

Kingdom, Power, and Glory
Easter Sunday
04/09/23

Introduction

I am 31 years old, decently educated, relatively well read, mentally healthy (I think), and I live in a (sort-of) urban city in 2023...and I've based my entire life on the belief that an ancient, uneducated, not particularly well-read Jewish peasant from the small town of Bethlehem, rose from the dead sometime around the turn of the first century.

And I do know more and more in our world today, just how odd that might sound.

But one of the things that distinguishes Christianity from every other faith movement is that it traces its origin back to a definitive event. That is not true for Judaism, or Buddhism or Islam or Atheism.

And that event has real historic evidence. Evidence we could spend hours discussing and dissecting. Evidence that may surprise you. Evidence written about and studied by both Christian and non-Christian historians and scholars alike. Evidence with enough credibility that, if we were willing to be intellectually honest, would create more of a compelling case for the historicity of the resurrection than many events we so readily accept from the same time period.

And yet I have no interest, (at least this Easter we'll see next year), to present that evidence to you like a lawyer presents a case to a jury.

Because one of the worst kept secrets of humanity is that we do not choose the direction of our lives by simply weighing the evidence.

We live our lives on moments of clarity.

The really important decisions we make (for those of us who are fortunate enough to get to make them) are not the product of left brain rationality alone. Rationality and logic are part of it, for sure, but there's almost always that moment where things just sort of click into place.

And I don't just mean that in a religious sense, I mean that in the everyday stuff of life.

- That dance at a mutual friend's wedding, where you look into each other's eyes and you realize that you love her and everything else just doesn't seem to matter as much as giving everything you have to be with her for the rest of your days.

- That weekend trip to visit a friend, where in that moment of travel between the coffee shop and the park you realize “I just have to move here”, and even though it may be risky and you’ve never lived that far from home, that risk is a risk you’re willing to take.
- Or hour 2 of a 3-hour zoom meeting that could have been an email, where you realize – I never should have chosen this career in the first place, and even though it may make no sense, even though it may be a hit financially, even though it may be 3 steps in the opposite direction of the corporate ladder, I know in my gut I have to pursue this other path instead.

Who you love, where you live, and what you do – you did not make those decisions on rational left brain thinking alone. There was a moment when it clicked, and here you are.

So yes, my whole life is based on the resurrection from the dead of an ancient Jewish rabbi with very few earthly credentials. But it’s not because the stacked up evidence became so convincing that my rational mind could finally be appeased.

It was because there was a moment of time where the reality of the resurrection intersected with my own story of suffering and sin, and in a moment of clarity all I could do was say with the disciple Peter in John 6 – **“Lord, where else shall I go? You have the words of eternal life.”**

So before there were pastels, egg hunts, and \$20 brunches – there was a definitive moment in history known as the resurrection. And so here we are once again to mark that moment as a church family.

And in doing so we get to remember, all of us in the room whether followers of Jesus or not, that what we need this Easter Sunday is not simply some compelling argument to debate, or idea to ponder, or story to make us happy – we need an encounter with the living God.

We need the overwhelming grace of God to intersect our stories of sin and suffering with the reality of the resurrection such that we have no choice but to wake up and worship Him.

The Lord’s Prayer - Set Up

That’s why I love this verse, this one verse we get to spend a few moments exploring together this morning.

Over the past 40 days of Lent we’ve been on a journey as a church line by line through what’s commonly referred to as the Lord’s Prayer from Matthew 6, making the very same request as modern day disciples that Jesus’ first disciples did 2000+ years ago – “Lord, teach us to pray.”

So we’ve been studying together this template of prayer that Jesus gave to His disciples.

And we come now on Easter to the ending of the prayer...

Matt 6:13b – “For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.”

Church historians believe that it would have been common practice in Sunday worship, as early as 90AD for the pastor or bishop or priest to recite the Lord’s Prayer - “Our father in heaven, hallowed be your name...” etc. and when they finished the last line – “Deliver us from evil” – the entire church in response would shout together at the end – “For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever amen!”

