

Resurrection Day 2018

All scripture references are from the NASU unless otherwise noted

**Calvary Chapel Fellowship of Enid
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Teaching: Happy Resurrection Day (or, as the world knows it ... Easter). As many of you know, this was originally, a pagan holiday. The ancient Southern Europeans being a polytheistic society ... one of their goddesses was the goddess **Eostre [Es-tera]**; the false goddess of light, spring and fertility.

It was her reign over spring, mixed with other pagan beliefs, that gave birth to the Easter egg as a symbol of new life and the cute little bunny rabbits as a, very appropriate symbol of fertility. And it wasn't until about 300 AD that the meaning and object of worship on this day began to transition to that of Christianity.

The name Easter does appear in the 1611 King James Bible (**Acts 12:4**), but most Bible scholars agree that it's a gross mistranslation of the title for Passover.

So, there's no arguing the fact that Easter is a man-made holiday that become a tradition amongst Christians ... much the same as Christmas and Good Friday and Ash Wednesday and Lent.

And yet we read in ...

Col 2:8 See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. ... 23 These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion ...

So, the Apostle Paul is warning us against man-made religious practices.

Q. But what could possibly be wrong with inventing Holidays like Easter and Christmas when they're for "Christian" purposes? After all, more people attend church on Easter than any other day of the year ... right? – Yes! And therein lies the problem!

We all have a conscience. In fact, the conscience is mentioned 30 times, just in the New Testament (**Hebrews 10:22**).

Some people have a paper-thin conscience and some are a bit thicker, but we all have one. And when an individual feels the conviction of the Holy Spirit ... and they respond

with a compromise, (like going to church on Christmas or Easter), sometimes that's just enough for them to forgive themselves and skip out pleased and free of conviction.

Q. After all, they've gone to church on the holiest day of the year ... right?

Q. So does that make these days bad or evil? -- No. Man-made, or not, they still provide us with an opportunity to get the gospel out and to bring souls to the Lord.

But I think it's very important that we, as Christians, know the truth. It's part of what prepares us to defend our faith ... in season and out (**2nd Timothy 4:2**).

Good Friday, Ash Wednesday, Lent, Easter and Christmas are all man's invention. They're not mentioned in the scriptures and, in honesty, they're not holidays for us as Christians ... they're holidays for the lost.

Let the world believe that those are holy days or sanctified or whatever ... but as Christians we're to worship our Lord every day; Tuesday or Sunday, Easter or Independence Day.

So, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. But before He could be resurrected, He had to die and be placed in the grave. And before He died ... He suffered ... so that's where we're gonna start this morning.

Because of the confrontations and mock trials, Jesus had been sleep deprived for, at least, 24 hours and during those hours He endured more emotional and spiritual stress than most people do in a lifetime. In the Garden of Gethsemane, the extent of His suffering became evident in a medical condition known as hematohydrosis.

Luke 22:44 And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.

Hematohydrosis is a rare, but well-documented condition that's seen only in the most extreme cases of physical or emotional pain.

In addition ... remember that there's no record of Him having any food or water after the Passover meal. He was beaten, His beard was pulled out, He was spat upon, mocked and scourged severely. He had a crown of thorns pressed into His scalp and was then beaten again ... all before He went to the cross (**Isaiah 52:14**).

Crucifixion wasn't a rare event in that day, but it was reserved for the worst of criminals. Obviously, it was a method of capital punishment, but it wasn't just to rid the earth of some hardened criminal ... it was to inflict as much pain and suffering as possible in the process. In fact, the word "excruciating" is derived from the word "crucifixion".

Now the “classic” Roman device for crucifixion was a wooden pole that stood permanently in the ground and an 80-100-pound crossbeam that the convicted was forced to carry from their holding cell to the site of crucifixion.

Once they made it to the upright pole, the crossbeam was taken off their shoulders ... laid on the ground and then the victim was forced onto it backward with their arms outstretched. And when their hands had been pressed against the wood ... an 8” iron spike was driven between the two bones of their wrists. Once they were nailed to the crossbeam, they were hoisted into place ... and the crossbeam was secured to the upright pole.

The Romans of that day claimed to have “perfected” the art of crucifixion in that by their method, some victims would suffer for more than two days before succumbing ... which had to do with the positioning of the feet and legs. They’d pull their torso down so their arms were fully extended from the nails ... then flex the knees 45°. Their feet were then stacked one on top of the other, forced flat against the poll and nailed with another 8” spike. Death by crucifixion ultimately resulted from suffocation.

