

JESUS DEFEATED! ~An Easter Message

As we gather here this Sunday morning, I want us to consider what this day was like some 2000 years ago for the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth.

It was the early morning hours of Sunday, the first day of the week.

His disciples were gathered together. **In shock. In fear. Unsure of what to do next.**

Just days before, Jesus had been arrested after being betrayed by one of their own.

A series of sham trials had declared Him guilty of crimes He did not commit.

He had been sentenced to die after the people of Israel chose to free an evil man while crying out **"Crucify him!"** to a man who had only done good in their midst.

HOW... had it come this?!

The fact that Jesus of Nazareth was dead... was like an oppressive cloud. A thick gloom that seemed to fill the air.

It all seemed impossible.

John the Baptizer was the first to declare it three years ago as Jesus approached him in the waters of the Jordan river to be baptized.

"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!"
John 1:29

He was the fulfillment of the prophet Isaiah's declaration-

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. **Isaiah 9:6-7***

Just a week ago they entered Jerusalem and the people had been cheering, Shouting:

"Hosanna to the Son of David; BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; Hosanna in the highest!" (Matthew 21:9)

The blank looks on many of the disciples told the story that was on all their hearts.

How could the hearts and minds of God's own people Israel turn so completely to betray and have put to death the Christ who had come to save them?!?

And now He was dead. His cold body lying in a cold, dark tomb.

After His crucifixion, the apostles, disciples and several of the women had gathered in a room to... **to what?**

Pray? Hide? Plan? Nobody seemed quite sure what the next steps were.

At a table in the room several of the women were getting ready to go to Jesus' tomb as daylight approached.

Among them was Mary Magdalene, who had followed Jesus ever since He cast out the seven demons plaguing her.

And the other Mary, who was the mother of James the younger.

They had gathered oils and spices to go and finish anointing Jesus' body.

There had been no time after His death to properly wrap and anoint the body.

Jesus had died late in the afternoon just this last Friday.

The following day was the Sabbath Day, **the day of rest**, when no work could be done.

It had been such a God sent blessing when Joseph of Arimathea had stepped forward and offered his own tomb, which had never been used, to lay the body of the Lord.

But things had moved very quickly to lay his body before sunset. There simply had not been time to finish all the work.

How had it all come to this?!?!

Jesus had declared that He and the Father were **One**.

Jesus stated that before Abraham was born, "**I AM.**"

It was clear to all who heard Him speak that Jesus declared that He was the long waited for Messiah, the Christ, who would deliver God's people.

He had declared it Himself in the synagogue of Nazareth when He read from the scroll of Isaiah.

Luke 4:18-21 "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, ...
... TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD."

And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, "**Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.**"

Jesus had proven over and over that He was who He claimed to be.

He spoke with the authority of God. His teachings could not be refuted. All that He uttered was divinely inspired.

He demonstrated His authority over all of creation. When the storms raged, Jesus quieted the wind and the waves with the words, "**be calm.**" *Mark 4:35-41*

On one occasion, water became wine, on another he strolled across the waters of the sea as casually as one might walk across a meadow of clover.
(*Matthew 14:22-33*)

He demonstrated His love for people. Upon His blessing food was multiplied such that so little portions had fed thousands. (*Matthew 14:13-21*)

- He healed the sick.
- Caused the blind to see.
- The deaf to hear.
- The lame to walk.

Surely, He had been the living embodiment of what was foretold by the prophet Isaiah

"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert." (Isaiah 35:5-6)

- The unclean had been made clean.

- Unclean spirits had fled at His name.
- Lepers were made well.

All were welcome to approach Jesus to hear Him speak or to draw near for healing.

In fact, Jesus went out of His way to spend time talking with, and dining with, those who society was the quickest to cast aside.

And the pharisees and other religious leaders despised him.

“Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” they asked of the disciples.

Jesus replied to them, **“It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick.”** (Matthew 9:11-12)

The Jewish leaders knew, but they refused to see, refused to hear, and refused to accept the truth that was in front of them.

Nicodemus, **one of their own,** had admitted this as he spoke with Jesus one night in private.

““Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”
(John 3:1-3)

Jesus gave him the teaching he, and we all needed to hear:

“Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”

Nicodemus heard, but the teachings were hard to understand when heard through prideful ears.

Jesus taught that the only way to have eternal life, the only way to God the Father and all His promises, was through HIM!

He declared, **“I am the way, the truth and the Life, no man comes to the Father, but through Me.”** –

He declared that He was the **“Bread of life.”** John 6:35

He declared Himself to be the source of **“living water.”** John 7:38

He taught that His body was the sacrifice, given for us.

That the shedding of His blood, the giving of His life, was the way of the New Covenant by God for mankind. (*John 6:47-69*)

He taught that for any to be saved this must partake in Him.
Many struggled with the teaching, some walked away.

So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. "We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God." John 6:66-69

The twelve had been hand-picked by Jesus.

Now, this morning, all were gathered together. Unable to sleep.

All but Judas, who had betrayed Jesus.

