

EASTER April 5th 2026

The reversal at the cross

MATTHEW 27:27-50

This image from the NAKED PASTOR *challenges me every Easter*. It quietly confronts me with the question: what have I made of the cross and resurrection this year in my life? Did I make the cross of Jesus into something **that's all about me**? Or is it still a moment of reverence and worship and repentance?

What does Easter actually mean to you...right now?

Because for a lot of us, **life feels heavy right now**.

- Maybe it's the **chaos in the world** – the violence and bombs being dropped and division and anger.
- Maybe it's *something closer to home* – like a relationship that's not what it used to be.
- Maybe you're **just tired**. Tired of trying. *Tired of pretending you're okay*.
- Or maybe you're here SIMPLY BECAUSE IT'S EASTER. And this is just what you do.

But what if Easter speaks into all of that?

What if Easter isn't just a tradition? What if Easter is a reversal?

A moment where **everything looked like it was falling apart** BUT GOD was putting everything back together.

In **MATTHEW 27**, we're brought right to the cross.

- It's uncomfortable. It's raw. It's brutal.
 - ⇒ The religious leaders who were supposed to recognize Jesus – **rejected Him**.
 - ⇒ His closest friends **ran away**.
- Jesus is **dragged from trial to trial**. No JUSTICE. No FAIRNESS.
- *A criminal is set free*. Jesus is sentenced to die.
- From the outside, it looks like the **worst day in human history**.
- But behind the scenes God is rewriting the future.
- It reminds me of the words of **WATCHMAN NEE**.

Our old history ends with the cross. Our new history begins with the
resurrection.

Verses 27-31

Some of the governor's soldiers took Jesus into their headquarters and called out the entire regiment. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him. They wove thorn branches into a crown and put it on his head, and they placed a reed stick in his right hand as a sceptre.

Then they knelt before him in mockery and taunted, "Hail! King of the Jews!" //

// And they spit on him and grabbed the stick and struck him on the head with it. When they were finally tired of mocking him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him again. Then they led him away to be crucified.

MATTHEW 27:27-31 NLT

- Hundreds of soldiers SURROUNDED **one unarmed man**.
- They **BEAT** Him. They **MOCK** Him. They **HUMILIATE** Him.
 - ⇒ They put a robe on Him.
 - ⇒ They jammed a crown of thorns into His head.
 - ⇒ They put a fake scepter in his hand.
 - ⇒ And then they kneel. **Pretending to worship Him**.
- It was BRUTAL. It was DEGRADING. It **stripped Him** of His DIGNITY.
- Jesus looked like a failure. **Naked**. BEATEN. *Powerless*.

But if you look closer. Something else was happening.

They thought they were humiliating a Jew. But instead they were **crowning a King**.

REVERSAL #1: The One they mocked as a fake king is the true King.

- The CROWN wasn't funny. The CROSS wasn't a defeat.
- It was Jesus' **coronation**.
- The APOSTLE PAUL would later write:

Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honour and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

PHILIPPIANS 2:9-11 NLT

- Every KNEE. Every TONGUE.
- Even the **ones who mocked Him** will one day bow before Him.

Resurrection Sunday reminds us:

- If you've ever felt overlooked or dismissed or laughed at or felt not good enough – **you are not alone.**
- Jesus was treated the same. Been there. Done that. Got the T-shirt.
- Easter Sunday reminds us that we don't have to build our identities on *approval* or *success* or *what people think of you*.
 - ⇒ You were **created by God.**
 - ⇒ You are known by God.
 - ⇒ You are *invited into His family.*

Verses 32-37

Along the way, they came across a man named Simon, who was from Cyrene, and the soldiers forced him to carry Jesus' cross. And they went out to a place called Golgotha (which means "Place of the Skull"). The soldiers gave Jesus wine mixed with bitter gall, but when he had tasted it, he refused to drink it. //

// After they had nailed him to the cross, the soldiers gambled for his clothes by throwing dice. Then they sat around and kept guard as he hung there. A sign was fastened above Jesus' head, announcing the charge against him. It read: "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews."