Because of the bend in the victim’s legs, the thighs bore the weight of the body, but that strength eventually gave out ... shifting the weight of the body to the arms. Limbs that God didn’t design for the weight of the body so the upper extremity joints didn’t last. The shoulders would dislocate first and then the elbows. Experts say that a crucifixion victim’s arms would be 6-9” longer than before the crucifixion.

As the arms joined the legs in becoming virtually useless ... the chest began to stretch. The ribcage would elevate as it does on inspiration. That meant that the victim couldn’t breathe out without somehow lifting themselves. So, they would begin rhythmically pushing themselves against the spike through their feet with exhausted thigh muscles to exhale and then fall again on the spikes through their wrists to inhale.

When they reached the limit of their physical strength and were no longer able to push themselves up ... they’d begin rapid, shallow breathing that caused hyperventilation and that ... along with the blood loss from the beatings and the spikes and the scourging ... would cause severe dehydration.

Q. Remember Jesus’ words in John 19:28 “I thirst”?

Now before we read the classic Resurrection Sunday passage(s), let’s look briefly at what we, almost unwittingly, call Good Friday.

Open your Bibles please to The Gospel of **John chapter 19** and let’s read **verse 17-18** ...

So, we’re jumping in just as Pilate is handing Jesus over to the soldiers to be crucified.

Now let’s skip down to **verses 23-30 (John 19)**:

Q. “Good Friday” seems like such a strange nickname for what that day contained ... doesn’t it? – And yet we call it Good Friday ... and rightly so! Really ... it’s good because of one little phrase in **verse 30** ... **“It is finished”** or, in the Greek ... Tetelastai (Tet-tel-astie)!

It’s a surprisingly common word in the New Testament because it can mean several different things depending on the context. It can mean, it is made an end of; it can mean, it is paid; and it can mean, it is accomplished.

Q. So, in the context of verse 30, which of those does it mean? -- It means all three!

- Christ made an end of our bondage to sin (**John 8:36**).
- He paid for our redemption (**1st Corinthians 6:20**).
- And He accomplished the will of His Father (**John 6:40**).

It is finished ... Tetelastai! When we read this account, which really culminates with the words **“It is finished”**, we could be fooled into picturing the Lord as a defeated man saying **“It is finished”** ... in fact, that’s what Satan mistakenly thought. But when the Lord uttered these words, with His dying breath, it wasn’t a statement of defeat, but of victory!

The world would say that victory in death isn’t possible, but Paul declares ...

1 Cor 15:54 "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. 55 "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

During the Hebrew’s 40 years of wilderness wondering in the Sinai Desert, they had a number of people problems and **Numbers 21:4-9** gives us the record of one of those problems and how the Lord dealt with it ...

So, the picture is of the general population saying ... “We’re not satisfied with Your plans God. We’re not satisfied with the way You’re getting things done. We think there are better ways to do this, so we won’t be following You or Moses any longer”.

They rejected dependency on God. They had the mindset that ... man’s ways are above God’s ways.

Words spoken about 3,500 years ago. Which proves that Solomon was right when he said ...

Eccl 1:9 That which has been is that which will be, And that which has been done is that which will be done. So there is nothing new under the sun.

Indeed ... nothing has changed! People still think they're smarter than God. Which is understandable coming from the world. But it's sad when God's children, do the same thing.

As the Hebrews rejected the Lord and refused to rely upon Him, God responded in a way that, at first glance, might look like an angry God punishing His subjects, but nothing could be further from the truth.

Remember God can see the future ... man can't. God knew, all too well, how much pain and suffering would befall the Hebrew nation if they didn't turn back to Him and stop trusting in themselves.

So, it was in mercy that He sent these serpents. It was their bite that caused the Hebrews to look to God's provision for salvation. They had to trust in God's plan rather than their own.

And it's interesting how the Lord describes these serpents. The name in the Hebrew is nachash (naw-khawsh) which simply means "a snake". But He describes them as "fiery" which is the primitive Hebrew word saraph [saw-raf] which means "on fire" or "to burn". The word, nachash, by the way, is the same word used back in **Genesis chapter 3** to describe the serpent that tempted Eve.

So, once the Hebrews were bitten by one of these evil serpents, they had a simple choice to make; they could either **burn ...** or they could **trust** in the provision the Lord had made for them ... and live.

Luke 23:32-43: These two thieves can teach several things.

Based on the Greek ... we know that both of them were violent and untrustworthy men being crucified for their wrongdoing. Both of them knew who Jesus was. They knew of His claim to be the Messiah. They both spoke to Him and ... they both asked Jesus to save them.

