

Risen
My Friend Jesus
March 27, 2016

PRELUDE – He Knows My Name

Greeting: Nathan

Worship Song – The Saving One

Video – Our Saving One

Worship Song – This is Amazing Grace

Announcements – Shannon

**Feature Song – The Sound That Saved Us
All / Offering**

As I said a few minutes ago, today is the day that we especially remember what Jesus of Nazareth did to become our savior.

- We remember that on a hill outside Jerusalem on a Friday afternoon he

was crucified and died on a Roman cross to atone for every sin – past, present and future – of every person who would believe in Him and what he did. We remember that amazing grace and that amazing love God offered to us not because we are good but because *He* is good.

- And then, of course, we remember that on Sunday morning Jesus rose from the dead.

And, as we saw in last week's message, His resurrection was *not* a story made up by people who didn't want what Jesus stood for – his ministry and his teaching – to die along with him. Nor was it a series of mass hallucinations or mass visions of Jesus as a ghost or a spirit. The resurrection of Jesus

that was proclaimed by the disciples all over the Roman world (and is still proclaimed all over the entire world even today) was *real*. God raised him up in a new kind of physical body that will never get sick or die, the same kind of body he promises to one day give to everyone who believes.

For 40 days after that, Jesus taught and prepared his disciples for their mission of spreading the good news. And then he returned to his Father in Heaven where he awaits the command to come back and complete the restoration of all creation that first began in his very own body.

Now, if you don't have a lot of experience in church or if you've heard a lot of skepticism expressed towards Christianity

(which seems to be ever-increasing in our culture), all of that may be a little hard to believe. But, in last week's message ...

I explained why believing in the literal resurrection of Jesus does *not* require “blind faith.”

It's actually the most logical conclusion that fits the facts as we know them – and not simply the facts as presented in the writings of the first disciples – but what we know of what happened historically in the years after the first Easter Sunday.

I also showed why it is not ignorant or irrational to believe in Jesus and his resurrection.

There are lots and lots of very intelligent people (smarter than most of us) who have analyzed the historical data and believe the

claim to be true.

And if you were not here last Sunday, and you wonder about these things, I want to encourage you to check out the message under the media tab on our app which you can download from the Google Play Store or iTunes. Or you can check it out under the media tab on our website. Whichever way you do it, you can listen to it, watch it or read it. Your choice.

Of course, as I said last week, the point of doing that message wasn't to "prove" anything. The point was to show that ...

The Cross really does mean something: that God is real, His love is real, grace is real, forgiveness is real, and there really is hope for ultimate redemption.

The resurrection is why the cross matters. Without it, death of Jesus has no significance whatsoever. Jesus is just another failed Jewish messiah put down by the Romans. No big deal.

... which is why the Apostle Paul once wrote:

If Christ has not been raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your faith is useless ... if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins.

1 Corinthians 15:14,17
(NLT)

And that is a big deal.

On Wednesday night we had a special service here in this auditorium to remember what Jesus went through in the

hours leading up to His crucifixion. It was awesome and I was pleased that so many folks turned out.

Near the end of the service, we all were given a black piece of paper and a little bit of time to write down a list of sins in our lives – past sins or present sins. And then we were invited to come up to front and take a hammer and a nail, and then nail our paper to that cross you see behind me (which is why it is covered in nails and black paper).

The purpose of that little exercise was to remind us of two things:

- First, that it was *our specific* sins that Jesus had to die for, not just the generic “sins of the world.”

- And second, that because of our faith in Jesus as our savior, those sins (and all the other sins we couldn't think of or didn't have time or space to write down or haven't even yet committed) are forgiven 100%. They're gone, removed as far as the east is from the west because His death was the meeting of eternal, cosmic, Divine justice and eternal, cosmic, Divine grace. Jesus got the justice we deserve. We got grace – favor with God – that we do not deserve and cannot earn.

Now, what we did in nailing our sin list to the cross was such a moving experience that I hope we do it again next year. But without the *resurrection* of Jesus – unless that really happened – it means nothing.

It's just a sentimental ritual that makes us feel good for a moment and nothing more.

It's the *resurrection* of Jesus that gives the *cross* of Jesus its significance. And that's why we make such a big deal of the whole thing – especially on Easter Sunday.

Global Impact

Of course, Jesus' life was about much more than just His death and resurrection. For three-and-a-half years, He traveled the Palestinian countryside teaching people, healing people, loving people, challenging people, sometimes even blasting people as He announced the good news that the Kingdom of God was present in Him and open even to those who thought themselves least qualified to enter in.

