

Easter Message

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning and happy Easter. My name is Sam Bunnell. I have the honor of being the pastor here at First Baptist Henrietta. Can I ask you to do this? If you've got some room kind of in the middle of your pew, would you mind scooching in? So as those are still trickling in, they've got a place kind of on the ends to sit. That would be a big blessing. I appreciate y'all.

Listen, I want to welcome every one of you who is able to attend this morning here with us in person, as well as those joining us online. I want to thank you for choosing to worship here at First Baptist Henrietta with us. I want to wish you all a happy Easter, happy Resurrection Sunday, as we celebrate that he is alive. Death could not keep him. And what a wonderful thing. What a wonderful truth that is really the bedrock, the foundation for our Christian faith. So we're grateful that you joined us in worship. I want to welcome each of you. If you are visiting with us, we have a gift for you. If you would take a welcome card, and that's on the seat back in front of you, fill that out. We should have a pen from our church there. And just fill that out and take that back to the welcome desk in the back of our lobby. You'll see that straight out those double doors. Then drop that off there after the service. We'll have someone there who would like to give you a free gift from our church, so make sure you don't miss out on that. We have a little bit of an unusual service plan for you today. Being that it is Easter, our choir has worked very hard to prepare three different songs for us. And I broke my sermon up into three different parts to kind of go along with the themes. And they're each an hour long. Okay, so we've got to... Y'all thought I was kidding? I was. I was kidding. All right, it's okay. So I would like you to take the Word of God with me, if you would. And we are going to jump straight into our first theme for today. As you're turning in the Bible, I'm going to send you to 1 Corinthians chapter 15. 1 Corinthians chapter 15. So that's in the New Testament, kind of the latter part of the book.

You'll go through the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Acts, Romans, and then you'll land on 1 Corinthians. We're going to go to chapter 14, 15. If you didn't bring your Bible here today, there should be one in the pew back in front of you. And as you're turning there, I would like to share this quote with you. Easter is the only time when it's perfectly safe to put all your eggs in one basket. Anybody done an Easter egg hunt yet this season? I know my wife and my kids and I were out at the community Easter egg hunt out at Hapgood Park last weekend, and that was a lot of fun. Saw some of you out there. But you know what's interesting about this quote is it kind of agrees with our faith as well.

[2 : 4 5] For instance, I put all of my eggs, all the eggs of my faith in the basket that Jesus did not stay dead, he came back to life. And when he did that, he proved he was God. He proved that everything he had said was true because he's the only one of us that can pull that off. And so I have put all my eggs in that basket. I'm happy to do so. So here's the theme of our talk today. What does the resurrection of Jesus mean for me? What does the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead actually mean for me, for my life, for my family? Let's look at 1 Corinthians 15. Now I want to make clear for you, brothers and sisters, the gospel I preach to you, which you received, on which you have taken your stand, and by which you are being saved. If you hold to the message, I preach to you, unless you believed in vain. Verse 3, for I passed on to you as most important what I also received. Here it is, ready? This is the most important thing that the writer of this letter, the apostle Paul, wrote and ever talked about. He said, this is it. That Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.

That he was buried. That he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures. And that he appeared to Cephas and then to the 12. Then he appeared to over 500 brothers and sisters at one time. Most of them are still alive, but some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James and all the apostles. Last of all, as to one born at the wrong time, he also appeared to me. And that's a

reference to when Paul saw Jesus actually on the road to Damascus. Had an encounter with God himself.

So let's jump down to verse 12. Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? See, this was a controversy back then. A lot of people, even early Christians, were based on previous presuppositions they had in their own faith, they were trying to say, no, there cannot be any resurrection of the dead. Once you're dead, that's it.

That's the final resting place. And that completely undermines and runs counter against the Christian faith. So Paul's saying, if Christ raised from the dead, then how can you say there's no resurrection from the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation is in vain. And so is your faith. We are found to be false witnesses about God because we have testified wrongly about God that he was raised up, that he raised up Christ.

