

Easter 2023 | Christ Resurrected

- There is good news, there is forgiveness of sin. Heaven is open. There's joy for the heart. There's hope for the future. His name is Jesus Christ. He's alive and well right now and we're really excited to have you join us for Easter. My name's Pastor Mark. I'm so glad to see you. If I've never had a chance to preach a sermon and yell at you for a short bit, thank you so much for joining us. We're just so excited. It's the best day of the year because the most significant event in the history of the world is being celebrated. Jesus Christ said He was God. Jesus Christ said He would die. Jesus Christ said He would rise and I have such good news. Jesus Christ is alive. Jesus Christ rose from the dead. So I've got a special holiday gift for you, it's a short sermon. You can come back next week if you want a long one. But here's what we're gonna do. First we're gonna talk about Jesus. I wanna tell you about the person I love the most. He's changed my life. He has blessed my family. He's only and always been good to me and I want the same for you. Jesus is the most towering figure in the history of the world. I'll tell you a little bit about Him. If you wanna learn more, the best place to start is with the Bible, the word of God. You can start in a book called Luke and just keep reading and you'll learn about Jesus. Jesus is the hero of the Bible. He's the center of the Bible. He's the theme of the Bible. Not only is Jesus the center of scripture, He's the center of history. We measure time by His life. B.C., before Christ. A.D., Anno Domini, the year of our Lord. Just think of everyone who has ever lived on planet Earth. One person is the pivot point for all of history. Jesus. In addition, we celebrate him during the holidays. Christmas, it's His birthday. Good Friday, this week was His death. Today is Easter, it's His resurrection. Holiday means a holy day. For Christians this is the holiest day of the year. In addition, we're gathering as the church, and you need to know this, the biggest, largest, longest lasting, most diverse and bilingual movement of any sort or kind in the history of the world is? The church. If you're part of the church of Jesus Christ, you're part of the biggest movement in the history of our globe. Today, billions, this weekend, billions of Christians around the world gather together to worship Jesus Christ. In addition, two things I want to tell you about Jesus you may not know. He says things that no one else says and He does things that no one else does. First, He tells us that He is perfect and without sin. There is no founder of any major world religion who ever said that He was perfect without sin. Number two, Jesus also said that he was the only God. Jesus is also the only founder of any major world religion to say He's God. And so those two claims being without precedent or peer are questions that you must ask yourself. Do I believe that Jesus is perfect? And do I believe that Jesus is the only God? Many originally did not believe those claims so they conspired together to crucify Him, to kill Him, to murder Him. He was buried on a Friday and He rose on a Sunday just as He promised he would to prove who He is. We're here to meet with Jesus. We're here to learn about Jesus. We're here to see some of you become followers for the first time of Jesus. The impact that He has left is really remarkable in light of the resources that He had. He grew up in a small town, not a big city. His parents were peasants. They were not royalty. In addition, He never went to college. He never penned a book. He never traveled more than a few hundred miles from home. He didn't make much money. He was often homeless. In addition, He never had the comfort of a wife or the joy of a child. Yet in his wake, there are more songs sung to Him, more paintings painted of Him, more lives devoted to Him, more books written regarding Him than anyone who has ever lived in our planet. At the point of the turning of the millennium, "Newsweek" magazine had a

cover story about Christ. They named Him man of the millennium. Here's what they say, "By any secular standard, "Jesus is the dominant figure in Western culture. "Like the millennium itself, "much of what we now think of as Western ideas, "inventions, and values, "finds its source or inspiration in the religion "that worships God in His name. "Art in science, the self and society, "politics and economics, marriage in the family, "right and wrong, body and soul, all have been touched "and often radically transformed "by the Christian influence." Jesus is the biggest influence in world history. I'm excited to talk to you about Jesus and I also need to talk to you about you. So let's talk about you. Let's talk about me first. I'm gonna ask you a question. You could be honest. We're in church. Am I a sinner?

- Yes.

- That was very quick, very unanimous. Even my wife, she joined in that chorus. She agrees. So I love you, but I'll ask this kindly and nicely. Are you a sinner?

- Yes.

