

# Ministry of Grace Church

## Easter Sunday 4/9/23 – Speaker Notes

Easter Sunday is the day we commemorate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Last week, we talked about Palm Sunday and the fact that it is the beginning of what has come to be known as Easter holy week. As I said then, when Jesus entered the city riding a donkey on that day, there was no Easter holy week yet because there was no Easter yet. And there was no Easter yet, because there was no resurrection yet. And there was no resurrection yet, because Jesus hadn't been crucified yet.

Today we are gathered to talk about the other end of Easter holy week. Today we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. **So -- what is so important about the resurrection?** In order to answer that, we have to go back to Jesus' arrest and trials. If you recall, He was fulfilling all the requirements of the Passover lamb for the Jewish people and as such, He had to be inspected and declared to be free from any blemish or defect. When He was questioned by the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians, they could find no fault in him. When He was tried by Pilate and Herod, they also found no fault in him. In fact, "... Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, I find no guilt in this man." (Luke 23:4)

The only group that did not declare Jesus to be innocent was the Sanhedrin, the religious leaders of that time. They declared Jesus to be guilty! But, guilty of what? He was found guilty of blasphemy because he claimed to be the Christ, the Son of God. As a result, they sentenced Him to death. However, they had a problem. The Jews were not allowed to execute anyone. Only the Romans could do that. That's why they delivered Him to Pilate who, as we just learned, declared Him to be guiltless. Now, this is where it gets interesting. When Jesus rode into town on a donkey the crowd cried out, "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!" When Jesus was presented to them, these same people now shouted, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!"

Keep in mind that one of the reasons that God separated the Israelites from the rest of mankind was for them to introduce the world to God. Instead, they condemned their God, their Messiah, to death. And not just any old death, they condemned Him to the death of crucifixion! It was perhaps the most torturous and agonizing death ever devised by mankind.

But wait a minute! If God is all knowing and all powerful, if He is truly a loving God, why did He send His only son to die the agonizing death of crucifixion? Especially if Jesus really was innocent? Listen, He sent Jesus to the cross because He IS an all knowing, all powerful, and loving God. You see, our God is also a Holy God. That means that He is completely separate from sin and, as a result, must be completely separated from sinners. And since every person who ever lived and who ever will live is a sinner, God cannot be in the presence of any of Adam's race. In fact, by God's rule of law, every sinner must die. But didn't God make mankind to have fellowship with Him? That can't happen if all of mankind is sinful.

Jesus was innocent when He went to the cross, remember? He was innocent of everything except claiming to be the Christ, which He is! So -- He truly was, and is, without fault! As such he is able to apply His death to anyone He wants, so they won't have to die themselves. God loves you and me, but we have the penalty of death hanging over us because we are all sinners. The only way we can avoid that death is to have someone else die for us. That's what Jesus did. Here's how the Apostle John expressed it in his gospel account.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:16-17)

So, Jesus had to go to the cross in order to provide us a way to escape death. But doesn't everyone die? Yes, because we are all sinners, everyone dies physically. This earthly body wears out and we all will die someday. But, I am not this body just as you are not your body. These earthly bodies are simply houses for our spirits. Our body is our dwelling place. Understand this, our body is temporary, but our spirit is eternal. Our spirit will never cease to exist. When our body ceases to live, our spirit will need a new dwelling place. That new dwelling place will either be in God's presence or separated from His presence. Do you remember what Jesus told His disciples?

In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. (John 14:2-3) [NASB]

If we want to be with Jesus after we die physically, we need to have one of those dwelling places that Jesus talked about. So, how do I reserve one of those dwelling places for myself. According to John 3:16, I need to believe in Jesus. But -- just exactly what does that mean? I believe that Jesus was a real person and that he died on the cross to pay the penalty for my sins. Does that now make me a Christian? Unfortunately, this is what many people believe and if that's all they believe, the permanent dwelling place that they're going to receive will be away from the presence of God, in Hell. Now, if we read John 3:16 again, we will see that God gave his only Son, and whoever believes in Him, that is, whoever believes in God's Son, will have eternal life. In other words, we have to believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

So, what does it mean that Jesus is the Son of God? To answer that let's go to Luke's gospel. When the angel Gabriel first appeared to Mary, Jesus' mother, here's how their conversation went.

And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. (Luke 1:30-35)

To fully understand this, we need to understand that God is one. The main Jewish creed, called the Shema, starts out like this:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

In other words, there is only one God and He is one God. However, there is something about God that the Jews missed. God is, indeed one God. But He is also three separate persons. That does not mean that at times God appears as the Father, at other times as the Son, and at other times as the Holy Spirit. God is all three at the same time - always. Otherwise, how do you explain the baptism of Jesus where it says,

... and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." (Luke 3:21-22)

The Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, descended onto Jesus. Obviously, this demonstrates that the Son of God and the Spirit of God are separate persons. And while the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus, the Father declared Jesus to be His son. This demonstrates that God, as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were all present at the same time. Now, if we look at John 3:16 again, we see that we have to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. That's the very reason that the Sanhedrin condemned Jesus to death. Since Jesus is the Son of God, He is part of the Trinity. In other words, He is God. So, according to John 3:16, we have to believe that Jesus IS God!

