

VICTORY IN EASTER! (Why Jesus Came)

1. Opening Remarks

- a. Comment on what it is like being away for two weeks. How good it feels to be “home” with “family” at our church.
- b. Comment on how we wished that we could have taken y’all with us on the cruise. Cozumel (snorkeling); Grand Cayman (playing with sting rays) and Jamaica (Dunn River Falls and tropical paradise).

2. Review

- a. While in Jamaica, we stopped for something to eat for lunch. While waiting in line I looked around the room and saw a woman reading a book called “Tarot Made Easy.”
 - i. I was quickly reminded about all that we have been talking about these past 5 weeks in the sermon series on Spiritual Warfare.
 - ii. I was reminded that we are in a battle that has been waging since the creation of the world.
 - iii. I was reminded that there are people in this world who are being misled, tempted, and used by Satan.
 - iv. And then I remembered why we celebrate Easter.
 - v. Easter is the day of our victory.
 1. The day in which the Son of God triumphed over the grave.
 2. The day in which death was defeated.
 3. The day in which Satan’s hold over mankind was broken.
 4. Easter is the day in which captives were set free from bondage to sin.
- b. If you have been here during the five weeks before we went on vacation, you understand that our world is part of a cosmic battle that rages in the spiritual realm.
 - i. But there are some of you here today who are thinking...oh yeah, right...like there really is a devil!
 - ii. Folks, there is a devil just as surely as there is a God. The bible says that he is an angelic being that rebelled against God before the foundation of the world, and was cast out of heaven for his rebellion. For reasons not entirely explained, he was allowed to influence creation – and was the active ingredient in tempting our ancestors (Adam and Eve) into following his example in trying to be “their own gods.”
 - iii. Now if you are still skeptical, let me catch you up on a few facts:
 1. His existence is taught in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.
 - a. Seven Old Testament books teach his existence (Genesis, 1 Chronicles, Job, Psalms, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah) and every New Testament writer refers to his reality and activity as a personal being.
 2. More importantly, Jesus also affirmed the fact of Satan and his activity as a personal being.
 - a. In twenty-five of the twenty-nine passages in the Gospels which speak of Satan, Jesus is speaking.
 - b. Jesus did not see Satan as some mythological figure that originated in people’s superstitions.
 - i. He saw Satan as a real being.
 - ii. He knew him from eternity.
 - iii. He encountered Satan early in his ministry and daily confronted him and his rule in people’s lives as he healed people and set them free.

- iv. The Cross itself is the apex, the very battlefield of this confrontation that has raged since creation began.
 - v. Jesus rising from the dead on Easter Sunday morning, 2000 years ago was the declaration of victory that we shout even today.
 - vi. Easter is as vital to our understanding of eternity as the Declaration of Independence is to our nation's founding.
3. This morning, we are going to examine the VICTORY of the resurrection in the light of the question, "Why did Jesus come?"
- a. The New Testament gives us at least a dozen reasons.
 - b. Today we will look at those that relate to our celebration of Easter.
4. **Why did Jesus come?**
- a. **To die on the cross**
 - i. John 12:27 "*Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour*"
 - ii. Jesus did not come to teach a bunch of cool sayings or even to provide an example of love. He came to earth for a specific hour, a specific task... "to die on the cross."
 - 1. Why did he do this? Because it was there that the battle would be won.
 - 2. It was there that mankind's slavery to sin and self would be broken.
 - 3. It was there that the devil's reign over us would be smashed.
 - 4. It was there that the debt we all owe to God for our rebellion toward Him would be paid.
 - b. Open your bibles to 1 John 3:4-10 for our next two reasons why Jesus came.
 - c. **To take away sins**
 - i. 1 Jn 3: *4 Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. 5 But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. 6 No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him. 7 Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. 8 He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. 9 No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. 10 This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother..*
 - ii. We talk about Jesus providing forgiveness for our sin in church all the time.
 - 1. Jesus came to be the propitiation – the payment for our sin.
 - 2. But it would not be enough for Jesus to simply take the penalty for our sins and leave us to wallow in them for the rest of our lives.
 - a. That would mean that we would be no better off than before H came, except that we would have a free ticket to heaven.
 - b. There would be no change in our character or our conduct, we would simply have right standing before God but still be sinning our lives away.
 - c. In fact, that is "Christianity Light" where you can have forgiveness without life change.
 - i. But that is a perversion of what the bible says.
 - iii. In verse 5 we are told that he came to **"take away sins."**
 - 1. The Greek word that your bible was written in and is translated "take away" means literally "to lift up and carry away."

