

Easter -
5th - April 11, 76 P.M. W.R.I. ✓

WHAT EASTER SHOULD MEAN FOR YOU

Luke 24:9

"And they remembered his words and returned from the tomb and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest."

Our modern custom really covers up the true meaning of Easter. A man standing at the Western Union counter just before Easter - he noticed a list of 30 canned season's greetings with an invitation to check your choice, which you might send to a friend.

The samples read - "From far away, I wire today, a very Happy Easter Day." "Here's Hello from your Easter Bunny. May your day be bright and sunny." "Easter's Greetings across the miles. Here's to wish you a day of smiles."

What really impressed the man was that not one of the 30 messages conveyed the true significance of the day. Not a Christ is risen in the lot. The Easter bunny, the Easter lillies, the Easter eggs, the Easter parade crowd had crowded out the Easter message. The Jesus Christ who died and was buried emerged alive conquoring death and was victor over the grave.

V. 1

After the women had been to the tomb early that morning and had experienced the tremendous earth-moving experience of discovering the tomb to be empty, and to listen to the angels declare that he is not here but is risen, and then they remembered all that he had said to them.

V. 1, 2

Matt. 28:9-10 records it that as Mary entered the garden that first Easter morning, the Lord greeted the other women on their way to tell the disciples

about the empty tomb. Then Jesus said unto them, be not afraid - go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee and there shall they see me.

✓ Their lives henceforth would be changed. They now worshipped as never before. No longer did they need to fear. They had a thrilling message to communicate.

— Once the truth of the resurrection grips one - his way of living will be altered. For Easter compels men to change their way of life. It will do something for men when they come to this realization.

✓ I. IT CAUSED THESE DISCIPLES TO WORSHIP 8-9
v. 9

Now this is one of the things that Easter ought to do to you - cause you to want to worship the Eternal God.

Charles Lamb, once discussing Shakespeare with a group of literary men, once said the difference between Shakespeare and Christ is this...if Shakespeare would walk into this room everyone would rise to admire him. But if Christ entered, all of us would fall at his feet and worship.

— This is exactly what the resurrection causes a person to do. On Friday when the tomb was sealed - and then on Sunday morning rising with power, the stone had been rolled away, and he appears to his loved ones - he walks with them. No wonder they worship him.

A little girl in China, taught at home to worship the idols on the shelf, learned at a mission Sunday School about Christ. She learned that he died and arose the third day. She went back home. She took an idol into the back yard and buried it. On the third day, she went to the spot, she dug into the ground and found the idol still buried. Going to her mother, she explained, that the idol was worth only throwing away. She was henceforth going to worship the living Lord who had been able to rise from the dead.

In a day when missionary enterprises operate and we find that Moselm resound with prayer at the Mosque five times a day - it is well to remember that no other founder of any religion rose from the dead. Mohammad is dead. Budah is dead. Confusious is dead. But Christ is living.

At his own request King Charlemagne was buried in a sitting position with royal robes of purple on him, a crown on his head, a scepter in his hand - when the tomb was later opened - the crown had tumbled from Charlemagne's brow and his scepter had fallen into the dust from his lifeless grasp, his royal robe had crumbled, in tatters about his decomposed form. His authority had dissolved in death. But one king who was buried without any outward pomp or symbol of power emerged victorious. He lives today at the right hand of Almighty God.

So on this day that we celebrate, it should cause us to worship. On the first day of the week, the Corinthian Christians were told to lay aside their offerings in order which Paul gave to all the churches. I Cor. 16:1-2. On his stay in Troas, public worship with a sermon and the Lord's Supper was held on the first day of the week. Even though Paul had been there seven full days including the Jewish Sabbath, we find that they celebrated on that day - the

first day of the week because it was the Lord's Day. And churches today which are crowded only on Easter should in reality be jammed every Sunday. All professors and followers of Christ should join in a weekly, first day, worship at the triumphant Christ.

