

# 2025 Easter / From Death to Life

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Preacher: Nathan Rambeck

[0:00] Okay, well we'll just have a brief message and like I said we'll end with a song and just keep in mind that song is in your bulletin as an insert.

! You know I'd like to just start the service again with He is risen! You know millions of Christians all over the world do that on Easter Sunday.

It's not just here in Springfield, Ohio, it's not just in the United States of America, but all over the world Christians on this day are celebrating and have for hundreds and hundreds of years, over a thousand years, celebrated this as a day to commemorate.

And it doesn't have to just be on this day, on Easter Sunday, but we mark a special day to do that. And the reason is, is because this day, the day that we're celebrating, that first Easter Sunday, is really the most momentous event in all the history of the world.

That's quite a claim, isn't it? I mean there's a lot of important and amazing things that have happened in the history of the world. But this is the claim, I think, of Christians all over the earth, that this day is the most momentous event that ever happened.

[1:25] The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Now some people think that that story we find in the Christian Bible is just a fairy tale.

It's just something made up, something that somebody decided to write down and to give religious comfort maybe to those who are looking for that.

You know, there are even churches today, those who would gather in a building like this, who would say that, you know, the resurrection is a nice story.

But we shouldn't say that it's something that actually happened in reality. I mean, after all, when people die, that's it. Nobody rises from the dead.

And we would think that they have a point. I ask the kids, have you ever met somebody who rose from the dead? I'll ask that to everybody else. Anybody else met somebody who rose from the dead? I'm seeing lots of shaking of heads.

[2:32] And so there are some churches that teach, well, this is an account, a story in our Bibles that is meant to be more of a metaphor for life. That if you maintain certain basic religious sentiments, that you can experience a type of religious life of renewed hope and renewed possibilities in the world.

I have a couple of quotes from some more liberal theologians. One that said, the resurrection is not about a dead body walking out of a tomb. It's about the triumph of love over hate, of life over despair.

Another one, another theologian says this, I think Easter is more powerfully understood as a symbol of possibility. A spiritual metaphor for rebirth and renewal.

And I guess that sounds nice. But let's consider this, that if the resurrection of Jesus Christ is just a story, just a metaphor, then Christians of all the people in the world are the most pathetic group of people that there could ever be on the face of the earth.

And do you know that that's what the Bible itself says? In 1 Corinthians chapter 15, which is an important passage, by the way.

[4:08] You might read this today, 1 Corinthians chapter 15. And we'll look at a few passages from here this morning. But Paul is teaching about some, or teaching to some who weren't sure, is there really life after death?

And this is what he said to them, 1 Corinthians 15 verse 12. Now if Christ is preached, that he has been raised from the dead. How do some among you say that there is no resurrection from the dead?

But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty, and your faith is also empty. It's useless. It's vain.

Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ, whom he did not raise up. If, in fact, the dead do not rise.

For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then your faith is futile. You're still in your sins. And then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ, they have perished.

[5:15] They're gone forever. However, if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are, of all men, the most pitiable.

Here Paul says that if Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead, if there is no future hope of a resurrection, then the Christian faith is meaningless. It means nothing.

And those people who follow it are to be pitied. They're a pathetic group of people. And so Christianity really, it rises or falls on this event.

Did Jesus Christ really rise from the dead? By the way, that's a question that you wonder about that you're not sure about. We have a little book right there outside those double doors called The Case for Easter.

It's just a short little book. You can probably read it in just a couple hours. But it makes a case. It's written by an investigative journalist who was an atheist, an unbeliever, and decided he was going to investigate the claims of Christianity because of his wife, who became a Christian, and went through that process of investigating the claims of Christianity, and specifically the resurrection, and came on the other side becoming a believer because the evidence was so powerful.

[6:30] But really there are two consequences to our faith if Christ did not rise from the dead that is described here in this passage that we just read.

He says, one, that we Christians are still in our sins. Our sins are not paid for. We still have to pay for them. And then two, that Christians who die physically, those who perish, he says, are just gone forever.

