

ALL THINGS NEW // Easter Sunday

*"If Christ isn't risen, nothing matters. If He is risen, nothing else matters."
- Jaroslav Pelikan*

Christianity isn't just simply the good news that God can make bad people good or good people better, but that God can make dead things come alive.

My hope for all of us today, is that we would experience the abundant life that Jesus came to bring us, that we would see Jesus for who He really is. That whatever burdens, disappointments, or unfulfilled hopes we're carrying today, whatever circumstance or condition of our hearts, that we would look at and declare dead that every single person would personally encounter and experience the God who makes all things new.

20 years ago, God took the broken pieces of my life, and He saved me. He made me a brand new creation. He gave me life, purpose, hope, meaning, significance. He made me a new creation. Through what God did in my life over the span of the next year, my entire immediate family received the NEW LIFE that only Christ can bring.

The stories of grace and redemption are the stories of all of God's people. If you're exploring faith, or skeptical of Christians, my prayer for you today is that we wouldn't base our decision about Jesus on His imperfect followers but that you base our decision about Jesus on the person of Jesus. That you would be willing to take a risk and make the decision to trust in His power over death! His victory over death, Hell and the grave, and that you would receive the free gift of Salvation. Our God is a God that makes all things new.

He can take the dead things of our lives and make them alive again.

John 20:11-18, "...Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.' Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?' Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, 'Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary.' She turned and said to him in Aramaic, 'Rabboni!' Jesus said to her, 'Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brothers and say to them, "I am ascending to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God."' Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'— and that He had said these things to her."

Revelation 1:17-18, "...Fear not, I am the first and the last, ¹⁸ and the living One. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades."

Revelation 21:5, "And He who was seated on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.'"

A NEW PAST

As a society, around this time of year, we feel a collective permission to begin to entertain the new. New ideas, the new gadget, new priorities. What we see in the Easter story is the redemption of the most broken parts of our past, our failures, our disappointments, our missed opportunities. Look at Peter, for example. In John 18, as Peter is warming himself by a charcoal fire, Peter denies Jesus three different times in Jesus' greatest hour of need and after the third time the rooster crows just like Jesus told him it would. And all of a sudden it dawns on Peter that after all the times he'd told Jesus, "*I'll follow you wherever you go. I'll never deny you. I'll go to the end with you...*" in Jesus' greatest hour of need, he betrays his closest friend. He denies that he ever knew Jesus for fear of his own life.

John 21:4-7, "Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, 'Children, do you have any fish?' They answered him, 'No.' He said to them, 'Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.' So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!' When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea.

John 21:9-10,12, "When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.' Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.'"

Jesus is saying, "*I'm taking you back to point of your failure. I'm taking you back to the environment that reminds you of your worst moment, your greatest pain, your greatest regret in life, your greatest weakness, the thing you think disqualifies you from being loved by God, or even being used by God, and I'm going to redeem it. Every single ounce of it. Even the smell of that charcoal fire you were huddled around when you denied me... I'm cooking you some breakfast on that same charcoal fire, and no longer will it remind you of your greatest failure but of my immeasurable grace over your life.*" Then Jesus says, "Do you love me?" Peter says, you know I do. Jesus says, "feed my sheep." And Peter becomes one of the greatest movement leaders of the last 2,000 years.

The most broken parts of my life before Jesus are the very things that He's used the most. Years of addiction and all the brokenness that came with it. For the last 20 years, God has taken the worst things about my life and redeemed every ounce of it for His glory, His purpose. God doesn't just redeem from this point forward, when we come to Him. He redeems all. The whole storyline, every aspect of our lives that we entrust to Him, He redeems it - repurposes it for our good and His glory.

What part of your story do you need God to redeem today? What's your charcoal fire? What failure, disappointment, circumstance, relationship do you need to bring to God today? Because God doesn't do away with the past, He redeems it if we'll bring it to Him. He doesn't say, I'll make all NEW things. But He also does NOT say, "*I WILL make all things new one day...*" (even though He absolutely will).

A NEW FUTURE

One of the reasons why we're all fascinating with NEW is because we live in world that is in a constant state of decay. Our memory isn't as good as it used to be, our bodies are falling apart.

