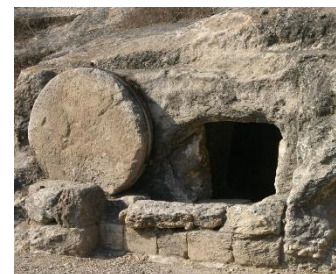


Game-Changer

The scene on Sunday morning started somberly. The women went to the tomb to anoint a dead Jesus with spices. They weren't sure how they would roll the stone away but felt compelled to honor Jesus. They had witnessed a lifeless Jesus, taken down from the cross. He had been scorned by the crowd and suffered a cruel death. It looked like it was all over. Three days later, they were in for the surprise of their lives. Instead of treating a dead Jesus, they were met by heavenly angels with a life-changing message. The angels said, *"He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay"* (Matthew 28:6). The empty tomb was the game changer.

Those words, "He is not here. He has risen," are life-changing for all mankind. Mankind had been on a path to being forever dead to sin. It is a path that those not of the faith are still on. The resurrection gave us the hope for eternal life for all believers. It is easy for us to sit here, several thousands of years later, and lament how Jesus died on that cross. We are tempted to think of it in the "past tense." While it may hurt us to think about it, we're glad it wasn't us. Think again. It wasn't just Jesus on the cross. Jesus was crucified on the cross as a substitute for us. It should have been us. Because of our sinful life, we deserve to die – not the perfect Jesus.



A favorite Mercy's Well song is called "On My Cross." The lyrics really hit home for me. "Those were my nails; that was my crown that pierced Your hands and Your brow. Those were my thorns; those were my scorn; those were my tears that fell down. And just as You said it would be, You did it all for me." Then it really hits home when it says, "You took my shame, my blame, on My cross." It is easy to enjoy the melody until you realize that the word "My" is the key to the meaning of the song: my nails, my scorn, my tears, my blame, and my cross. Jesus' death on the cross *is* a sacrifice for me. Notice the present tense. At some point, people often wonder if Jesus would suffer for them as an individual. I remember a pastor often saying, "If you were the only person living on the face of the earth, Jesus would have died for you." He loves us that much!

None of us alive today were part of the Holy Week events 2,000 years ago. We weren't in the crowd yelling, "Crucify Him." We weren't gathered at the hill at Golgotha, watching Him die. We can't play the innocent game because we are anything but innocent. We are sinners in need of forgiveness and to be purified to have eternal life. The term "game-changer" is often used when something changes an impossible task into a possible task. Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection are the *only* way we have hope for eternal life. *"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'"* (John 14:6). The resurrection is the game changer, making eternal life possible. Life is anything but a game, but Jesus changed everything.

The resurrection on Easter morning is *our* resurrection. Without it, Jesus would have been a great motivational speaker and humanitarian, but He wouldn't have been the Savior of the world. Without the resurrection, He wouldn't be our Savior. The resurrection opened the way for the salvation of everyone who believes in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. There is a reason today to rejoice. Jesus defeated an enemy that we all face – sin. He defeated the death we all deserve. From our cross He forgave those who wronged Him. As a result, we can be forgiven if we forgive those who wrong us. We are set free. Eternal life is ours if we believe that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior.

Question: What difference does it make in your life knowing that Jesus' death and resurrection were for you?

Closing Prayer: Dear Lord. You died so we can live. You forgave, and we should do the same. Sin and death have no power over us. Christ is risen. He has risen, indeed. Hallelujah. Amen.