MATTHEW 27:32-37 NLT

- Jesus was so brutally beaten that He COULDN'T even **carry His own cross**.
- The One through whom **God created the world** COULDN'T even carry a piece of wood.
- Then they **nailed** Him to the cross.
- And while He was hanging there. Bleeding. Struggling to breathe.
- The SOLDIERS **sat down and gambled** for His *clothes*.
- Like it was nothing. As if Jesus was nothing.
- *The soldiers saw weakness*.

But here's the reality. Jesus COULDN'T carry a wooden cross but He was **carrying something far heavier**.

REVERSAL #2: the one who couldn't carry his own cross, was strong enough to carry your sin.

- Jesus CARRIED everything wrong in us. Jesus CARRIED everything broken in this world.
 - ⇒ Every **regret**.
 - ⇒ Every **failure**.
 - ⇒ Every moment of **I knew better but I did it anyway**.
- He CARRIED it.
- So, you wouldn't have to. So, I wouldn't have to.
- **CHARLES SPURGEON** said:

In Christ upon the cross we see the Just dying for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. The innocent bearing the crimes of the guilty, that they might be forgiven and accepted.

- I've had moments in my life *where I felt* like I was barely holding it together.
Where everything **just felt heavy**. And I didn't even know *how to pray anymore*.
- But I've learned at the cross and the empty grave:

Jesus never asked me to carry it alone.

- **And He's not asking you to carry it alone either.**
 - ⇒ You don't have to punish yourself for your PAST.
 - ⇒ You don't have to carry guilt forever.
 - ⇒ You don't have to fix yourself before coming to God.
- **The weight has already been carried.**
- The price has already been paid.
- **Jesus already took on everything our sin deserved.**
- But here is the kicker: when I really connect with Jesus, He doesn't leave me the same as I was before. Everything changes.
- The CROSS and the RESURRECTION invite us to turn to Jesus. **To trust Him.**
To start following Him.

Verses 38-44

Two revolutionaries were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. The people passing by shouted abuse, shaking their heads in mockery. "Look at you now!" they yelled at him. "You said you were going to destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days. Well then,

if you are the Son of God, save yourself and come down from the cross!" //

// The leading priests, the teachers of religious law, and the elders also mocked Jesus. "He saved others," they scoffed, "but he can't save himself! So he is the King of Israel, is he? Let him come down from the cross right now, and we will believe in him! He trusted God, so let

God rescue him now if he wants him! For he said, 'I am the Son of God.' Even the revolutionaries who were crucified with him ridiculed him in the same way.

MATTHEW 27:38-44 NLT

- Now everyone joins in. The CROWD and the RELIGIOUS LEADERS and even the CRIMINALS NEXT TO HIM.
- They joke: If you're the Son of God – *come down!*
- And in their mockery, they were right – **Jesus could have come down.**
 - ⇒ He **healed the blind.**
 - ⇒ He **raised the dead.**
 - ⇒ He **fed thousands** with a kid's lunchbox.
- *One word and it would have all been over.*
- **But Jesus stayed.**

It wasn't the nails that held Jesus on the cross. **It was love.** His **indescribable unconditional extravagant** love.

The crowd EXPECTED Him to save Himself. But Jesus stayed on the cross to save us.

REVERSAL #3: the one who didn't save himself, did it to save us.

- You need to hear this before you leave today. *Nobody took Jesus' life 2000 years ago.* Not the Romans. Not the Jews.

- He intentionally gave it away.

⇒ For every time **we fall short.**

⇒ For every time **we hurt others.**

⇒ For every time **we drift from God.**

- One writer said it like this:

For so many centuries people have been spilling blood to get to God. But in the crucifixion it is reversed – God spills his own blood to reach out to us.