For if the dead are not raised, verse 16, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, catch this, your faith is worthless. You are still in your sins. Verse 20, but as it is, Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of all those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, talking about that original sin with Adam and Eve back in the garden, the resurrection of the dead also comes through a man. Who's that man? Jesus Christ. That's the one through whom the resurrection from our spiritual death can come. For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ will all be made alive. I want to share this quote with you. It's on the screen. The resurrection was God the father's way of authenticating all the truths that were declared by Jesus. If you look back through, if you've got one of those Bibles that has the words of Jesus in red, and you read all the red letters of the Bible that Jesus shared with us and that is recorded in scripture, he made bold claims that he was

[6 : 41] God, that he was God's son, that he was born of a virgin. He performed mighty miracles and all the things that Jesus claimed about himself during his 33 years walking on this earth. God made them certain.

God authenticated them. He made them concrete that we can put our faith in those by raising Jesus from the dead. So number one, Jesus defeated sin. By his resurrection, Jesus defeated sin. You ask, what does the resurrection mean for me, for my life? It means you can have victory over sin because that's what Jesus did. That's the first thing that we can draw from his resurrection.

Colossians chapter two and verse 14, he erased the certificate of debt with its obligations that was against us and opposed to us and has taken it away by nailing it to his cross. What is this debt of sin that he's talking about? Romans chapter six and verse 23 says, the wages of sin is death. What we have earned, what you and I have earned is the same wage, the same payment for our sin. And that is death in an eternal hell that was created for Satan and for his demons. But we have that sin debt and that penalty, that punishment for our sin looming in front of us until Jesus came in and erased the debt by dying on the cross and rising from the dead.

So through his death and his resurrection, Jesus defeated sin. Now the problem is sin still has a hold on anyone who has yet to put their faith in the payment that Jesus made. Sin will still control us. Sin will still dictate to you. Your own flesh and desires will still drive you to make mistake after mistake as I'm sure so many in this room can testify to having made. I hope it's not just me. So many of us fall prey into sin's trap time and time again. And we owe that debt that we can't pay. We can't afford to pay that debt.

But Jesus did. He paid it for us. What an incredible thing that Jesus paid our sin debt. I want to share this quote with you and we'll be done with this part of the service. Easter is the only time when it's perfectly safe to put all your eggs in one basket. You can put your eggs in the basket of Jesus' death and resurrection. That won't bring shame on you. That won't bring regret.

Would you pray with me? God, I pray that you would continue to speak through our hearts from your word as we go through the different music that's been prepared and the reading from your word and the preaching from your word. Let no one leave this place without having encountered you this morning.

[9 : 44] Let your resurrection power become real in our life. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. All right. Are we having fun in church yet? Amen. I love seeing somebody get baptized. The choir is providing outstanding music, keeping our theme on the fact that Jesus lives. And I want to continue on with that. Number two, Jesus defeated death. Number one, we realize that Jesus defeated sin.

And I thank God for that because on our own, you and I cannot defeat sin. We can try to kick a habit for a while, but without the power of God, ultimately sin will always have the victory over us. And you can say the same thing of death. Death, according to man's thinking, is the final adversary. No one can cheat death except Jesus because he holds the keys to death. So by his resurrection, Jesus defeated death.

Would you look with me again in 1 Corinthians chapter 15? 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 20. We read it just a moment ago. As it is, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also comes through a man. Verse 22, watch this. Just as in Adam all die. Remember that first sin in the garden when Adam and Eve broke God's command, sin then passed upon all men and women because we have all sinned.

So death then passed upon all of us. Just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. All who choose to follow Jesus. All who choose to walk the Jesus way. All those who put their faith not in themselves, not in their own ability to do right or to resist evil, not in any of that, putting their faith solely in the power of God, the goodness of God, the grace, the mercy, the love of God. That is our answer. That is our rescue. That is our hope. Sin gives us the bad news. Death is something we cannot escape except by the power of God. So just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all can be made alive. Watch this. Verse 26, the last enemy to be abolished is death.

