

life groups' sermon guide

switch: others first

easter and resurrection



Life Groups exist at Kingsway to provide authentic relationships for spiritual growth.

“If Christ has not been raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your faith is useless... And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world.” – Paul (1 Cor. 15:14, 19)

It's Easter season again. And with it comes the usual onslaught of bunnies, eggs, and loads of candy (followed by trips to support your local dentist). Despite what we may assume, not everyone understands the reason for this season. In fact, a candy store in London got egg on its face a few years ago by advertising an Easter egg promotion inadvertently celebrating the “birth” of Christ. The original press release read, *“Brits will on average be enjoying over 3.5 eggs each over the Easter weekend alone. But over a quarter don't know why handing them out symbolises the birth of Jesus...”*

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It wasn't until their third press release, after hastily consulting with the Church of England, that they finally corrected their theology, settling on “resurrection” to describe the meaning of Easter.

And so it goes. With each passing year, the essence of our theology tends to lose some of its vitality in our minds. In fact, you may be one of those people who like “Peeps,” those sugary, marshmallow treats shaped as birds and other creatures. But if left open on the kitchen counter too long, they transform into a stale version of themselves. No longer do they contain the same substance or desire they once held for us.

That is the danger of our Christian holidays, including this pivotal Easter season. Especially for those of us who have grown up in the Church, there may be a tendency to gloss over the significance of the event and lose sight of the original meaning and power it represents.

Q:: Do you think there is a tendency to allow celebrations like Easter become a bit stale over the years? Why/why not?

Q:: If so, how might we resist that natural evolution?

Discussion:

Throughout Scripture, the apostle Paul emphasizes various aspects of theological doctrine and spiritual practice. The two go hand-in-hand, which is why he warned his protégé, Timothy, “Watch your life and doctrine closely” (1 Timothy 4:16). In essence, how we live out our lives is directly related to what we believe about life and our place in it.

Likewise, as Pastor Matt is reiterating this Easter weekend, the significance of the resurrection is intimately connected to our mandate to carry out Christ’s Great Commission. In fact, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead dramatically shapes the entire Christian worldview. It is the hinge point of history which separates Christianity from all other religions in the world.

Q:: What is the Great Commission?

Q:: What is evangelism?

Q:: What is discipleship?

Q:: What is the relationship between these two ideas within the context of the Great Commission? And why it is important for us to understand this?

In our attempts to carry out that Great Commission, there is a tendency as we share the Gospel to attempt to soften the hard truths it contains in order to make it more palatable for the watching world. We focus in on the love aspects of God’s character and tend to overlook His holiness. And in doing so, we forget that He is a actually conditional, not an unconditional, God. That is to say, He has clearly established certain boundaries, laws, and standards that He expects His people to follow. He laid out His requirements to the Israelites in the Old Testament, and Jesus Himself elevated God’s moral threshold in the New Testament to help us understand true biblical living.

When we shape the Gospel more to our liking—downplaying, or even eliminating, those parts with which we disagree, while simultaneously overemphasizing the parts which support our fallible perspective—a dangerous evolution takes place. For, at some point, the Gospel ceases to actually be the Gospel. It becomes a mere shadow of its former self. And the vitality grows stale.

The truth is, in fact, the Gospel message is not hard to swallow for those who desire it, because it centers on the person of Jesus Christ. Through His death and resurrection, we have the opportunity for life beyond our present world. That changes everything!

Q:: What does Jesus Christ’s resurrection mean for the Christian?

Q:: What would change if the resurrection had never happened?

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In Pursuit of Genuine Hope:

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This true story is illustrative for the Christian, however. For, we will never have the opportunity to see the mummified finger of Christ on tour around the world. Nor do we need to. The tomb is empty! “He has risen,” the angel told the women, “just as He said” (Matt. 28:6).

It is this historical fact that gives true and lasting hope to the Christian believer. And that message of hope is indeed the Good News that is intended for all people. Certainly, our salvation hinges on Christ’s death on the cross, but what would be the significance of that death if He never rose again? On the contrary, it is the resurrection which puts the cross in its proper perspective.

