

ZION, AKRON, EASTER 2021

On Easter we celebrate love. We celebrate love coming down from heaven. We celebrate love blanketing the earth in a transforming embrace. We celebrate a love that is unique and infinite. A love that gives more than we can imagine to cleanse us of our sin. A perfect sacrificial love. The love of the Lamb of God. The walking, talking Word of God made flesh. He is our teacher. He is our role model. He is our friend. He is God in human form. He comes to die and rise from the dead. Proving that all who believe in Him will also rise to have eternal life, with Him, who is Lord of all.

Easter means that this life on earth is not all there is. Jesus went "to prepare a place for us". A place to live with Him in His Father's heavenly mansions for all eternity. Jesus died for our sins, paying our penalty, so that we could be forgiven. He was resurrected, to prove that death has no hold on those who repent and receive Him as Savior and Lord. Life on this earth is but a prelude to eternal joy with our Lord. Easter is a celebration of our eternal destiny.

Without Easter, there would be no hope of heaven. Without the hope of heaven, there would be no repentance. Without repentance there would be no personal transformation. Without Easter, the world would still be in chaos and darkness. The death and resurrection of Jesus means we can be reborn. Reborn to live a new, fuller, more meaningful life as God's children filled with His Spirit.

On Easter, we celebrate our Savior.

Whatever people seek in Him, they find.

In history, there has never been another

So holy, sacrificial, good and kind.

His resurrection makes us all immortal;

In heaven, we'll be together with our King.

Eternally we'll share in all His blessings;

Happy Easter! Jesus Christ is everything.

Jesus came to deliver us from the chains we wear. From the shadows of death and shame.
From prisons of despair. Jesus came to deliver us from the depths of grief, guilt, and pain.
Jesus came to deliver us from frustrated tears. From hopelessness, doubt, and disbelief.
From soul-tormenting fears. Jesus came to deliver us into God's great Love. Into a more
Abundant Life. Into a Home Above!

Jesus loves me, this I know;
The Easter story tells me so.
He died for me to bear my sin;
He opened heaven to let me in.

Yes, Jesus loves me;
Yes Jesus loves me;
Yes Jesus loves me;
Easter tells me so.

Jesus loved me when He died,
Loved me enough to be crucified.
But His death didn't last very long,
Because His power is so strong.

Jesus' came back from the dead
I know because the Bible said.
Jesus is my Lord and King;
Love and praise to Him I bring.

When I die, I'll rise up, too.
We'll all be in heaven, me and you.
We'll see Jesus face to face.
Up in heaven, that happy place.

The Easter story brings much joy
To us all, each girl and boy.
Jesus is my Savior now;
Heaven and earth to Him must bow.

Yes, Jesus loves me;
Yes Jesus loves me;
Yes Jesus loves me;
Easter tells me so.

We hold close to our hearts the cross where Jesus died. But so much more than the blood-stained cross is that Jesus came back to life. The stone's been rolled away. The tomb has been laid open and bare. They looked for Him, and then the angel said that He is no longer here. What joy they must have felt. To see Him just once more. To eat with Him. To drink with Him. To receive Him back as Lord. So much did He accomplish through His death upon the cross and in His rising from the dead. He reconciled us back to God. Nothing else could bridge the gap that sin had wrenched apart. Now we can freely go to God and receive Christ in our hearts.

Today, we are celebrating the single, most important event in human history. The resurrection from the dead of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The resurrection of Jesus has done more to change the world than any invention. Any election. Any empire or any political victory. The miracle of Jesus' resurrection has changed the world.

Luke 4:18 reads, **"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed."**

Matthew 11:5 reads, **"the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them."**

People have been liberated because of the resurrection. Orphans have been rescued. People have been set free. Hospitals have been built. Entire oppressive systems of governments have been overturned. All because of one single event inside a borrowed tomb. Jesus was dead, but God raised him to life!

Christ died for all of us. All the sins of every person were paid for by Jesus. Christ sent his Holy Spirit to all of us.

This is Romans 8:11, **“And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.”**

It's not about what we can do. It's about what Jesus has already done! The tomb is empty, so our lives can be full!

“O Death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?’ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Corinthians 15:55-57

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is all about the day that death died. When Jesus rose from the dead, He overcame the power of death for all who believe in Him. He delivered them from death's grip.

