

SERMON NOTES

EASTER 2016

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Easter is all about remembering and celebrating the fact that Jesus rose from the dead. The early followers of Jesus didn't simply believe in Jesus because of who he was. They believed him because they saw him alive after he was crucified and died. This is exactly why we can believe and trust in him today. Jesus' resurrection proves that he has the power to forgive our sins and give us new life.

Easter is the best time to rethink your relationship with God and, if you haven't already, to put your faith in Jesus as your savior. At Fellowship Greenville, we are a church that believes that Jesus really did physically rise from the dead. It wasn't just his spirit or an illusion or some kind of mass hallucination. We believe he really died, was buried, and then rose from the dead.

This is so essential to our faith. Authentic Christianity teaches that if Jesus didn't rise from the dead, that if he was no more than a great teacher or good moral example to follow, then our faith is meaningless.

Why is the resurrection of Jesus the cornerstone of the Christian faith?

Jesus' friends and followers saw him physically alive after they saw him die on a cross and be buried in a tomb. Seeing Jesus alive from the dead changed their lives and the whole course of history. We mark time based on Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection.

We believe in the resurrection because we believe the many first hand, eyewitness testimonies of people who saw Jesus alive after he died. Their lives were changed forever because they believed what they saw.

This is the #1 issue when it comes to thinking about the Christian faith: *Jesus rose from the dead.*

If you believe that while Jesus had some good, moral things to say, but believe all the miraculous stuff was made up to "keep the dream alive" and pass on Jesus' teachings to the next generation, then everything you believe about God and Jesus is meaningless.

When Jesus died, not a single one of his followers was standing outside of his tomb, waiting for Jesus to come back to life. They believed that dead people stay dead. No one expected that he would rise from the dead, even though Jesus told them many times that he would suffer, die, and rise. No one took his claims seriously. So, when Jesus died, the movement died with him. Hope died with him because Jesus was their hope.

So, how is it that when Jesus died, the movement somehow survived to this day?

Christianity rose from the dead because Jesus rose from the dead. The Book of Acts tells us that after the resurrection, the disciples saw Jesus and believed, and went out into the streets preaching a four-point message:

1. You killed him
2. God raised him
3. We've seen him
4. Repent of your sin

Peter, one of Jesus' disciples, said, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus, for the forgiveness of your sins and you'll receive the gift of the Holy Spirit", ushering you into a brand new relationship with God.

This weekend is the very best time for you to give Jesus another chance.

No matter...

... how bad your past church experience has been.

... how crooked the last Christian you did business with was.

... what you saw in your Christian home growing up.

... what you've seen in terms of "all the hypocrites in church".

... of unanswered prayers you've had.

... how disappointed you've been with God when he didn't do for you what you hoped he would.

You can believe in Jesus not because of what he taught, but because he claimed to have died to forgive your sin and make you right with God, and then he rose from the dead, proving he could make good on that claim.

If you feel God drawing your heart toward Jesus, pray this prayer in your heart to God. It is simply you telling God that from this day forward, you trust Jesus to forgive your sin just like he promised he would do.

Jesus promised: For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him (Jesus) and trusts in him, will not perish, but receive eternal life.

You can pray this prayer in your heart to God:

"Heavenly Father, I believe that Jesus is your Son. I believe he died on the cross to forgive my sin. I believe he rose from the dead to give me new life. I believe that Jesus' resurrection proves that everything else he said was true. So, right now, I ask that you would forgive my sin and receive me into your family. I'm trusting that Jesus' death on the cross was the payment for my sin, and I want to spend the rest of my life as a follower of Jesus."

If you trusted Christ today, we'd like to share a resource with you, entitled, *The Runaway Bride*. This book will walk you through the whole Story of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. It will reinforce the decision you've made today in becoming a follower of Jesus.

Click [here](#) to download a PDF of ***The Runaway Bride, If God is so good, why is the world so messed up?***