And these two consequences that he mentions speak to the two problems that were solved by Jesus Christ when he rose from the dead. And those two problems can both be summarized in just one word.

And that word is death. Death. All of us have experienced death, not personally. I don't think there's anybody here who's come back from the dead.

But we have experienced around us in our lives. And sometimes it might just be, especially if you're a young child, maybe you haven't experienced that yet, but you might see as you're walking through the yard a little bird that is once flying around in the trees and is now laying on the ground, lifeless.

[7:45] And even that little bird brings sadness to our hearts and especially to that of a small child. But many of us have lost brothers or sisters, father, mother, others close to us.

Death is part of the ultimate statistic that 10 out of 10 people die. Right? It seems on all accounts that death is inescapable.

And because of that, you know, many of us try to come to terms with death. It's just an inevitable part of life. Everyone's going to die. Yet there is something in us, something more powerful than just the logical brain that does not want to accept that, that yearns to defy death, to escape the pain of death, to transcend its darkness.

Something in us wants to live forever. And why is that? You know, it seems to me, reading through the Bible, that that's because God designed us that way.

That's how he designed us. To yearn for life evermore. Here's what Paul says in 2 Corinthians chapter 5. For we who are in this tent, he's figuring our bodies as a tent.

[9:12] For we who are in this tent, we groan. Anybody ever, anybody feel that? We groan. Being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed from our tent, from our body, but actually because we want to be further clothed.

That mortality may be swallowed up by life. Paul's saying everybody yearns for eternal life. We don't want to be separated from our family and our friends.

We don't want to be separated from the joy and laughter of life. We don't want to be separated from the warm sunshine and the cool summer breeze.

We don't want to be separated from the picturesque sunrise, that glorious sunset. We don't want to be separated from the work and art and creativity of life.

We want it to continue. We want to live. And you know, all of these things, God created for us to enjoy.

[10:19] And he created us to enjoy them forever. So what happened? And as with many things, we go back to the book of beginnings.

And there are two kinds of death that are described when we go back to Genesis. When we look in the garden, here's what it says in Genesis 2, verse 16. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat.

For in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die. We all know what happened after that, right? Our first parents, they disobeyed that command, and they inherited the promise that God gave them.

The promised consequence of death. It brought death and mortality, not just to them, but to all of their children. And we see the fruits of that even to this day.

In describing the curse on all mankind, here's what God said. This is Genesis 3, 19. In the sweat of your face, you shall eat bread till you return to the ground. And here's what he says.

[11:31] For out of it you were taken. For dust you are, and to dust you shall return. But that's not how God designed it to be. This was a consequence of sin.

But was it just physical death? In fact, it might be confusing because as you read that account, they ate of the fruit, but they continued to live on.

For many years, actually. Many hundreds of years. But there's another death that maybe isn't quite as apparent. It's a death that we call spiritual death.

And what is that anyway? A spiritual death. Well, if we describe physical death in these terms as a separation. Physical death is a separation of your spirit, the real you, separating from your body. And so, when someone dies, their spirit leaves their body. And a lot of times, if you've ever seen someone at a funeral, you can tell they're just not there anymore. They've gone on.

[12:32] They're somewhere else. Without our spirit, our body is dead. In the same way, spiritual death is a separation. But spiritual death is a separation of man, a man, from his God.

Because God designed us to be united with him. That's how he designed us. But sin comes in and causes that separation.

In Genesis 3, 8, continuing on with the story, this is after they had sinned. It says this, And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. And Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

They hid. They were ashamed. That's what sin does. Later on in chapter 3, it says this, Then the Lord God said, Behold, the man has become like one of us to know good and evil.

And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life and live forever. Therefore, the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken.

[13:44] So they were rejected from the garden. Their life would be different from how God designed because of sin. Just as God designed us to live physically forever, he also designed us to live spiritually forever.

Ever. To live in a relationship with him. To know him. In fact, Jesus, he was praying. This is one of Jesus' long prayers in the Gospel of John.

