

That's Not All, Folks! Easter 2017

April 16th, 2017

I'm so glad that you're here this Easter Sunday as we focus in on **the life & hope we have** through the death & resurrection of Jesus.

- Just two nights ago we celebrated Good Friday... where all of our attention was **given to the incredible love of Jesus**
- who sacrificed Himself, on our behalf, on the cross of Calvary.
- It's an odd name for such a horrific night, but of course,
- the reason we call it "**Good**" Friday is because of what came after it... the resurrection & empty tomb!

You see, the **reason His "death" can be celebrated** has everything to do with the "life" that follows it.

- And yet, the sad thing is that, for so many people in the world around us, death is all there is.
- And I think that's why, as a culture, we pretty much do everything we can to avoid the subject of death.

It's why, **in America today, fewer and fewer people plan for their death...** even though dying has become a pretty expensive proposition.

- In fact, **I don't know if there's ever been a culture that has spent more money on death...**
- while giving so little time and attention to **what actually comes after death.**

One business analyst released a long-term market forecast of the coffin industry not long ago.

- Apparently, he's very optimistic due to increased number of people who will die in the United States over the next twenty-five years.
- And, because more and more people may want to go out in style, one of the growing trends is something called the "**Designer Casket.**"

Now, I'm not just talking about the **\$40g gold-plated coffin for Zsa-Zsa Gabor...**

- Or the **\$25,000 solid bronze casket Michael Jackson** was buried in...

- But **the kind of casket everyday Joe's like us** might choose!

Now, I shared some examples of designer caskets a few years ago in another message.

- And so, I decided to poke around Google a bit and see what kinds of designer caskets are most popular these days:
- You can get always get one with your favorite **NASCAR colors** or with your favorite sporting team's emblem & colors.

For you **CAR lovers** out there, I found a few options that might appeal to you... Like this **1950 Mercury Casket** from CruisinCaskets.com or a **Vintage Shelby** casket.

- Or, for **outdoor enthusiast**, there the **"Gone Fishing"** casket from "AmericanCasket.com".
- I mean, there's a casket for everyone!! For the **Cat Lover**... for the **Musician**...
- for the person who loves a **glass of wine** at the end of the day...
- for the person concerned that there **might not be any fruit** in heaven!

Now, for me personally, I've narrowed my choices down to three. **First**, in honor of a whole lot of traveling...

- I could go with a more masculine version of the **"Going on a Long Trip"** Casket.
- Or, because of my love of all things "Mac," I might decide on the **iCasket**.
- Or, a far simpler, but no less poignant casket, the **"Return to Sender."**

If those get too pricey, you can purchase your casket online through Walmart.com!

- Their least expensive caskets will cost you \$899...
- While, no kidding... **Amazon.com has one made out of cardboard that sells for \$206.92**... with free shipping if you have Amazon Prime!

There's one company here in NJ that sells *used* caskets for under \$450.

- Ok... I just made that one up... **most of the used caskets** out there are hopefully buried!
- **Bottom-line...** I don't know that there's **ever been a culture that has spent more money on death** and less time & attention to what comes after death... than ours.

But, that hasn't always been true of us. For many generations, when parents would tuck their children in at night, for example, they would have them say a little prayer.

- Many of you know this prayer: "*Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take.*"
- That's not the happiest way to send your kids off to bed is it?

There's actually a **second verse**: "*Our days begin with trouble here, our life is but a span. And cruel death is always near, so frail a thing is man.*" **Nighty night, honey!** Pleasant dreams!

People used to teach their kids to pray this, because people wanted their children to know that death is real.

- They were comfortable talking about the subject of death... even with their children...
- **because it was clearer to them that death wasn't the end.**
- I mean, isn't it interesting that **the more secularized we become** as a culture, **the less comfortable** we are with the whole idea of death?!

How many of you recognize the name "Mel Blanc?" Mel Blanc was the amazing voice behind so many of the cartoon characters in *Looney Tunes*.

- Can you imagine... one man gave us **Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Tweety Bird, Yosemite Same, Pepe Le Pew, and Porky Pig!**
- And if ever you were a fan of Looney Tunes, than you know that at the end of every episode, Porky Pig would come on the screen, and he would always say the same thing: "*That's all folks!*"

Well, sadly, **back in 1989, Mel Blanc died.** And, do you know what his family put on his tombstone?