And through his ministry and his teaching, the impact Jesus has had on *everyday life* in our world – even up to today, *two thousand years later* – is almost as significant as what he accomplished “spiritually” on Good Friday and Easter Sunday. See, whether you are a Christian or not, whether you believe Jesus existed or not, whether you believe he was who he said he was or not, whether you believe He really did rise from the dead on that first Easter Sunday, Jesus has impacted *your* life in ways you probably aren’t even aware of.

One very simple way ... every time you look at a calendar or write a check, that’s evidence that chronologically, at least, the incredibly brief life of Jesus has somehow become the dividing line of human history.ⁱ

So says pastor and author John Ortberg in his book, *Who Is This Man? The Unpredictable Impact of the Inescapable Jesus ...* in which he details how the teaching and example of Jesus of Nazareth has influenced in a positive way the world you and I live in today.

And I want to take a few minutes this morning to show you some video clips where he talks a little bit about that influence. Here's the first one.

Video Clip - 01 NOBODY ELSE COMES CLOSE (0.7 min)

(Begin) Ortberg: “Even in the first century ...”

(End) Ortberg: “Nobody else even comes close.”

Nobody else even comes close. Even the

names of the primary leaders of the first century world in which Jesus lived – Nero and Caesar – have lost their significance. Today, their names are used – if at all – for pizza parlors, dogs and casinos.

Not so with Jesus. Even today, Ortberg writes, “It is in Jesus’ name that desperate people pray, grateful people worship, and angry people swear. From christenings to weddings to hospital rooms to funerals, it is in Jesus’ name that people are hatched, matched, patched and dispatched.”

But the influence and impact of Jesus goes far beyond just His name. He has touched almost every area of our lives – law, government, economics, the fine arts, science, education, healthcare and family.

Check it out.

Video Clip - 04 MASSIVE IMPACT (4.6 min)

(Begin) Ortberg: “Children would be thought of differently.”

(End) Orberg: “... an act of moral beauty.”

Those are just a few of the areas in which Jesus – and the people who followed Him – has had an impact, shaping the world you and I live in.

I wish we had time to see more of that clip, but I want to drill down a bit on the idea that people ought to be valued no matter who they are, because it is so prevalent in our culture. Guess where that idea first came from?

Let’s watch.

Video Clip - 03 “EVERY HUMAN MATTERS” (1.4 min)

(Begin) Ortberg: “People have always been moved by pity.”

(End) Ortberg: “... came to the broader world through Him.”

And I think what Ortberg said there was very important. We’ve inherited this idea but we take it for granted that it’s always been this way. It hasn’t been.

Of course, a skeptic would say to that “well, what about all the bad stuff done in Jesus name through the centuries? Times when people haven’t been treated as if they matter?”

Listen to how Ortberg responds.

Video Clip - 02 WHEN CHRISTIANS GET IT WRONG (0.6 min)

(Begin) Ortberg: “Those of us who are Christians ...”

(End) Ortberg: “... a self-correcting reforming tendency.”

<SLIDE SET 2>

“There’s something about Jesus’ teaching and life that has a self-correcting reforming tendency.”

And that’s true.

For example, even though some Christians were slave owners, it was the self-correcting reforming aspect of Jesus teaching that led other Christians (like William Wilberforce) to work to shut it down.

And it was the self-correcting reforming aspect of Jesus' teaching that produced not only a Martin Luther King Jr. (who, as we saw in a message back in January, was first and foremost a pastor); it also was the reason so many white Southern Christians eventually repented of their racist views and supported the Civil Rights Movement.

And I don't think the positive significance of this aspect of Jesus' influence can be overstated because this is exactly what's missing in Islam. And I'm a little hesitant to say this because I don't want to come off as bashing another religion, but the great struggle for Muslim theologians today is that they can't reconcile the peace-oriented teaching of The Prophet with his jihadist teaching. There's no consistency to produce that inherent self-correction in his

followers which is why ISIS and the like continue to use his words as justification for their atrocities.

There's just something qualitatively different about Jesus' teaching.

Now, at this point, I'm sure that some of you are thinking, "OK, Rick, this is all really interesting; you're telling me stuff I haven't heard of before – and that's cool – but what's your point? What are you getting at?"

Here's what I'm getting at. A while back, I read about a guy who did a survey of 300 college students who claimed to be agnostic. He asked them one question: "what is the main reason why you are not a

Christian (why you're not a believer in Jesus, why you're not a follower of Jesus)?”