This line is a shouting line. It was a declaration of worship in response, not simply to the prayer Jesus had given His Church, but to the God of the prayer.

- The kingdom belongs to God – God rules over all with all authority in His hand.
- The power belongs to God – He is all-powerful. He sets the earth in motion and holds all things (including us and our lives) together.
- The glory belongs to God – He is the one worthy of our worship, adoration, our praise, our celebration.

The Kingdom, Power, and Glory belong to God!

It was a fitting declaration of worship for the early church, and it is the perfect declaration of worship for us on Easter Sunday.

Because the empty tomb, the angel’s question – “Why do you search for the living among the dead?”, the folded clothes of the God-man who 72 hours earlier had been beaten and nailed to a cross, the testimony of Mary and the other women, the eye witness accounts of over 500 people who saw the resurrected Christ over a period of 40 days...

All of that shouts across time and space – **The kingdom and the power and the glory belong to God, forever, Amen.**

He is not here, he is risen!

The Story

But to understand that, you have to understand a little bit more about the story leading up to that moment.

SCENE 1:

Now contrary to what you might be expecting, the story of Easter doesn't start on a cross on a hill called Golgotha, or even 33 years prior to that in a manger in Bethlehem. It starts much much much earlier.

The story starts all the way back at the beginning of time and the beginning of the Scriptures - Genesis 1. Before there was anything else, there was God. God who existed before time began. God who had fullness within Himself, who did not need anything from anyone, and yet longed to share the beauty of His glory with others and so He creates.

How? By speaking. That's how powerful this God is – He simply speaks and creation forms. And for the first 5 ½ days he speaks all sorts of life into existence – day and night, sun and moon, land and sea, plants and animals.

But on the 6th day it's something different. He creates the pinnacle of his creation. The only thing that is said to get the very breath (the ruach) of God – humanity. He creates a man and a woman. God, in his infinite power, out of the overflow of his glory creates and sustains *life*.

But it's not simply life, it's life with a purpose.

In Genesis 1:26 we read – **26 Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...”**

God creates mankind in His image (Heb - *Tselem*). In ancient times kings would spread out *tselems*/images of themselves across their kingdom. Little physical representations of the king so that people would know – this place belongs to this king. If I see the image of this king, I know this place is a part of this kingdom.

Adam and Eve are created in the image of God, as little physical representations of God to then make more image bearers who would then spread out across God's creation declaring all of it belongs to God and is a part of His Kingdom.

This is how the story of Easter begins – Out of the overflow of His glory, through his infinite power God creates a kingdom.

In other words Genesis 1 shouts to us – The kingdom, the power, and the glory belong to God forever amen.

SCENE 2:

But then you get to scene 2 just one page later. God has given the first man and first woman one “do not” command – do not eat the fruit from one specific tree in this paradise where they live – do not eat

from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God's Kingdom is one of flourishing, but all true flourishing of humanity comes not with unlimited freedom but with good healthy boundaries and restrictions.

But the tempter comes, Satan, the enemy of God. And his temptation is not simply about fruit, but about kingship and power and glory. "You will be like God" he tells them. Change the shout of creation from the Lord reigns to Humanity reigns.

And so they eat. Those who were meant to live with God under His rule and reign, want to now be god themselves so they rebel against their king. ***And just as God promised - death enters the world.***

- The death of relationship between God and man.
- The death of relationship between mankind with each other.
- The physical death promised to all of humanity – "you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

And you're meant to leave Genesis 3 thinking the whole thing is messed up beyond repair... That the Lord no longer reigns. That Kingdom and the power and the glory no longer belong to Him.

- Creation, meant to display the glory of God, is now breaking down in decay.
- God's power, which is supposed to be infinite and without limit, now seems unable to even hold his creation together.
- God's Kingdom, which is supposed to spread out over all creation now seems powerless against the kingdom of darkness.

Human Condition

And this becomes the story of humanity. The universal and horrific plight of all mankind, you and me, and all who have and will ever live – is that we live in the death, decay, and brokenness of a scene 2 + Genesis 3 world.