- You guys weren't as enthusiastic about you as you were me. I noticed that. Before we can understand our need for a savior, we need to understand that we're a sinner who needs to be saved. Before we really appreciate the good news of Jesus, we need to understand the bad news of us. We have so many problems in our world, but under all the problems, there is one problem. The Bible calls that sin. Had we not sinned against God, rebelled against God, separated from God, there would be no problems without that problem. That is the root cause, sin, of all the other problems. There would be no death or destruction or dying or decay. There would be no tears and no funerals and no wars. Everyone would be alive and everything would be joy filled and joyful. And the problem under all the problems is sin, which means until we deal with that problem, we're not ready to deal with any other problem. So I need you to understand that you are a sinner and I am a sinner too. I'm not saying I'm better than anyone. I'm sure that some of you are much better people than me. And some of you are aware that you're a sinner and some of you struggle to believe that. If you're married, ask your spouse, they will give you the truth, you are a sinner too. Let me tell you a little bit about sin. Sin, the Bible says, is something we have by nature and choice. We make choices that are sinful because they proceed from a nature that is sinful. And a lot of times people are like, "Well, how do I change my behavior?" Well, first you need God to change your nature. An apple tree bears apples. A sinner bears poisonous, sinful fruit. Unless God changes us in here, nothing really changes out there. We're sinners by nature and choice and a sinner tries to choose better but they can't become new unless God does some profound work. In addition, sin includes our thoughts. How many of you are glad that people can't see what you're thinking? God can. Also, sin includes our words. How many of us have said things that were untruthful, wrongly flirtatious, not entirely integrous. We all have. Sin also includes our deeds. How many of us have done things that we just regret? We know they're wrong. Maybe they're even crimes. And also our motives. Sometimes we do something that looks good but it's out of a bad heart. We're trying to manipulate, control someone. We're trying to seduce them or manipulate them. In addition, sin

includes commission where we do what is wrong or omission where we don't do what is right. I didn't love that person. I didn't forgive that person. I wasn't generous toward that person. I didn't acknowledge that person. I didn't serve that person. We are sinners by the things that we do and the things that we fail to do. Now, God has given us a conscience. Even if you don't believe the Bible, your conscience continually holds court and it reminds you and convicts you that you're a sinner. Some of you have really struggled with this guilt, shame. You're ashamed of what you've done and you can't get free of those sort of guilty oppressive feelings. Some of you have denied it or blame shifted toward others. Some of you have made lots of excuses. But in the end, even those who don't know the Bible come to the same conclusion, and this little statement in our culture sort of summarizes it well, nobody's perfect. Another way of saying it is, everybody's a sinner. So we've established that Jesus is God and perfect and the Savior and we are sinner. That being said, how do we reconcile God who is holy, we who are unholy, God who is in heaven, we who are on Earth, God who is right, and we who are wrong? There's only two options, my friend. Number one, we go up to God. This is every religion except for Jesus Christ in the Christian faith. Through good works, karma, reincarnating, paying off your debt to God, your good deeds outweighing your bad deeds, you climb a ladder of performance and works, you work your way up to God. The only way that this works is not that we go up to God, but if God comes down to us. Christianity is the only religion that teaches not how you get to God, but how God came to you. His name is Jesus Christ. His name, Emmanuel, literally means God with us. And so God came down in the person of Jesus. And here's what I want to talk to you about. God came down as Jesus to do a work for you, to do a work for you 'cause He loves you. And then to do a work in you and then to do a work through you. That's the Christian faith. Number one, God works for you. I'll read from Romans 5:6-10. "While we were still weak." We couldn't save ourselves. We couldn't make it right. We couldn't undo our wrongs. We couldn't get back to God. Christ died for who? The ungodly. Our God died for the ungodly. "For one will scarcely die for a righteous person, "though perhaps for a good person "one would dare even to die. "But God shows his love. I'm just so excited to tell you this. You're not good but you're loved. And His love makes you new. So you don't need to be good. You need to be loved. And His love will make you new. This is such a relief. You don't work for God's love, you work from it. God doesn't put his love for you at the finish line, but at the starting line. That's our God. He goes on to say, "God shows us his love for in this "while we were still sinners." Some of you are gonna get saved today and you were sinning this afternoon. Are you trying to squeeze a few in? See, God's pursuing us even when we're running from Him. Christ died for us. You and me both. We're all sinners. "Since therefore we have now been justified. "We've been declared acceptable in His side by his blood. "How much more will we be saved by Him "from the wrath of God," that's hell. See, in this life you can receive the love of God but if you don't receive it, all that remains in the next life is the wrath of God. For if we were enemies, no one is born a friend of God, you need to be born again to be a friend of God. "We were reconciled to God by the death of His Son. "How much more, now that we are reconciled, "shall we be saved by His life?" He's talking there about His resurrection life. So three things, number one, Jesus lived the life that you and I should have lived. That's what He's saying. He said, "We're ungodly," and he's righteous. So if you wanna know, what's a human life supposed to look like? Jesus. Take your life, compare it to His. Everything you do or believe differently is a sin. Jesus alone lives a