- **Etched on his tombstone are the words, “That’s all folks!”**
- You see, here’s the question we need to consider on this Easter Sunday: “*Has Jesus Risen from His Tomb*” **or**, is “*That all folks?*”

Does death mean that the show is over? Or, is it possible that, because of Easter... because of the empty tomb... **the good stuff is just about to begin?**

- I want to focus in on this question a bit as we look at an amazing story from the Book of John... a story about **Life & Death...** and then **Life again.**
- It involves Jesus and a good friend of His named Lazarus.

Lazarus **lived with his sisters, Mary and Martha,** in the town of Bethany... kind of a suburb of Jerusalem.

- In fact, whenever Jesus went to Jerusalem, He would typically stay with Mary, Martha & Lazarus.
- Well, by the time this story happened in **John 11**, they had not seen Him for a while,
- because **the last time that Jesus was there**, some religious leaders tried to kill Him.

Well, one day, Lazarus gets sick. The Bible doesn’t tell us what illness he had,

- But the **doctors apparently shook their heads** and said, “*Sorry... there’s nothing we can do.*”
- His sisters, Mary and Martha, were desperate. They have only one hope.
- So, in **John 11:3**, they sent word to Jesus, “*Lord, the one you love is sick.*”
- You see, **Mary & Martha know that Jesus can heal...** They’ve seen Him do it before. He’s done it for total strangers.

But Lazarus... he’s such a good friend of Jesus that the sisters don’t even have to mention his name.

- **They just say, “The one you love.”** Surely Jesus will heal him.”
- Then Jesus does a strange thing. In **verses 5-6**, the text says **“Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days.”**
- Now, if there is someone you love, and something goes wrong, and **they tell you they need you**, what are going to do?
- You're gonna do all you can to get there, right? You say, I'll be right there!

But **Jesus waits two days**. He has His reasons, but whatever those may be, **He's no doubt left Mary & Martha** deeply confused and hurt.

- But **after two days**, He says to His disciples in **verse 7**, *“Let's go back to Judea,”* where Bethany is located.
- Now, again, the last time He had been here, the religious leaders had tried to kill Him... so, He knows it's not a safe place for Him.

And, **Mary and Martha knew that...** which showed how desperate they were to have Him come.

- But by the time Jesus & His disciples get to Bethany, Lazarus has been dead for four days.
- Mary and Martha are surrounded by family and friends, and they're in deep mourning.

Hearing, in **verse 21**, that Jesus was on His way, **Martha** goes out to see Him.

- And as soon as she does, **she says, “Lord, if only you had been here my brother would not have died.”**
- **Mary had the same response** when she sees Jesus in **verse 32...** *“When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.’”*

That's a very powerful statement. *“If only you had come when you first heard.”* Truth is, **everyone in this room has experienced** a few **“If Only's”** in your own life...

- If only I hadn't said those words.
- If only I had made a wiser choice.
- If only I'd gone to the doctor sooner.
- If only I'd told them I love them.
- If only I'd said, "Please forgive me."
- Everybody in here has some *If Only's* you have to live with.

Well... both **Mary & Martha express their hurt** and disappointment to Jesus. *"If only You had been here."*

- Maybe she's thinking, *"If only I had gone myself to take the message to Jesus... I'm sure He would have come."*
- I'm not sure what reaction Martha thought she'd get from Jesus, but whatever she expected... **it wasn't close** to what she got.
- Jesus looks at her and says, *"Martha, your brother will rise again."*

Martha responds, *"I know. I know. One day... I know about our hope in the resurrection."*

- But then Jesus makes this statement... one of the most remarkable statements in all of Scripture.
- In John 11:25-26, Jesus said to her, ***"I am the Resurrection and the Life. Whoever believes in me will live and never die... Do you believe this?"***

You know, it's easy to just skim over statements like this. But, I really want us to **consider what a staggering claim Jesus is making** here.

- I mean, if I said something like that, what would you do?
- Yes... **you would call the men in white coats** to come and take me away...
- Because no human being in his or her right mind would ever say something like that.

