



Empowering People to Change the World

**Easter 2020: Invited into Family
The Victory of Jesus**

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Introduction:

- How many atoms are there in a Brussels Sprout?
- How would you measure the weight of your head? (you might want to measure your child's head!)

Fourteen bizarre questions were asked to England's brightest minds, those who are at Oxford and Cambridge, just to see how well they can think on their feet with logic and deduction outside of their area of study. They had a panel of 6 intellectual celebrities (an oxymoron?) answer these questions.

Question #10 was "Why are we here?"

- One person said "Only God can answer that."
- One philosopher said "Well, if you are religious, you believe that you are here to serve God, but if you are non-religious, you are here for no reason."
- A TV journalist said, "Most of us spend our lives trying to answer that question and I certainly have not figured it out yet."
- She should be commended for her honesty, for she speaks of most people today.

In normal everyday life, most people we meet cannot answer the most fundamental question: "Why am I here?"

- One guy I asked said, "Well, I don't know, I got started and I just can't stop."

Most people go their entire life unable to answer this most fundamental question.

Woody Allen, a tragic comic figure who is also very intelligent has said,

“The fundamental thing behind all motivation and activity is a constant struggle against annihilation and death. It is stupefying in its terror and renders anyone’s accomplishments meaningless.”

- Now to the extent of this thinking, will be the extent of ones view of life being utterly meaningless and of no real lasting value!
- We live in a world that considers human beings, men and women, as walking monkeys who got an evolutionary break.
- Our world tells us: Time + Matter + Chance = walking monkeys or Human Beings.

The temptation is to escape...like the man who jumped out of a 34 story building and was heard to say as he passed by a window, “so far so good.”

If life has no meaning, no purpose, then escape into fantasy island!

Like the famous cartoonist Ralph Barton, who wrote this on his suicide note,

“I have had few difficulties, many friends, great successes; I have gone from wife to wife, and from house to house, visited great countries of the world, but I am fed up with inventing devices to fill up 24 hours of the day.”

Question: Does what happened on Easter speak in any way to these questions? Does Easter speak to the meaning of life? Why is it that billions of people across the world consider Good Friday and Easter the most momentous events in the history of the world?

So this is the situation on that morning 2,000 years ago:

- Joseph of Arimethia had given the tomb.

- The Romans had rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb because there was a rumor that Jesus had predicted that He would rise from the grave.
- A guard of Romans soldiers were guarding the tomb 24-7.
- And now the women have bought spices and are bringing them to the tomb to re-annoint the body.
- The stone is looming most large to the women. How are we going to move a two ton stone? Who will help us? Let's pick up our story in the book of Mark.

Mark 16:1-8

¹Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. ²Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. ³And they said among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?" ⁴But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large. ⁵And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. ⁶But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. ⁷But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you." ⁸So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed.

- In all the records of the Bible, they all agree that Jesus rose from the dead! They all agree in their different eye-witness accounts.
- The interesting thing is that they don't all agree in every detail...it would be very odd if they did.

- For that would speak of men who went into a room and decided just how to invent the story. All of the accounts would be word for word the same. There would be collusion!
- Rather, the story has different perspectives from different men who saw and experienced the same thing but share it from their own personality and interpretation.
- It is exactly what you would expect...one journalist says it this way...each paper's headline has its own ideas...but they all agree in one fundamental point...Jesus is alive.

But where are the men?

- Since the death of Jesus these men are nowhere to be found.
- Their behavior less than commendable.
- Let's summarize where they were:
 - Deserted...they fled the scene. After the garden, they booked it.
 - Denial...Peter openly denied Jesus. All of them denied Him too.
 - Disbelief...even when the women tell them, they did not believe.
 - They are a group of defeated men!

But some 50 days later, you find this disillusioned, disappointed, depressed group, boldly and powerful proclaiming that Jesus has risen from the dead. Totally and radically transformed!

And they never change their story and give the rest of their lives, their fortunes, their future to proclaiming Jesus rose from the grave. They are imprisoned and beaten proclaiming that Jesus is the Messiah.

Eleven of the 12 disciples died martyrs death proclaiming that Jesus rose from the grave! All of them said they saw Him physically alive.

Even secular history tells us that the Church is birthed out of this “Calvary seed” which changes the world. All of history is changed.

- Even our dating system being marked by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ...A.D. Anno Domini, the year of our Lord!
- Clearly something happened that changed a group of 12 fearful, depressed, despondent men into the greatest movement that the world has ever seen!

What happened on that Easter morning?

Professor Thomas Arnold, the late chair of Modern History at Oxford, author of the famous three volume set on the history of Rome, once wrote,

“I have been used for many years to study the histories of others times, and to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them, and I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort, to the understanding of a fair inquirer, than the great sign which God hath given us than that Christ died and rose from the dead.”

H.G. Wells, the famous atheist, once said, “I am an historian and not a believer but this penniless preacher from Galilee is irresistibly the center of all history.”

In June 1815, a famous day in English history...Wellington vs. Napoleon at Waterloo...French against the English. All of the nation of England anticipated the news. If Wellington lost to Napoleon, the English would be speaking French today...

They had signal boats to tell them what was happening. The boats in the English Channel would tell the outpost in the steeple of Westminster the news.

