

*A Fresh Look At Easter*

April 24, 2011

Andy Wirt (andy@clearviewgrace.com)

ClearView Church ([www.clearviewgrace.com](http://www.clearviewgrace.com))

**Introduction:**

Easter! Today we celebrate a central theme of the Bible that we believe to be completely true—that on the third day after His death, Jesus’ tomb was empty. His followers came to the site where His body had been laid...and all they found was neatly folded burial garments. Jesus was gone. The Bible reports that after this the risen Jesus, very much alive, appeared to His disciples and more than 500 other people before returning to Heaven, where He lives and rules today.

***What does all this mean for you and me....today? What does Easter (the Truth of Christ’s resurrection) mean for you and me....today? Real life?***

We want to discover that today. But, I want to discover these truths in a fresh way. Obviously, we celebrate Easter every year. Even if you’re not an overly religious person... you probably know what the big picture of Easter is all about. And, if you’ve gone to church for a long time... it may feel like you hear the same things over and over again every Easter.

I don’t want this year to be a rerun! I want this year to be different for you. It has been for me. I’ve noticed things about the cross I’ve passed over before. I’ve been challenged by truth that is deeper than what I’ve pondered before. *Today, I want to take a fresh look at Easter.*

We’re preparing to move this coming week. As we’ve been packing, I’ve been going through some of our pictures. When you pack you dig out things and go through them...**you see things you forgot about...**When you go through old pictures...**you see things you didn’t notice before...**

***We need to take a fresh look at Easter...*** we might see some things we’ve forgotten about or some things we haven’t noticed before. We need to be careful that we don’t get a sense of “been there done that” with Easter. We need to be sure we look at this afresh and see all of the angles of this important celebration.

The first thing I want to talk about is that when we take a fresh look at Easter, *we see things about God that we pass over.* We see things about God that we might not want to think too much about. We see things about God that you don’t hear about that often.

**1. A Fresh Look At Easter Reveals Who God Really Is...**

**A Loving Father AND A Righteous Judge Satisfied By A Perfect Sacrifice**

God is a loving Father. God loves you. On Good Friday, and Easter, we celebrate God's love. The Bible makes it clear (John 3:16): <sup>16</sup> *"For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."*

God loves us and at this time of year, we celebrate God's great demonstration of love in sending Jesus. ***But, sometimes we stop there. What if this is not the full picture of God? What if there is more?***

See the truth is, we like to hear about God's love so much...we need to hear about God's love so much, we forget to look further and learn that God is much more in addition to love. He is also a God of justice. He is also a God of jealousy-when we place anything in life before Him. He is a God Who, because of His justice...because of His righteousness...He must judge those who violate His standards... Which the Bible says is every one of us.

Listen to the seriousness of our sin as it separates us from God.

### **Habakkuk 1:13**

<sup>13</sup> *But you are pure and cannot stand the sight of evil.*

### **Psalms 5:5**

*Therefore, the proud may not stand in your presence, for you hate all who do evil.*

### **John 3:36**

<sup>36</sup> *And anyone who believes in God's Son has eternal life. Anyone who doesn't obey the Son will never experience eternal life but remains under God's angry judgment."*

You might be thinking *"Well, this isn't good news. This doesn't seem like a bright and shiny message for Easter."* ***Why is this so important?***

***This is important because we cannot understand the cross until we feel the need for it. We can't feel the need for the cross until we understand that our sin puts us in opposition to our righteous Father. This is a sort of theological challenge. We say God can do everything...anything. But, God is actually limited by His own limitations... He cannot stand the sight of evil. He cannot allow sinners into His presence. He cannot let sin go un***

Perhaps it helps us to see the depth of God's wrath and judgment by looking at what it took to satisfy it. Do you remember that picture of Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane before He was arrested?

### **Matthew 26:38-39**

<sup>38</sup> *He told them, "My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."*

<sup>39</sup> *He went on a little farther and bowed with his face to the ground, praying, “My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.”*

#### **Luke 22:41-42**

<sup>41</sup> *He walked away, about a stone’s throw, and knelt down and prayed,* <sup>42</sup> *“Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.”* <sup>43</sup> *Then an angel from heaven appeared and strengthened him.* <sup>44</sup> *He prayed more fervently, and he was in such agony of spirit that his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood.<sup>[e]</sup>*

**What was Jesus so afraid of?** Dying? Surely not. Jesus was no coward. Countless people down through the ages have died horrible deaths as martyrs for their faith. Books are filled with their stories of heroism as they refused to recount their faith in Jesus Christ.

David Platt in *Radical*:

*Since (the day of Jesus’ crucifixion) countless men and women in the history of Christianity have died for their faith. Some of them were not just hung on crosses; they were burned there. Many of them went to their crosses singing.*

*One Christian in India, while being skinned alive, looked at his persecutors and said, “I thank you for this. Tear off my old garment, for I will soon put on Christ’s garment of righteousness.”*

*As he prepared to head to his execution, Christopher Love wrote a note to his wife, saying, “Today they will sever me from my physical head, but they cannot sever me from my spiritual head, Christ.” As he walked to his death, his wife applauded while he sang of glory.*

*Did these men and women in Christian history have more courage than Christ Himself? Why was he trembling in that garden, weeping and full of anguish? We can rest assured that he was not a coward about to face Roman soldiers. Instead, He was a Savior about to endure divine wrath. (pg.35)*

What was Jesus so afraid of? Here’s what we see in taking a fresh look at Easter... The cross was an act of love. It was a loving Father sending His son. But, it was also an act of Jesus taking our penalty. Jesus stood in our place and took our punishment. He stood in our place and endured God’s wrath for our sin.