But that's exactly what Jesus said. And when He did, He asks Martha what He continues to ask people today... **what He's asking you this morning:**

- *"Do you believe this? Do you believe I am the Resurrection & the life?"*

- So, **what will her response be?** In **verse 27**, Martha says, *“Yes Lord. I believe that you are the Messiah...”*

But, what about you? *“Do you believe this?”* **Do you believe Jesus’ words in John 14:6**, *“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one can come to the Father except through Me?”*

- Maybe you’re not sure. Maybe the next step for you is to say, *“You know, I’m not sure what I believe, but I’m gonna explore who Jesus is.”*
- Truth is, **there’s a lot riding on this question...** on who Jesus is.

If you’re not sure, then I hope you’ll make a decision this morning to keep **asking...** to keep **reading...** to keep **searching.**

- ("Case for Christ" movie)
- Maybe you believe in Jesus... **but you’re having a hard time trusting Him right now.**
- Believe me... Mary and Martha are going through the same thing.

Think about what Martha said to Jesus... *“If only You were here, Lazarus wouldn’t have died.”*

- You see... she believed Jesus had the power to heal Lazarus when he was sick...
- **but she didn’t necessarily believe** that He could do anything once he was dead.
- She had confidence in Jesus... she trusted in Him... **and yet, there was a certain point at which that trust ran dry.**

I know I can so easily fall into that myself. I completely trust Jesus with my destiny... with my eternity.

- And yet, **I can struggle to trust Him with the much smaller things** that are on my plate right now.
- Truth is, it’s easy to trust God when things are going well... **when the events of life remain within our own control.**
- It’s also easy to trust in the **power of God for the future...** while **doubting His power for today.**

But guys... as much as you can trust God for your future... you can trust His provision for you today.

- That provision may not always come just when you want... **it certainly didn't come just when Mary and Martha began praying** for an ailing Lazarus.
- In fact, their answer came four days after his death... **but it came.**

Jesus finds Martha's sister, Mary, and the other mourners. They're in deep sorrow.

- The text says in **verse 33** that ***"Jesus saw Mary weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping. He was deeply moved in spirit and troubled."***
- Not long **after being in Tajikistan**, Joyce and I experienced our first funeral.
- In **contrast to funerals here in the States**, where immediate family members do their best to maintain their public composure...

There in Tajikistan, not just the immediate family... but extended family and friends... would all ***publicly weep*** over the person's death.

- And, as "different" as this may sound, **if they didn't feel like weeping... they would pretend** to weep.
- Well, that's a lot closer to how it was back when Lazarus died... where family and close friends were expected to cry out loud.

In fact, in Jerusalem, even today, **there's a wall where people go to lament** and cry out to God.

- Do you know what that place is called? **The Wailing Wall**... a place where deep cries of anguish are heard.
- That's what is going on here. Jesus sees this. He sees the tomb. He hears people wailing.

And then, in **verse 35**, Jesus himself joins in— ***"Jesus wept."*** But **He didn't weep in order to fulfill some expectation.**

- In fact, John doesn't use the word for loud wailing as he did when describing the cries of Mary & Martha (**klaio**).

- Instead, he used the Greek word (**dakruo**), which **spoke of Jesus silently bursting into tears.**

In other words, **John wanted us to know** that Jesus' tears were a **spontaneous expression** of love that couldn't be held back.

- But why? Why does He cry at all? I mean, Jesus knew that Lazarus was going to be OK.
- He knew how the story was going to turn out, right?

So then, **why does grief come pouring out of Him** like this?

- We'll answer this in just a few moments. But I'll tell you it's a very important part of the story,
- because the answer reveals the heart of God in such a beautiful way.

A couple of days after this, Jesus will stand outside of Jerusalem, and he will weep again.

- He will look at this city and think of **all the people who live there in worry and fear and doubt...** all the people there **trapped in guilt & shame.**
- Jesus will look and think about how much He loves them and longs to embrace them...
- and **how they won't let Him...** and He weeps.

This is God's heart for humanity... even for those who are **confused** or **stubborn** or **discontent...**

- For those who are **just busy** and are **racing through their lives**, headed **not only for their graves...**
- But to an eternity **without ever saying "Yes" to a God who would die to embrace them.**
- And so, Jesus weeps.

In **Luke 13:34**, looking at Jerusalem on His way from Bethany, Jesus cries out,

- ***"O Jerusalem, how often I would have gathered Your children under my wings like a hen gathers her chicks, and you were not willing."***

- He weeps **for the world**. He weeps **for you**. He weeps **for me**. He weeps **over the death of Lazarus...**

But even more so here... **because He DOES know how the story ends**, He weeps over **the pain Mary and Martha are experiencing** because of Lazarus' death.