Robert W. Dale, Pastor of a famous church in England, was preparing his sermon for one Easter. In a new way it suddenly dawned on him that Jesus Christ was alive, at that very moment. He kept repeating to himself -- he is alive now. He entered the pulpit radiant and eager, ready to lead his congregation in praise. The members of his church reported thereafter every Sunday morning service, without fail, he included the singing of an Easter hymn - because Easter compels worship. And men remember that the tomb is empty, and that the Christ is alive, Easter should do that for you.

✓ II. DISPEL FEAR

~~V.10~~ V.5

Jesus said to these disciples, fear not. This is one of the things that follows a man from his cradle to his grave. The child is afraid of the dark. Youth are afraid of failure at college. The mother of losing her husband. The father that his business may be bad. Fear, fear, fear! Fear about health, fear about the future, and the uncertain things in life.

Of course some fear may be good for us. To fear germs, or fire, or rattle snakes. Now some people handle them but it is not very advisable to do so.

And fear becomes destructive. It can cause paleness, rapid heart beat, a hoarse voice, or an upset stomach. People with abnormal fear remain inside a house or they become a prisoner of fear and they forget that this is 10 times deadlier than even germs. A great big person will shake with fear. I have seen great big husky men tremble with fear as they tried to put a wedding ring on the bride's finger.

But to the women that Easter morning, they were startled at meeting Jesus - the risen Christ. He reassured them and said, "fear not". Earlier that morning the angel at the tomb had calmed them. And said fear not ye. Matt. 28:5.

V.36
Later the 10 disciples in the Upper Room were to be saluted by Christ - coming through the closed doors in the midst of them saying, Luke 24:36 - Peace be unto you. That is, fear not. Jesus dispels their fear.

How significant that Christ opens his greetings to his followers, fear not. No fear of life lies outside his power to dispel it - to discharge it, including apprehension of the past. Unfortunate heredity, a bad medical history, a failure, an unpleasant experience, or a wrong doing. Our sins can be blotted out and put behind God's back and removed as far as the East is from the West, thrown into the depths of the sea never to be remembered again against us.

This risen Christ can deal with your fears of the future, involving possible illness, impending disaster, or old age, loneliness, and even the unknown.

I read the story of a little girl on the train journeying - and the train crossed several rivers during the day, and she shivered everytime she saw the

water ahead. She couldn't understand how these rivers could be crossed safely. But each time as they neared the river, somehow a bridge would appear to provide the way. After several crossings, she leaned back with a sigh of relief. Someone has put bridges for us all the way.

So Christ, who knows the end from the beginning, has promised to make all things work out for our good and for his glory.

III. OVERCOMING DEATH

V.6

This is what Easter should mean to you. This is what it meant to those early disciples that the reign of Christ would issue a victory over the last enemy. This week the graves in the church yard and on the cemetery hills have been decorated with lots of flowers. People have made their pilgrimages to the cemeteries.

The Spring is now upon us, leaves are coming out, and all of this beauty will soon die. All the living things that are sprouting and blooming now will give way to death. They belong to death. They are only waiting for their time and death will gather it's harvest. And it will not be long before they will make a trip through the cemetery and gather up all of these dead flowers. And when we think about the decay of nature we feel somehow drawn into that. And people have a fear.

Have you ever stood on a bridge and watch the water rush past below. On and on - and it seems as though the bridge were moving, and everything around

men to believe eternal life. There is a numbness about it. You bounce that ball hundreds of times and finally it will not bounce anywhere. It is true that we repeat from generation to generation and people believe it not. They are no longer moved by the fear of death.

It is strange how we pretend to our neighbor that his death could never happen.

The last favor we offer a man, on his death bed, is a (pretension) that his sickness could not possibly be terminal. And the patient who realizes his serious condition still wants to hear the opposite.

I read an interesting story by a French author who told about a widow who takes the children every Thursday to visit a distant relative. He promised to remember her in his will. On Thursday, they have taken the trip 5 hours and found the patient worse. He feels wretched, don't you think, he says, that I should make a will. Do you think you could go and fetch a lawyer. But she senses the secret fear behind the question, don't worry, she replies. You will soon be better and he smiles assured. The next day he was dead without having made a will. His closest relatives get everything but she can comfort herself with the thought that she gave up everything in order to keep from him the knowledge that he was going to die. She did for him the last act of kindness.

