

What's Keeping You? – Easter 2017

Of all the times to pull out the stops, Easter is certainly it; From the resurrection of Jesus to the guarantee of our salvation – praise is rising; And if that's not true for *you* . . . I hope it will be before you walk out; And to get there, let's turn to Acts 2

➤ While you're turning there, have you ever heard the expression "What's keeping you?" As in, "What's delaying you?" What's holding you back?

I'll never forget one particular occasion in high school, when my basketball coach, Mr. Leemhuis, called a timeout, gathered us in, and ever so calmly sprang that question He just looked us straight in the face and asked, "What's keeping you?" "What's keeping you," he said, "from getting in the game?" "What's keeping you from getting after it?" "What's keeping you from running the offense? And boxing out? And playing D?"

And then, after a pregnant pause, he was like – "I'm serious; I want to know" "Are you tired? Are you hurt? Have you forgotten the game plan? Is this not important to you? What's keeping you?"

And I wish I could tell you what happened next, both in the timeout *and* in the game, but that's all I remember; I don't know

➤ What I *do* know, is that that question is particularly appropriate for *this* occasion – Easter; The resurrection of Jesus Who died on the cross for our sins, and rose again 3 days later, so we could too; So we *too* could have new life Never to face the *consequences* for our sin, and never to be *separated* from him again Only loved and cherished as a child of God

That's Easter; And if you've never experienced it, it begs the question, "Why?" What's keeping you? Or more specifically, what's keeping you . . .

• From Jesus (Acts 2:36)

That's the first question I want to pose to you in this *timeout* of sorts What's keeping you from the one around whom all *history* revolves – BC and AD What's keeping you from the one about whom more was written and preserved in the ancient world, than everyone else put together? What's keeping you from the one who literally changed the world in the span of 3 years? Age 30 to 33; The time of his public ministry

What's keeping you from the one the New Testament writers considered the *Messiah*, the Christ – the promised one of old who would save his people from their sins? Like Luke, the doctor and historian, records in Acts 2:36 Peter is speaking, one of Christ's closest confidants, and said . . . [36] *Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.*"

He was speaking to a crowd in the Jerusalem temple, just 50 days after Easter, to explain what was happening; That the one they killed was the *Christ*; the Messiah . . . The Savior of the world; And that he's *Lord*; Ruling and reigning over all; Including us

He's Lord, and he's Savior; That's what those who knew him best said

➤ So what's keeping you from him? Is it guilt? Shame? Feelings of unworthiness? Or flat-out *unbelief*? You don't think he's real; Is that it?

If so, you must think the same about Aristotle; And Plato; Socrates; Archimedes; Homer; Even Alexander the Great B/c we have less recorded about them than we do Jesus And it's *not* all in the Bible; Secular historians of that time speak of him as well

➤ Or maybe for you, it's not guilt or shame or unbelief, but self-absorption – you don't care; You just don't care; Or self-sufficiency – you don't need him; Is that it?

If so, you need to know that the book *about* him says you *do*; We *do* need him B/c all have sinned it says, and are facing suffering and separation from God, forever What the Bible calls *the second death*; *The lake of fire* (Rev 20:6,14)

And nobody can save you from that except Jesus (**Jn 14:6**)

I am the way, and the truth, and the life [he said]. *No one comes to the Father except through me.* No one (**1 Tim 2:5-6a**) [5] *For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, [6] who gave himself as a ransom for all; Who died for all*

➤ In which case, you shouldn't let *anything* keep you from Jesus***** Especially when you consider that he will embrace you open-armed; No matter *what* you've done; No matter what your guilt; No matter how unworthy you feel *Come to me* [Jesus said], *all who labor and are heavy laden* [all who are beaten down and beat up; all who are filled with shame and wracked with guilt], *and I will give you rest.* (Mt 11:28)

Whatever's keeping you, don't; Don't let it B/c the one who is *both Lord and Christ*, waits; And time is running out Whether it's the time of your life, or the time of his return; What's keeping you?

2nd, what's keeping you . . .

