

Crossroads Easter Celebration – Saturday April 23, 2011

Video Song: ***Come Just As You Are***

Narrator: **Welcome and Prayer**

Welcome to Crossroads. Tonight is a night to celebrate all that God has done and wants to do. It is a night where each of us can come, just as we are, and ask God to show himself to us in new ways.

Maybe you are one who has **never stepped foot in a Christian church before** – Welcome! - Feel free to observe, to soak it all in, don't feel like you need to participate in any way you are uncomfortable with.

Perhaps you have been struggling in life recently, **you have felt God is far away**, or you have found yourself wandering from God – Welcome! - Let tonight be a night to seek God anew, and to trust His promise that all who seek Him really will find Him.

Perhaps you have spent this last week **meditating on the sufferings and death of Christ** – Welcome! - Let tonight be a night to celebrate the resurrection of Christ from the Dead!

Whoever you are and where ever you are in your journey with God – Welcome! – let us come just as we are to receive all God has for us tonight. Please join me in prayer.

Narrator: **Pray**

Narrator: **The Story of Easter ... Are You Thirsty?**

The story of Easter begins back at the very creation of the World. God made the universe and all that is in it, and then he made each of us. He made men and women in His very own image and breathed life into us. Throughout all time **God has had a special love for humans**, walking and talking with man and desiring a relationship with each of us. Yet so often **we have chosen to go our own way**, decided we want to run our own life and that we do not want a relationship with God.

St. Augustine once said "**Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee.**" The more we try to live life our way, apart from God, the more restless and dissatisfied we actually become!

Blaise Pascal put it this way "**There is a God shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator, made known through Jesus.**" We have been created in such a way that no amount of money, fame, pleasure or service to others can truly fulfill us. We are all naturally thirsty to know God.

But God also made a promise to us - if we come to Him He will fill us.

Isaiah 55 says:

“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters;
and you who have no money, come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.

Why spend money on what is not bread,
and your labor on what does not satisfy?

Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,
and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.

Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live...

Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near.

Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts.

Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him,
and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

God said He would provide water to drink that would truly satisfy. **Jesus tells a woman** that he meets at by a well in Samaria that he wants to give her ‘**living water**’ that will never run out and that will change her life forever. He says to us that He has come to bring **rest to the weary**, and **give life abundantly**.

As we follow the **story of Jesus** we see him constantly reaching out to the poor and needy, to those who are hurting and suffering the consequences of their rebellion against God. And He does not come with condemnation, but instead he **reaches out with compassion** - touching, healing, feeding, comforting and delivering people.

John 3:16 is perhaps one of the most famous verses in all the Bible, and it says:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Do you want to know God and His love? Do you long for true life, satisfying life, eternal life? Are you thirsty? Then let’s take this Easter to come together to Jesus, and to drink from His stream living water!

Worship: ***All Who Are Thirsty***

Narrator: **The Story of Easter ... Solving Our Greatest Problem**

While God loves us and offers us His living water, **we have a problem**. God is holy and we are not. God is our perfect, loving creator who we should have loved, worshiped and served. But instead, as Paul tells us in **Romans**, we have turned away from the creator and chosen to worship and serve created things, serving our selves and our own desires rather than serving God. This turning from God is worthy of death, and eternal separation from God.

Thus Jesus needs to do far more than simply say some nice things and heal a few people. If He truly loves us **He needs to find a way to reconcile us to God**, a way to rebuild that broken relationship. And the only way to do that is for someone to take the punishment that we deserve. Thus Jesus Christ came to live a perfect life, maintaining a perfect relationship with God, and then to stand before God and offer to die in our place, thus taking the punishment that you and I deserve.

Mark 15 describes Jesus' death like this:

The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. And they began to call out to him, "Hail, king of the Jews!" Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross. They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull). Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get.

It was the third hour when they crucified him. The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS. They crucified two robbers with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself!"

In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

Notice here the awful suffering and humiliation the soldiers and the religious leaders put Jesus through. Yet if the story ended here we may well assume Jesus was simply a religious martyr. Instead **Mark goes on:**

At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*”—which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

When some of those standing near heard this, they said, “Listen, he’s calling Elijah.” One man ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down,” he said.

With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.

The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, “Surely this man was the Son of God!”

As Jesus dies he, who was perfect, **takes on himself our crimes against God**, and so God **sends darkness** over the whole land, and turns his face from Christ, forsaking Him in our place. Yet we also see something else here at the end – **the curtain in the temple is torn**. Early-on God had his people build a temple where they would come to worship and hear from God. But because of the righteousness of God and the unrighteousness of the people a curtain was put between the inner court where God’s presence resided and the people. As Christ dies, that curtain is miraculously torn, showing that God has indeed accepted Jesus sacrifice and is indeed ready now to restore the relationship with you and me.

It is only through the blood of Christ dying in our place that we can ever have a relationship with God. But through His blood we can indeed be restored!

Worship: ***Nothing But the Blood***

Narrator: **The Story of Easter ... Giving Us Life and Victory**

The Easter **story does not end here!** Jesus dies, and is buried, and then **Mark picks up the story 3 days latter:**

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

"Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"

Jesus is not just a religious martyr. He is not even just a sacrifice to die in our place. **He is indeed God himself, who rises from the dead**, appearing to over 500 people in the weeks to come who all verify that Jesus is alive. **We do not serve a dead God, we serve a living God!**

By his resurrection Jesus did not just show that God had accepted his sacrifice, **but he actually defeats sin and death**, as well as Satan himself! **Hebrews 2:14-15** says

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

We serve the God who is the giver of life itself, and who now promises all who believe in Christ **new life here** and eternal life with Him. **2 Corinthians 5:17** says

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

Through the death and resurrection of Christ we begin a new life, an abundant life of walking and talking with the living God.