When a man has the shadow of death upon him and has an urge to speak to his loved ones about it, and wants help to face it, they usually stop him from doing so. In other words they play a comedy and keep up a pretense, they have made him lonely and refuse to help him.

We are embarrassed - we know each other and we know we are going to die.

Evidence of the fear of death in our generation is shown by our obsession on youth. Glorification of the body after death. And staying silent on the subject.

A boy living in Northern Idaho could never forget a timber buyer by the name of Benham, who stopped for a week in the boy's home. He was an outspoken Atheist. Mr. Benham would recite with persuasion the main arguments of Robert Inglesaw. He frankly stated that he had spent most of his money and years proving that God did not exist. And he held that there was no after life - neither Heaven nor Hell.

Twenty years later, the boy now grown into successful manhood, was attending a business convention in St. Paul, Minn. When his attention was drawn to a familiar looking gray haired gentleman in the lobby. It was Mr. Benham. Though two decades had passed, he remembered the young man and invited him to lunch. It was evident that the atheist had lost his poise. He acted like a man waiting a death sentence.

Now 71 years of age, the gentleman explained that he had an incurable enemic and had less than a year to live. He then lauched into an unforgettable story who lay at death's door in a local hospital where he had gone for (a check-up.) While there, he had been conscripted by a nurse sent out by the dying woman to get three witnesses to a death bed will. Which she could not sign due to a paralyzed arm. Entering the ladies' room he was struck by the utter serenity of this woman. She had been bed ridden for several years. And who was now facing the end with a smiling countenance. The nurse rapidly wrote the whispered instructions of the stricken woman for the disposal of her property. When the three witnesses had signed the paper, the lady smiled, thanked them and said, "And now I am ready to leave this pain wrecked body to meet my maker, my husband, my father, my mother, and all my friends who have gone before me. Won't that be

wonderful."

Mr. Benham reached this point, tears started down his pale wrinkled cheeks. He looked at this young man from Idaho, he said in a hoarse whisper, I have lain awake many nights since I've learned that my days were numbered. Staring at the ceiling with nothing to look forward too except that my life would end in a handful of ashes. That's the difference between me and atheist - and the woman I have described. She believes and faces her final days with a smile. Here am I a non-believer, with every moment a nightmare. Facing nothing but a cold tomb. He hesitated a few moments, and then added, I would shove my hands into a bed of red-hot coals if by so doing I could secure a belief in a supreme being and an after life.

Death, need not have any fear for the Christian. For the empty tomb points out Christ's victory over the grave, and death.

A little boy from a non-Christian family began attending Sunday School one Christmas time. He drank in the words of the teacher as the lessons advanced from the birth of the Saviour through his ministry and death. Often, he begged his mother to come to church. But possessed by a morbid fear of death, she refused. Terrified lest the preacher say something about dying.

Easter came, with the story of the risen Christ. After the lesson, the little fellow rushed home with a shining face. Oh Mother, you needn't be afraid of dying anymore. For Jesus went right through the tomb and left the light behind him.

The grave need no longer be gloomy - Easter dispels that fear and helps

But Easter says to us that a tomb is not a blind alley. It is a thoroughfare and this will bring light to us.

D. L. Moody said to his followers one day that someday you will read in the newspapers that D. L. Moody is dead. Don't you believe a word of it. For I shall be more alive then than I am now.

Now Easter will cause us to worship. It will defeat our fear. And in the third place, it will grant us victory over death. There is one last thing we have time to comment on.

✓ IV. IT GUARANTEES TO US HEAVENLY FELLOWSHIP ✓ V. 10

Go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee and there they shall see me. Matt. 28:10. The Lord commanded these women whether he meant that they would be there - and by the resurrection they would be joined in that group of witnesses. What wonderful news. Could these women keep this message to themselves. On the contrary. The truth burned like fire in their hearts. It impelled them - it actually propelled them to go and to tell. Doubtless they ran over the ground with their hearts singing and their voices in praises announcing to all that would hear that Christ had returned from the dead and would meet his followers in Galilee.

