

Empty Cross, Empty Grave

Happy Resurrection Sunday! This is the day that we remember and celebrate the greatest event in the history of this world! The day when sadness turned to gladness. The day when the hopeless became hopeful. The day when death lost its power!

Let's Pray.

I've got some bad news today.

Romans 5:12 (NKJV)

.....through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—

We were all born into sin. We have all committed sin. Sin has a cost....and requires payment

Romans 6:23a (NKJV)

For the wages of sin is death

Every one of us is an eternal being. While life on this earth will come to an end, that won't be the end for our life. Heaven is real. Hell is real. And everyone will end up in one or the other. It's a certainty.

Our sin causes spiritual death, that is eternal death..... deserving of and headed to hell.

I know in our society today, sin is a bad word. In the age of relativism where good and bad are all relative to what YOU THINK....it's not culturally correct to talk about sin. But sin is real.....and it has real consequences.

But God.....

Romans 6:23 (NKJV)

23 For the wages of sin is death, **but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

Jesus offers us the gift of salvation. A gift is free, it costs you nothing, but it does cost the one who bought it for you!

Forgiveness and salvation is offered to us free of charge. It doesn't cost you a thing. But it cost Jesus, He paid a heavy price.

As we consider this price. It seems like a no brainer, after all, He was the only person that could pay it. But that doesn't make it any less significant or forgettable.

If we were to go back to this day over 2000 years ago....there would have been a cross much larger and rugged than this one to my right. It would have been a reminder of what happened just a couple days ago.

Jesus had carried the beam of that rugged cross. He carried it on a back and shoulders that were torn to shreds from the lashings He bore. He carried it on in a weakened physical state to the spot where He would be nailed to it, suffocate and die on it. That was the cost of my sin, your sin.

What a Savior.....what a Friend.....what a God.....

So going back a couple thousand years....we are told in the gospels that there were some ladies who headed out that morning. They were headed to the tomb where Jesus was laid. They had spices to anoint His body.

The cross would have still been standing due to the fact that yesterday was the Sabbath. If you were to look at it, it would have been covered in blood from

- the crown of thorns on His head
- the nails in His hands and feet
- the lashes on His back from a whip that had 9 strands covered in glass, bone, and other sharp objects
- the spear to His side

It would have reminded them of His death. That Jesus gave His life upon that cross so that He could do what we could not. Pay...in..... full....the price for our sins.

His blood was poured out for us.

Ephesians 1:7 (NKJV)

7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace

Ephesians 2:13 (NKJV)

13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Thank you Jesus! He paid it all!

John 19:28-30 (NKJV)

28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst!" 29 Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and

they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put it to His mouth. 30 So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

His work on the cross is a completed work. It is finished. He finished this task....the task of redemption.

When you look at the cross today.....what do you see? It's a reminder..... It's a reminder of love, a reminder of forgiveness, a reminder of grace.....and on that day, like it still is today....it's empty! Jesus is no longer on it!

There is an empty cross, but it's full of love, forgiveness, and grace

Jesus while certainly not given an honorable death, was given an honorable burial. Placed in the tomb of a rich man who was seeking the Kingdom of God. He freely gave of this burial spot.

Mark 16:1-3 (NKJV)

1 Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. 2 Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. 3 And they said among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?"

If you can imagine these ladies, walking to the tomb with heavy hearts. The events of the cross still fresh in their minds. Heading to the tomb to honor their Lord. And they had no idea how they would get in there....the tomb was closed off with a large boulder. It is estimated to have weighed more than two ton and it had been sealed so that no one could move it and enter.

Matthew 28:2-4 (NKJV)

2 And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. 3 His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. 4 And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.

MAN.....talk about God's provision! They are wondering how they could move the stone and BAM...earthquake, angel from heaven comes and rolls it back and sits on it! How cool would that have been?!

Matthew 28:5-7 (NKJV)

5 But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. 6 He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. 7 And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you."

Imagine as they go in and look.....He's not here..... Jesus is not dead, He's alive! Just as He had said! HE IS RISEN! This is the basis of our faith. Without the resurrection the rest of it is worthless. An empty tomb is full of life!

In a Sunday school class several weeks before Easter the class had a special project. Each child got a plastic "egg". They were to go outside, find a symbol for new life and put it into the egg. Enthusiastically, the class responded.

