

Easter Message

Introduction (Where We Begin):

The message I'm about to speak could change your life.

Maybe you're thinking, "I've heard people say that before."

Me too.

I'm skeptical about anyone saying they can change my life.

...but please believe me when I say that the following few moments can change your life.

To me, when someone says, "I can change your life," they're going to tell me how to live a life without problems.

Here's what most of us envision a problem-free life to look like...

Freedom from Failed Relationships...

because they don't always seem to work out for us

Freedom from Mental Exhaustion...

because our minds won't shut off

Freedom from Financial Hardship...

because we can't seem to catch up

Freedom from Sickness, Disease, and Death...

because we hate watching people suffer

Freedom from Temptations and Struggles...

because we can't seem to get a break

Freedom from Disappointment...

because life isn't supposed to be this way

Freedom from Complicated Questions...

because we have so many more

Freedom from Regret, Guilt, and Shame...

because we wish we could change the past

Ultimately, most of us move around the pieces in our life to maximize comfort and pleasure.

No one wants difficulty...

The kind like millions in our world are experiencing right now.

My promise to change your life is not some form of *easy-believism*.

In other words, just *believe this* or *buy this* and your problems will go away.

I'm not promising a life free from hardship.

...but what I am promising is HOPE.

HOPE when relationships are falling apart.

HOPE when depression, anxiety, and despair are deep.

HOPE when the money is not there.

HOPE when myself and the people I love are sick or even dying.

HOPE when addiction or struggles won't release their grip.

HOPE when I feel like my whole life is a walking disappointment.

HOPE when my life is just a mess.

Some of you may not identify with needing HOPE.

It's possible that status, stability, and success has created a false security.

It's so crazy that 6 weeks ago all of us were most likely living with a false sense of security.

...but many of those things that you put your HOPE in are now gone or different.

Everything can change overnight and that's why we need HOPE.

HOPE does not change when circumstances fall apart.

So, what is HOPE?

HOPE is the *confident expectation of something better*.

In other words, my life may not be *what it should be*...

...but there is something or Someone who makes my life *better*, even when circumstances don't turn out the way I imagined.

That Someone is Jesus.

He is your HOPE.

I will go as far to say that without Him, you have no HOPE.

Jesus has offered HOPE to you by becoming your Savior, Helper, and the One who gives you an eternal home.

Even if you feel far from Him today, He is offering HOPE in this moment.

Your life may not be what it should be...

...but Jesus is offering something better.

For the sinner, there is HOPE.

For the messed up, there is HOPE.

For the person who is confident in themselves, there is HOPE.

Motivation (Why You Need This):

So why is it that many people live without hope, if hope is readily available?

Why do we allow our lives to continue without an *expectation of something better*?

Why do people choose an often-traveled path of regret, guilt, and shame?

Is this what we are created for - to be born, do our best in life, and then die?

There must be something better.

If God loves us, He must want us to live in hope.

But it's difficult to live with confident expectation.

Especially when we look at our lives...

...the lives of others...

...and the world around us...

...and we don't see much hope.

We often see the opposite of hope.

Despair, discouragement, and disappointment are around every corner.

If you are like me, you HOPE there is something better to this life and the next.

In order to process these thoughts, let's rewind and take a look at the first human beings, Adam and Eve.

Their story doesn't actually begin with themselves, but with God.

To understand hope, we must turn back the pages to see where hope was lost.

Information (What You Need to Know):

So, let's start at the beginning of the Bible. Genesis 1:1 says,

Genesis 1:1 (ESV) In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

This is the very first verse of the Bible.

It never argues for the existence of God.

It just assumes that people would believe that God exists and that He is Creator.

The next several verses reveal that He is powerful.

By His very word, He speaks the heavens and the earth into existence.

After creating the heavens, earth, and everything in them, God fashions His most prized creation - human beings.

Genesis 1:27 says,

Genesis 1:27 (ESV) So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

What does it mean that man and woman were created in the image of God?

It means that they were created to reflect God.

So, when people looked at man in his original state, he would reflect...

...who God is...

...what God is like...

...and how great God is.

God's holiness, beauty, creativity, and goodness would be perfectly reflected in man.

In the beginning, the first humans lived in perfect harmony with God.

God's love for them was on display.

He fellowshiped with them and provided everything they could ever need.

Even though Adam and Eve had complete freedom in the world God created, He did give them one restriction.

It's found in Genesis 2.

Genesis 2:15 (ESV) The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. **16** And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, **17** but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat you shall surely die."