The reality of life is that we all die. But death has lost its match to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, through His death and resurrection, now has the power over sin and death.

Paul said to the church in Rome, **“For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him.”** This is why Paul could say that it was a clear and unmistakable fact that **“Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died.”**

Therefore, those who are in Christ, those who have accepted Him as their Savior and Lord, no longer need to fear death, because they are a part of that great harvest.

And therefore, like King David, can say, **“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me.”**

Easter and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is about how death died. It is about how Jesus Christ took the sting right out of death. For those who believe death has no more power. Death is a defeated foe. And so, if death died, what's the outcome those who believe in Jesus Christ? Eternal life.

We could say it like this, that today we're living in the land of the dying trying to get to the land of the living.

Vance Havner, a preacher and Bible scholar from the 1900's said, "**The hope of dying is the only thing that keeps me alive.**" Why is that? It is because death can no longer hold us or keep us down. Death in this life is merely a doorway to heaven and eternal life in the presence of our Lord to all those who believe in Jesus Christ.

Because of His great love for us, Jesus took on human flesh with the intent of destroying not only death, but also the one who uses death to harass us, and that is the Devil. Jesus's intent was to free us from fear and death.

So, death for the one who belongs to Christ becomes a friend not an enemy. Death is nothing to be feared any longer for it is under the power of The King of Kings and the Lord of Lord. It's the same power that those who believe in Jesus Christ are under which is why the Psalmist could say: "**Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.**"

The key is belief in Christ. This is seen in what Jesus told Martha when she said that if Jesus had come earlier, then her brother, Lazarus, would not have died. But Jesus said, "**I am the resurrection and the life. 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?**"

Death has lost its power and its sting as Jesus, who is the resurrection and the life, offers us His freedom. Freedom from death and freedom from the fear of death. The same freedom that He gives to all who put their trust in Him. It is for this reason that Psalm 23:4 is so often quoted at a believer's funeral. "**Yea, though I walk thru the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me.**"

And so, to Martha and then to us, Jesus asks, "Do you believe," and Martha's response should be ours, that is, if we want death to die for us so that we can live forever in heaven in the presence of God. She said, "**Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.**"

On the Cross of Christ, the price was paid in full for your freedom so you can be freed from the bondage to sin. The term is "redemption." "Redemption" means to let go free for a ransom. Redemption means "**Deliverance on account of the ransom paid.**"

We have been delivered from the power and the eternal consequences of sin which Christ purchased by laying down His life as a ransom for those who believe. We have been redeemed by the highest cost possible, through the shed blood of Christ.

Because of the redemptive work of Christ, we have been set free. We are now at liberty to live a life of real meaning. A life freed from the sinful passions that destroy fellowship with the Lord and devastates lives. We have been delivered of sins and are enjoying the empowerment of the Holy Spirit of Christ to overcome sin.

Does Your Life Reflect Christ's Redemption?

It is impossible to achieve victory over sin merely by striving to do things. All salvation is by God's grace. It is unmerited divine help that even causes us to have a desire to want to seek the Lord. A desire to enquire about the Christ and then have the ability to live a life pleasing to Him. If you know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, then it is by God's grace alone. Without Him there would be no drawing to Christ. No ability to respond to the gospel and live it out.

God is willing and wanting to give us all grace. The Holy Spirit moved the apostle Paul to write about this powerful truth, "**And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.**"

On the Cross of Calvary Jesus Christ paid the only payment that could purchase your freedom from the bondage of sin. As Robert Lowry wrote,

**"What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
What can make me whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.**

**Oh! precious is the flow
That makes me white as snow;
No other fount I know,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.**

**For my pardon this I see--
Nothing but the blood of Jesus!
For my cleansing this my plea--
Nothing but the blood of Jesus!**

**Nothing can my sin erase
Nothing but the blood of Jesus!
Naught of works, 'tis all of grace--
Nothing but the blood of Jesus!**

**This is all my hope and peace--
Nothing but the blood of Jesus!
This is all my righteousness--
Nothing but the blood of Jesus!**

So significant is this event that the whole of the Christian faith would fall if the resurrection of Jesus Christ were not true. We are not asked to believe the doctrine of the Resurrection. We are asked to meet this person raised from the dead.