Back in the classroom the eggs were opened one at a time with each child explaining the meaning of his symbol.

In the first egg was a pretty flower; in the next a beautiful butterfly, while green grass was in a third. The children "oohed" and "aahed". In another was a rock, which prompted loud laughter. Finally the last egg was opened - there was nothing.

"That's stupid," said one child. Another grumbled, "Someone didn't do it right!"

The teacher felt a tug on his shirt. It was Phillip, who said, 'That's mine, and I did do right! It's empty, 'cause the tomb was empty."

What better sign of new life than an empty tomb, huh?

Jesus had power over death. Back in His earthly ministry, we see Jesus raising people from the dead.

- the widow's son
- the 12 year old girl
- His friend Lazarus who had been in the grave FOUR DAYS! He was called out of a tomb. He was still covered in strips of burial cloth. He looked like a mummy, but he was alive!

Death was no match for Jesus. People feared death and the uncertainty of it. But Jesus had authority over it.....

His followers had seen this authority in action.....then they saw the One who raised the dead, raised up on a cross. It looked like death would win once again.....but death didn't get the final word!

From inside a sealed tomb with guards waiting outside. The Holy Spirit entered the tomb (there is nothing that can keep the Holy Spirit out or from doing His work), and raised Jesus from the dead and they walked right out....not as Lazarus did looking like a mummy, but with His burial cloths folded neatly where He had laid. He defeated death and the grave!

1 John 3:8 (NKJV)

8 He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

Death and the fear of it were satan's greatest powers. And on that day he was destroyed and was stripped of that power. It was snatched from his hand.

1 Corinthians 15:55-57 (NKJV)

55 "O Death, where is your sting?

O Hades, where is your victory?"

56 The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul asks O Death, where is your sting? There is no answer....

A father and son were traveling down a country road on afternoon in the springtime when suddenly a bee flew in the window. Being deathly allergic to bee stings, the boy began to panic as the bee buzzed all around inside the car. Seeing the horror on his child's face, the father reached out and caught the bee in his hand. Soon, he opened his hand and the bee began to buzz around once again. Again, the boy began to panic. The father reached over to his son, and opened his hand showing him the stinger still in his palm. "Relax, son," the father said, "I took the sting, the bee can't hurt you anymore."

The empty tomb is God's way of saying to us; "Relax, my child, I took the sting, death can't hurt you anymore."

Jesus bore the whole of death's sting in order that we would have to bear none of it! - John MacArthur

Death has no sting.....it can not hurt you!

Paul then asks O Hades, where is your victory? Again there is no answer....

Romans 6:8-10 (NKJV)

8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

When we give our lives to Jesus, we gain life.....abundant life.....eternal life. We gain victory over sin, over satan, over death. We have victory in Jesus.

1 Corinthians 15:57 (NKJV)

57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

WORSHIP TEAM COME

What do you see when you look at the empty cross and the empty grave? Do you just see wood and rock?

Church.....there is an empty cross that is full of love.....and I'm thankful for that. But do you know that an empty cross that is full of love isn't enough? It doesn't provide and abundant life. Forgiveness is not all there is to be had in Christ Jesus!

There is an empty grave that is full of life.....abundant life.....victorious life....a life of hope.....eternal life

1 Corinthians 15:16-19 (NKJV)

16 For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. 17 And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! 18 Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

Because Christ lives.....you too shall live

Because Christ has victory over death.....you too have victory over death

John 11:25-26 (NKJV)

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. 26 And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

If you do, this is something you can receive TODAY! Don't let this opportunity pass by. Today, is the day, not next week, not next year. Today is the day to get right with the Lord

There is no other way to God, no other way of salvation.

Jesus is salvation. Jesus is life. Jesus is light. Jesus is God. If a road leads anywhere besides Jesus, it doesn't lead to God. The Lord cannot be other than He is. You must either receive Him as He is, or not at all.

"He who has the Son of God has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 John 5:12).

Because of the resurrection, you are offered NEW LIFE.

In the resurrection there is a release from the past and all that shames and shackles you.

Repentance and forgiveness flows directly out from the resurrection because it is saying new creation is starting, you can leave the old behind and follow Jesus into the new life which He has prepared for all who accept Him.

Is that you today?