

THE MESSAGE OF EASTER

Romans 6:3-11

Welcome to Restoration! I'm excited you are with us today. My name is Wade and I'm the minister here at RCC. If you are a guest with us today please know we are glad you are here. After the service, if you are curious and would like to know more about RCC, please stop by the table in the lobby and we will connect with you and get you more information about our church.

I want to take this opportunity to invite you back next Sunday as we kick off a new series called "**Before & After.**" We are going to spend a few weeks talking about the before and afters of marriage. Before you say, "I do." After you say, "I do." Before you say, "It's Over." After you say, "It's Over." And regardless of your marital status or situation, whether you are single, not yet married, don't want to be married, divorced, widowed, separated, whatever your status is... there is going to be some relevant material for you. So please come back next week as we kick off that series. You won't want to miss it.

Now, today is Easter! I have one question for you as we get started today:

"What comes to your mind when you think about Easter?"

I spent some time thinking about this question last week...

The first thing that came to my mind was **Cadbury Easter Eggs**. (That's the spiritual answer you expected the preacher to give on Easter, right?) Some people find these eggs disgusting, but they can be wrong. I love them! I wish they were available in stores all year round. My mom and dad would make Easter baskets for my brother and me every year, and because I loved these Cadbury Eggs so much, mom would put a dozen of them in my basket. It was so great!

Another thing that came to my mind when I was thinking about Easter is the **chocolate bunny** you would get. (Maybe I have a chocolate problem?) Every year we would pray for a solid chocolate bunny. Didn't you? But without fail, you would bite into that chocolate bunny and it would be... HOLLOW!!! It was so disappointing. Inevitably my dad would say, "Now son, just like the chocolate bunny is hollow, so was Jesus' tomb." And I'm thinking, "You're just cheap. Spring for the solid bunny dad!"

What comes to your mind when you think about Easter?

Maybe you think of Easter lunch at grandma's with the ham and all the fixings on the side?
Maybe you think of hiding the Easter eggs and searching for them or you enjoying watching the kids search for the eggs?

Every one of us in this room today sees Easter through a different lens.

Many of us recognize Easter as Resurrection Sunday. This is the celebration of Jesus coming back to life after His death on the cross. So we are here today to celebrate this event and that's the primary way you see Easter.

Maybe you're here today because this is part of the pre-game festivities before going to enjoy an afternoon lunch with your family. Let's get through the church service so we can enjoy our afternoon.

Maybe you are here today and you're more skeptical. Church was never your thing, but you came because it makes your mom happy or your wife happy. And while you think Easter is a nice holiday, you don't get what the big deal is about it. Why all the hype?

I came across a story last week of a guy that didn't understand something. He had gone out and bought a "Honk if you love Jesus" bumper sticker. He put it on his car and then he wrote about the first day he drove around with the bumper sticker.

"What a wonderful experience it was the first day I put that bumper sticker on the back of my car. I was sitting at a stop light, just lost in thought; I didn't notice that the light had changed. Man, that bumper sticker really worked. I found lots of people who loved Jesus. The guy behind me started to lay on his horn, it was clear he really loved Jesus because pretty soon he leaned out the window and started yelling His name. Soon after that, people behind him joined in on the yelling and honking. I began to honk also. I leaned out my window and waved and smiled at each of those loving people. There must have been a guy from Florida because he was yelling something about a 'sunny beach'. I saw him waving at me in a funny way with only one finger so I ask my kids what that meant. They looked at each other, giggling, and said, 'Dad, that is the Hawaiian sign for good luck.' Well, a couple of people got so excited that they got out of their cars and started to walk towards me. I bet they wanted to pray. But just then I noticed that the light had turned green so I stepped on the gas and made it across the intersection before it turned red again. I was the only driver that made it across the intersection. I looked back at all my new friends standing there, gave them a big smile and held up the Hawaiian sign for good luck as I drove away. Praise the Lord for such wonderful people."

That guy totally missed the point. He didn't understand what all the fuss was about.

Maybe for you, when it comes to Easter, you don't understand all the fuss either. Sure, it's a nice day, but what's with all the hype?