Now the early church could not contain this good news. The thousands on the day of Pentecost came and received the proclamation that this Jesus, hath God raised up, whereof we are witnesses. Acts 2:32. To the crowd on the porch

of Solomon's porch after the healing of the lame man, we find that they went to Cornelius - to his household and everywhere they went, they said that Christ arose from the dead. The third day according to the Scriptures.

It was the miracle of the empty tomb so strong that it took hold of their hearts. They could not help but proclaim that this wonderful fellowship was going to become Heavenly fellowship for they too would rise and take part in it.

A conductor rehearsing the final practice of the great choir for the Messiah - he had reached the point where the soprano soloist took up the refrain. I know that my redeemer liveth. The soloist technique was perfect. With faultless breathing and accurate note placing, and faultless enunciation. After the final note, all eyes fell on the conductor. to catch his approval. Instead he silenced the orchestra, he walked toward the singer, he said, "My daughter, do you really know that your redeemer liveth?"

Why yes, she answered.

Then sing it, cried the conductor, tell it to me so that I will know and so that all will hear you and know the joy and the truth of it. Then he beckoned the orchestra to play again. This time she sang the truth as she really knew it. All who heard, thrilled to the announcement so convincingly sung. That the conquering redeemer had risen from the dead.

When this message grips us, when this message takes a hold of your heart, then it will do something for you.

Now some today have fear about losing their loved ones. But this is one of

Sooner or later the time will come for us to share the last honors.

We stand on the street beside the house wearing our black garments, and chatting with one another. Discussing how long he had been sick. And which doctor tended him and whether his going was an easy or hard one. We share the awareness to overcome the last enemy. And this still prevails where the outside world reigns.

But where Christ reigns inside, death's rule is at an end. Christ really overcomes death. Now this is what Easter does for us. Death is a comforter. Think of our lives, with no appointed ends, with all the misfortunes and intol-erable burdens we have. The path of life leads to a vantage point which we view in the distance.

What will become of my child without me. What will become of this loved one without me. Those who mean something to us, what will happen to that which was between us. Everything we might have been to each other.

We need to treat each other with love.

How can death be overcome? Live your life with your eyes upon the empty tomb. This is what Easter does for us.

Sagan, a famous author, wrote a novel of a French youth - at 19 years of age wrote a best seller. It was reviewed in a magazine. He said at times I wake up in the middle of the night and my hair stands on end when I think that I am going to die one day. During the Middle Ages the skull and cross bones came into general use. Carved on bridges, drinking cups, rings, and China as a constant reminder that life is fleeting. One philosopher facing death cried, I am taking a fearful leap in the dark.

you seems to be on the move. You grasp the rail. And you had some unaccountable fear. But then you felt something firm.

There is the same feeling when people gaze into decay and death. With the feeling of being carried away and no escape. And the main question in life quite often ought to be, how do you feel about death? Everything that captivates us in an instant - the very next hour becomes utterly valueless. Because death reigns outside and it reigns inside.

X A famous chaplain preaching in the French king's court once pointed from the pulpit to vaults where the nobility were buried, lying in a row one next to the other in a place along the wall of the royal chapel, where the service was being held.

He described how the dead used to sit there in times past in all their finery as full as life and gaiety as were his listeners. He told them that they too would someday be under those stones - decaying and rotting away.

After painting that gruesome picture, he thought his congregation was now ready for a sermon on repentance and eternal life. But he had preached to them the soverignty of death.

Where there is terror and fear of death, there death reigns.

Clinging in fear and terror to the hope of eternal life is a need. When he tells us that the Kingdom of Christ will destroy the power of death, that is only part of what he is saying.

Now I know that many sermons are preached on the terror of death to frighten

you to know that the resurrection is the starting point of Christian living. This is the day for the Christian.

X Death is no longer final - it is the turning point. Phil. 3:21, 2 Cor. 3:18, 2 Cor. 5:1-10.

