

SERMON NOTES

SERIES: Easter 2017
TITLE: **Starting Point**

SCRIPTURE: Luke 23-24; Acts 2

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Easter is all about celebrating the fact that Jesus rose from the dead. Early Jesus followers didn't simply believe in Jesus because of who he was. They didn't believe in Jesus because of his teaching. They believed in him because they saw him alive after he was crucified. The resurrection is why we can believe and trust in him today. Jesus' resurrection proves that he has the power to forgive our sins and to bring us into a new, forever relationship with God.

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 the essential *starting point* of our faith. In fact, 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. That means, if you believe that while Jesus had some good, moral things to say, but believe all the miraculous stuff about Jesus was made up to keep the dream alive and pass Jesus' teachings on to the next generation, then everything you believe about God and Jesus is meaningless. The Resurrection is the starting point of true faith in Jesus.

Why is the resurrection of Jesus the starting point of the Christian faith?

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.

But something happened to all these hopeless people that changed everything. Many of the 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 human history. We mark time based on Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection. And the apostle Paul tells us that there was a time when over 500 of Jesus' followers saw him alive from the dead! In a very real sense...

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 of Jerusalem preaching a four-point message:

1. You killed him
2. God raised him
3. We've seen him
4. Repent of your sin (That is, change your mind about who Jesus is and what Jesus has done for you.)

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*, bringing you into a brand new relationship with God. That was the starting point for the faith of many people who had previously rejected Jesus.

Easter could be the starting point for your faith as well.

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. Simply tell God that, from this day forward, you are trusting Jesus to forgive your sin and give you new life just like he promised he would do. Here's one of Jesus' promises to you...

*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 receives eternal life.* (John 3:16)

The starting point of your faith can be a prayer like this: *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 bring 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?***