We are simultaneously sufferers and sinners.

- **We're sufferers.** Those who experience the brokenness of life. Who walk through life hurting from all sorts of pain – emotional pain, relational pain, physical pain, spiritual pain. We hurt, that's a universal part of the human experience. You may have heard it said before "a smile is the universal language" well "pain is the universal experience" - no matter your age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, nationality, religion or anything else – we hurt.

- **But we're also sinners.** Rebels against God our creator. We don't just experience pain as passive victims, we create pain through our own misguided deeds and acts. Pain for ourselves and pain for others. We, left to ourselves, don't worship God as He deserves but go on our way trying to be our own gods.

One of the reasons why I love the Bible is because it gives no room for you to think otherwise. The Bible gives you no help if you're looking to make an argument for the awesomeness of mankind or that life will be pain and trouble free.

Instead...

- You get story after story of humans exchanging the worship of God in his glory, for the false glory of idol worship.
- You get story after story after story of the kingdoms of men seeking to push out and rebel against the kingdom of God.
- You get story after story of pain as humanity faces the very same sufferings we still face – betrayal, abandonment, loss, infertility, hunger, lack of daily needs, and on and on and on.

And in case all of that is not enough – the ultimate unbeatable enemy death tracks a 100% success rate.

The human experience is one lived in these two painful realities, no matter how much we might want to cover it up with pastels and smiles – we live – even on Easter morning – as simultaneously sufferers and sinners.

Do you sense that at all this easter – in yourself or in your story?

- Rather than experiencing the flourishing of God's Kingdom as it breaks out into our lives and in the world we experience those all too familiar pains of heartache, betrayal, sickness, and loss.
- Rather than experiencing the goodness of God's glory does your story just feel like a continual line of dread marked by moments of agony?
- Though you long to delay it and distract yourself from it, does death not loom over the horizon of our lives like a sick twisted joke of inevitability.

Resurrection Hope

Now at this point you're probably wondering what kind of easter service you've found yourself in and how to quietly slip out without anyone noticing so you can head to brunch early.

But here's why we had to start with all of that...because if we're going to make sense of an event as incomprehensible as resurrection, we first need to be brutally honest about the world in which resurrection happened, and into which resurrection still speaks today.

Because while the story of humanity is one of life and then death, after death comes a comma and not a period.

Enter scene 3.

God becomes man.

God He does not sit back resigned while sin and suffering destroy his most precious creation. God doesn't stand back, splashing some redemptive paint on the canvas trying to make things look better from far away.

Jesus, God Himself, takes on flesh. Becomes a human being. Heads straight on into our suffering and our sin.

- Though He Himself never sins, the Bible says when he goes to the cross he takes our sin upon Himself. All of our rebellion, all of our wanting to wrongfully be like God, all of our corruption and evil down at our very core – Jesus, though perfect, takes the punishment for us.
- And in so doing, he suffers.
 - **Physical suffering** – as his body is beaten and whipped to the point where it is seemingly unrecognizable and just shy of death.
 - **Relational suffering** – as his closest friends betray him, deny him, and abandon him in his greatest moment of need.
 - **Emotional suffering** – as he feels the weight of loving and dying for the forgiveness of the very people driving the nails into his hands.
 - **Spiritual suffering** – as He who knew no sin becomes sin for us.

And when his time of suffering is over. As the night goes dark, and his body is taken off of the cross and laid in a tomb, it seems like the story ends at death. Friday turns to Saturday and you wonder – which kingdom has won? How do we get from a grave to a declaration of power, kingdom, and glory? Because this doesn't feel like the Lord reigns.

It feels like if the story ends in a grave then our suffering reigns.
It feels like if the story ends and the tomb is full then our sinning reigns.

Then you remember the words of Jesus in John 10:18 – No one takes my life from me, but I lay it down of my own accord...

