

Easter: Personal Reflections

Mark 16:1-8

April 20, 2025

HDBC

At its heart, Easter is a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ 2000 years ago. However, as with many other holidays it has attracted all kinds of trappings and additions that its true meaning has become somewhat obscured in our culture.

We send mixed signals which cloud the truth! I'm not opposed to the trappings of Easter. Have fun. However, as you enjoy those things, **please** remember the real meaning and teach it to your kids! They are often confused as well.

A Sunday School teacher looked at her class of four-year-olds and asked this question: Does any know what today is? A little girl held up her hand and said, Yes, today is Palm Sunday. The teacher exclaimed, That's fantastic. That's wonderful. Now does anyone know what next Sunday is.

The same little girl held up her hand. Next Sunday is Easter Sunday. Once again the teacher said, That's fantastic. Now, does anyone know what makes next Sunday Easter? The same little girl responded and said, Yes, next Sunday is Easter because Jesus rose from the grave. Before the teacher could congratulate her, she kept on talking and said, But if he sees his shadow, he has to go back in for seven weeks.

Well, this morning I want us to read the truth about Easter from God's Word. Then I want to offer some personal reflections or takeaways. There are only three. Why only three? The older I get and the more experienced I am with preaching and teaching the more aware I am of the limited capacity most of us have to absorb truth and then apply it to our lives. Especially on this important Sunday, I would rather keep it simple and easily understood. Simple is generally better. **The brilliant Albert Einstein would agree.**

Kevin Lemon wrote a book titled ***Adolescence Isn't Terminal***. Thank goodness for that. He includes an interesting story about Einstein.

In the late 1930's, a young golf instructor had the task of trying to teach the game to the renowned physicist, Albert Einstein. Unfortunately what Einstein had in mental ability he lacked in physical dexterity. His hand-eye coordination wasn't the best, and he kept missing many of his shots. After each miss, the golf pro dutifully pointed out what he had done wrong.

Take the club back slowly.

Choke up on the club.

Keep your head down.

Don't open up the club face.

You're jerking the club when you transition into your downswing.

Finally an obviously frustrated Einstein asked the young pro to hand him a few balls, which he did. He then threw all four balls at the pro at once and yelled ***Catch!***

The pro dodged, but did not even catch one ball. Einstein raised his finger and said, ***young man, if I throw you one ball, you can catch it. If I throw four at once, you can't catch even one. So, when you teach, make only one point at a time.***

So, my intention is to give you one point at a time, and to limit the number to three. Three reflections on the resurrection of Jesus that I believe can be life-changing, if we believe and apply them. So, let's read the resurrection story written by a man named Mark, who wrote first account of Jesus' life.

READ Mark 16:1-8

Let's assume that it happened just as Mark reported. I happen to believe it did. All Christians do. Belief in the resurrection of Jesus is foundational to our faith. If you do not believe the resurrection of Jesus, YOU ARE NOT A CHRISTIAN! It is that simple.

So, let's consider three implications of the resurrection of Jesus.

Because of the resurrection . . .

1. Jesus can be trusted *He has risen* (6)

There were two things that Jesus repeatedly said to his disciples and others which were routinely dismissed. The religious leaders rejected the first as ludicrous. His own disciples struggled to believe the second.

First, Jesus claimed to be the Messiah. He claimed to be the divine Son of God. This was something the seasoned but crusty religious leaders could not stomach. They believed in a Messiah. They believed a Messiah would come. They just did not believe it could be Jesus.

He was too common for them. The son of a carpenter. No formal religious education. He was far outside the normal pipeline that had produced the great religious leaders of their day. And besides that, he refused to follow the normal patterns of teaching. He ignored their invented religious guidelines. He preached grace, love, forgiveness.

He was too human to be divine.

So, they dismissed Him and they killed Him.

Second, Jesus claimed He would be killed, then resurrected.

Many of the religious leaders believed in a resurrection, the kind that would come at the end of the age. This is not what Jesus was talking about. He claimed He would be resurrected on the third day after His death. It would be timely. It would be verifiable. It would change the course of history.

Even His closest disciples struggled to believe this. This was evident in their responses when He explained that it would happen. It was evident in how they responded after He was killed. One thing seems certain in the hours after his death; they were not anticipating His resurrection on the third day. They did not believe it.

Now, watch what Mark wrote in verse 6. He recorded the simple words of the angel, *He has risen*. As they gazed at the empty tomb they realized the statement was true. There was no dead body in that cave and the explanation from the angel visitor was that *He had done just what he said He would do*.

But when they saw the empty tomb, saw His body, heard His voice and recognized His mannerisms, they believed. They knew it was Him. They were eyewitnesses, ear witnesses. Even touched Him. He was not some apparition. He was not some hallucination.

He was alive, and they knew it. The Roman government had confirmed His death. Now they confirmed His life. He said He would do it and He did! **He can be trusted.**

If Jesus is not who He said He was, our faith crumbles. For it is all built upon Him. If Jesus was not resurrected, then He can't be trusted and our faith is useless. But He was resurrected and therefore can be trusted.

This is one of many key differences between Christianity and every other major world religion. The leaders of all those religions were buried and their decaying bodies remain right where they were deposited.

Jesus is uniquely qualified to be trusted.

2. Shattered dreams can be restored *He is not here* (6)

An occupied tomb represents shattered dreams. It is true today and it was true then. Apart from the occupied grave they could have held out hope that He had not really died. But when the body was wrapped in grave clothes, then was placed in a tomb that was sealed by the Roman government, they knew He was dead. And when His body died and was buried, their dreams also died and were buried. That ***occupied tomb screamed your dreams are over***.