perfect life. He lived the life that none of us have lived. Now what happens is that sin causes death. That's why it feels like our world is dying. Our economy is dying. Our culture is dying. Our government is dying. Our hope is dying. Our joy is dying. Our future is dying. And you know why it feels like that? It's dying. And unless God brings life, there's only death. And so what happens is we're all going to die because of our sin. Here's the good news. Jesus not only lived the life that we were supposed to live, He died the death we were supposed to die. That's what it says. That Christ died for the ungodly. So on the cross, our God became one of us and he took our place. And if you believe in Jesus, this is such incredible news. He took your place and He put you in His place. Jesus died so you could live. Jesus had condemnation so you could have salvation. Jesus endured the wrath of God so you could receive the grace of God. Jesus had his relationship with the Father severed so that your relationship with the Father could be started. Jesus took your place and put you in His place. That's what He's saying. And then He died so that your sin could be forgiven and that death, which is the consequence of sin, could be conquered. And then number three, Jesus rose to quote unquote "life." You need to know that Jesus isn't just our dead example. He's our living Lord. Jesus died and rose and then over the course of 40 days, he appeared to crowds upwards of 500 at a time. This was a public historical event. It's recorded both in and outside of the scriptures. He appeared to family members, friends, even enemies who testified He has returned very much alive from the grave. The point is this, wouldn't it be nice to know what awaited us on the other side of this life? Wouldn't it be nice to know that there was hope after death and after death, life really begins. Jesus went through death and came back to tell us to trust in Him and to follow Him. And then Jesus ascended into heaven. So here's where Jesus is now. I have good news. Jesus is alive right now. He's ruling and reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords in heaven. He is ready to forgive your sin. He's been praying for you. Interceding for you. He loves you. He is concerned about you. He would love a relationship with you. It doesn't matter what you've done or how far you've gone. His grace has been pursuing you and right now He wants to invite you to turn from sin and trust in Him and He will hear and answer you. And when you die, you'll go to be with Jesus. And when He comes back and He judges evil doers and He brings and end to the curse and He raises the dead from the grave, you're going to be filled with joy in the presence of Jesus forever and ever, amen?

- Amen.

- So that's God's work for you. Do you know Jesus? Do you love Jesus? Do you trust Jesus? Do you hope in Jesus? Do you like Jesus? Are you worshiping Jesus? I hope my big idea is coming through. You need Jesus. That's God's work for you. And then God does the work in you. This is where becoming a Christian is not a finish line, it's a starting line. And sometimes people will say, "Well become a Christian "and then you can go to heaven when you die." I have good news. Heaven comes to you before you die. Eternal life doesn't begin the day you die, it begins the day you start walking with Jesus. See, I don't know how much time you've got left in your life, but it needs to count. And ultimately, Jesus Christ wants to do a work in you to prepare you for the work He has to do through you. I'll explain it this way, John 3:7-8. Jesus says it this way, "You must be born again. "Born of the Spirit." First time we were born physically. You're born

physically, but you don't know God until you're born again spiritually. Your body is alive, but your soul is dead. Rebirth, being born again, is where your soul opens up to God. It says it this way, Philippians 2:13, "It is God who works in you." So let me explain this. God's work for you, you gotta trust that, receive that. Love Jesus. God then does the work in you. And what He does, He makes you new. Not perfect. Christians will tell you, we're not perfect. But we will tell you, we're new. We're not who we were. We're not yet who we will be. But we're getting closer every day to the perfect version of us that Jesus is always working on. Amen?

- Amen.

