

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday April 21, 2019. "Encounters: Easter", intro "Surviving the Worst Thing Ever".

A. Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work thru from the message this past Sunday. Whether you were able to attend the worship service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper in your own spiritual walk.

Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

B. Recap Series.

We're in our last week of the "**Encounter**" series. A look at people who had a significant, life-changing "**Encounter**" with the person of Jesus, and how that "**Encounter**" impacted and changed the direction of their lives. We're using these "**Encounters**" with Jesus, to draw out powerful truths, and examining how we can apply them to our everyday life also.

C. Sunday.

Sunday was Easter...and all that comes with that. Sweet threads, cute kids, and lots of candy. It was also a split message Sunday. The first half dealt with the Easter resurrection account, and the second half was an introduction to the next series. We'll spend some time talking about each.

First, the Easter message began with two thought provoking questions, and then a dive into the passage that actually asks the same question.

Who are you looking for?

Why are you here?

Is there a bigger more meaningful thing you're looking for?

Go ahead and answer the questions. **Why do you gather with a group of people, on a Sunday?**

D. Scripture.

The scripture was also divided in half between the two messages, but we'll have you read it in its entirety at once. Then we'll divide up the discussion between the two messages from Sunday.

The passage was **John 20:11-18**.

When the women got to the tomb, and it was empty, they had no idea what to do. Jesus had hinted in cryptic ways the temple would be destroyed and rebuilt in three days. But sometimes Jesus was difficult to understand, and they were not expecting this. They had come to prepare the body for final burial, and this just blew their mind. And being in the middle of having all of this be revealed, it was difficult to gain any perspective that would help them wrap their minds around it.

Think back to a time you were in the middle of something very traumatic, maybe even devastating.

What was your frame of mind?

How did it feel being in the middle of it?

What were your specific struggles?

The women at the tomb, and the disciples, didn't have the bible. They didn't know how things would turn out. What seemed impossible, unbelievable, not even imaginable, was actually happening... and being revealed to them in the moment. And these women didn't know what to do with it. And even though we have 2,000 years of perspective, study, scholarly commentary... **we don't know exactly what to do with the resurrection either.**

That event dramatically altered the life of all of those who followed Jesus. Because that's what real **"Encounters"** do. The early followers had to grapple with the fact Jesus had been resurrected.

We were left with two truths from the Easter story Sunday morning.

1. Our God is alive.

He's not a concept, an idea, a list of rules, some book, or anything like that. We gather here because hundreds of people saw Jesus after he had died, shared the stories, and after over 300 years later it was eventually condensed into a book. It was the resurrection that fueled the early followers. Many of us could share so many real stories of how this event changed our lives.

So, **our faith and hope is placed, securely grounded, in this truth that God is alive, and has power over death.**

2. We believe in the power of personal transformation.

We believe we are not stuck in who we are. We don't have to settle for a life the world tells us we have to live. We believe in a power to; **redeem impossible situations, restore broken things, overcome obstacles, fight big battles, and thru all of that be transformed into something better.**

We will still bare the marks, of what we've been thru, our scars tell the story of our life. But on the other side of crucifixion, something really tough, the 'worst thing ever', is this thing called **resurrection**. From hard and broken things comes something new and different. **To transform us ... because there is always hope.**

How do you engage the Easter story? What does it mean for you?

The second message introduced the next series; **"Surviving the Worst Thing Ever"**. Or how to take those worst moments of our life, and make something beautiful and meaningful out of them. There are, and will be, things that happen to us that just crumble the foundation from underneath us. And more often than not, they also dismantle whatever faith system we have build over the years to explain God and how he works. This feels really scary when this happens. Our beliefs are challenged, but it is a very normal part of life. And what the followers of Jesus had to do, when they saw him resurrected. But we will grow spiritually when we can 'let go' of outdated beliefs about God and thru those horrible events rebuild our understanding of God into one that has meaning for us as adults. So...to get you started.

When was your faith shattered and how did you respond?

Join us over the next couple of weeks as we look at how we can **"Survive the Worst Thing Ever"**.