• From the Bible (Ps 19:7-11)

The 66 books of the Old and New Testaments; *This book* Written over the course of 1500 years, by 40 different people, in 3 different languages W/ a singular source, singular message, & singular purpose; Like it says in **2 Tim 3:16** [16] *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, [17] that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.* Pretty amazing claims; And that's not the half of it

So what's keeping you?

Is it cynicism? Doubt? A lack of understanding when you read it? Intimidation at its length? Not knowing where to start? Or just plain old apathy and indifference?

➤ *The Case For Christ* **movie** just came out, and it's worth seeing
A true story about a journalist named Lee Strobel, who was anything *but* apathetic, but still didn't read the Bible; Mainly, b/c of his preconceived notion that it was false
A bunch of made-up stories for bogus religious purposes; That's what he thought

So when his *wife* began to read it, and received Jesus as *her* Lord and Savior, he got mad;
And set out to prove it wrong; Reading and talking to experts the world over
It was a massive effort; And it eventually failed; B/c the facts showed otherwise; That indeed it is true; And he too accepted Christ as his Lord and Savior
Going on to write a book about it with the same title

➤ How about you? What's keeping *you*? Is it cynicism like him?*****
Or *skepticism* about its usefulness? Thinking it might be true and all, but not real helpful; Maybe for *another* time, but not now
I mean, how pertinent can a book written 2000 years ago, be?

If that's you, turn with me to see what Ps 19 says; And what so many people just *like* you, have experienced for themselves; Ps 19:7-11
[7] The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; [8] the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; [9] the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. [10] More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. [11] Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

King David wrote that Psalm; And he's referring to the written word of God; The Bible
And people the world over continue to read it b/c it revives their soul, enlightens their eyes, brings them joy, and leads to reward
Not the least of which is the forgiveness of their sin, the salvation of their soul, and a relationship with Jesus; It's for you, and it's for now

➤ And just like Lee Strobel found, you can *trust* it; Not just b/c it impacts your life, but for several **objective reasons** as well; Like the fact that . . .
It's prophetically accurate; It's historically verified; It's painfully honest; Its authors were persecuted

It's prophetically accurate to the tune of 65 fulfilled prophecies about Jesus alone
And historically verified time and time again, through archeology and literary finds
And don't miss the honesty about the participants; Including those who wrote it; B/c it's the *last* thing you'd expect if they made it up

And the fact that the biblical authors were *persecuted* for what they wrote, seals it
Not that persecution of religious authors is unusual; But that *nobody* suffers, for what they *know* to be *false*
And since the NT authors were in a position to *know* whether the resurrection of Jesus was false, the fact that they suffered and died for preaching it, shows it was true*****

➤ Good reasons to read it, and good reasons to trust it
So whatever's keeping you, don't; Don't let it

Whether it's skepticism, cynicism, a lack of understanding, or apathy – find the *Gospel of Mark* in the New Testament, and start reading
And get with others in our church who are doing the same; To talk about it; And apply it; And figure it out
Don't let *anything* keep you from God's Word

3rd, what's keeping you . . .

• **From church (Heb 10:24-25)**

The gathering of God's people for worship, preaching, discipleship, and prayer
What's keeping you from coming, beyond Christmas and Easter?
Is it busy-ness? Lack of desire? Laziness? Guilt?

➤ On that note, a woman in our church was just telling me about a couple of truck drivers she saw, who pulled up to our doors last Christmas . . .
To load the boxes we had prepared for Samaritan's Purse
Apparently they had been contracted by the ministry, and here they were

She was *inside* the church she said, and noticed that they were not only a bit rough around the edges, but a bit hesitant to come in
And as they made their way to the door, kind of joking around, one of the guys grabbed the handle and starting shaking; Like he was being electrocuted
Obviously conveying some feelings of guilt, at the prospect of entering a church
At which point the woman quickly went to the door, and assured them that all was well; Come on in; No lightning bolts

➤ I wonder if that's *you*? Do feelings of guilt keep *you* away? Worrying that you might be convicted, or feel uncomfortable b/c of how you live or what you've done?
If so, you're right; You *will* be convicted; Not by us, but by the Holy Spirit
You *will* hear truth; Spoken in love, but spoken
And you'll be uncomfortable at times; Just like *I'm* uncomfortable at times, when the Lord convicts *me*