- **He then walks toward Lazarus' tomb and stops.** And then, standing at the face of this tomb, He says in **John 11:39...**
- *"Remove the stone." Martha says to him, 'But Lord, by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.'*"

If you know much about Martha from the Bible, **you know that she was a very meticulous hostess**, a very proper woman.

- Her last name might have been "Stewart."
- She knows that as soon as they break the seal and remove the stone, it is going to be very unpleasant for everybody.
- So she basically says, *"Jesus, what possible good could come from opening that tomb after four days."*

You can see that, when Jesus asked Martha to have the stone removed, **there wasn't a shred of expectation in her** that Lazarus would actually come back to life.

The point John wants to make here is that Lazarus was *really* dead. There is no doubt about this.

- He's been in the grave four days. Jesus is not concerned.
- In **John 11:40-41**, **Jesus says, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God? So they took away the stone."**

"I know what the circumstances look like. I know how hard this is... but didn't I tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"

- Imagine the drama of this moment. **For the moment, all of the wailing stops.**
- Everybody stands still. The stone is rolled away.
- And then, standing in front of that tomb, **the One who called Himself the Resurrection and the Life**, says in verse 43, *"Lazarus, come out!"*

- And in this amazing moment, Lazarus comes out covered **in the grave clothes he had been covered** in when put in the tomb.

Following what must have been a very long bout of stunned silence, **Martha/Mary must have thrown the party of their lifetime.**

- And yet, John never mentions it. He doesn't mention it because, for the author here, *this is just the preview for something so much bigger.*
- Ironically, the last time that we hear of Lazarus is in the next chapter.
- In **John 12:10-11**, we're told that "*The religious leaders made plans to kill Lazarus for, because of [Lazarus], many of the people were going to Jesus and putting their faith in him.*"

Can you **imagine Lazarus' frustration?** "*Man—I already died once. Now I have to go through it all over again!*"

- Remember... when Lazarus walked out of that tomb, **he was still a man!**
- Just like this last time, he'll eventually get sick... and eventually die.
- Only now, he has to **check with the Geico** life insurance guy to find out if his life insurance policy covers a second death!

That's why John doesn't talk about the celebration following Lazarus' miracle... You see, **this is not the ultimate resurrection story!**

- For John, the ultimate Resurrection Story is **Jesus' story.**
- When Jesus came out of the tomb, **death was finished!**
- He had **mastered life.** And, **in His Resurrection, He had conquered death** once and for all.

Paul writes in **1 Corinthians 15:54-57**: "*Death is swallowed up in victory. ⁵⁵O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? ⁵⁷But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

That's what we're celebrating this Easter morning... **the ultimate resurrection story of Jesus.**

- Because, now... when death comes for someone who puts their trust in Jesus— the one thing you can bank on is... *“that’s not all folks!”*
- You see, now... for His followers... **the grave is not the end.**
- In fact, author, Anne Lamott wrote that for those who trust in Jesus, *“death is just a change of address.”*

You can have that hope. Jesus is still asking people, *“Will you trust Me?”* You can do that today, if you never have.

- Maybe you’re here this morning and you’re just not sure what you believe.
- If that’s you, then **would you just talk to Him?** Even that might seem strange... but would you **share your heart with Him?**
- Would you **share your questions** with Him?

Maybe you’re already there... even if all your questions aren’t answered, maybe you’re **ready to embrace the reality** of the resurrection...

- You can tell Him, *“Jesus, I want you in my life. I acknowledge my sin and receive Your forgiveness. thanks for making me your son!”*
- *With all my imperfections, I want to devote what’s left of my life to walking in friendship and intimacy with You,*
- *and then I want to spend eternity with You on the other side of the grave.”*
- And then, **no matter what you face, even death**, you can know that He’s with you... that He loves you... that for eternity, He’ll never leave your side.

I’ve shared a story with you before about two men who are standing in front of a painting called Checkmate at a famous art gallery.

- **In this painting (show pic), a man is playing chess with the devil, who happens to be grinning ear-to-ear** because, apparently, he’s got the man cornered.
- One of the men is anxious to move on to other paintings in the gallery, but the second man, an international chess champion, can’t seem to walk away.

There was something about the painting that intrigued him. And so, he began to study it carefully... telling his friend to go on ahead without him.