It had only been a few days ago that Jesus had washed their feet and shared His last supper with them.

After Jesus was arrested, Judas had run off into the night, remorse for what he had done consuming him. They learned later he had taken his own life.

But the others were here, along with other disciples, and the women who had now departed to make their way to the tomb to finish anointing the body of their Lord.

Some were praying, others were in low conversations. Some were sleeping, or at least pretending to.

Everyone was scared. Lost. Confused.

For three years they had followed Jesus of Nazareth.

Some had come along more recently, and others had been with him since He first appeared. **But nobody could believe what happened in these last few days.**

There in one corner were James and John, the "Sons of thunder" as Jesus referred to them.

Both were fishermen by trade, they had been working with their father Zebedee, on the shores of Galilee when Jesus approached them.

"Follow Me." He commanded. And they had. No doubts, no questions.

...Then... But now, it seemed like questions were all they had.

There in a corner was Peter and his brother Andrew.

Peter was still reeling with emotions.

On the night they arrested Jesus, Peter had followed behind the crowds to where the trial was being held. There in the dim light of a warming fire a servant girl had pointed him out:

Luke 22:54-62

⁵⁴ Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house, and Peter was following at a distance. ⁵⁵ And when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them. ⁵⁶ Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, "This man also was with him." ⁵⁷ But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him."

⁵⁸ And a little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not."

⁵⁹ And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, "Certainly this man also was with him, for he too is a Galilean." ⁶⁰ But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed.

⁶¹ And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times." ⁶² And Peter went out and wept bitterly.

Can you imagine the anguish in Peter's heart this sad morning?

In his last moments seeing Jesus before His death, Peter had denied even knowing him... Peter's heart was absolutely broken...

There in the room were Philip, Simon, Matthew and the rest.

All these men, and many of the women who had travelled with them, had been eyewitnesses to the miracles that Jesus performed. Personally present during his teachings.

In the most amazing and public of His miracles, Jesus had even demonstrated His authority over life and death itself.

This He did when he called out to the tomb holding his friend Lazarus, who had been four days dead.

“Lazarus, come out” Jesus commanded. And from the tomb Lazarus emerged. The scent of death gone, and his body fully restored.

But now it was the body of Jesus that laid in the tomb!

Jesus taught this day was coming. But nobody wanted to hear it. Nobody wanted to believe it.

Jesus had shared WHY God the Father had sent Him.

John 3:16-21

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Jesus had shared in detail the events that would take place.

Matthew 20:17-19

As Jesus was about to go up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve disciples aside by themselves, and on the way He said to them, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up.”

Jesus had also clearly taught about the salvation from judgement or the condemnation that was coming based on what people chose to believe about Him.

John 3:18

¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.

He even taught WHY so many would reject Him.

John 3:19-21

¹⁹ This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does

evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed.

And hate them they had.

The men of the Sanhedrin, the priests, the scribes, the Sadducees and the Pharisees – the men whose function it was to bring God’s people nearer to God...

... Had instead alienated themselves from God, conspired, plotted, lied and schemed to have Jesus arrested, found Him guilty though He was innocent, and partnered with the government of men to put Him death.

The beatings had been brutal.

The mockery of the Lord had been severe.

And there on the cross the humiliation of the King did not end.

The taunting of the crowds

Matthew 27:38-40

And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads and saying, “You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.”

The mocking of the priests and elders

Matthew 27:41-43

In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him and saying, “He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him. “

“HE TRUSTS IN GOD; LET GOD RESCUE Him now, IF HE DELIGHTS IN HIM; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”

Even with so much hatred, slander, and malice cast at Him – Jesus had prayed, *“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”*

It was midday, noon. Or the “sixth hour” in Jewish custom when the sun’s light faded, and the land became dark.

For the next three hours there had been an uneasy and surreal feeling. While some still taunted and hissed at Jesus on the cross, others became nervous. Something was happening. Something big.

In the ninth hour, or at around 3pm, Jesus cried out from the cross, quoting the Psalms (22:1) **"My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"**

He then declared, **"It is finished."**

And then in His final utterance He prayed – **"Father, into thy hands, I commend my spirit."**

With this, His shoulders sagged, his head bowed, and Jesus of Nazareth died.

IMMEDIATELY, an earthquake shook the land, rocks were split in two from the force of it. (*Matthew 27:45-54*)

In the temple, the veil shrouding the Holy of Holies was torn completely in two... from the top ... to the bottom.

Even the centurion who was over the guard on the hill that day saw and heard these things and declared, **"Truly, this was the Son of God!"**

And it was true.

But what did all that matter now? Now that Jesus was dead.

Nobody knew for sure.

So, for now everyone was waiting. Fearing the worst.

As far as the world could see, the message certainly appeared to be that JESUS has been DEFEATED.

(Wellington Defeated story)

There is a story, that comes out of England, that on the evening of **June 18, 1815** a man stood in the tower of England's Winchester Cathedral gazing anxiously out to sea.

All of **England** held its breath with him.