Being a perfect reflection of God would be lost if Adam and Eve disobeyed.

Was it a test? Yes.

...And sadly, they failed it.

Genesis 3 says,

Genesis 3:6 (ESV) So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate.

Adam and Eve rebelled against their Creator.

They wanted to decide what was right and what was wrong.

Their action demonstrated that they doubted God's goodness.

Their disobedience revealed that they disliked God's authority over them.

Later on in the Bible, one of Jesus' followers writes about the far-reaching effects of Adam's sin.

Romans 5:12 (ESV) ...just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.

Adam's sin brought sin into the entire human race.

All who came after him would be born into sin.

After eating from the tree, they knew they weren't perfectly reflecting God's image.

How do we know this?

Adam and Eve hid from God.

All HOPE was lost.

They were filled with regret, shame, and guilt.

This was clearly reflected in their realization that they were naked.

In order to suppress the shame and guilt, they tried to cover their nakedness.

This was mankind's first attempt at giving themselves HOPE.

But God was very clear that their disobedience would be punished by death.

God very clearly illustrated for Adam and Eve that the punishment for sin is death.

But instead of immediately putting Adam and Eve to death, God showed them what death looked like.

Genesis 3 says,

Genesis 3:21 (ESV) And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

An innocent animal was sacrificed to clothe Adam and Eve.

God took what was innocent and used it to alleviate their guilt.

The sacrifice of an innocent animal was simply an illustration that death is necessary to pay for sin.

God could have walked away from Adam and Eve at this point and left them without HOPE.

...but He didn't.

God reveals His plan to bring mankind back into a relationship with Himself.

He promised to send a Savior to be the innocent sacrifice for sin.

This Savior would die so that the disobedient one could go free.

We've already looked at Adam and Eve's sin and its consequences...

...but now let's fast forward to right now.

This moment.

You and I face the same consequences as Adam and Eve.

Physical death and eternal separation from God is the penalty for our sin.

Why?

Much like Adam and Eve, you have sinned by disobeying God's commandments.

Even the person who thinks of himself as good and moral has broken God's law.

All of us have dishonored our parents.

We've hated.

We've lusted.

We've taken things that did not belong to us.

We have lied to get ourselves out of sticky situations.

...and honestly, there are so many more things we've done wrong.

Before you begin weighing good and bad works, remember that Adam and Eve were sentenced to death because of a single act of rebellion.

In the same way, you and I are guilty before a holy God and deserve His full wrath.

Good works cannot satisfy God's prescribed punishment for sin.

So is there any hope of being forgiven?

Yes.

Nearly 2,000 years ago God sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to set us free from the penalty of sin.

He would be the innocent sacrifice to pay for sin.

God would offer eternal life to anyone who would receive the sacrifice of His Son to pay the penalty for their sin.

God is holy and we are not.

This is the problem that Jesus came to solve.

Mark, one of the Gospel writers, reveals that "the Son of Man came...to give his life as a ransom for many."

But here's the thing.

If Jesus simply died for our sin, if death defeated Him and He is still in the grave, is there truly any future HOPE for us?

Does it get any better than this?

Is Christ's death enough to give us HOPE?

The Apostle Paul gives us a clear answer,

1 Corinthians 15:17 (NLT) And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins. **18** In that case, all who have died believing in Christ are lost! **19** And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world.

The death of Christ is meaningless without His resurrection.

If Jesus is still dead, we have no HOPE of eternal life.

This world, with all the suffering, death, and disappointment would be as good as it gets for us.

The modern-day pastor, John MacArthur, said...

“If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then sin won the victory over Christ and therefore continues to be victorious over all men.”

Thankfully, the Bible reveals that Jesus Christ didn't stay dead in a grave.

I thought about personally reading the real-life story of Jesus' resurrection, but I had an idea this past week.

I've missed seeing the faces of people at our church, so I asked if some of them would be willing to read it to you.

From their homes, here are some of our people reading the account surrounding the resurrection of Jesus.

Compilation Video of Church Reading the Easter Story

Part 2

As you can see from the reading of the Gospel accounts, Christ is risen!

“The resurrection provided proof that God had accepted the sacrifice of His Son and would be able to be just and yet justify the ungodly.” - John MacArthur

Through faith in Christ’s death and resurrection, the sinner is justified.

Being justified means that man is made right in the sight of God.

The sin of Adam in the beginning brought death upon the ENTIRE human race.

...but the death and resurrection of Christ brings new life to those who believe.