- And so what you don't need is a better you, you need a new you. You don't need self-esteem. You need God to do a work in you. I'll give you a few things that happen when God works in you. Number one, you become a new creation. If anyone is a Christ, new creation, old gone, new come. Fresh clean start, fresh clean slate. No guilt, no shame, no archeology digging up your past and looking at it again. New creation, new you. Not a perfect you, but a new you that God's gonna keep working on until there is a perfect you. And a new power. The same Holy Spirit that indwelt and empowered Jesus comes to dwell in the Christian following Jesus. God says, "You could do far more abundantly than all you ask or think according to that power at work in you." Some of you're like, "I don't have the power." That's true. But He does. He has power to overcome addiction. He has power to break generational curses. He has power to heal marriages. He has power to save children from self-destruction. He has power to give people authority even over the demonic realm. There is power and what we don't need is just principles to live by, we need power to live by. And God gives that in His work in us. God also gives us a new heart. God says, "I'll take out their old heart, I'll give them a new heart." All of a sudden you're like, "I'm different. "God loves me and I love people. "God forgives me and I forgive people. "God's patient with me "and I'm praying about "being patient with people." We're new but we're not perfect. And all of us, how many of you have received a new heart? Can you testify saints? You're like, "Something changed in here." You also get a new mind. The Bible says, be transformed by the reading of your mind. Let's take a little poll. True or false, the world has lost its mind.

- Yes!

- Okay. And so what you need is a new mind 'cause your old mind, it's been brainwashed and polluted by media and education and lies. And so God comes, he says, "I'm gonna give you a new mind. "You can think differently and see differently "and deal with reality." God gives us also new emotions, beloved, and that's like a grandfather talking to his grandkids. You're the beloved. God loves you. Our oldest two kids are married, our first grandkids are on the way. Yeah, I'm a grandpa. I can't wait to meet my grandkids. And when those kids come, I'm gonna call 'em beloved. It's first and second beloved. And that word to me, it's just so beautiful. It's like, I love you so much. That's God's father heart for you. That's God's grandfather heart for you. It says, "Beloved, let us love one another "for love is from God," and everybody who's been born again has God's love and shares God's love. Here's the big idea. You don't work for God's love,

you work from it. God says, "I just love you." You're like, "I haven't done anything." He's like, "Well that's grace." How many of you have held a child or a grandchild? You just loved 'em. That's how God feels about those who are born again and it's that love of God that provides that security so that we can walk forward into the future. Also a new freedom. It says, "For freedom Christ has set us free." It's what the scriptures say. Some of you have had addictions, shame, guilt, trauma, brokenness, woundedness, bitterness you've carried your whole life. I'm telling you today, give it to Jesus and be free. Walk in freedom. Let those people and those things remain in that past and just walk in freedom. In addition, there are new desires. This is what the non-Christian doesn't understand about the Christian life, and I was a non-Christian until age of 19, so for those of you are non-Christians, I understand and we love you and it's so good to have you, but I thought the Christians were the weirdest people I've ever seen. First of all, they wanna read the Bible. Who wants to do that? And then they wanna pray. That's crazy. And then they sing and raise their hands and their voices. These people are nuts. That's what I thought. And then I became one of these people. And what God did, God did a work in me and He gave me new desires. How many of you are Christians and you're like, "That's what happened to me. "I don't even know what happened. "I look at the driver's license, it looks like me, "but that's not who I am anymore." Here's what He says "The desires of the flesh," that's how you used to live, "are against the desires of the spirit," that's God's work in you. "They're opposed to each other "to keep you from doing the things you want to do." I'll tell you what, once God does a work for you and you know Jesus and then God starts to do a work in you, you have new desires. How many of you, you're like. So, if you're non-Christian you'd ask this question, "Why do you guys read the Bible?" We like to. I know, we're shocked too. Why do you sing? Because we want to. We're really happy and we love Jesus. Well, why do you pray? Hey, if there's a God who will listen and help, we're gonna dial 'em up a lot. And here's the big idea. Christianity is not a series of things that you don't want to do and have to do, they're a series of things that you get to do and you want to do. We wanna pray, we wanna sing, we wanna read the Bible, we wanna love each other, we wanna forgive one another. We wanna leave here and go to heaven. Amen?

- Amen.

