

Easter Changes Everything – 2019

John 20:24-29. After my freshman year of college basketball, the athletic department hired a weight training coach, who advocated that we not only lift in the *off*-season . . . But *in* season. Games, practices, whatever.
“It’s a game-changer man. You can’t do without it.”
And we were like, “You can’t do that. We’ll mess up our shot.”
But lift we did. Every other day, 6 am.
And he was right. It changed everything. We went from 3-28 to .500 in one year.

Which of course is *minor* compared to the game-changers of *history*.
Like the invention of dynamite; or gunpowder. The printing press. Television.
Automobiles. Airplanes. Smartphones.
And don’t miss historical *events*: like the Black Plague, or Spanish Flu; the Protestant Reformation, or World Wars.
History is *full* of things that changed everything.

And so is our life. Like meeting the *love* of your life. Or facing the unexpected death of a loved one. Or having a baby; or a *grand*baby. Who we just found out is a boy.
Our oldest daughter and her husband are having a baby boy.
And little do they know, it’s going to change everything.

But all that *pales* in comparison to the game-changing scope of *Easter* – the resurrection of Jesus from the *dead*.

Other events *pale* in comparison to the effect it’s had on our world. Especially those in our world who *believe*. Those who embrace it.

It changes everything. And if you haven’t *experienced* it, I hope you will before you leave. I hope the risen Savior dawns on your life, just like he has on so many others.

➤ V24 – Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came [this is right after his resurrection, when he appeared to his closest disciples]. [25] So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.”

[26] Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” [27] Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.” [28] Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” [29] Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

Easter changes everything. Starting with our mind.

1. It changes our mind from doubt to belief – because Jesus lives. (John 20:24-28)
Including the mind of Doubting Thomas. “Unless I see him for myself, I will never believe.” (25b)

And yet, 8 days later, he did. Because his mind was changed by what he *saw*.
Just like the hundreds of *others* who saw Jesus after his resurrection. More than 500 the Apostle Paul says.

Which means our faith, and Christianity in general, is not based on a wing and a prayer.

It’s not wishful thinking, and it’s not the figment of someone’s imagination; like *most* religions.

It’s based on historical events; and verifiable facts. Things that happened to a *real* person, at a *real* time, in a *real* place. And his resurrection is at the core of it.
Changing the minds of those who doubted.

- The very thing he *continues* to do *today*. Because he continues to *live*. In heaven. At the right hand of the Father. Interceding for us and defending us.
Rom 8:34 – *Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.*
Jesus rose again and *continues* to live, in the presence of God.
Defending us against accusations of sin, even legitimate ones, because he already paid the price; he already died.

The point being, Easter changes our mind from doubt to belief . . .

Because Jesus lives

Currently. Present tense. He rose again and lives today. Like that old Easter hymn says:

“He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives *today*.”

That’s what changed the mind of Thomas; and the disciples; and the crowds.

You say, “Ya, but they were able to *see* him. We can’t.” For sure. We can’t.

But that doesn’t make his resurrection any less *true*. It might make it more *difficult* for you to believe, but it doesn’t make it false. Just because you can’t *see* him.

- It’s like the jury I sat on awhile back, where the prosecution had a video of an inmate attacking a prison guard. Starting with a head butt. To the guard’s face. Boom!
Except the video didn’t show the actual *impact*. It was a body cam, and only recorded what was in front of it, not above it.

But no worries, there was another guard right there who saw the whole thing, and testified to the same. And there were pictures of the wound on the guard’s face.

And yet, it took us 2 days of deliberations to reach a guilty verdict.

Because one person out of the 12 on the jury wouldn’t accept the testimony of the guard who was attacked, or the witness, or the pictures.

Because she couldn’t see the actual impact on the video.

We could *hear* it, mind you. We could see the motion of the inmate’s head *leading* to it.

We could even see the result. But we couldn’t actually see *it*.

So she held out for 2 days, in a case that should have taken 30 minutes according to the judge.

- Just because you didn’t see the risen Christ with your own two eyes, and just because you can’t, doesn’t mean he’s not alive.
There’s testimony galore from those who *did* see him, there’s the empty tomb and lack of a body, and there’s the obvious “impact” on those who believed.
Including those of us who *haven’t* seen him, and believe. It’s that clear.
And changes everything, if your mind is open at all.

2. It changes our standing from guilt to innocence – because Jesus forgives (Rom 4:25)

Our standing, referring to our legal *position* before God. How he sees us; how he considers us. Easter changes it from condemnation to justification.

Like it says in **Rom 4:25** – [Jesus] *was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification*. Let that soak in a second.

He was delivered up to die on a cross for our sins, our *trespasses*; and was raised from the dead for our *justification*; our declaration of righteousness. *God's* declaration.

That's what it means to be justified. We're declared *righteous* in God's eyes.

Changing our standing, from guilt to innocence. *****

And we're all in desperate need of that. Because we're all guilty; whether you feel it or not. *All* have sinned and missed the mark the Bible says.

All fall short of God's standard of holiness. *None* are righteous (Rom 3:23-24; 3:10).