2 Corinthians 4:16, "...our outer self is wasting away."

The world is in decay but this isn't what we were made for. When sin entered into the human story in Genesis 3, death and decay entered into every aspect of life with it. But in Revelation 21, we're told about a day coming when Jesus Himself will bring about the renewal of all things.

Revelation 21:1-4, "Then I saw a **new heaven** and a **new earth**, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.'"

This is what God made us for. This is a return not just to the paradise of Eden, but a newer, better Eden. A paradise BOOMING with life where every wrong will be made right. Every injustice will be dealt with, every sorrow will be turned to joy, every tear will be wiped away. There will be a cosmic and eternal renewal of all things that is coming one day.

2 Corinthians 4:16-17, "So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison..."

We can't even fathom the future that awaits us. The resurrection of Jesus assures us that our future is secure. Jesus said, in **John 14:19**, "Because I live, you also will live."

Do you know what that knowledge empowers us to do? It gives the Christian an ability to live with a radical courage without fear of death because we know what awaits us on the other side. The promise of our future is what has given Christians the courage to lay down their lives for the last 2,000 years. And this is exactly WHY Jesus came! This is exactly why Jesus died! This is exactly why He conquered death, hell, and the grave! Because the death and resurrection of Jesus turns death into a doorway! Of all the world's religions, Christianity alone sees death

not just as an enemy, but as a defeated enemy! Because in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the power of death has been broken forever!

The Apostle Paul even taunts death.

1 Corinthians 15:55, 57, "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting...thanks be to God, who gives us the **victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."**

Jesus Christ alone has broken the power death!

He [Jesus] is the 'first fruits,' the pioneer of life,' He has forced open a door that has been locked since the death of the first man. He has met, fought, and beaten the King of Death. Everything is different because He has done so."

- C.S. Lewis

Everything can be different because of Christ. Because of the resurrection of Jesus, those who belong to Him no longer fear death but can have the audacity even to taunt death. Knowing what is coming to us on THAT day, gives us the power to live differently on THIS day. It gives us power to live differently now! The resurrection of Jesus gives us a redeemed past, a secure future, and a...

A BRAND-NEW NOW

Because Jesus says,

Revelation 21:5, "Behold, I AM making all things new."

What Jesus tells us here is that He's not just discarding the old things that didn't work and replacing them. And He's also not just biding His time, waiting until one day WAY in the future to bring us to paradise with Him. Jesus is saying in this one verse... *"I WANT TO MAKE ALL THINGS NEW now! I want to bring you into NEW LIFE, NEW HOPE, NEW POWER, NEW PURPOSE, NEW HEALING, NEW PERSPECTIVE, NEW COURAGE, NEW STRENGTH, NEW VISION, A NEW CALLING, NOW! And because I've been raised from the dead, because I breathed again and walked out of that TOMB, NEW LIFE is available, not just THEN AND THERE but HERE AND NOW."*

Jesus says, **Revelation 1:17-18, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living One. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades."**

This is what we celebrate on Easter. Jesus has risen to new life, and invites anyone and everyone that would believe in Him, to receive the new life that only He can bring. Because Jesus Christ is the only person in human history to predict his own death and resurrection and have it actually happen!

2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

In other words, there is a spiritual resurrection that happens in your life the very moment you believe! Jesus says, *"the moment you entrust your life to me, my Spirit comes in and takes up residence inside of you and you'll become a brand new creation, I'll give you a brand new start. If you bring your life to me, your past can't hold you back, death can't even kill you... and I will give you a brand new start. Today."*

John 3:36, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life."

John 8:24, "'I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.'"

Jesus came so that our past could be redeemed. Jesus came so that our heavenly future would be secure. Jesus came so that we might have life here and now!!

And because of the resurrection, death doesn't have the final word. Fear doesn't have the final word. Our failures don't have the final word. The broken pieces of our past don't have the final word. Our disappointments and let downs in life don't have the final word. Because of Easter Sunday, because of the empty tomb, because death is a defeated enemy, Jesus Christ alone has the final word!