The message was partially obscured by the fog. The signal seemed to say, "Wellington defeated"...The worst has happened, the word goes out to the furthest reaches of England...Wellington has been defeated!

Then the fog lifted, and actually the message says, "Wellington defeated the French."

- Good Friday, blood, sweat, tears, defeat...the message, Jesus defeated!
- The new message today, when the fog clears...Jesus defeated the Grave!

We are in an election year, and very little in politics or culture are unanimous, but in all surveys taken, experts tell us that there is 100% mortality...

We will all die!

The Bible says,

⁵⁴So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

⁵⁵"O Death, where is your sting?

O Hades, where is your victory?"

⁵⁶The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.

⁵⁷But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:54-57)

The spoils go to the Victor!

- Jesus rose from the grave and so can you today!

- Jesus was in the grave for 3 days and some of you are in a grave—you feel dead, demoralized, defeated.
- Jesus has come with the ultimate victory: the victory over death means a victory for life.
- God removed a two-ton stone away from the tomb...

Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus we have been given VICTORY:

Jesus has given us victory over the powers of darkness: satan and his angels

Last year a young man was brought to my office for prayer. He was only 12 years old and his life had been wracked with fearful dreams of death and hatred for people. We gathered and prayed, we told the demons to leave and he never had another bad dream and was set free with a new peace!

Through the cross and resurrection Jesus has given us victory over sickness!

A recent email, “When our daughter was 2 ½ years old, she developed a very strong stutter. She started talking at 13 months and had a HUGE vocabulary by the time she was 2. Then, all of a sudden, she started stuttering! It was pretty uncontrollable, at the end of every 3-4 words. We were so shocked we weren’t sure what to do. After a few trips to the pediatrician, we just decided one night to anoint her with oil and pray over her. The next morning her stutter was gone. God has since used her speaking ability to excel in speech and debate and I know He will use it in her near future as well. We are incredibly thankful for his healing in her life.”

Last week, Eric and I were in India and we spoke with a couple who are planting a church in New Delhi with Hindus and weekly they see people getting healed through prayer.

Through the cross and resurrection Jesus has given us victory over life's daily problems, suffering.

There was a family at MSC who have known great victory in the midst of incredible suffering: the husband was using a log splitter to chop firewood when his attention was diverted for only a second when his glove caught on the blade quickly pulling his hand into the machinery. He suffered from a partial amputation of a large portion of his hand. But God was faithful. His hand was successfully reattached by a skilled surgeon and he now has 90% of his hand fully functioning. Before the husband had recovered, their son experienced a ruptured appendix that nearly killed him. He would be in the hospital for months, with numerous surgeries. At the same time their daughter caught a severe case of pneumonia and had to be hospitalized. Simultaneously, the mother went through 3 surgeries of her own.

Ann, the mother writes, "Faith is not knowing what the future holds but knowing Who holds the future. The Lord is closest to you when you are in the deepest of troubles. On more than one occasion I felt the presence of the Lord so clearly that it was like I was sitting right next to Him, I could have reached out and touched Him. When times are tough and things go wrong don't give in to the schemes of the enemy; he will tell you there is no hope and that all is lost...Our lives are altered forever. We are changed because of our suffering but we are mostly changed because our GOD IS FAITHFUL!"

Through the cross and resurrection Jesus can give us victory in a hopeless marriage.

A couple in our church, just about to celebrate their 30th wedding anniversary, when the bottom dropped out of their life. Because of the revelation of a deep-rooted addiction, the husband resigned his job and entered an intensive recovery program, separating them for 3 long months. Their 2 adult children seemed to abandon them.

As the husband went through therapy, the wife began to engage close friends and trusted support groups, digging in to the truths in

God's word, seeking hope in prayer & doing battle with the weapon of fasting.

She writes, "I began to have hope, not in myself or my husband or my kids etc., but in the Living God who never fails. The message of Easter and what Christ bore for me on the cross took on new meaning. The message of true forgiveness brought me to a place of surrender, grace and mercy for myself as well as for my husband. True forgiveness—no strings attached—is a POWERFUL thing!"

That was 4 years ago and today their marriage and relationship with their adult children is not only restored but thriving.

Where are you today?

- What will you do with the resurrection of Christ?
- A huge rock was removed in front of the tomb, and God can move any stone in your life and take you from the catacombs of death into the forests of new life.
- Victory in this life is possible through Jesus Christ!

For a long time, even into the 14th century, Europeans believed that there was nothing past the coast of Portugal. There was even a sign in the Port of Lisbon, written in French, "Ne Flu Ultra," meaning, "nothing beyond this." Then, of course in 1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue, and discovered all the vastness of the new world. They changed the sign to "Flu Ultra," meaning, there is more beyond this!

- Do you believe there is more beyond this? Is your sign "ne flu ultra?" There is nothing beyond this? Do you believe that?
- I know that you don't believe that! God has put eternity in your hearts! You know that is not true! You know it is "flu ultra" there is more beyond this!

Jesus rose from that grave! And because of that fact:

- The resurrection is the bases for all faith, Jesus is alive...billions concur.
- There are more people alive today than ever in the history of the world combined...
- He alone can give you hope.
- He alone can give you faith.
- He alone can transform your life.
- He alone can transform your marriage.

What will you do with Jesus?

Revelation 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

Romans 10:9-10

If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Open your heart to Jesus this Easter.