The Apostle Paul writes extensively on the significance of Jesus Christ’s resurrection in his letter to the church at Corinth.

1 Corinthians 15:21 (NLT) ... just as death came into the world through a man, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man. 22 Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life.

Christ’s resurrection guarantees HOPE of a changed life right now.

But His resurrection also gives us hope of a future resurrection where we will spend eternity in the presence of God.

Application (What You Need to Do):

In my last few minutes, I want to speak directly to two groups of people -

First, let me speak to those who have believed in Jesus, repented of sin, and are actively following Jesus.

It’s easy to forget that this life, with all of its’ disappointment and suffering is not all.

I’m reminded of what awaits those who are the children of God.

The Apostle John speaks about a future HOPE and home in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 21:3 (NLT) "...God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. **4** He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.... I am making everything new!"

There is HOPE beyond our present circumstances.

This life and all of its' temptations, trials, and sorrow is temporary.

God promises eternal life free from pain and suffering.

I'd also like to speak directly to a *second* group of you.

Some of you have not received the HOPE that God has provided through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Without Jesus' death for your sin and His resurrection to guarantee eternal life, you are also without HOPE.

Being without HOPE means you will pay for your sin by physical death and eternal separation from God.

You might believe that trying to *do better* or *be better* will make you right with God.

The Bible is VERY clear that your efforts cannot make you right with God.

Isaiah, one of the people who spoke the words of God, reminds us about the likelihood of good works earning us favor with God.

Isaiah 64:6 (NLT) We are all infected and impure with sin. When we display our righteous deeds, they are nothing but filthy rags.

What is the key to having new life and HOPE of a future life in God's presence?

One of Jesus' closest followers, John, writes about belief being key to HOPE.

John 3:16 (ESV) For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Forgiveness is given when you stop trying to get God's attention through your own efforts.

You must believe that your sin offends God and repent, meaning that you must agree with Him about your sinfulness.

You must believe that Jesus Christ's death paid the penalty for your sin.

You must believe that Christ's resurrection guarantees new life.

I know I've said a lot over the last few moments.

...but let me summarize everything I've said in a few brief sentences.

God is the Creator of all things.

He is worthy of our worship

He is righteous and holy and will punish sin.

All people are sinful by nature.

They are born far from God, disobedient to Him, and deserving of His wrath.

But God sent His Son, Jesus.

Jesus lived a life without sin.

He died on a cross to absorb the wrath of God for all who would believe in Him.

Three days after His death, Jesus came back to life to secure new and eternal life for those who believe.

God calls on everyone, everywhere to repent of their sins and believe in Jesus to be forgiven and experience new life.

This is the message of HOPE.

In response to this message of HOPE, allow me to ask you a few questions.

Will you repent of your sins?

Will you believe in Jesus' death as payment for your sin?

Will you believe in His resurrection for new life now and eternal life in the future?

Will you choose to follow Him?

If you will, your life can be changed in this moment.

Regardless of how great or deep your sin is, Jesus offers forgiveness and HOPE.

Will you accept God's gift of forgiveness by believing in His Son?

There are only **two ways to respond** to accepting God's offer of forgiveness.

The Apostle John gives us the two ways to respond...

John 3:36 (ESV) Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

The *first way* to respond is you can REFUSE to believe in Jesus as your Savior.

If you do, God's wrath will remain on you, which will eventually result in your physical death and eternal separation from Him.

The *second way* you can respond is by believing in Jesus.

God has already done everything necessary for you to have a relationship with Him.

Will you now take a step of faith toward Him?

In this moment, will you speak the following words to God from a genuine heart?

God, I believe that You are the Creator of all things.

You alone are worthy to be worshiped.

You are righteous, holy, and justified in punishing sin.

I know I was born into sin...far from You.

I am disobedient and deserving of Your wrath.

But I believe You sent your Son, Jesus.

He lived a life without sin.

He died on a cross to absorb Your wrath for all who would believe.

Three days after His death, I believe Jesus rose again to secure eternal life for those who believe.

I this moment I repent of my sins, believe in Jesus, and choose to follow Him.

If you just spoke those words from your heart and called on the Lord to forgive You, will you take one more step?

This may sound impersonal, but we're choosing to use technology for good.

Will you visit thesummit.life/easter and click on the I BELIEVE button?

That will let us know you're choosing to believe in Jesus today.

We want to send you some FREE resources.

Will you do that right now?

Maybe you have believed, but have never declared that publicly by being baptized...
...or, you need prayer or just want to connect with us.

You can also visit thesummit.life/easter to respond to any part of this message.