[12:24] For God has put everything under his feet. God is in control and has power and dominion over everything, even death. Now when it says, verse 27, everything is put under him, it is obvious that he who puts everything under him is the exception. The only thing he doesn't have power over is himself. But that would be an obvious understanding, right? He has power over everything else. So verse 28, when everything is subject to Christ, then the son himself will also be subject to the one who subjected everything to him so that God may be all in all. God is in control of this whole process. God was in control that day when they hung Jesus on the cross and they killed him.

That didn't come as a surprise. That wasn't a threat to God's plan. That was part of God's plan all along. When we envision the crucified Savior, the sinless, perfect son of God, hanging on the cross, being brutally tortured and killed. I'm sure Satan was dancing. I'm sure the demons and the devils were dancing and singing and celebrating the death of their arch enemy, Jesus Christ, the son of God.

Day one happened, right? Jesus died. He was buried. He was in the tomb. Day two happened. The devils rejoiced.

But on the third day, he arose. He came back to life. He proved his power. He proved his authority over death, over anything, that could come up against him. We think when the heart stops, it's over. But that's what's different between you and me and God. They stopped his heart, his human heart. But he was 100% man, but also 100% God. And you can't kill God. Many have tried, but they can't. Jesus always will have power over death. That's why sometimes when our loved ones pass away and we know and have full faith that they had placed their faith in Jesus. That death, even though it's a time of grieving for us here on earth, it's ultimately a time of rejoicing because we know that God has saved their soul. And we know that he will keep them alive and keep them until the day when we can all gather home in heaven someday.

And we will see them again. There is no final death for the child of God. Would you go with me? Would you go ahead and take me on to the next slide? Revelation 1 and verse 18.

[15:15] Revelation 1.18. I am the living one. I died, but look, I am alive forever and ever. And I hold the keys of death and the keys of death. You understand what Jesus is saying here? I was dead, but I am the living one. I did die, but look at me now. I am alive forever and ever. And I hold the keys of death and the grave. Are you scared of death? You don't have to raise your hand, but I'm sure just about everyone in this room can fear death sometimes. But we don't have to fear when we know the one who holds the keys to it. We know the one who has power over it. Would you take me to the quote that follows this? Easter is a time where we are reminded that conclusions in man's mind are the beginnings of God's plan. Sometimes man will tell you that something is hopeless.

Sometimes you think something is dead, but can I tell you that whatever you feel like may be dead in your life, Jesus has the keys to it. Jesus can bring life back to that situation. Jesus defeated the ultimate enemy, which was Satan's attempt to kill him, to stop his heart, to stop the God story, to throw a wrench in God's plan to save you and me. Satan hates us. He didn't want us to be saved.

He wanted us to die and suffer. But Jesus has more power. Jesus has the victory. And Easter is a time where we can look around in our life and say, what is dead in my life? Maybe there's a relationship that you think is dead. Maybe there's a fear that you think has killed any hope that used to be in your heart.

Maybe there's something that's killed the joy in you. Whatever is dead in your life, God can bring life back to that. God can bring the hope back. He can put the smile back on your face. He can make the sun shine again. The night seems dark, but joy comes in the morning. And what greater joy than the morning when they realized Jesus was alive? God, I pray that you would continue to speak to us from your word. As the choir sings again, as we lift our voices in praise of you again, let us remember that we are singing to one who is alive, who hears us, who defeated death. Thank you for the hope that gives us. In Jesus' name, amen. If you've ever experienced that love that flows down from Calvary, that forgiveness, that grace, that grace, then you'll know what we're talking about. You know what we're singing about.

You see, by his resurrection, Jesus not only defeated sin, he not only defeated death, but Jesus made a way for us. 1 Corinthians 15, once again, for the final time.