But how do I know that Jesus is God? What proof is there that he was not just a very good person? That's where the resurrection comes in. But first, let's look at what the Bible says about it. If you read the first chapter of the gospel according to John, you will learn that Jesus is "the Word," and that He was with God from the beginning. It also tells us that "all things were made through Him." Jesus is the one who created everything that you and I can see and touch.

So, the Bible declares that Jesus is God. But what proof is there? Before we can get to the proof, we have to establish one more thing and that is that God has life in Himself. It wasn't given to Him and it can't be taken away from Him. It is part of His eternal being. Here's how the Apostle John expressed it in his gospel account.

For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. (John 5:26)

OK, so we have seen that the Bible declares that Jesus is God and that He has life in Himself. So, let me say this in another way. If Jesus is truly God, then He has life in himself and He cannot be killed, right? And, if Jesus does have life in Himself, then He is truly God, right?

Now, let's get to the proof that Jesus is God. I'm going to say this slowly and carefully so you will all hear and understand it. Jesus was not killed on the cross. Does that sound like blasphemy to you? Well, it's not. Jesus was not killed on the cross, He voluntarily gave up His life. To see this, we need to go back to Luke's gospel account.

It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, ... Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last. (Luke 23:44-46)

And Matthew, in his gospel account, said it this way.

And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. (Matthew 27:50)

Do you see that? Jesus was not killed. He did not die because of the crucifixion. He died because He gave up his life into the Father's hands. Now, in John's gospel account, Jesus makes it even clearer.

For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”  
(John 10:17-18)

Jesus stated very clearly that He has the authority to give up His life. The word translated “authority” also means “power” or “ability.” Jesus has the ability to lay down His life, but He also has the ability to take it up again. This is not something that any man can do. Only God can do this!

So, where’s this proof that I have been talking about. Here it is:

According to Matthew’s gospel account:

Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.”  
(Matthew 28:1-7)

Jesus could not rise from the dead and be alive again unless he has the ability to lay down His life and take it up again. So, the bottom line is -- when Jesus rose from the dead, he proved that He is the Son of God! As the sinless Son of God, He is also able to apply His death, the penalty for sin, to anyone He wants to. And, having gone into heaven, He is preparing a place for everyone who believes that He is God, that He has died for their sins, and that He has been raised from the dead.

But, there’s a dark side to all of this. There are many people today preaching an incomplete gospel, a gospel of easy believeism. They say that all you have to do is to say the sinner’s prayer. The problem is that you can say the sinner’s prayer and not believe it in your heart. Those who say the sinner’s prayer just to obtain a “get out of Hell, free” card will be dismayed when they appear before their God, because they are not saved. There are certain things that you must believe in order to be saved. You must believe:

- You are a sinner and as such, you are deserving of death.
- Jesus is the Son of God.
- Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty of your sins.
- Jesus rose from the dead, proving that He is God, and is alive today.
- All of the above and you must commit yourself to Him as your Lord and Savior

Here’s how the Apostle Paul explained it to the church at Rome:

because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. (Romans 10:9-10)

You see, Jesus doesn’t save you just so that you have a free ticket into heaven and then live the rest of your life however you want. He saved you to be His subject, for Him to be your Lord and

Master. That means, you have committed your life to Him and will do everything you can to live in a manner that will bring glory to Him.

Those who have said the sinner's prayer and who don't really believe all that they said, those who aren't willing to submit their will to His will, will be very surprised when they reach the end of this life only to discover that they never really were saved. They will get a dwelling place, but not one prepared by their Lord. Their dwelling place will be in the lake of fire that burns with a very hot, blue flame.

## **So What?**

Before we close, let me say one more thing about this salvation. Just because you are genuinely saved doesn't mean that life will be easy from here on out. In fact, becoming a Christian means that you will have tribulation in this life. Our enemy, Satan, is the prince of this world and he does not want us to be happy. Remember, Jesus told His disciples (and I believe that this applies to all of us):

I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

The word translated "will have" is actually in the present tense. Therefore, this should be translated as, "In the world you have tribulation." Not, "you may have" or "some day you will have," but "you have." So, if you have become a true Christian and believe that you have gotten a raw deal from God because you are suffering from the tragedies of life, take heart. You can have peace, but only as you abide in Christ and He abides in you. When you experience these tragedies, instead of getting mad at God, submit yourself to His authority. Turning away from Him only makes things worse.