I have realized that for a long time I did not truly understand the significance of this day either. But now, this day means so much more to me than chocolate eggs and bunnies. It means even more than a big church day for me as well.

The older I get the more pain and hurt I've experienced in life, and the more I've recognized my own brokenness and sin. Easter means so much more to me now because it is the only event in the history of the world that deals with my sin and your sin.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most important event in history because it effectively deals with our sin.

I know this is a huge claim to make, but I have come to believe it with all of my heart.

And while we may not know everything about each other, there is one thing I do know about you. I know that you have a moment in your past you are not proud of. I know you have a

moment you wish you could get a do over. I know some of you are carrying around the baggage of guilt. I know regardless of how hard you try, your past is still defining your future.

I know this is true of you because it's been true of me. And if that's you I'm talking to today, I want you to lean in because this message is for you.

Since we have this guilt and brokenness in our life, we try to deal with it. There are basically 3 ways we deal with it. The first 2 are useless, but there the ones most of us try to use. But the 3rd way is the only way we will truly find life. And it's based upon the message of Easter. But let's look at the 3 ways we try to deal with our sin in life.

The first way is...

I CAN MANAGE IT.

Our first instinct is to think I can manage this. That's our natural disposition. I can manage this.

A few weeks ago I was at the National Preaching Summit in Indianapolis. This is an annual event I look forward to going to because I get to spend time with several of my friends who are preachers. So on Monday night of the convention, it's late at night, we've checked in to the hotel room... and someone gets the bright idea to go out and eat. 10 o'clock at night.

Across the highway from our hotel is a Buffalo Wild Wings. This is perfect. Let's get some wings and stay up late at night. So I go there with my friends and order my Asian Zing boneless wings. They're amazing. We are laughing and talking and I'm having the time of my life! I'm not so old, I tell myself... I can still party like a rock star! (See, I'm showing my age.)

I finally get to bed at 2am... happy and content. Full belly and full heart. The conference starts at 8am. Darrel Land is speaking so I want to be there.

6am and my alarm goes off. I discovered I'm not as young as I once was. The side effects of my actions caught up with me.

I text my wife Amanda and tell her what I've done, asking for prayers and comfort. Being the loving and compassionate wife that she is, she texted me back, "What were you thinking?!? Why on earth did you think you could stay up that late and eat like that? You can't do that anymore!"

I swear I am still feeling the effects of that night right now. I still haven't recovered. The older I get the worse the side effects seem to be.

That's how sin is... our first instinct is to think I can manage it. But the problem with sin is you can't manage it for very long. Sin is not just a list of bad things we do, sin is a cancer that eats away at your life and eventually takes it. And even when we try to "treat" it, when we try to manage it so we can keep on living, sin always has deadly side effects. Sin will always lead to pain and interruptions in your life.

Maybe you're thinking right now, "Yeah... but right now I am managing things. My life is going pretty great in fact. Sure, you might say I'm living in sin, but the way I see it and the way I feel is great. I have never felt better!"

And I'm sure you feel that way now because sin is fun! Sin is enjoyable. If it wasn't, we wouldn't do it. So yes, I'm sure you feel great right now...

But it's only 2am in your life.

Give it time and the side effects will catch up with you.

Some of you have already experienced this. You thought you could manage it. It was pretty fun for a while... but now you're addicted. Now you can't stop. Now you feel horrible. Now you're carrying the baggage of guilt and shame. Sure, we're trying to manage it, but it feels like we're rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic.

This brings me to the second thing we try to do when it comes to our sin...

I WILL CLEAN THIS UP.

My life is a mess, so I'm going to pull myself together and get everything sorted out. And I know just the formula to get this done: I will go to church, listen to the sermon, volunteer to help an old lady cross the street, and put in a lot of work to fix up my image so people will think I've got everything together.

I will clean this up.

But you know what happens?

We try to clean it up and we make a bigger mess out of things!

It's like we have spilled red kool aid on white carpet and we're trying to wipe it up. But wiping the spill only makes the stain larger and deeper.

So we cry out to God and plea bargain with Him. *"I will clean this up! Oh God, please... I will pray 22 times a day and adopt Somalian kids... I will clean this up!"*

And our efforts only make it worse. The stain gets larger. So we scrub harder...