2. The bible tells us in 2 Cor 5:21 “*He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*”
3. He takes our sins...the only thing we have to offer Him...and bears them away to judgment on his perfect, sinless self.
4. This is what it means for Jesus coming to “take away sins.”
 - a. He carries them away and bears our burden.
 - b. He does for us what we could not do for ourselves...He takes both our sin and its penalty at the Cross on our behalf.
- iv. Do you ever wonder why Jesus suffered so grievously at the Cross?
 1. Do you wonder why the movie “The Passion” which many of you came and watched on Friday, is so gruesome?
 2. Listen to this very carefully.
 3. The Cross was gruesome because **SIN WAS JUDGED IN THE BODY OF JESUS ON THE CROSS.**
 4. 2 Cor 5:21 “*He made Him who knew no sin to be(come) sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*”
 5. Jesus took the sin and the penalty for your sin and my sin: every sin you and I have ever committed or ever will...and he bore it on His perfect body, and in His perfect soul.
 6. He took the penalty of hell that that sin deserved and bore it in your place.
- v. In the Old Testament, on the Day of Atonement, which is the day in which all of the sins of the nation of Israel were to be confessed – a goat was selected and the High Priest would lay his hands upon the goat, to symbolically transfer the sins of the entire nation upon the goat, after which the goat would be cast out into the wilderness where it would “carry away the sins” of the people and die on their behalf.
- vi. Jesus came to “carry away” our sins.
 1. He not only dies on our behalf, bearing the penalty, but he also CARRIES AWAY our sins.
 2. When the bible says in Psalm 103:12 that “*As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us*”; the REMOVAL of sins from us is recalled.
 3. They are removed from us. But no longer symbolically as on the Day of Atonement but literally, upon the body of the perfect, sinless Son of God.
 4. In so doing, Jesus changes the direction of our lives. We are no longer the person we once were.
 5. We are both forgiven and free of the burden and control of sin.!
- d. **To destroy the works of the devil.** (v8)
 - i. *The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.*
 1. It is important that we realize that Jesus didn’t come to neutralize or alleviate or even minimize the works of Satan. **Jesus came to destroy them!**
 2. What are these works of the devil.
 - a. We find that out in the preceding words and in the words following:
 - b. “*He who commits sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning.*”
 - i. The word for “commits sin” doesn’t mean someone who sins occasionally. It means someone who lives a self-led life instead of a God centered life.
 - ii. When one acts like the devil, he shows or demonstrates that he is not a true child of God.