But what if the stone was rolled away? What if the tomb was no longer occupied? What if that place of shattered dreams was now an empty cave? That would reverse their heartache, bring light into darkness, and restore their broken dreams. The empty tomb changed everything. Even as the occupied tomb signaled the shattering of their dreams, **the empty tomb resurrected and restored their dreams.**

The disciples had not only put all their hopes and dreams in Jesus, but they had put their very lives on the line for Him. They had walked away from work, from families, from friends and from a stale, useless religion to follow Him. Now He was dead. For parts of three days they pondered what this meant for their futures. They grieved, they worried, and they likely struggled with fear.

But throughout the day on Sunday, they heard unusual reports. The tomb had been opened. Angels had appeared and spoken. The body was not there. Before the day was over most of them had personally witnessed the resurrected Jesus. They knew that it was Him. They had spent three years up close and personal. He had indeed come back from the dead. And with His resurrection from the dead, their shattered dreams were also resurrected.

Have you ever had your dreams and hopes shattered? To one degree or another most of us have. Several years ago I shared with you the story of Chippie the parakeet. But it's worth repeating.

Chippie the parakeet never saw it coming. One minute he was peacefully perched inside his birdcage, and the next he was sucked in, washed up and blown over. His problems began when Chippie's owner decided to vacuum out his bird cage.

She stuck the attachment inside the cage, and about that time the telephone rang distracting her. When she turned, Chippie was gone. She immediately hung up the telephone and looked inside the vacuum

cleaner bag – sure enough, Chippie was there – alive, but stunned.

Since he was covered with dirt and debris, she grabbed him and raced down the hallway to the bathroom where she stuck him under the faucet and ran cold water over him for two minutes. She then realized that the bird was soaked and shivering, so she did what any compassionate bird-owner would do – she reached for her hair dryer and blasted the bird with hot air. Poor Chippie never knew what hit him.

Several days later, the reporter who covered the story called to see how Chippie's recovery was coming along. The owner said, "Well, Chippie doesn't sing much anymore. He just sits and stares."

Well, I guess so! After being sucked in, washed up and blown over, that's enough to take the song from the stoutest of hearts. When circumstances suddenly change for the worst and take us out of our peaceful territory, it's never an easy adjustment. In this world, plans are interrupted, desires go unfulfilled, and dreams are shattered

Maybe you've experienced some broken dreams. I suspect you have. You are in good company with the disciples. Things had gone great for them. For 3 years they traveled with Jesus, saw him perform miracles, and trusted Him deeply. Then, in a flash, He was dead and buried. We can only imagine the roller coaster of emotions they experienced while the body of Jesus was in that grave.

But then something happened. Jesus came out of that grave, very much alive. He defeated death! Another place in the Bible tells us that when the disciples heard the news, **They were overjoyed!** I imagine that's an understatement. Their song had grown silent, but now they had reason to celebrate. Their shattered dream was restored.

Jesus can be trusted.

Shattered Dreams can be restored.

3. Our failures can be forgiven *Tell his disciples, and Peter* (7)

I don't think it's any coincidence that the discovery of the empty tomb took place, *very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise*.

It was dawn, the first day of a new week. A new beginning, a fresh start. No one would have appreciated this more than Peter. He was one of Jesus' disciples, and promised Jesus early on Good Friday that he would always stick by Jesus no matter what happened.

Peter, like the other disciples, fled when Jesus was arrested. But he also carries the distinction of being the one who denied knowing Jesus 3 times that same night. He sinned. He failed Jesus, in a big-time way.

Much of what Mark learned about the life of Jesus; he learned from Peter. As Peter gets to this part in the story about Jesus rising from the dead – and he begins to say those words of the angel, he might have gotten a lump in his throat just saying them...

Go, tell his disciples and Peter! Make sure Peter knows that Jesus rose from the dead – because as guilty as he feels right now, he especially needs to know that he can have a fresh start.

Perhaps you've experienced some failures. Maybe you're feeling guilty. Sometimes you wish you could just start over. Maybe you could use a fresh start on life – b/c Jesus rose from the dead you can have one! It's called new birth and it happens by letting Jesus Christ into your life. When you believe in him and admit your need for His help, He will forgive you of everything you've done wrong.

Because of Easter . . .

Jesus can be trusted

Shattered dreams can be restored

Our failures can be forgiven

One of the most important battles ever fought was on June 8, 1815 in Belgium, at a place called Waterloo. England, under the command of General Wellington joined forces with the Dutch, the Belgians and the Prussians to defeat a military genius by the name of Napoleon.

The battle raged on and on, and all of England waited for word that would come out of Belgium. There were no radios, no phones. A ship would flash a message through light signals from the battlefield to another spot who in turn would signal to England.

On the final day the ship got as close as they could to the battle and as the signal came back, England wondered who was winning the war. Then one of those dense fogs set in that England is so famous for. Just as the message was flashed, "Wellington Defeated", but they couldn't make out the rest of it, due to the fog.

So, they went to bed that night convinced of defeat and wondering how soon it would be until the army of France would march into the streets of England. But early the next morning the fog lifted and they could read the whole message, "Wellington defeated the enemy at Waterloo."

On that Judean hillside, Jesus was crucified. A spiritual fog certainly engulfed the disciples, the region and the world. There was uncertainty about the outcome. But on Sunday, the evidence that began with an empty tomb and angel messengers soon included multiple witnesses who encountered the resurrected Jesus in places throughout the region. Quickly the narrative changed from defeat to uncertainty to clear victory.

JESUS WINS!

He can be trusted.

Shattered dreams can be restored.

Failures can be forgiven.