And the whole time there's a passage in the book of Isaiah that goes perfectly with this... Isaiah 64:6...

All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags;

We can get up early every morning, read our Bible and pray. We can go to every church meeting there possibly is... and none of our righteous deeds will do any good. They're filthy rags in God's sight.

We can try everything to clean up the stain, but all of our efforts are like filthy rags. We never get ourselves clean because we cannot manage this. We cannot clean this up. The only thing we can do to deal with our sin is....

SURRENDER.

Surrender it all. This is the only effective way to deal with our sin.

We often talk about the Apostle Paul in church because he wrote basically half of the New Testament section of the Bible. And sometimes we can read about these people in the Bible and put them way up on a pedestal, thinking we're not worthy, there's no way I could be like Paul or Peter or Mary.

But I like to read what Paul wrote because he felt the same way about himself. Paul never viewed himself as worthy. Paul knew he had been guilty of arresting Christians and even putting them to death.

Paul wrote things like this:

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. (1 Timothy 1:15)

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. (Romans 7:15)

Paul never considered himself to be elite or above anyone. He actually thought the opposite.

But what changed Paul was the message of Easter... that God loved us so much He sent His Son to die for our sins so we could be forgiven and be made new!

There's one section of verses I think sum up the message of Easter so perfectly and they were written by Paul. We find them in Romans 6 starting in verse 3.

3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

That is the do over... that is the beginning of being made new. We are buried with Christ and raised up to live a new life.

Then Paul writes in verse 5:

5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— 7 because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him.

10 The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

This is the message of Easter... Jesus went to the cross to take our sins away, and He was brought back to life so we can be brought back to life. Jesus walked out of the grave so you could be made brand new! And the way we are made brand new is through our surrender.

We can't manage it... We can't clean it up... We can only surrender.

This is why Paul says in Romans 6:11...

[11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.](#)

We no longer live for ourselves, rather, to follow Jesus means we die to self. We die to sin. We die to our old way of living. We die to our agenda and seek God's agenda. We die with all that baggage we were carrying around, we die to it. We surrender our life and die to our sin so we can be renewed and live a new life.

When you know you've been made new in Christ, you view yourself as dead to the old ways of living.

This means when I wake up in the morning, the first thing I do rather than checking Facebook is to open my Bible app and read the verse of the day.

This means when my family sits down to eat, we don't just dive in, but we take a moment to pause and tell God thanks for providing our needs.

This means when I see someone make a mistake, rather than laughing at them or talking about them behind their back, I go to them and say, "I've been here before. Let me help you up."

This means when everything around you is crumbling, you remember your hope is in God who raised Christ from the dead!

This means when you don't know how you're going to get through the next hour, you remember the same power that raised Christ from the dead is available to you.

When your past is brought up and you're made to feel guilty and not worthy to be loved, you look at the Devil and you say, "I am in Christ, therefore I am made new!"

This is the message of Easter! There is hope! There is power! There is love!

And God wants you to know Him... so much so that He sent His Son to die on the cross, just to show you how much He truly loves.

COMMUNION TRANSITION

Every week at Restoration we take time to pause and remember Jesus' sacrifice in a time of communion.

As we take together, remember the message... why Jesus gave His life... and pray that you will know Him better and not only know the message of Easter, but live it every day.

Let's take time to remember together. I'm going to pray and then we'll take together.

(Video after prayer)

INVITATION

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most important event in history because it effectively deals with our sin.

God didn't wait for you to manage it all away.

He didn't wait for you to clean it all up before you would be worthy in His sight.

God said I am going to come to you in the form of Jesus Christ and I am going to take all that baggage upon myself on the cross, deal with it, and then walk out of a grave so you can be brand new.

Wouldn't it be awesome if on the day we remember and celebrate Jesus walking out of a grave, you could walk out of yours as well?

Wouldn't it be great if your spiritual birthday was Easter weekend?

When Paul was baptized, Ananias the man who was sent to him by God said this, "**16 And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.**" (Acts 22:16)

If you need to surrender this morning, would you come down front as we sing.