One thief said to Him ... "**Save Yourself and us**" and the other said ... "**remember me when You come in Your kingdom**". But scripture tells us that only one of them was saved by the Lord.

One was willing to accept salvation if Jesus could give it, but the other was asking for salvation after recognizing his own sinful state. He was willing to accept Jesus' lordship with the gift of salvation.

I've always liked the picture of salvation as a journey that begins on a Southern California beach. The beach representing the world, the Pacific Ocean symbolizing the Christian life and the coast of Hawaii is Heaven.

There a number of reasons that this is an apt analogy for being “born again”.

- 1.** Most Southern California Beaches have a number of things that are difficult to turn our backs on, but salvation means leaving the world behind (**Philippians 3:13**).
- 2.** The destination is beyond our ability to see it, but the fact that we can't see it, makes Hawaii no less real (**Hebrews 11:1**).
- 3.** The Journey is long and comes complete with trials and dangers (**2nd Timothy 1:8**).
- 4.** Embarking on the Journey requires consideration and a conscious decision (**Matthew 12:30**).
- 5.** The destination it is far more beautiful than what you leave behind (**James 4:14**).

Now think back to our two thieves.

Q. What was the difference between the one that got saved and the one who didn't?

-- The difference was trust!

If you're presently on that California beach, but you're ready to start your Journey toward Hawaii ... there are two questions that have to be answered ...

- 1. Q. Are you ready to leave that beach and all the, seemingly great things that are there?**
- 2. Q. Are you ready to take the leap and brave what's to come; Long cold nights, shark attacks and all kinds of uncertainty?**

Q. Now here's another question ... at what point in our analogy are you truly on your way to Hawaii? Symbolically ... when are you a Heaven-bound, born-again Christian? --

Q. Is it when you're on the beach looking at the water and thinking about it?

- NO

Q. Is it when you're wading along the edge of the water? - NO

Q. What about when you waded out to your waste? - NO

You're Heaven-bound when you truly let go of the world and place you trust in Jesus. You're bound for that Hawaiian Promised Land when you really let go and start

swimming. When you're no longer touching the bottom. Because as long as you can touch bottom ... that's what you're trusting in.

Q. What if you've only swam 10 feet from shore? -- YES! Because it's not a question of how long you've been swimming or how fast you go ... it's a question of are you swimming!

Q. Are you moving toward Hawaii?

One thief was wading along the edge of the water, but the other one kicked up his heels and began to "dog paddle". Slow and clumsy no doubt ... but on his way.

Q. And can't you just hear the rejoicing in the Lord's words as He's dying in agony and saying to this man ... "... today you shall be with Me in Paradise."?

Jesus said in ...

John 3:14 "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; 15 so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.

Now I know that we're supposed to be celebrating the Lord's resurrection this morning, not His crucifixion. And some would say that if we didn't read the story of Him rising from the grave, we'd be leaving off the best part.

So, we're going to read it ... but I must say that I disagree that His resurrection is the best part of the story.

If you're a Christian ... then for many reasons ... the best part of the story came in **John 19:30** when Jesus proclaimed "**it is finished**"!

The resurrection is simply the confirmation that Jesus has all authority ... so, when He said "**it is finished**", He meant "**it is finished**" ... and it was true!

After the Lord was confirmed dead by a Roman soldier who stuck a spear into His side and saw blood and water come out, His body was taken down and placed in a borrowed tomb.

The Jewish and Roman leaders, who so desperately wanted to put this whole controversy behind them, had a large stone placed in front of the Lord's tomb. They had it sealed with wax and they posted armed guards to make sure it wasn't disturbed.

Now let's read **Luke 24:1-7**: After the Lord was resurrected, He was seen by more than 500 people (**1st Corinthians 15:6**). And then we have the record in **Acts chapter one (6-11)** of His ascension back to Heaven where He sits at the right hand of The Father to this day.

Jesus said in ...

John 6:40 "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

The Hebrews had to "behold" the brass serpent in the desert when they were bitten by the serpent of sin if they wanted to live. We must "behold" our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ if we want to live ... because each and every one of us has been bitten by the serpent of sin and we are therefore lost without Christ.

Conclusion: We celebrate on this man-made holiday, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But His resurrection was nothing more than proof that He could do what He said He could do. That He could save souls from sin and death.

Q. So, are you on your way to Hawaii? Have you trusted in Him? Have you looked to Him in your snake-bitten state to save you?

If you're not a Heaven-bound, born-again child of God ... today is the day to fix that. And if you are ... you are, because Jesus willingly endured more pain and suffering than we can imagine.

Be thankful and live like you are!