- New desires. And then lastly, you get to live a new life. The Bible says put off your old self and put on your new self. It's like this morning, you took your pajamas off, you put your clothes on. Today's the day for some of you, your old way of life, your old emotional life, your old thoughts, your old relationships, your old patterns, your old addictions, your old compulsions, you're taking those off and you're putting on, I belong to Jesus now and he's doing a work in me and I'm a new person. And then here's the good news. God not only He doesn't work for you and in you, He has good work to do through you. You come from God. You're here for God. You're going to die and stand before God. You can be rewarded in eternity for God. Your whole life now has meaning and value and purpose. You're not an accident. You're a chosen child of God with a destiny. He says it this way, "By grace you've been saved through faith." Ephesians 2: 8-10, "And this is not your own doing. "It is the gift of God, not a result of work "so that no one may boast." What he's saying is that's God's work for you. "For we are His workmanship." That's God working in us. And dear saint, don't be discouraged. You're not where you will be, but you're not

where you were. He's still doing His work. "Created in Christ Jesus for good works, "which God prepared in advance that we should walk in them." That's God working through you. Let me tell you how exciting this is. God has a wonderful series of divine appointments in your future. God has ways that He intends to show up and show off. God has people for you to love and serve and give to and bless and encourage. Some of you, God has a spouse for you to marry. He has children for you to raise. He has grandchildren for you to kiss and to hug and to bless. God has ministry for you to do. God has lessons for you to learn. The good news is this, Jesus Christ is alive and well right now and He is ruling and reigning over everyone and everything and He's so personal and intimate that He knows you when He calls you and He plans for you by name and I'm so excited to see what God has for you in the future that He's laid out before you in the legacy that He'll leave in the wake of you. But here's what you need to know. All of it comes down to you and Jesus, my friend. Do you love Jesus? Do you trust Jesus? Are you ready to commit your life to Jesus? I wanna talk to two groups of people. Some of you are the prodigals. You grew up maybe in a Christian home or you went to a Christian school, or maybe you even had a complicated situation happen with a religious or spiritual leader, I'm sorry for that. Some of you have wandered away from God. You're like, "I used to walk with God "and I sort of ran away." Here's what I want you to know. If you turn around, Jesus has been chasing you. You have not gotten far, my friend. He's right there. And there's nothing but a smile on His face and open arms. He loves you. He'll take you back right now. And welcome back to the family of God. There's no judgment here. We love you. We're glad to have you. We've all got our stories and we've all got our stumbles. Some of you, it's time to come back home. It's time to come back to the Lord. It's time to come back to the family of God. And some of you, it's time to make the most important decision you will ever make. The most important person who has ever lived is Jesus Christ and the most important decision you will ever make is whether you receive Him as Lord or you reject Him and that's the moment that we find ourselves in. Let me be clear, this is the moment of decision. Will you tell Jesus that you are a sinner and receive Him as your Savior? Or will you reject Him to live opposed to Him and then die and stand before Him to be judged by Him? Either Jesus was punished for you or you will be punished for you. I love you. Some of you're wondering, I can see it on your face, like, "What are you trying to do? Get me converted?" Yes. Thank you for coming. That's the whole reason we're here. Jesus loves you and you need Jesus and my question in closing is this, is God starting to do a work in you? You're like, you know what? I haven't thought much about Jesus. You know what? I haven't really loved God. I haven't obeyed God. I haven't followed God. Life without God isn't working. Is God doing a work in you? He's preparing you to receive the work that Jesus has done for you. And the way that we show this in the Christian church is something called baptism. Jesus died, was buried, and rose. When someone is baptized, they're saying, "When Jesus died, the old me died. "When Jesus got out of the water, I was made clean "and now I identify with Jesus "and one day they're gonna bury me "and I'm gonna rise to be with Him "and like Him and for Him forever." I'm telling you, Jesus Christ is returning. This world cannot endure forever. Things can't continue in decay and decline. The only hope for this world is not in this world. It's in God coming to save the world. We all need Jesus. Everyone needs Jesus. Everything needs Jesus. And I'm just begging you. I love you. I care for you, I'm passionate for you. I'm yelling that 'cause I'm angry, but because I'm worried. How do you live without Jesus? How are you gonna make it

through this world without Jesus? How are you gonna keep your emotional mental state intact without Jesus? How are you gonna close your eyes on your deathbed without Jesus? And how are you gonna have any power or hope without Jesus?