Q:: How might that perspective differ between those true Christians who have real hope and those who follow other religions and belief systems? Why?

Q:: In what might they place their hope? And why is that significant?

Application:

When you ask someone, “How ya’ doin’?”, the common answer is “Busy!” With busyness comes the tendency toward distraction. With the emphasis in our culture on sports, Hollywood, and keeping up the Joneses, our tendency toward distraction draws our focus toward the temporal and away from the eternal perspective Paul challenges us to embrace (2 Cor. 4:18).

Q:: Why is there such a tension for us between the temporal and the eternal?

Q:: Why is it difficult to stay focused on the things which matter most?

Q:: How can we work to approach each day with a more eternal perspective in mind?

There is an intentional connection between the Great Commission given to us by the Lord, and the message of hope which is at the center of our message to the world. We are told that through the death, and especially the resurrection, of Christ, we have new life. The question is, do we really believe it? Or, more specifically, do we live as if we really believe it?

Q:: What might change in our lives if we better understood the reality of the resurrection?

The knowledge of the Resurrection and what Jesus did for us is the greatest gift we can share with anyone. If, for example, you had the secret to life, wouldn’t you share it with others? It is like the blind beggar who stumbles upon a loaf of bread and immediately goes to share the news with his blind friend. That is how it should be.

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Q:: Reflect on the people in your sphere of influence right now who may still be living under the shadow of death. What can you do to shine the light of the Christ's resurrection into their life?

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When you ask someone, “How ya’ doin’?”, the common answer is “Busy!” With busyness comes the tendency toward distraction. With the emphasis in our culture on sports, Hollywood, and keeping up the Joneses, our tendency toward distraction draws our focus toward the temporal and away from the eternal perspective Paul challenges us to embrace (2 Cor. 4:18).

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Likewise, as Pastor Matt is reiterating this Easter weekend, the significance of the resurrection is intimately connected to our mandate to carry out Christ’s Great Commission. In fact, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead dramatically shapes the entire Christian worldview. It is the hinge point of history which separates Christianity from all other religions in the world.

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When you ask someone, “How ya’ doin’?”, the common answer is “Busy!” With busyness comes the tendency toward distraction. With the emphasis in our culture on sports, Hollywood, and keeping up the Joneses, our tendency toward distraction draws our focus toward the temporal and away from the eternal perspective Paul challenges us to embrace (2 Cor. 4:18).

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Q:: What is the relationship between these two ideas within the context of the Great Commission? And why it is important for us to understand this?

In our attempts to carry out that Great Commission, there is a tendency as we share the Gospel to attempt to soften the hard truths it contains in order to make it more palatable for the watching world. We focus in on the love aspects of God’s character and tend to overlook His holiness. And in doing so, we forget that He is a actually conditional, not an unconditional, God. That is to say, He has clearly established certain boundaries, laws, and standards that He expects His people to follow. He laid out His requirements to the Israelites in the Old Testament, and Jesus Himself elevated God’s moral threshold in the New Testament to help us understand true biblical living.

When we shape the Gospel more to our liking—downplaying, or even eliminating, those parts with which we disagree, while simultaneously overemphasizing the parts which support our fallible perspective—a dangerous evolution takes place. For, at some point, the Gospel ceases to actually be the Gospel. It becomes a mere shadow of its former self. And the vitality grows stale.

The truth is, in fact, the Gospel message is not hard to swallow for those who desire it, because it centers on the person of Jesus Christ. Through His death and resurrection, we have the opportunity for life beyond our present world. That changes everything!

Q:: What does Jesus Christ’s resurrection mean for the Christian?

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In Pursuit of Genuine Hope:

Many years ago, there were worldwide reports about masses of people in various Asian countries gathering in droves to see the alleged finger of the Buddha, which was enclosed in a heavily-guarded glass case. As you might imagine, this religious relic carried very special significance for many of the followers of the Eastern religions.

This true story is illustrative for the Christian, however. For, we will never have the opportunity to see the mummified finger of Christ on tour around the world. Nor do we need to. The tomb is empty! “He has risen,” the angel told the women, “just as He said” (Matt. 28:6).

