?" A hand shot up into the air from the rear of the classroom. "I know, I know", said a little girl. "Tell us, what were the first words of Jesus?" Extending her arms high into the air she said, "TA-DA!"

I doubt those were the first words of our resurrected Lord. However, clearly, the resurrection is the "TA-DA" of Christianity. **The resurrection is everything.** It is the very thrust of the Christian faith. Mohammed is still in grave, as is Buddha, Confucius, Joseph Smith, etc. Only Jesus Christ, the Son of God was resurrected and therein lays the very strength, hope, comfort, forgiveness and essence of our faith.

1. **The Resurrection is a Partition.**

⁴We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. Romans 6:4

The resurrection is not just the resurrection of Christ. The resurrection of Christ is also the believer's resurrection. Just as Christ is raised from the dead through the glory of God, so is the saved, born again Christian raised up to newness of life. Easter is not only a celebration of the resurrection of Christ. It should be a celebration of your own resurrection from the old to the new.

The resurrection is a partition / a dividing wall, between the old self centered you and the new you in Christ.

²⁴"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it." Matthew 16:24-25

To experience salvation, we must deny ourselves. In salvation, we must allow the old self to die and be resurrected in Christ.

This means there is a partitioning point where we become a changed person. We make a conscious decision to allow Christ to live through us rather than everything being about us.

The problem is that too many people claim to have a personal experience with Christ but there is no partition. There is no dividing point between the old way of life and the new person in Christ. They just continue on being the same person. This makes for a miserable Christian because the war rages inside. The war is stirred by the old self who is unwilling to die and unwilling to allow Christ to be on the throne of their life.

People want a religion that does not ask them to sacrifice, not even for a moment. But God's Word says we must sacrifice. We must die to ourselves in order to find real life.

Jesus condemned the Pharisees of His day because they served God with their lips, but their hearts were far from Him.

Illus: Remember back on Palm Sunday as Jesus entered Jerusalem, the crowd waved palm branches and shouted "Hosanna" which literally means "Save, I Pray". And then in a few days that same crowd was shouting "Crucify Him".

We ponder at how the crowd could have been so wishy-washy. They were not happy because He did not do the things they expected Him to do.

Many Christians do the same thing. We proclaim "Hosanna" by accepting His salvation. But, we shout "Crucify Him" with our lives because we are unwilling to allow ourselves to die and let Him live through us.

To participate in the resurrection there must be a partition between the old self and the new creature in Christ.

2. The Resurrection is Personal.

Illus: In the movie "Saving Private Ryan", Tom Hanks and several other soldiers are sent into battle to retrieve Private James Ryan who is one of three brothers in the war. The other two brothers have been killed and orders from high up the ranks are to get the young man out alive and home to his mother. The problem is that several men die trying to get Private Ryan out. When the Captain, Tom Hanks is dying, he grabs the young private by the shirt and says, "Earn This!" You and I are in the same shoes as Private Ryan. We can't earn our salvation but we must receive it. We must let it make a difference to the point that we become a new person. It must be reflected in our lives.

It is easy to read the resurrection as if it is just another story from the Bible. **But that is not an option.** The resurrection of Christ is an event we must personally deal with. You might say, "Brother Bob you can't make me deal with anything" and you are correct. But, God leaves you and I with no choice but to participate or reject. And know this; to sit on the sideline is to reject.

It is clear from our scripture today that the resurrection of Christ is far more than a historical event. It is a very personal event. Not only must we believe in Christ, we must become a participant in His death and resurrection. This is a personal decision and a personal process in which we must each individually participate.

Your salvation experience is not about how long you have been a member of the church. It isn't about your Mother or Father, Brothers or Sisters and their relationship with God. It isn't about how much money you or your family might have given to help build this church. It is about you and Jesus Christ. There are no other participants in this relationship but you and the Son of God.

Above all power, above all Kings,
Above all nature and all created things,
Above all wisdom and all the ways of man,
You were here before the world began

Above all kingdoms, above all thrones
Above all wonders the world has ever known
Above all wealth, and treasures of the earth
There's no way to measure what you're worth..

Crucified and laid behind a stone,
You lived to die, rejected and alone.
Like a rose, trampled on the ground
You took the fall, and thought of me
Above all.

The body of Christ the Son of God was torn and beaten. The blood of the Son of God flowed down a wooden cross and onto the ground. Yet God took it and He put it back together and handed it back to you and I in perfect form. God wants to do the same thing with our lives. He wants to take our lives with all of the sin and selfishness, bury it and raise us up a new person in Him.

Make no mistake about it, the resurrection is Personal!

Conclusion

One final thought. The events of the crucifixion and the resurrection are remarkable. They are difficult for us to fathom. However, the amazing thing about the life of Christ is that God did it all intentionally. Easter is about God's love and desire for you. It is personal.

For those who sit back and observe and do nothing, it makes no difference. For those who participate, it makes all of the difference in the world.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things become new. 2 Cor 5:17

What difference does the resurrection make in your personal life?

Invitation