***When He was praying in the garden before His arrest, Jesus wasn’t afraid of soldiers and nails and a horrible, painful death. He was afraid of suffering the weight of God’s wrath. He was afraid of taking my rightful place. He was afraid of bearing the full weight of the sin of mankind. He was afraid of losing His intimate connection with His Father because of taking on my sin and yours.***

David Platt in *Radical*:

*What happened on the cross was not primarily about nails being thrust into Jesus' hands and feet but about the wrath due your sin and my sin being thrust upon His soul. In that holy moment, all the righteous wrath and justice of God due us came rushing down like a torrent on Christ Himself. Some say, "God looked down and could not bear to see the suffering that the soldiers were inflicting on Jesus, so He turned away." But this is not true. God turned away because He could not bear to see your sin and my sin on His Son. (pp.35-36).*

**"The essence of sin is we human beings substituting ourselves for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting Himself for us." -John Stott**

This is why I am so amazed at the passage I read with Seth this week from His KidView God-time card. The cross...Jesus...solved our sin problem with God. This is the message of Easter. **This is the good news of a loving Father and righteous judge making a way for our sin problem to be solved.** God, because of His righteousness had to punish us...but because of His love... He made a solution.

### **Look at Romans 5:6-11**

*<sup>6</sup> When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. <sup>7</sup> Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. <sup>8</sup> But **God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.** <sup>9</sup> And since **we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ** he will certainly save us from God's condemnation. <sup>10</sup> For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. <sup>11</sup> So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.*

David Platt in *Radical*:

*The Gospel reveals eternal realities about God that we would sometimes rather not face. We prefer to sit back, enjoy our clichés, and picture God as a Father who might help us, all the while ignoring God as a Judge who might damn us. Maybe this is why we fill our lives with the constant drivel of entertainment in our culture—and in the church. We are afraid that if we stop and really look at God in His Word, we might discover that He evokes greater awe and demands deeper worship than we are ready to give Him.*

*But this is just the point. We are not ready to give Him what He asks for because our hearts are set against Him. God's revelation in the gospel not only reveals who He is...but it also reveals who we are. (pp.29-30)*

## 2. Easter Reveals Who We Really Are...

### Former Enemies Of God Converted By God's Grace For God's Pleasure

For the power of the Easter message to resonate in your heart—you have to realize where you have come from. It is easy to forget where we were and where Jesus has taken us to. The New Testament uses very visual terms to contrast our state **before** Jesus to our state **with** Jesus. Listen to this amazing passage. It speaks about what Jesus has done for you and me.

### Ephesians 2:1-6

*1 Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. 2 You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. 3 All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else.*

*4 But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, 5 that even though we were dead because of our sins, **he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead.** (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) 6 For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus.*

**Did you hear it? Did you hear where you were before knowing Jesus?** Before Jesus you were dead...far away from God...living in sin...following the devil...subject to God's anger. BUT- God, rich in mercy and love, gave you life when He raised you, along with Christ, from the dead. **RESULT:** Positionally, God views you as seated with Christ in heaven!

The message of Easter is astounding. You move from old covenant to new covenant. You move from an enemy of God to standing before Him blameless. You move from death, sin, and being subject from God's anger to being raised with Christ and seated with Him in Heaven!

David Platt in *Radical*:

*The modern day gospel says, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. Therefore, follow these steps, and you can be saved." Meanwhile, the biblical gospel says, "You are an enemy of God, dead in your sin, and in your present state of rebellion, you are not even able to see that you need life, much less to cause yourself to come to life. Therefore, you are radically dependent on God to do something in your life that you could never do.*

*The former sells books and draws crowds. The latter saves souls. Which is more important?*

*In the Gospel, God reveals the depth of our need for Him. He shows us that there is absolutely nothing we can do to become to Him. We can't manufacture salvation. We can't program it. We can't produce it. We can't even initiate it. God has to open our eyes, set us free, overcome our evil, and appease His wrath. He has to come to us.*

*Now we are getting to the beauty of the gospel. (pg. 32).*

***What does Easter mean for you and for me today? It means that Jesus had done something for you that you could never do for yourself.***

*He has freed you from the power of sin. He has given you new life. He has changed your eternal destiny. God looked down from heaven, saw you as an enemy and said, "Nope...I will send my Son...He will rescue you from the camp of Satan and make you my friend. Jesus will clean you up and present you to me as my child."*

One of the things I love most about Jesus' work is how happy it made God.