It is this historical fact that gives true and lasting hope to the Christian believer. And that message of hope is indeed the Good News that is intended for all people. Certainly, our salvation hinges on Christ’s death on the cross, but what would be the significance of that death if He never rose again? On the contrary, it is the resurrection which puts the cross in its proper perspective.

Q:: How might that perspective differ between those true Christians who have real hope and those who follow other religions and belief systems? Why?

Q:: In what might they place their hope? And why is that significant?

Application:

When you ask someone, “How ya’ doin’?”, the common answer is “Busy!” With busyness comes the tendency toward distraction. With the emphasis in our culture on sports, Hollywood, and keeping up the Joneses, our tendency toward distraction draws our focus toward the temporal and away from the eternal perspective Paul challenges us to embrace (2 Cor. 4:18).

Q:: Why is there such a tension for us between the temporal and the eternal?

Q:: Why is it difficult to stay focused on the things which matter most?

Q:: How can we work to approach each day with a more eternal perspective in mind?

There is an intentional connection between the Great Commission given to us by the Lord, and the message of hope which is at the center of our message to the world. We are told that through the death, and especially the resurrection, of Christ, we have new life. The question is, do we really believe it? Or, more specifically, do we live as if we really believe it?

Q:: What might change in our lives if we better understood the reality of the resurrection?

The knowledge of the Resurrection and what Jesus did for us is the greatest gift we can share with anyone. If, for example, you had the secret to life, wouldn’t you share it with others? It is like the blind beggar who stumbles upon a loaf of bread and immediately goes to share the news with his blind friend. That is how it should be.

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Q:: Reflect on the people in your sphere of influence right now who may still be living under the shadow of death. What can you do to shine the light of the Christ's resurrection into their life?

"I have come that you may have life, and have it to the full." – Jesus (John 10:10)

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life groups' sermon guide

switch: others first

easter and resurrection



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“If Christ has not been raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your faith is useless... And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world.” – Paul (1 Cor. 15:14, 19)

It's Easter season again. And with it comes the usual onslaught of bunnies, eggs, and loads of candy (followed by trips to support your local dentist). Despite what we may assume, not everyone understands the reason for this season. In fact, a candy store in London got egg on its face a few years ago by advertising an Easter egg promotion inadvertently celebrating the “birth” of Christ. The original press release read, *“Brits will on average be enjoying over 3.5 eggs each over the Easter weekend alone. But over a quarter don't know why handing them out symbolises the birth of Jesus...”*

Upon realizing their mistake, the PR spokeswoman humbly acknowledged, *“Please find below the amended story revealing Britons' mounting ignorance regarding Easter. Note the references to rebirth (not birth) as previously stated. Apologies for any confusion.”*

It wasn't until their third press release, after hastily consulting with the Church of England, that they finally corrected their theology, settling on “resurrection” to describe the meaning of Easter.

And so it goes. With each passing year, the essence of our theology tends to lose some of its vitality in our minds. In fact, you may be one of those people who like “Peeps,” those sugary, marshmallow treats shaped as birds and other creatures. But if left open on the kitchen counter too long, they transform into a stale version of themselves. No longer do they contain the same substance or desire they once held for us.

That is the danger of our Christian holidays, including this pivotal Easter season. Especially for those of us who have grown up in the Church, there may be a tendency to gloss over the significance of the event and lose sight of the original meaning and power it represents.

Q:: Do you think there is a tendency to allow celebrations like Easter become a bit stale over the years? Why/why not?

Q:: If so, how might we resist that natural evolution?

Discussion:

Throughout Scripture, the apostle Paul emphasizes various aspects of theological doctrine and spiritual practice. The two go hand-in-hand, which is why he warned his protégé, Timothy, “Watch your life and doctrine closely” (1 Timothy 4:16). In essence, how we live out our lives is directly related to what we believe about life and our place in it.

Likewise, as Pastor Matt is reiterating this Easter weekend, the significance of the resurrection is intimately connected to our mandate to carry out Christ’s Great Commission. In fact, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead dramatically shapes the entire Christian worldview. It is the hinge point of history which separates Christianity from all other religions in the world.

Q:: What is the Great Commission?

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