[18 : 23] This corruptible, verse 53, this corruptible body, my body and yours, must be clothed with incorruptibility. This mortal body must be clothed with immortality. When this corruptible body is clothed with incorruptibility, and this mortal body is clothed with immortality, this is the day when Jesus comes back, and we are brought home to heaven. We hope for this day and believe it will come by faith.

Then the saying that is written will take place, verse 55, death has been swallowed up in victory. Where death is your victory? Where death is your sting? The sting of death is sin. That's how he gets us, by our sin. The power of sin is the law. That's the one, the law that says you can't do this, you can't do that. God says, this is God's universe. He makes the laws, and he says, you can't do this. If you do this, you're wrong. If you kill someone else, you're wrong. If you steal someone's things, then you're wrong.

If you sin in all these different ways, you are wrong. The law is the power of sin in our life. It shows us when we are wrong. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

God didn't take away the law. He didn't change it to make it nicer, to make it more permissive, to say, well, what you're doing really isn't all that bad. Sure it is. It's terrible. It's destructive.

God didn't change the law. He showed grace. He introduced us to something that says, you are wrong. You are deserving of hell for all the wrong that you've done in your life, but I love you anyway.

[20 : 25] Instead of giving you what you deserve, what you've earned, I'm going to give you life. I'm going to give you heaven. I'm going to call you my child. I'm going to make a way for you to be saved.

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the Jesus way, the Lord's work, because you know that your labor, your walk in the Jesus way will not be in vain.

And that's the end of 1 Corinthians 15. By his resurrection, Jesus made a way for us. Isaiah chapter 43 and verse 19, the Old Testament kind of looks forward to this. It says, look, I am about to do something new. Even now it is coming.

Do you know what that something new is? That something new was Jesus Christ coming. Even now, even back then, the plan was in place. Jesus would come. Do you not see it? Indeed, I will make a way. How many in this room need God to make a way in their life? My hand is raised.

So many of us, we need God to step in and make a way in our life. He did it. He did it through the cross. He did it through the empty tomb. Jesus made a way for you and for me, and he can do it again.

[21 : 52] In the wilderness, he can bring rivers. In the desert, in the driest of places, God can bring water. In the darkest of nights, God can bring light. He can make a way for you, and he can make a way for me. He made a way to defeat sin. He made a way to defeat death, and now he can make a way to overcome anything in your life. He can make a way to overcome the penalty of sin in your life if you will choose this morning to put your faith in him. We can't all look around at everyone in the world and say we're all children of God. No, we're not all children of God. That's why Jesus had to die to make a way for those who would choose to place their faith in him. God is drawing you.

He's calling you. He's saying, I am here. I love you. I died for you. I rose for you. I'm listening to you now.

Will you call out to me? The resurrection gives my life meaning and direction and the opportunity to start over no matter what the circumstances. No matter what the circumstances might be in your life, you say, man, you don't know me. You don't know how bad I've been. You don't know the wrong that's been done to me. You don't know what's going on in my life. You don't know my history.

No, but God does. And whatever trouble, whatever problems, whatever sin, whatever wrong has happened in your life, the resurrection still gives you hope. It still gives you life.

It still gives you meaning. It still gives you direction. It still gives you a purpose when you wake up in the morning. Say, man, I've been bad, but God is alive and God still loves me. What more do I need for today? Sure would love if my wife liked me. Sure would love if my kids liked me, but I still know that God loves me. And God can intervene. God can heal a broken relationship. God can make streams in the desert. God can do something way beyond anything I can do.

That's what we have hope in. That's why we make Easter such a big deal. It is the big deal. It's that Jesus is alive and we have hope. So the takeaway is, will you choose the Jesus way?

[24 : 13] Will you choose the Jesus way? What does that mean? It means not choosing your way. It means not choosing another way that you've heard about. It means not listening to your own desires, listening to your own heart, listening to your own way of thinking. It means choosing the Jesus way.