RICHARD ROHR

Resurrection Sunday reminds us:

- If you've *ever wondered*: Would God really want someone like me?
- The cross answers that question – **absolutely yes.**
 - ⇒ You DON'T have to pretend. You DON'T have to perform.
 - ⇒ You DON'T have to clean up first.
- God **came for you** as you are.
- *And no one is too far gone.*
- You are not too far gone. Neither is that person that you've given up on.

Verses 45-50

At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock. At about three o'clock, Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" which means "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" Some of the bystanders misunderstood and thought he was calling for the prophet Elijah. //

// One of them ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, holding it up to him on a reed stick so he could drink. But the rest said, "Wait! Let's see whether Elijah comes to save him." Then Jesus shouted out again, and he released his spirit.

MATTHEW 27:45-50 NLT

- **Darkness covered the land.** In that moment Jesus felt completely alone.
- Not because God stopped loving Him.
- Jesus felt alone because He chose to step into everything that separated us from God.
- And He felt the full weight of it.
 - ⇒ The SILENCE.
 - ⇒ The DISTANCE.
 - ⇒ The DARKNESS.

He was without any comforts of God – no feelings that God loved Him – no feelings that God pitied Him – no feelings that God supported Him. God was his sun before – now that sun became darkness...He was without God – he was

as if he had no God. All that God had been to him before was taken from him
now. He was Godless – deprived of his God.

ROBERT MURRAY M'CHEYNE

- But then His FINAL WORDS:

Then Jesus shouted, “Father, I entrust my spirit into your hands!” And with those words he
breathed his last.

LUKE 23:46 NLT

Even though Jesus felt abandoned, He trusted anyway.

REVERSAL #4: the one who cried out in abandonment, trusted God completely.

- In His **darkest moment.** Completely alone. Overwhelmed by His suffering.
- Jesus chose to surrender. Jesus chose to put His **trust in the Father.**

Resurrection Sunday reminds us:

- If you've ever felt like God is FAR AWAY or QUIET or MISSING IN ACTION. **Jesus knows that feeling.**
- Your QUESTIONS don't disqualify you. Your DOUBTS **don't scare God off.**
- Trust isn't some kind of feeling. **It's a choice.**

- To place your life in God's hands, even when you *don't understand*. Even when everything *doesn't add up*.
- To hold on to the promise: **God got this. God got you.**

Sunday morning the women went to the grave. Got the news from an Angel that Jesus has risen from the dead.

The women ran quickly from the tomb. They were very frightened but also filled with great joy, and they rushed to give the disciples the angel's message. And as they went, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they ran to him, grasped his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Don't be afraid! Go tell my brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see me there."

MATTHEW 28:5-10 NLT

What does Easter mean today?

- What looked like defeat – **was the victory.**
- What looked like the end – **was the beginning.**
- Jesus died – but **then He walked out of the grave.**
- The King the world rejected **reigns forever.**

This ISN'T just a story to admire. **It's an invitation.** To you. To you. To me.

And maybe – for the first time – to trust that what Jesus did 2000 years was actually meant for you too.

VIDEO – You need not say goodbye.

The cross of Jesus is saying:

I see you fully. I know your story. I know your mess. And I came for
you anyway.

The resurrection of Jesus is saying:

The worst thing is never the last thing. Not the CROSS. Not your past. Not
your failures. **Because Jesus turns endings into beginnings.**

Jesus TURNS guilt into forgiveness.

Jesus TURNS shame into honor.

Jesus TURNS graves into gardens.

So don't count your story out – He is not done with you yet.

BLESSING

May the God who brought Jesus back to life **fill your heart with a hope that never fades.**

May the risen Christ go ahead of you to lead you. May He **walk beside you as your friend.** May He *stand behind you to protect you.* May He live within you to give you peace.

And may the Holy Spirit **give you strength to live as people of the resurrection.**

FREE. JOYFUL. FULLY ALIVE.

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.