



## Parkway Fellowship

The Message of Easter • John 3:16; Matthew 28:18-20; Philippians 3:10a • 04/21/2019

### Main Point

The message of Easter is that God deeply loves us and makes His resurrection power available to us.

### Introduction

Use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What favorite Easter memories do you have from childhood?**

**What traditions does your family have surrounding Easter now?**

**For believers walking with the Lord, every day should reflect Christ's death and resurrection.**

**Why, then, is it important to celebrate Easter once a year?**

We know that Easter is about far more than bunnies and eggs. Still, we might find ourselves sometimes forgetting the depth of the Easter message and its implications in our daily lives. Christ's resurrection assures us that God loves us deeply and that His power is available to us. Those truths let us know there should be some implications for the way we live.

### Understanding

Use this section to read the Bible together and talk about it.

| Ask a volunteer to read John 3:16.

**What words from this passage help us understand the manner of God's love for us?**

**What did God's love lead Him to do? Why is this such a big deal?**

**Read also Ephesians 2:8-9 and Acts 16:30-31. What does God offer us through Jesus?**

Instead of leaving us to die in our sin, God sent Jesus to die for us. He's the perfect solution to our sin problem, rescuing us from the punishment we deserve. Out of His deep love for us, God sent Jesus to

accomplish our salvation on the cross. John 3:16 tells us that whoever believes in Jesus gains eternal life, which is eternity in the presence of God. When we believe in Jesus we believe in both His identity as the Son of God and His work—His death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. Salvation is something we could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. God’s love provided salvation for the world through the gift and sacrifice of His Son, but salvation comes only to those who believe in Christ.

| Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 28:18-20.

**Does it surprise you to read that, knowing some of them doubted Him as they worshiped, Jesus responded as He did in verses 18-20?**

**Why did Jesus lead His command with a statement of His authority? In what is His authority rooted?**

**In verses 18-20, where do you see reason for joy? Hope? Purpose? Victory?**

Jesus’ authority and presence empowered His disciples then and still empowers His followers now to fulfill His commission. His resurrection power is available to us! Jesus’ first disciples did not evangelize and disciple others based on their own strength. In the midst of their struggles, Jesus empowered them with courage, love, and joy. He empowers all believers. The enemy will continue his attempts to dissuade and defeat us, but the resurrected Christ secures the hope, joy, purpose, and ultimate victory of every person who trusts in Him.

| Ask a volunteer to read Philippians 3:10a.

**What was the focus of Paul's life?**

**Does Paul’s goal in Philippians 3:10 sound possible for most people? For you? Why or why not?**

**What things do you do to get to know Christ and the power of His resurrection?**

Demonstrating the lack of importance of earthly things, Paul expressed what life truly meant to him. He desired resurrection from the dead, so he pursued the only way that promised resurrection. The Damascus road experience transformed him. He discovered that Judaism with its traditions, regulations, and rituals could not guarantee resurrection. Only the resurrected One could. This changed Paul’s aim in life. He wanted to know Christ and the power of His resurrection. To know Christ meant much more than knowing about Him in his mind. Knowledge is a relational term of intimacy. Paul wanted the closest possible personal relationship with Christ.

## Application

Discuss how to apply what you have studied.

**How do you know that God deeply loves you, personally? What are some hangups that sometimes get in the way of knowing He loves you deeply?**

**Would you say that you are currently living in resurrection power? Why or why not?**

**How does God want His deep love and resurrection power to impact your life, not only when you die, but right now?**

## Pray

Thank Jesus for sacrificing His life on your behalf and conquering death so that you can experience the fullness of God's love and power. Ask Him to let the resurrection change your perspective and behavior in the day to day so that you might truly know Him and give Him the glory He is due all the days of your life.

## Commentary

| John 3:16

Eternal life comes not because of anything we do. Salvation comes as a free gift when we believe what God has said. “Whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” Four times in three verses (vv. 16-18) Jesus uses variations of the word “believe,” perhaps the most important key word in John’s Gospel. Jesus classified the entire human race into two groups—those who believe and are not condemned, and those who do not believe and are condemned already. The gospel begins with God’s love, continues through the cross and the empty tomb, and results in eternal life for those who believe. The verb “perish” speaks of eternal death in contrast to eternal life. It represents the opposite of preservation, since death is the opposite of life. Those who refuse God’s gift are alienated from Him without hope for both the present and the future.

| Matthew 28:18-20

28:18 Before the resurrection, Jesus had authority (7:29; 9:6,8; 11:27; 21:23). However, through the resurrection, the Father granted Him all authority over heaven and... earth, an authority far greater than that which Satan had vainly promised Him.

28:19 The command to extend their mission worldwide brings to a climax Matthew’s repeated theme of Gentile participation in God’s salvation. The inclusion of four Gentile women in Jesus’ genealogy and the summons of the magi to worship the infant Christ foreshadowed the disciples’ mission of making disciples of

all nations. Baptism marked a person's entrance into the faith community. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is a reference to the Trinity. Matthew's language shows that a clear understanding of Jesus' nature and identity as God was required before baptism.

28:20 The Great Commission (vv. 19-20) is preceded by a reference to Jesus' authority and followed by the promise of Jesus' spiritual presence among us. Both are necessary if we are to fulfill our God-given mission.

## | Philippians 3:10

Paul wanted to know Christ in the sense of experiencing an ever-deepening relationship with Him (v. 10). In that intimate relationship, Paul wanted to have the power of His resurrection. He wanted his life and service infused with the same power that raised Christ from the dead. Resurrection power would enable him (and all believers) to be victorious over sin, to grow spiritually, and to minister effectively. In union with Christ, Paul wanted to experience the fellowship of His sufferings. Paul viewed his hardships as Christ's emissary to be an extension of Christ's sufferings; he readily shared those sufferings, albeit to a lesser degree than his Lord. Part of Paul's goal was to be conformed to Christ's death. As did Jesus (see 2:7), Paul wanted to pour himself out in service to others. Paul wanted the same kind of obedience, selflessness, and self-sacrifice Christ demonstrated. This attitude involved Paul's death to sin and self in order to live for God and others.