The number one answer was “because I do not find Jesus, or the Church or Christianity to be relevant to my life.”

What they were saying was “Jesus might be a big deal in some cosmic spiritual sense. He might even be a big deal to people who, by nature, are religious or to people who are in some kind of crisis and need something to lean on. But, for me, personally, I can't connect the dots between Jesus and my everyday life.”

And my purpose in telling you all of this is to point out to you that, whether you realize it or not, *Jesus is already relevant to your life*. Your life wouldn't be as good as it is without His influence in history! He's

that big of a deal. He's that relevant.

But, you know what? He can be *even more* relevant to you. He can be relevant when you walk out that door this morning. He can be relevant when you get up tomorrow morning. Jesus' impact is not only cosmic and eternal. It's not only historical and cultural. Jesus' impact is personal.

Or at least, it can be.

A Personal Impact

And I believe that to be true because of the impact He has had on *me*. I've been a Christian for many years, since I was 15 years old, actually. And as I look back over those years, I can see four specific ways that Jesus has been a relevant part of my

everyday life.

And I debated sharing this, because I don't want anyone thinking that this is something specific to me or special about me because it's not. In fact, I'm pretty sure that a lot of people in this room who are Christians would be able say what I'm about to say because this is how Jesus is a relevant part of their life, too.

1. First of all, Jesus is my Teacher.

And, some of you are thinking, "Wait a minute, Rick. Jesus isn't physically with us. He's not doing messages over the internet or on TV or in churches anywhere. How can he be your teacher?"

Thankfully, we have his words and the words of his closest followers recorded in

the Bible. We have the stories of the things he did and how he treated people as examples for us to follow. That's how He is my teacher.

And His teaching has impacted my life and continues to impact my life. For example ...

- It's impacted the way I think about God.
- It's impacted the way I think about myself.
- It's impacted the way I look at money and possessions.
- It's impacted the way I think about the all of the evil and suffering in this world. (Specifically that this isn't all there is – there truly is a day of justice and redemption coming).
- It's impacted how I handle it when

people hurt me intentionally or unintentionally.

I could go on and on but, most importantly, Jesus' teaching has had in my life that self-correcting reforming tendency that Ortberg was talking about.

Just one example: When I first became a Christian, I used to think it was so important to win an argument in anything that had to do with religion and theology. I was a soldier for Jesus. But Jesus corrected that. From Him, I've learned that it's more important to win the person because you can win the argument and lose the person.

Here's another way Jesus is relevant to my life.

2. In addition to being my teacher, Jesus is also my Leader.

And that means that his teaching is more than just a suggestion or good advice. It's something to be followed and obeyed as much as possible.

Many of you know that I like to play golf. And you also know that I am just a little bit competitive – I don't like losing and I don't like doing something unless I can do it well – which is why over the years I've invested a little bit of time and money in trying to become a better golfer.

Now, the best way to do that is to find a teacher: someone who is more accomplished and knows more than you do. And over the years, I have gone to golf schools and I have signed up for courses

over the internet.

But the thing I've noticed about every one of those teachers – actually, this is more about *me* than *them* – is that when they say you should do or not do something with your stance or your head or your takeaway, a lot of times I think to myself, “Well, thank you for your input. I'll take that under advisement. I'll think about it and maybe I'll even try to do it.”

That's because those teachers are to me *advisors* whose counsel I can accept, reject or modify as I see fit.

Not so with Jesus. I've invited him to be more than that. He's my *leader* which means that ...

- Even though I don't always *like* what He says ...
- Even though it's hard sometimes ...
- Even though it sometimes doesn't make sense at first ...
- Even though things don't always work out the way I think they should ...

... in the end, for me, Jesus is the ultimate authority. He's the boss.

Or, to use the biblical terminology, "Jesus is King of Kings and Lord of Lords."

And knowing Jesus in that way – trying to follow Him as my leader – has so impacted my life.

- It's why I live in Kansas City today instead of on the East Coast or in Texas.
- It's why I have the kind of family I have.
- It's why I'm doing what I'm doing today instead of being a software engineer.
- It's why Jetta and I have given away more of our income than either of us would have ever imagined.
- And, quite frankly, it's why even though I'm still a recovering jerk in a lot of ways, I'm a lot easier to get along with than I used to be. That truly is all

because of the influence of Jesus.

And I could go on and on but I think you get the idea: Jesus is relevant to my everyday life because He is my teacher and He is my leader.

But He's more than that.

3. He's also my Friend.

And I realize that may sound a little weird because, again, Jesus isn't physically present and walking on this earth any longer.