All deserve punishment and death; *eternal* death.

But God shows his love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (5:8)

He took the punishment *we* deserve. *He* paid the price *we* owed.

And then rose again to prove *his* righteousness, and declare ours; prove his *innocence*, and impute it to us – give *us* credit for it.

So that when he looks at us, he sees us “just as if” we'd never sinned.

And the key to it all, is forgiveness. Easter changes our standing from guilt to innocence . .

Because Jesus forgives

He casts our sin away, as far as the east is from the west. Infinitely far.

He chooses never to remember it, after it's confessed.

He no longer holds it against us when we repent.

We're forgiven. Period. Like it says in Eph 1 – *In him we have . . . the forgiveness of our trespasses*. We *have* it. (Eph 1:7)

Which changes our standing before God, from guilt to innocence.

Take a look at this **video** (God@Work – Turner's) of couple in our church who experienced that firsthand.

➤ He turned to God, and in that moment the gavel fell; declaring him righteous.

Changing his standing from guilt to innocence, because Jesus forgives.

And he'll do the same for you, if *you* turn to him. If *you* confess your sin. If *you* come clean. He'll change you.

3. It changes our life from emptiness to fullness – because Jesus indwells (Rom 15:13)

In case you haven't noticed, emptiness is epidemic in our culture.

Teenage girls look for love in all the wrong places, because they're empty.

Men, young and old alike, resort to pornography; because their empty.

Women give themselves to modeling and prostitution, because they're empty.

Both have affairs, because they're empty. Or indulge in homosexuality and transgenderism, because they're empty.

Men buy more and more toys because they're empty.

Women go shopping because their empty.

People binge-watch and binge-drink because they're empty.

And never stop working because they're empty.

And saturate themselves with sports because they're empty.

And fear a quiet moment because they're empty. It's epidemic.

Meanwhile, **Rom 15:13** says – *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.*

May he *fill* you. No longer empty, but overflowing.

➤ With what? **Joy**. Easter changes our life from emptiness to joyfulness.

A supernatural delight in the presence of God, the people of God, the power of God, and the purposes of God. *May the God of hope fill you with all joy* it says.

And **peace**. Easter changes our life from turmoil to peace.

That settled assurance that God is in control no matter what. And can be trusted because he *is* good and *does* good. (Ps 119:68)

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace.

And third, **hope**. Easter changes our life from *futility* to hope.

The quiet confidence and blessed assurance that God will do what he says. That God will fulfill his promises. So that *you may abound in hope*. Overflow with it.

Those are the indicators of a *full* life.

➤ And it can only be had by *believing*. *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing*. Believing in Easter. The death and resurrection of Jesus, for *you*.

So that his Spirit dwells *within* you – the Spirit of Christ.

Like Paul says in Gal 2:20 – *It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.*

That's why Easter changes our life from emptiness to fullness.

Because Jesus indwells

He indwells us. He lives within us. He takes up residence in our soul.

Replacing our emptiness and futility, with the fullness of joy. The fullness of peace. The fullness of hope. The fullness of, God.

But you have to believe. You have to believe that when he died, he died for you; and rose again so you could too.

You have to receive him into your life, never to leave you or forsake you, and live for him as Lord. That's when Easter changes everything.

And I'm going to give you an opportunity to do just that, in a few minutes. To believe and receive.

But first, there's one more aspect of our lives that Easter changes, and that's our future.

4. It changes our future from hell to heaven – because Jesus saves (John 14:1-3)

John 14:1-3. Jesus is speaking, and says . . .

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. [In other words, we're one and the same. If you're going to believe fully in him, you need to believe in me. And if you believe in me, you believe in him.] [2] In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? [3] And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. Referring to heaven. Because that's where Jesus *went* at the end of his earthly ministry.

He ascended to heaven where God the Father is, to prepare a place for us – those of us who *believe* in him.

So that when he returns, when he *comes* for us, we can go there and *be* with him.

That's his promise for our future: to take us to heaven.

➤ Which is a far cry from the place we're headed if we *don't* believe. The place of condemnation referred to in **Jn 3:18**.

Whoever believes in him [Jesus] is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already [hell-bound already], because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

Believing in the one who died and rose again at *Easter*, changes our future from hell to heaven. Why?

Because Jesus saves

That's why he came. *If we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more shall we be saved by his life.* (Rom 5:10)

The resurrection of Jesus changes everything, because by it, he *saves* us. From the consequences of our sin, our rebellion, our rejection.

If, you believe. Not in some fire insurance sort of way, where you pray to God and live like the devil. But in a heart-felt way.

Jesus saves if you believe, and repent. Admitting your sin, asking God to forgive you, and committing to turn from it. You have to believe and repent.

Take a look at this spoken word video that sums it all up. (**Video** – Odd Thomas)

Pray – Father, where would we be without Easter? To change our mind, our standing, our life, and our future. We praise you. And ask that you would guide and protect those who just prayed. Bless them and keep them. Spur them on to know you more. And knit our hearts together as one. For your glory and our joy. (Praise God)