1. One who practices sin on a continuing basis shares the same moral nature as the devil does.
 2. If Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, how can anyone who shares the character of the devil be ONE with Christ? **He CANNOT!**
 3. The “works of the devil” that Jesus came to destroy are SIN.
 - a. When people sin, they are doing the “works of the devil.”
 - b. The work of the devil is to tempt, lure, trick, entice people to sin.
- iii. SIN is defined as choosing less than God’s best for ourselves.
1. We do that by choosing for ourselves what we think is best for us.
 2. When we sin we choose to reject God’s authority and to replace it with our own.
 3. Satan’s work is to tempt us to reject the authority of God and become like God ourselves
 4. Verse 4 calls this “lawlessness”.
 - a. Lawlessness is living as if your own ideas are superior to God’s.
 - b. Lawlessness says that “God demands something, but I don’t want it.”
 - c. Lawlessness says, “God promises something but its not good enough for me.”
 - d. It replaces God’s best, His perfection with my own flawed desires.
 - e. Lawlessness says that I am a law unto myself.
 - f. Lawlessness is the rebellion of myself against God and His right to make rules and govern His creation.
 5. Jesus came to destroy sinning.
 - a. Not just the penalty of sin
 - b. He came to destroy sin’s power itself.
 - c. Has sin’s power been broken in your life? Are you god of your own life or is Jesus the Lord of it now? You cannot have it both ways.
- e. How did Jesus destroy the works of the devil?
- i. **He dies and rises again.** He breaks the power of the devil over creation.
 1. The son of God appears, dies, and is raised to life – so that our sins (the works of the devil) can be forgiven, and so that we can no longer be accused by the enemy or discouraged by them.
 2. They are as far as the east is from the west...God promises to remember them no more.
 - ii. And **when a person is born of God** (v9) sin is conquered, and the work of the devil is destroyed in their life.
 1. When a person is born of God he gets a new set of desires. It is described as a new birth because something new has come into existence.
 - a. Paul calls you a “new creation” (Eph 2:10, 4:24)
 - b. Jeremiah says you have a “new heart” (Jer 24:7)
 - c. Ezekiel calls it a “new spirit” (EZ. 36:26)
 2. When you are born of God you are so changed by God that the dominion, the rule of sin, is broken in your life.
 - a. How? DNA, that’s how.
 - b. When a father begets a child, the father’s DNA is now part of the child. Something of the father is in the child and it makes him like his father.
 3. God’s character is the opposite of sin, one who is a child of God will not WANT to live a life of sin.
 - iii. So there are two steps in which the works of the devil are destroyed.
 1. **One is by the work of Jesus in the Cross and Resurrection.**

2. **The other is by the “new birth.”**
3. It is not enough that Jesus comes to die and rise again.
 - a. That is the great action of eternity; where evil is conquered in the eternal realm.
4. But people must be born of God as well.
 - a. Otherwise the works of the devil continue to reign in their lives!
 - b. We must appropriate the work of Jesus at Easter for the works of the devil to be destroyed in our own lives.
 - c. Otherwise we stand only as spectators to a mighty victory that we ourselves have no part in.
 - i. It is like watching the Cleveland Browns win the SuperBowl and not being a part of it. We see it.
 - ii. But we don’t experience it because we aren’t on the winning side.
 - iii. Our passivity, our refusal to take a side is a choice in itself.
 - iv. You aren’t on the winning team by merely watching the game.
 - v. You aren’t a Christian and you cannot experience the benefits of Easter: the death and resurrection of Christ by merely attending church.
 - vi. That is playing the role of the spectator. “Oh gee...that’s nice.”
 - d. You must become one with the victory!
 - e. .

f. To save sinners

- i. For this and the next point, the verb is “save.” To often we apply the eternal significance to the word...Save from Hell. But the word is much greater than that. The word means to “Make Whole.”
 1. We are damaged goods. Our world is a damaged world. We are broken, flawed and full of faults and full of self-interests.\
 - a. To make us whole means to restore us to our pre-fallen state, the state in which we had a relationship with God that was unbroken, perfect and full.
 - b. To make us whole means to undo the damage that a lifetime of living for self has wrought on us.
 - c. To make us whole means to restore to us the years that the locust has eaten.
 - d. To make us whole means to put Humpty-Dumpty back together again.
 2. That is what Jesus came to do. To make you whole.
 - a. You may feel like Humpty Dumpty today.
 - b. You may feel like your life has no meaning, that you have so screwed up your life that no one can rescue you.
 - c. You might feel that there is no way that your life could ever be fixed after what you have been through, after what others have done to you or after the choices you have made.
 3. But Jesus came for you.
 4. He came to make you whole. Won’t you let him?
- ii. (1 Titus 1:15) *It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.*

g. To save the world.