But you'll also experience grace; And mercy; And acceptance; And love
B/c we've *all* been there; Every single one of us is a sinner saved by grace; People who *encourage* one another, and bear one another's *burdens*, and build one another up
B/c we need it; *All* of us
We *need* the encouragement; We *need* the teaching; We *need* the support; We *need* the exhortation; Which means we need each *other*; Every single week

That's why the *early* church gathered every week; And why the Bible tells us not to *forsake* it; **Heb 10:24-25**
[24] Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, [25] not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. The day of Christ's return

➤ Whatever's keeping you from church, don't let it
Whatever's keeping you from discipleship, don't let it
Whatever's keeping you from worship, don't let it*****

If it's a lack of desire, make a commitment and come; Out of obedience

Trusting that you'll eventually be *hungry* for what you're fed, and that your desire will follow

And if it's guilt that's keeping you, rest assured that the grace is greater

And then last, but certainly not least, what's keeping you . . .

- **From believing (Rom 10:9)**

Believing that Jesus is who he says he is? Lord of all and Savior of the world

And that when he died, he died for *you*? Paying the price for *your* sins, and rising again for your *life*? What's keeping you?

What's keeping you from believing that you're sinful and separated from him? And need him?

Is it pride? Not wanting to *admit* you're a sinner; And *need* a Savior?

Is it rebellion? A refusal to *turn* from your sin?

Fear? Of what God might require of you?

Questions? B/c you're not quite sure?

Whatever it is, is it worth the consequences? Is your unbelief worth the consequences of suffering and separation for all eternity?

And the opportunity cost of missing out on the glories of heaven? And life to the full, right now? Including peace, joy, purpose, and the like; I think not

➤ If you have questions, get them answered; If you're fearful, rest assured; If you're rebellious, risk it no more

B/c Jesus is real, the Bible is true, and church is a blessing

And today can be the day of your salvation for the rest of your life; And all eternity

If you only believe **(Rom 10:9)**

[9] 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.

Saved from hell, set apart on earth, and guaranteed heaven

If you agree, you confess, you declare – that Jesus is Lord of your life, from now on

And *believe* that Easter was a miraculous work of God, for your salvation

➤ Whatever you walked in with – pride, doubt, apathy, or anything else – don't let it keep you from believing any longer; Lay it down and give it up **(Lyrics)**

If you've got pain, He's a pain taker

If you feel lost, He's a way maker

If you need freedom or saving, He's a prison-shaking Savior

If you got chains, He's a chain breaker

We're going to sing that in a minute, and I'd love it if you could experience it

➤ Let's bow our heads

Whether you've been coming for a while, or this is your first time – if you've never expressed your belief in Jesus, crossing over from death to life, now is the time

Your *timeout*; *“Do not fear, only believe”* Jesus said (Mk 5:36)

And if your faith is *weak*, ask him to help you; *“Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”* (Mk 9:24)

If that's you, if the Lord's been speaking to you, let me lead you in a prayer of salvation right now; Right where you sit **(What's Keeping You)**

Pray – “Jesus, I believe; I believe that you died for my sins, and rose again so that I could too; So that I could have new life, full life, and eternal life; I *believe* in you”

“And I confess right now; I confess my sins, and I confess that you are *Lord*; Lord of *my* life; Worthy of my worship, and deserving my devotion”

“Forgive me of my sins, and be my Lord”

“I commit to live for you, from now on”

“I believe, I confess, and I commit”

If you just prayed with me, will you raise your hand, look at me, and wait for me to acknowledge you?

I'm not going to call you out or call you forward; I simply want to rejoice with you and pray for you; Is there anyone?

Lord, thank you for Easter; Thank you for dying and rising again on our behalf; And thank you for saving those who just prayed

Assure their hearts as only you can; Bless their lives as only you do

And give them the strength to persevere, no matter what

Thank you for making a way, and breaking our chains

➤ If you just prayed to receive Christ, we praise God for you
Take a look at this video as we receive the offering