- But **after a little while**, He went and got his friend... asking him to find a chessboard.
- And once he had it, **he set all the pieces** up just as they were in the painting.
- It finally hits him... the artist got it wrong.

The painting is called “*Checkmate*,” he said, “*but the devil doesn’t have the man in a checkmate. You see... the man’s King still has one more move.*”

- In fact, with a group of people now formed around him, he **not only shows how the man had one more move...** but how this last move could win him the game.
- **You see, I may not know where you’re at this morning... but this much I do know... the King still has one more move!**

A young man **named David**’s up against the giant named Goliath. David is in trouble.

- He tries to put on King Saul’s armor, but Saul’s a 52-Long, and David’s a 36-Short. He can’t even handle a grown-up’s sword.
- It looks like Checkmate, but... **The King still has one more move.**

A **man named Daniel** gets thrown into a den of lions, because he refuses to stop praying to his God.

- The lions are hungry. He’s in there all night.
- At the first light of dawn, Darius calls down. Daniel tells him that he’s just fine, because... **The King still has one more move.**

A **man named Moses** convinces a nation of oppressed slaves to run away from the most powerful man on earth. Pharaoh sets out after them.

- They’re standing on the shore with the Red Sea in front of them and the greatest army in the world behind them, and the people say to Moses,

- *“Moses, what were you thinking? And Moses says to God, “God, what were You thinking?”*
- **But The King still has one more move!**

You see... this is Easter Hope. **Going down to Judea to see Lazarus** was the beginning of the end for Jesus.

- Ultimately, **it would cost Him His life**, as He knew it would.

On Good Friday, they **tried Him** and **judged Him**; they **whipped Him** and **beat Him**;

- they **mocked** Him and **scorned** Him;
- they **hung** Him on a cross to die and **laid Him in a tomb** to rot...
- the way every human body has rotted ever since death entered this sad world.

Suddenly the **devil...** and the **Romans...** and the **religious leaders...** were all shouting out...

- *“That’s all, folks. Show’s over! Time to go home. Checkmate.”*
- But they were wrong, because... **The King still had one more move!**

The Resurrection & Life who demonstrated His authority over death when He raised Lazarus, **has now conquered death once and for all...**

- **as the stone was moved away** from the entrance to his tomb...
- **Not** to let Jesus out... but to let His disciples in... **so they could see the fulfillment of His promise...**
- that *“if you tear down this temple, in three days I will raise it up again.”*

I don’t know what challenges you’re facing today. **Maybe there’s stress** at work. **Maybe there’s no work** at all and you’re wondering how you’re gonna make it.

- Maybe there is a **son or daughter**, somebody that you love, who is struggling or estranged from you.
- Maybe you’re **marriage has been strained** and you’re desperate for some kind of intervention.

- Maybe you're **dealing with financial pressures**. Maybe you're dealing with a pretty significant vocational decision...

Listen guys... **We can love** Jesus like Mary & Martha... **we can follow Him** like Mary & Martha...

- We **can wait for Him** like Mary & Martha... and we can even doubt Him like Mary and Martha.
- **But if we take the time to go to Him...** if we take the time to wait on Him... we'll **experience His power & presence like Mary and Martha as well.**

Maybe you or someone you love is facing some issue that's weighing very heavy on your life right now.

- Maybe you have **done the wrong thing**, or **said the wrong thing**, or **made a mistake** that feels so big it could never be redeemed.
- Maybe someone has done those things to you... and **you feel like Humpty Dumpty who's been pushed off the wall** and won't ever be able to put the pieces of himself back together.

Maybe things are going pretty well... that's great. The sad reality for this world is that **brand new challenges will always come** our way.

- Ultimately, I'm told, **the mortality rate is still hovering** right around 100%.
- And yet, because of Easter, we have this promise in **Revelation 21:4-5**;

“And He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes, and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain... And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.”

Whatever you face, whether it's today or tomorrow, the promise of Jesus to everyone who puts their trust in Him in this...

- There is hope! Even when it feels like “Checkmate,” because of Jesus' resurrection, because of EASTER, you can know...
- ***“That's not all folks,”*** because... **The King still has one more move!**

Hey gang... sometimes what we have to borrow is better than what we have to give... and this message, which is nearly 70% taken from a John Ortberg sermon, is a case in point. He gets all the credit.