- i. The bible says that *“God sent His son into the world not to condemn the world but so that the world through Him might be saved.”*

1. God saves by destroying. That is the meaning of verse 8 of 1st John where it says, "The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil."
2. In the same way that a doctor amputates a foot that is filled with gangrene or who cuts out a cancerous lung. Jesus comes to save us, but He does so by destroying the disease within us. That disease is called sin.
 - a. Walnut tree strangled by a vine...once small vine, nothing much to worry about, but over the years the vine grew bigger, taller, and as time went by, the entire trunk was covered by the vine. Its life is being squeeze away. So I cut the vine's trunk. The tangled mass of the vine still hung there, but its source of life was gone. As time passed, they began to fall away, because I removed the power that the vine had over that walnut tree.
 - b. Christ has cut the power of sin. There are some creepers still attached to us. But sin's power is broken. It will lose its grip as you abide in Christ.
3. There are many folks who want the benefits of a relationship with Jesus (as savior) – of eternal life, of peace, of joy, of fulfillment...but who aren't willing to welcome Jesus as a destroyer as well.
4. But God only saves us through destroying us.
 - a. That is the meaning of the cross.
 - b. Death is required for Resurrection.
 - c. The Cross comes before life.
 - d. We cannot have it both ways.
 - e. There is no new birth without a death.
 - f. To be saved our old man, our old ways must come to the cross and be laid down.
 - g. There is no crown without a cross.

h. To give us life abundantly

- i. John 10:10 "*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.*"
 1. The devil has had a hold of people's lives for a long, long time.
 - a. He may have a hold of your life.
 - b. Do you know how you know? By who rules your life.
 - c. If you rule...then the truth is, you aren't serving God.
 - d. You have believed the lie that you are god of your own life.
 - e. Your life will end in despair someday.
 - f. *This week I was watching a video of a soldier who was recollecting the deaths of several of his friends. He said, "you cannot know a man better than in the moments before his death, when he realizes that his life is going to end. You can read on his face in those last few moments every regret, every failure, every dream undone as he sees his life flash before his closing eyes."*
 - i. How about you? You don't have to come to the end of your life in despair and regret.
 2. But Jesus came to give you life, and life abundant.
- ii. *Ashley Smith is credited by police with playing a role in ending the 26-hour hunt for Brian Nichols, who's accused of killing a judge and three others.*
 1. *She read to her captor from "The Purpose Driven Life" and he surrendered, as he realized the truth of God's concern and purpose for him.*
 2. *Rick Warren, the author of the book says, "You see, the reason Brian was acting the way he was is, when people feel hopeless, they act in hopeless ways. And he was clearly acting that way and she showed him that there's a reason for hope."*

3. *The whole reason you are alive," Warren says, "the reason your heart is beating right now -- there's only one reason for it. God made you to love you. That's why you're alive. There's no other reason you're alive. God made you to love you*
- iii. Jesus came to give us the life that is abundant.
 1. It is abundant when we let God love us. When we let Him lead us and when we turn over our lives to Him.
 2. When you receive the free gift of His love your life will take on more meaning and purpose than you ever imagined.
5. Are you ready to receive the gift of God's love? Are you ready to have a life that is full of meaning and no more regrets?
 - a. Then you are ready to ask God to let you be "born of Him."
6. How are you born of God?
 - a. It requires that you ADMIT that you have been living apart from God.
 - b. It requires that you BELIEVE that Jesus died for your sins and that He rose again.
 - c. It requires that you CONFESS with your mouth that Jesus is your savior.
 - i. "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe with your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved."
 - d. God promises that you will experience a spiritual birth, and He will take up residence in your spirit. You will begin to hear His voice and you will begin to see life from His perspective. Former things have passed away and all things have become new.

With every eye closed and every head bowed, I want to invite you... You know who you are, you have been feeling God tugging on your heart this entire sermon... to pray a prayer to invite Jesus to bring the new birth to your life. To make you a brand new creation! If that is your desire, pray with me this prayer.

Lord God, I admit that I have been living apart from you. I have been living as if I was in charge. I have rejected Your love and control except on my own terms. I surrender today. I believe that Jesus died for me and for my sins and to take them away forever! I want freedom. I want to be free of this burden. Jesus, come and take up residence in my life today. I believe you died for me. I belong to You now. In Jesus name. Amen.

With every head still bowed, if you prayed that prayer this morning, would you slip up your hand and acknowledge that you have given your life to Jesus? Thank you.