But there is something going on spiritually which allows me to experience His presence in a way that's not typical of earthly friendships. The friendship of Jesus is something I experience through the Holy

Spirit.

On the night before his death, Jesus told his disciples:

“Unless I go away, the Paraclete [a Greek word meaning comforter, encourager, counselor] will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.” John 16:7 (TNIV)

What Jesus was promising his disciples is that, even though he was going to return to Heaven, they would still have a relationship with him; a friendship with him, through the Holy Spirit who comes to live in us when we open our hearts and receive Jesus.

And having Jesus as my friend has impacted my life because I can talk to him and I know he’s listening because the Spirit is in me.

But not only does he listen, like a good friend, through the Holy Spirit, he comforts and encourages and counsels me.

- He helps me with how I feel about myself which is something I've struggled from time to time. (If Jesus likes me, it's not so important what anyone else thinks).
- When I feel like I've been treated unfairly, the Spirit reminds me that Jesus has suffered the worst kind of treatment and He made it through and He encourages me that I will, too.

And I could go on and on but I think you get the idea: Jesus is relevant to my everyday life because He is my friend ... as well as my teacher and leader.

Unfortunately, however, there's a really big problem with everything I just told you. Actually, there are several problems:

- I don't always pay attention to his teaching. Actually, to be honest with you, there are times when I intentionally tune him out. I turn him off; I don't want to hear what he has to say.
- There are times in my life when I don't follow his leadership; times when I decide my way is better than His; times that I decide that even though His way is better, I'm doing it my way anyway.

- There are times when I am a terrible friend to Jesus, even though he is a perfect friend to me; times when, to quote the Apostle Paul, I “grieve the Holy Spirit” that is in me because of my attitudes and my actions; because of my words and my deeds.

And, friends, all that I just described is what the Bible calls “sin” ... which simply means “falling short” or “missing the mark.” See, the truth about me is that I am a sinner. I fall short, I miss the mark of who and what God has intended for me to be and do.

And that means that Jesus is relevant to my everyday life not only as my friend, my teacher and my leader. He’s relevant because I desperately need a savior.

4. And He is my Savior.

... which brings us all the way back to where we started.

Because of what Jesus did on the cross, I don't have to be responsible for atoning for my sin. In fact, *I can't* do it. The Bible says that all of the things we try to do to clean up, cover up or make up for our sin – none of them work.

But a lot of people are confused about that. A lot of people think that in order to have a relationship with God – in order for him to be a relevant part of their life as teacher, leader and friend – they have to do something to fix their sin.

In fact, for a lot of people, that's what they

think Christianity is all about: *that you do stuff to get back into God's favor* and then, when you do get back into God's favor, you better make sure you don't mess up again because then you'll *fall out of favor*. For a lot of people, Christianity is spelled "D O" ... do. You've got to do this; You've got to do that. And then maybe, just maybe, you'll be good enough.

But that's just wrong.

The Apostle Paul explains why. He writes ...

The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23 (TNIV)

Because all of us are sinners, Paul is saying, all of us are dead spiritually. And dead

people can't do anything to help themselves.

But we don't need to because the good news is that Christianity is *not* spelled "D O" do. It's spelled "D O N E" ... done. Jesus has already *done* what needs to be accomplished for us on the cross. Salvation is a *gift* that's waiting to be received. And once it's received, it's ours permanently, forever.

"Never will I leave you," Jesus says. "Never will I forsake you. No one who comes to me will perish. I give them eternal life, and no one will ever snatch them out of my hand."

Conclusion

And that's the thought I want to leave you

with this morning. What Jesus did on the cross and in his resurrection, he did for you. It's already done. And he can be your savior, your friend, your leader, your teacher for the asking. Some of you need to do that today – ask Him.

And let's do that right now.

Let's pray.

<prayer>

Feature Song – You Will Never Run

CLOSING COMMENTS

Ok a couple of things before we leave this morning.

1. If you want to learn more about

knowing Jesus, we have a special class called “Starting Point” which will begin on Sunday April 10th. It runs during the 10:30 service so you come to church at 9. Details in the program.

2. Also, don't forget this is the last day to register for the married couples “I'm a Fool For You” event this Friday evening. Stop by the table in the commons.
3. Finally, has anybody here heard of this guy Donald Trump? Between him and Hillary and Bernie and Ted there sure is a lot of political angst that's out there these days. Next Sunday ... talk about that ... but not political.

Endnotes

ⁱ From John Ortberg's small group study of his book, *Who Is This Man? ...* which can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kkyWFMfBagA>