He wrote a love letter to us. He wrote an instruction manual for life. It's all we need to get through this life with his help. And he says, I'm not leaving you just with the book and each other. He said, I am leaving myself with you. I am leaving my spirit. So even though physically, Jesus arose, he went back home to be with his father, he left his Holy Spirit in this world.

And all of those who truly are his children, all those who by faith in Jesus have said, I know that I'm a sinner and I know Jesus died for me. And he rose again. And just like the testimony we heard from Trip Hensley this morning before he got baptized, you say, I choose to put my faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of my sins to become his child. Then you get the Holy Spirit who walks with you, who never leaves you. And he's with you to help you on the Jesus way.

What does the Jesus way mean? The Jesus way means hope. It means forgiveness. It means compassion.

All those things that the choir just sang about a moment ago, it means choosing the way that Jesus would walk. What does the Jesus way mean for your relationship? What does the Jesus way look like in the middle of divorce? What does the Jesus way look like when your kids hate you? What does the Jesus way look like in the midst of employment conflict? On the job troubles, trouble with neighbors, fear about what's going on in the country, going on in culture. What does the Jesus way look like? It says, even though this world may seem dark, even though it's hard to find light, I know that Jesus has me in this place to be a light in the darkness. So I choose the Jesus way. I say no to fear. I say no to Satan. I say no to anger, to resentment, to bitterness. I say no to those things and say, I'm going to choose the Jesus way. I say no to self-indulgence. I say no to my own passions.

[26 : 56] I say no to my own desires. And I say, I'm going to set me aside. I'm going to set my way aside. And I'm going to choose the Jesus way. And I'm going to trust that he will see me through. I'm going to trust that he will bring the hope, the love, the joy that he promises if I choose the Jesus way. What does that look like for you? Maybe this morning you need to choose the Jesus way for the first time. Maybe you need to place your faith in him for the forgiveness of your sin and your hope of heaven. Maybe you've done that a long time ago. And maybe you've been walking with him for a long time, but there's something in your life that you need to choose the Jesus way.

Something's going on in your relationships or your circumstances that you say, man, I've been trying to figure this out on my own. But instead, I'm going to choose the Jesus way. I'm going to bring it to God. I'm going to lead my family to bring it to God. Whatever it is, I pray, I pray, I beseech you that you would choose the Jesus way. That is a daily struggle for us, y'all. It's a daily struggle for me. I know you're not any different. We have a choice. Will we choose our way or will we choose the Jesus way? Would you bow your heads with me? God, I pray that you would work in hearts right now. Right now, as the music begins to play, we're going to sing a little bit again of that chorus at the cross, at the cross, I surrender my life. I pray that there would be somebody in here this morning who would make the decision to surrender their life to you. There's no better day than Easter

Sunday, sitting in church, hearing about how Jesus is alive, than to say, I'm going to choose the Jesus way. I'm going to put my faith in him.

God, we put our faith in a lot of things, and a lot of things let us down. But we know by faith, and we know by experience, you never do let us down.

We'll let ourselves down, our family, those we love, our friends, even enemies will let us down. Time and time again, we'll be failed, and we'll fail others. But your way will never fail us. You'll never lead us astray.

Work in our hearts right now. Church, would you bow your heads? Would you close your eyes? Just for this moment, I'm going to ask this question. If there's somebody in this room who says, I want to choose the Jesus way, and what that means for me right now is I want to ask for forgiveness of my sins, become God's child. I want to be saved from the penalty of my sin, and I accept that Jesus died for me, he rose for me, and he hears me if I pray to him. If that's you, I'd love if you slip your hand up right now. Room this big, I know we have many people that need to put their faith in Jesus. Thank you. Anybody else? Thank you. You can put your hand down.

I'm going to invite you, if you raise your hand in just a moment while the song plays, I'm going to be right down front here. I don't want to embarrass you at all, but I'd love if you came down. We'll sit down here on this front view, and we'll pray together.

[30 : 17] I'd love to help you from the Bible know for sure that you are God's child, and you're forgiven in his eyes.