### **Ephesians 1:5-8**

*<sup>5</sup> God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and **it gave him great pleasure.** <sup>6</sup> So we praise God for **the glorious grace** he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son.<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>7</sup> He is so rich in kindness and grace that **he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins.** <sup>8</sup> He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.*

### **Transition:**

A fresh look at Easter reveals Who God really is, it reveals who we really are, and...

## **3. Easter Reveals What We Really Need To Do Totally Surrender All We Are And Have To Jesus**

*How should we respond to God? Certainly an act of this magnitude... Jesus' work on the cross...God's initiation towards redemption... God's rescuing of our souls...demands a response. Jesus told everyone that listened to Him exactly how WE should respond to Easter:*

Luke 9:21-27

*<sup>21</sup> Jesus warned his disciples not to tell anyone who he was. <sup>22</sup> "The Son of Man must suffer many terrible things," he said. "He will be rejected by the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He will be killed, but on the third day he will be raised from the dead."*

<sup>23</sup> Then he said to the crowd, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross daily, and follow me. <sup>24</sup> If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. <sup>25</sup> And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but are yourself lost or destroyed? <sup>26</sup> If anyone is ashamed of me and my message, the Son of Man will be ashamed of that person when he returns in his glory and in the glory of the Father and the holy angels.”

Jesus’ proposal for a response to Easter: *turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross every day, follow me—radically. Give up your life for MY sake...and find real life.*

David Platt in Radical:

*So, how do we respond to this gospel? Suddenly contemporary Christianity sales pitches don’t seem adequate anymore. Ask Jesus to come into your heart. Invite Jesus to come into your life. Pray this prayer, sign this card, walk down this aisle, and accept Jesus as your personal Savior. Our attempt to reduce this gospel to a shrink-wrapped presentation that persuades someone to say or pray the right things back to us no longer seems appropriate.*

*That is why none of these man-made catch phrases are in the Bible. You will not find a verse in Scripture where people are told to “bow your heads, close your eyes, and repeat after me.” You will not find a place where a superstitious sinner’s prayer is even mentioned. And you will not find an emphasis on accepting Jesus. We have taken the infinitely glorious Son of God, who endured the infinitely terrible wrath of God and who now reigns as the infinitely worthy Lord of all, and we have reduced him to a poor, puny Savior who is just begging for us to accept Him.*

*Accept Him? Do we really think Jesus needs our acceptance? **Don’t we need Him?***

*I invite you to consider with me a proper response to this gospel. Surely more than praying a prayer is involved. Surely more than religious attendance is warranted. Surely this gospel evokes unconditional surrender of all that we are and all that we have to all that He is.*

*You and I desperately need to consider whether we have ever truly, authentically trusted Christ for our salvation...*

### **Application To Message:**

Friends, I want to push a little harder today than I usually do. I want you to see Easter anew and I want us to reach for a fresh response to Jesus. I want us to see God as He really is...and I want us to see us as we really are...and I want us to recognize so deeply and profoundly that we need Jesus—**that we sell out. I want us to totally surrender to Him today.** If you see God for what He really is...If I understand who I really am without Jesus...*is there any other option?*

**I want you to sell out. I want you to go all in. I want you to jump with both feet. What does total surrender mean?**

I think it means that all of us...whether you've been in church your whole life or whether today is your first time in an Easter service... *we spend some time in reflection and we think on God's love AND God's wrath. And we thank God for Jesus.*

I think it means that all of us...whether you've been in church your whole life or whether today is your first time in an Easter service...*we spend some time in reflection and we picture ourselves as an enemy of God...set against Him and separated from Him because we are slaves to sin. And, we thank God for the pleasure it gave Him to send Jesus and through the power of the resurrection make a way for us to have new life.*

Then, I think it means we live **2 Corinthians 5:14-15**

*Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life. <sup>15</sup> He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them.*

A fresh look at Easter requires that we no longer live for ourselves. *We need to sell out and **live for Christ...who died and was raised for us. That is the call of Easter.***

- This means I want to know God. I search after Him. I read His word. I talk to Him intimately. I spend time wrapping my heart around His. I worship. I hunger...
- This means I wrestle with my sinfulness. I feel my depravity so deeply that I recognize I am lost apart from believing, knowing, following, and clinging to Jesus. I constantly remember this.
- I immediately put aside my sin, my selfishness, and I turn the allegiance of my heart over to Him.
- I sell out for His purposes. My life is His. My money is His. My talents are His. My time is His. My mission in life reflects His.
- I tell others about He Who changed my life. I am not ashamed.

**What does this look like in a family of Christ-followers?**

- It means we're a group of people walking with Jesus. We spend time with Him. We know Him. We are growing in Him.
- It means we're a group of people obsessed with what Jesus was obsessed with – training followers that would tell others about Jesus and then those people would go and tell more people and God's mission on earth would be pushed forward.
- It means we're a group of people unified around mission. The world sees Jesus by how we relate to each other. We resolve conflict. We support each other. We encourage each other.
- It means our individual and collective resources are submitted for God's work. Our time, our money, our talents—*they are God's for His glory and the advancement of His mission.*

**ClearView Challenge:** Answer: *Am I living for Christ? If not...what will it take?*