And here is how Jesus describes, as he's praying to the Father, he describes what is eternal life. He says this, And this is eternal life that they may know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

The eternal life, the spiritual kind of life, is knowing God. And that is what God designed us to do, to be in relationship with him.

Isaiah the prophet says this, Isaiah 59, 2, But your iniquities have separated you from your God and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he will not hear. Paul says in Ephesians, Ephesians chapter 2, And you he made alive, now that's the good news, who were dead in trespasses and sins.

[14:59] That's the bad news. For believers, they have a new life, but before then, like the rest of the world, who were dead in trespasses and sins.

And it says this, In which you once walked according to the course of this world. You see, our sins, not just Adam and Eve's sins, but ours, has contributed to our death, to our separation from God.

Every act of violence and of hatred, cheating, exploiting others, selfishness, infidelity, all of it leads to, and all those things, we know that sin separates, right?

Because when we hurt others, and that's what sin is, when we hurt others, when they hurt us, what does that do to relationships? It divides us. It causes us to separate. In the same way, our sins cause a separation between us and God.

And so God put together a plan. The solution was through Jesus Christ coming, coming to the earth as a man. And he spent three years, really 33 years, right, walking the earth and doing a great many things, teaching lots of great things.

[16 : 18] But the most important thing that he did is not the things that he taught, but the death that he died and his resurrection three days later. And here are some passages about that resurrection.

And because there were two problems, two kinds of death, both the physical death and the spiritual death, God's solution provided two solutions. Spiritual life and new physical life.

Here's what the Bible says about the spiritual life. In Romans 6, 4, it says this, Just as Christ raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united together in the likeness of his death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of his resurrection. Ephesians 2, verse 4, says this, But God, who is rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, he made us alive together with Christ, by grace you've been saved, and raised us up together and made us sit in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

That's a picture, it's a spiritual reality that we are united with Christ, we're sitting with him as friends rather than as enemies. Because as other scriptures have said, because of our sins, we were made the enemies of God.

[17 : 53] But because of the death of Christ, we can become the friends of God. Romans 8, verse 10, says this, And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness.

So there's a reality that as soon as you put your trust in Christ, you have this new life assigned to you, a spiritual life. You are restored in your relationship to God.

There's no more enmity, there's just peace. God declares you to be righteous.

But here in this verse, it says your body is still dead. And that's because the next solution comes later on. Here's what it says in the next verse.

Romans 8, 11, But if the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his spirit who dwells in you.

[19 : 11] You see, we have a promise. If we put our trust in Christ, we can be restored in our relationship right now, this very instant. We still have death residing in our bodies, but in the future, there is a day coming, a future promise, what we call the blessed hope, Jesus returning and all the dead being raised.

And not just raised into the same kind of body, but the Bible says a new kind of a body, a body that is like the one that he has even now, the new body that he took on when he rose from the dead.

One that will never die again. Back to 1 Corinthians chapter 15. We'll look at this same chapter.

And it says this, but now Christ is risen from the dead. So we've established that as a fact and has become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. First fruits, you know, think about a harvest. the very first part of the harvest is the first fruits. Jesus went before us. He rose from the dead, but it wasn't just him. for since by man came death, by man also came the resurrection of the dead.

[20 : 39] For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ, all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order, Christ the first fruits, afterwards, those who are Christ's that is coming.

Then comes the end when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when he puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet. And then, the last enemy that will be destroyed is death.

Death will be no more. So I have a question. Do you believe that? This is something that came up in the life of Jesus.

He was ministering somewhere, I can't remember where he was. This is described in John's Gospel, John chapter 11. And he heard that his friend Lazarus was sick. And then finally he found out that he had died.

And he went to go, finally go see them after Lazarus had died. And he was talking to Lazarus' sister Martha, also his friend. And here's how the account goes.

[21:43] Now Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him. But Mary was sitting in the house. Now Martha said to Jesus, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now, I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you.

Jesus said to her, your brother will rise again. And Martha said to him, I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day. She knew what was up. Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life.

And he who believes in me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?