That even what seems like the greatest defeat is a moment where God's power is shining forth. Why? Because Jesus' death is no accident, and it's no mistake – this is the whole plan. And Jesus is in control the whole time.

You see Jesus' death was not unique because it was on a cross. Crucifixion was a very common means of death in the first century. It was unique because it was promised and it was given.

- Jesus promised it would happen - over 10x in the gospel accounts alone Jesus says "I'm going to die".
- But not only was it promised, it was given. No one took Jesus' life. He willingly gave it in love.

According to Jesus, his death was not a heinous act by a barbaric God, a random deed of aggression by humanity, or a definitive triumph of evil. It was a preordained, merciful, gracious, holy work of love.

Jesus' death was promised to us and then given for us so that we could have something other than death.

How do we know that? Because three days later He got up out of the grave. Sin didn't get the last laugh. The powers of darkness did not win. The grave could not hold him. He who was dead is now alive!!

That is why the Resurrection is the central event on which our entire faith is grounded because it means the story is not life then death.

But rather, just as it was for our Savior Jesus, it may also be for us a story of – life, then death, then life again.

The great love of God means he enters into the sin and suffering story of humanity to suffer and become sin on our behalf to defeat sin and suffering for us.

Yours Is...

Which is why this line is so fitting for Easter Sunday.

Do you see it??

The resurrection of Jesus echoes across all eternity – The kingdom and the power and the glory belong to God, forever, Amen.

That's what we celebrate today! That's what must intersect with the reality of our lives.

So maybe you're walking in today and your life feels like the opposite of hope. You're well aware of the way you're a sufferer...

- You feel the sting of physical pain – a diagnosis, sickness of yourself or a family member or friend.
- You feel the hurt of emotional pain – crushed by the weight of anxiety, depression, and loss.
- You feel the all too fresh heartache of relational pain – hurt by a close friend, betrayal from a coworker, or abandoned by a spouse.
- You feel the nagging doubt of spiritual pain – the God we're here to worship feels distant, and you feel alone.

Or maybe you're walking in today and you're well aware of the ways you're a sinner...

- You know how you've been rebelling against God.
- You can recall all of the ways this week, this month, this year you've tried to run your life apart from Him.
- You know the ways you've run from Him, pushed Him away, gone against how He's called you to live.
- You were hesitant to even show up this morning because you're not so sure God would even want you here with the ever present the weight of your shame and guilt.

You need more than some convincing arguments about the historical credibility of the resurrection.

You need more than a lawyer's case for the empty tomb.

You need more than rationality and logic.

You need more than some good musicians, a free latte, some friendly faces, and a picturesque skyline.

You need the God who all of that points to, to enter into your life.

Who through His overwhelming and unending grace can intersect your suffering, your sin, your story with the reality of the resurrection such that you have no choice but to gladly wake up and worship Him.

This is your invitation – ***look at the cross, look at the empty tomb and look at the risen Savior.***

If Jesus got up from the grave after the greatest tragedy in human history, therefore shouting across all time and space – The kingdom and the power and the glory belong to God forever amen...how much more might that be true in your pain. In your guilt. In your shame.

Easter shouts to us – LOOK at the empty tomb, suffering doesn't hold the power. Death doesn't win! The grave could not hold King Jesus.

The power, and the glory, and the kingdom belong to Him.

Life, then death, then life again – on offer for all who believe and trust in Jesus.

Conclusion

Forever. There is no death on the other side of this new life. Death has been defeated. So there's life, then death...but for all who trust in Christ Jesus – the final chapter is life *forever*.

Because Christ now lives, and so we trust His promise that one day He will return. And when He does He will usher in a new heaven and a new earth. A return back to an even better garden. A return back to an even better copy of the original.

God, once again, out of the overflow of His glory, through his infinite power God will recreate a kingdom – a place where all who trust in Jesus will live with Him and flourish...forever.

So we hear the shout echo across the ancient and global church and we join our voices – The kingdom, the power, and the glory belongs to God.

Easter sings it over us and so we sing it too.

Forever. Amen.

Pray.