French dictator Napoleon Bonaparte had marched the French armies across Europe winning one decided victory after another.

In an **all-or-nothing** attempt to stop Napoleon's conquest, The Duke of Wellington led the armies of England along with what remained of the resistance forces in a force-on-force battle near the village of Waterloo.

If defeated, little would remain to stand between Napoleon's armies and England itself.

At last, he found what he was looking for – a ship sending a signal by use of lights. **He strained to see the message.**

As he stood in the tower of Winchester Cathedral the man waited to relay the news that would determine England's future.

But just as the flashing lights of the signal ship began, **a heavy fog** rolled in.

The man struggled to make out the signal through the rolling fog.

The message was brief. And the news was of the worst possible sort.

"WELLINGTON ...DEFEATED"

The man signaled to other stations and the news spread across the countryside, bringing great gloom and sadness.

Their great hope had failed.

But then, as the man in the tower continued to look on, **the fog began to lift**, and the message was sent again, this time the man in the tower was able to receive it in full!

And the message read:

"WELLINGTON ...DEFEATED... THE ...ENEMY"

*From despair to rejoicing! **Wellington had won!***

On **Friday**, As the body of Jesus of Nazareth was let down from the cross, it seemed the message was:

"CHRIST ...DEFEATED"

Saturday came had come and gone.

The dawn of **Sunday's** light was on the horizon.

We pick up the story in **Luke 24:1-12** as the women brought the spices to the tomb, hoping to have an opportunity to finish the customary prepping of the body.

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. ² And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

See that the women fully expected to find the body of Jesus. Understand that the message that everyone perceived at that time was that Jesus of Nazareth was, in fact, dead.

⁴ While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing; ⁵ and as the women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living One among the dead? ⁶ He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, ⁷ saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.” ⁸ And they remembered His words, ⁹ and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.

What elation!! Can you even imagine the thoughts that must have raced through their minds and how their hearts must have pounded!

¹⁰ Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles. ¹¹ But these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them.

*There is something very telling in this simple to read over passage – **it is the struggle of all mankind to believe the unbelievable.***

Luke 24:12

¹² But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home, marveling at what had happened.

The resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth clears the fog of doubt and allows us to see the complete message.

“JESUS ...DEFEATED ...THE ...ENEMY!”

- The guilt of our sin was our foe – Christ Jesus has overcome sin.
- The grave was our destination – Christ Jesus has overcome the grave.

There is VICTORY – for those who believe by faith – **the GUILT of the sins of the believer are covered by the blood of Christ.**

Romans 8:1

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

There is VICTORY – for those who believe by faith- **Separation from God in our death is no longer our end!**

1 Corinthians 15:53-57

For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, “DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. 55“O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?”

56The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; 57but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the very definition of the message of the Gospel – **THE GOOD NEWS** –

That is only fully received when one by faith accepts that the unthinkable is true!

Truth: The God of scripture **IS**. And there is no other.

Truth: God is THE holy, righteous, and good God of creation and the scriptures.

- He created all things to glorify Him and is over all things.

Truth: We have all failed our purpose for being. All having fallen short of the glory of God.

Truth: And the judgement for our failure is death of this body and eternal separation from the goodness of God.

Truth: BUT GOD – In His love, mercy, and grace, sent the Son, Jesus, Immanuel, God with us, FOR THIS VERY REASON – to be offered up in death by sinful man for the sins of mankind.

There, on the cross, Jesus went willing to perish in the flesh, as a lamb of offering, for the forgiveness of sins, so that unrighteous man could be made right before God.

And from the tomb he rose again!! victorious over sin and death – so that for those who believe their sins are forgiven and as He rose, so too shall the faithful rise from death to everlasting life!

And all this GOD DID – through THE SON – For His glory, and to our benefit.

Friends the message today is clear-

JESUS... DEFEATED... THE... ENEMY

And if you want to have victory today, tomorrow, and for all eternity – then confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead – and you shall be saved!

(Romans 10:9)

“HE IS RISEN” → HE IS RISEN INDEED!

Let us pray

Introduction Paragraph

Jesus of Nazareth was born the Son of God. Born King of the Jews. Born the King of kings and the Lord of lords. And yet, from the day of His birth, those of power and influence despised Him. Plotted against Him. And sought to have Him put to death.

Jesus demonstrated nothing but love for God the Father and for mankind. Through His teaching, His signs, His wonders, and in all that He did He manifested the truth of His claim that He was the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Thirty some years after His birth, the High Priest of God's people, Israel, conspiring with the other branches of the Jewish government, schemed, lied and manipulated the Roman governor of Judea such that they accomplished the task.

Jesus of Nazareth was tried and found guilty of charges He did not commit. He was brutally beaten and cruelly put to death in a public execution by crucifixion on a cross.

That night, as the battered body of Jesus was laid in a tomb that was sealed with a stone, there was rejoicing in the halls of the Sanhedrin. Across town, there was fear and confusion where disciples of Jesus had gathered.

To all the world it appeared the message was that Jesus of Nazareth had been defeated. But was that the whole message...??