Death can do him no harm. And death delivers from an imperfect state.

This has been the story of Christians through the ages. A lawyer by the name of Albert Roper wrote a book - "Did Jesus Rise From The Dead?" was the title of it. That lawyer taught a Bible Class here in Norfolk for many years. His conclusion was that Jesus did rise from the dead. And these are the facts and this is what Easter should do for you. The testimony of the Roman guard said that Jesus arose. The enemies of Jesus testified to his victory. The friends of Jesus attest to the fact. And the events of the day bring the facts to bear and we know that this testimony is true.

Now these disciples knew that death invaded their homes. And took away their dearest friends and it was a sad experience. But now the body of the death had been broken. No more could sin threaten to sever the soul from God. The tyrants grip had been broken and the disciples knew that he was alive. Paul knew this when he met the risen one.

Dawson King, a noble missionary, tells of a cemetery near a city in China - over the gate of which are the words "Place of eternal separation." Now that describes the hopelessness of a pagan world. And the unbelief of many people who walk upon the face of this globe. It is a dreadful thing for them because it is an end.

hopes which we have and the resurrection Easter brings to us. It tells us that death will not be the end - but there will be a renewal of life. It will open the door for a new existence, a renewed life, and that Heaven is promoted here in this text.

X
Easter tells us that eternal life will come and it will be a place of reunion - that friends will be there whom I have loved long ago. Just as the disciples were able to recognize Jesus after his resurrection, so we will be able to recognize and relate to each other. I think the only vacant place around the table will be those places left vacant by our own decisions, for or against our Lord.

This means that this Heavenly fellowship will be a place of reward. The treasures we have layed up for ourselves will be waiting for us there. Because the shrouds have no pockets - we do not carry things of this world with us.

It will be a place of rejoicing. There is so much sadness in life. Sadness comes to us because of failures - our own, sometimes our inabilities. But when we get this hope that he will wipe away every tear from our eyes, and death shall be no more. And neither shall there be mourning or crying, or pain anymore - for the former things have passed away. Rev. 21:4. Then Hell is the place of sadness. For those reasons, I can anticipate death, said Paul - for me to live is Christ. And to die is gain.

A
Margaret Sangster tells the story of a family she knew that lost three children in one week from diphtheria. And there was only one child left - a

three year old daughter. But on the next Sunday, the father and mother were in their places in church. The mother was teaching a Sunday School class and the father at the Superintendents desk - presiding in a wonderful way.

After the service, people were saying how on earth did they do it.?

On the way home, one 12 year old youngster said to his father, I guess Mr. & Mrs. So and So believe it, don't they? The father, turned and said, believe what son. Oh, the whole thing. This whole business about Easter.

You can also conquer fear if you believe the whole story. Not about Peter Cottontail, or bunny rabbits, but about the resurrection.

The resurrection means that your faith is secure and this is the one remedy for the ruin of sin. Many have fallen asleep in the grass. Do they mean anything to you. Who are they. Have you lost interest in your loved ones 25 years ago. Life would be destroyed if after we were layed away, we would spend our time in grief because Christ's resurrection is proof of our own resurrection. Surely as we come out of the grave - those who are asleep in Christ will come forth in the day of the resurrection. And I count that a great comfort. What Heavenly fellowship this will be for us.

In the New London school tragedy which killed over 300 from a gas explosion, bodies were taken to surrounding towns. Dr. Campbell said he preached to one of the parents who lost three children and they soon found two girls. And they went looking through the rubbish for the son. The mother said maybe our son was out in the woods - he loved wild flowers. And they kept up the search. And finally they came to a spot and they found there, as they pulled back a sheet.

The father sank to the floor. The mother who had gathered a bunch of flowers closed them in his motionless hand. And she took her husband's arm - and said, you son is now where the flowers always bloom. That's what Easter should do for you. It should cause you to worship, it should dispel your fear, it should cause you to know that you are victorious over death, and in the last place - Easter should guarantee to you Heavenly fellowship. I trust that it will grip your heart.