In the words of the old hymn:

I serve a risen Savior, He's in the world today.
I know that He is living, Whatever men may say.
I see His hand of mercy; I hear His voice of cheer;
And just the time I need Him He's always near.

He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!
He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way.
He lives, He lives, salvation to impart!
You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart.

Christ the Lord is truly risen, it is he alone who is mighty to save and restore our relationship with God. So let's stand and worship our risen savior!

Worship: ***Christ the Lord is Risen Today***

Mighty To Save

Doxology

Responding to the Christ of Easter

Talk (Mark): **Five People at the Cross** {Mark will sit up front and talk for 10-15 minutes about 5 people at the cross, how they responded to Jesus in Mark 15, and how we tend to have the same responses today}

**** notes below, with the addition of point 4, adapted from "Christianity Explored" ****

1. The soldiers

Verse 24 tells us about the soldiers who had nailed Jesus to the cross.

❖ **Read Mark 15:24**

And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get.

The soldiers weren't interested in what was happening on the cross – they had seen it all before. The only thing they were interested in was gambling for Jesus' clothes. They completely missed what was happening right in front of their eyes. For them the main legacy of the cross was Jesus' clothing.

2. The religious leaders

The religious leaders had wanted for a long time to have Jesus killed. They watched him die, laughing about it among themselves.

❖ Read Mark 15:31-32

In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

The religious leaders were convinced that they knew the way to God, so they didn't need Jesus. They knew that some people thought that Jesus was the Christ, God's only chosen King – but the chief priests and teachers of the law refused to believe that.

Ironically they mocked Jesus, claiming that he couldn't save himself – and completely missing the point that he was actually dying to save others, just as he had said he would.

3. Pontius Pilate

So the religious leaders rejected Jesus – but what about the political leader? What about the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate? He had questioned Jesus himself, and knew that Jesus was an innocent man. But Pilate was swayed by the crowds.

❖ Read Mark 15:12-15

"What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?" Pilate asked them.

"Crucify him!" they shouted.

"Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"

Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent. But when the pressure was on, he gave in. Instead of releasing Jesus, as he knew was right, he gave in to the crowds and had Jesus crucified.

By showing us these different reactions it's as if Mark is saying: "OK, this is how others reacted to Jesus' death on the cross.

4. The Crowds

The crowds had followed Jesus around, they had listened to him, many had been healed or had demons cast out, and they had all stood in awe of Him. Yet somehow between Palm Sunday and Good Friday they turned on Him and wanted Him dead. Why the change? Because Jesus did not turn out to be the king they wanted – they wanted someone to overthrow Rome and empower them ... instead Jesus confronts their sin, and calls them to follow him, deny themselves, and become servants of those around Him. And so they cry out

❖ Read Mark 15:13

"Crucify him!"

And so it is with all who would follow Jesus. If we see Jesus as merely a good teacher and if all we are interested in is some wise advice and healing, in the end Jesus will disappoint and even offend us. Our messed up lives cannot be so easily fixed. Jesus comes proposing radical surgery that will change us forever. If we are not willing for that to happen, then our only other response is to crucify Him and put him out of our misery.

What about You?

By showing us these different reactions it's as if Mark is saying: "OK, this is how others reacted to Jesus' death on the cross. But what about you? What do you see when you look at the cross?"

- Are we too busy like the soldiers?
- Too self-righteous like the religious leaders?
- Too cowardly and concerned about what others think like Pilate?
- Too self-centered like the crowd

Or will we see and respond to Jesus as He really is? There's one more response to look at...

5. The Roman centurion

Mark records the reaction of a Roman centurion – a hard-bitten soldier who was a high-ranking military officer. He would have seen many men die – but he had never seen a man die like this. This is how Mark describes it:

❖ Read Mark 15:39

And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"

And that is what we are meant to see as we look at what happened at the cross. We can recognize that Jesus is telling the truth: that he is indeed the Son of God. And that his death is God's amazing plan to rescue us from our sin.

There has never been better news than this. The gospel message tells me the terrible truth about myself – about my heart problem that I cannot cure. But then it tells me the wonderful news about Jesus dying for sinners, to give his life as a ransom for many.

So the question is: What do you make of all this? And what will you do with your sin?

It is not just those 2000 years ago standing at the cross that had to make a decision about how to respond to Jesus. We all have that same decision to make, and so I have asked Naomi to come and tell you about how she has responded to Jesus.

Testimony: **Testimony of Naomi** {Naomi Wagner will give her testimony in about 5 min.}

Mark: Follow –up comments to Naomi testimony and final challenge (2 min.)

Mark: **PRAY**

Narrator: **Drinking Freely of the Water of Eternal Life**

Let us return to our opening story, where Jesus meets the woman at the well. **John 4** says:

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

"Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?"

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Jesus offers to each of us living water, water that will fully satisfy, water that will spring up to eternal life. And all He asks is that we simply believe in Him. **John 3:16** promises:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Easter is not just a story of something that happened 2,000 year ago, it is the story of the God who is alive and well today. It is the story of God's love for you and His promise of life to all who believe.

And Easter is a story that points us forward to that day when Jesus promises to return to establish God's kingdom for all eternity.

Revelation 21 and 22 describe that day like this:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.

...

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

...

And then Christ ends by giving this invitation:

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

So come, come today, and drink from the fountain of Christ. Come now and worship God not just for all He has done, but all He will do, and for the eternal life he has offered. Come and **worship Him for His death and resurrection, for His new life, and for that glorious day** when He will wipe every tear from our eye and we will live with Him forever!

Worship: ***Glorious Day***

Jesus Paid It All

In Christ Alone

Jesus Paid It All

Worship Leader: **Closing Prayer**