And here's her response. She said to him, yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who has come into the world. So, we should take heed of that same question that Jesus asked Martha.

Do we believe? Do we believe that Jesus is the resurrection and the life? Do we believe that he actually rose again? Not just for funsies. He rose again for us.

[22:53] He died for our sins and rose again for our eternal life. Going back to that first, that passage in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, Paul talks about this message, the most central message to all of the Bible called the gospel, the good news.

It's a simple message. Many people miss it. But he says this, Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel, the good news, which I preached to you, which you also received and in which you stand, by which you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

For I delivered to you first of all that which I received, that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures, and that he was buried and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures. And that is the central message of the Bible. Jesus died for our sins. Not just my sins, but for your sins.

And you know, when it comes to our sins, there's only really two options to how they're dealt with. One, either we bear the guilt ourselves, and we stand before God on judgment day on our own account.

[24:13] Maybe we can see if we can fast talk God, talk ourselves out of it like a traffic ticket. Or the other option is that Jesus Christ can bear our sins for us.

And what does that take? What does that mean? And is Jesus the only way? Maybe there's other ways in which God will forgive us. Jesus actually, he said something very interesting when he revealed himself to John, the apostle John in the book of Revelation.

He says this. Here's how he described himself. I am he who lives. I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of hell and death.

No one else has those keys. Does anybody else, does any of you have those keys? I don't have those keys. But Jesus has those keys.

And all you have to do is come to him. Put your trust in him. And he will unlock the doors of death for anyone. And so the question, have you believed?

[25:27] Have you received the gift of eternal life? If not, God made it as simple as can be. You know, a lot of us, you know, we're kind of simple people. I consider myself somewhat of a simple man.

And some people out there are really smart. Sometimes I think people smart sometimes get in their own way. But God made it as simple as can be.

And he just said this. Just believe. Just receive the truth that Jesus died for your sins. Stand on that truth. Live your life with the foundation of that as a truth.

Receive the gift. And that resurrection life can be yours. You can be reconciled to God right now.

And you can look forward to a life eternal with a new body where there's no pain, no more death. But don't delay. You know, no one is promised another day. So if that's something, a decision that you have not made, to trust in Christ, to receive his gift, you can do that today.

[26:43] To finish up, we'll ask the question, why did God do this for us? Well, it was because of his great love. An amazing love, a love that is hard to describe.

You know, Jesus did not have to sacrifice himself. He could have just said, I'm done with it. These people, they don't want me? Fine. Maybe we'll just start over with a whole new group. But he didn't. He did something that is hard to imagine, becoming a man, experiencing death, even though he didn't have to, but he did. How about we sing about that?

Go ahead and open up your bulletin. And this song is one I just love and cherish. How deep the Father's love for us.

Let's go ahead and stand while we sing this.

[27 : 54] How deep the Father's love for us.

How vast beyond all measure That he should give his only Son To make a wretch his treasure How great the pain of searing loss The Father turns his face away As wounds which mar the chosen one Bring many sons to glory Behold the man upon a cross My sin upon his shoulders Ashamed I hear my mocking voice Call out among the scoffers

It was my sin that held him there Until it was accomplished His dying breath has brought me life I know that it is finished I will not boast in anything No gifts, no power, no wisdom But I will boast in Jesus Christ His death and resurrection Why should I gain from his reward?

I cannot give an answer But this I know with all my heart His wounds have paid my ransom Amen. Let us pray.

Father, the words here couldn't ring truer I ask myself this many times Why should I gain from his reward?

[30 : 39] Why would you do it? I still don't quite understand But I'm grateful that you did Thank you for what you accomplished On our behalf I pray that if there is anybody in this room That has not received that gift They would consider that even today That you would pull on their hearts Call you to them Open up their eyes To see the truth of your word Your life eternal Meant for them Father, may we as Christians All of us believers in this room Live every day Not just Easter Sunday But every day In the light Of your resurrection The light of what you accomplished for us That we might live lives That are pleasing to you Living as you lived in the world That we might be like you A light shining in the darkness In Jesus' name we pray Amen