

**Matt. 28:1-3,5-6**

Early Sunday morning, as a new day was dawning, suddenly there was a great earthquake! For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, rolled aside the stone, and sat on it. His face shone like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow! Then the angel spoke to the women, “Don’t be afraid!” he said. “I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He isn’t here! He is risen from the dead, just as he said would happen.”

The Easter story is surrounded with looking. Soldiers looked at God’s Son hanging on the cross; Mary looked at an empty tomb with holy awe; forty days later, the disciples looked up into the sky watching Jesus ascend to Heaven.

**The Christian faith has always been a “looking” faith.** We look at our past long enough to be thankful for what has been done for us; we look at our present with hope and the experience of God’s love cascading over our lives; and we look to the future with expectation and urgency.

It seems like I’ve seen ducks all over the place lately, and they are looking for a place to nest and lay eggs. When mowing my lawn years ago, all of a sudden from behind a bush came a duck. I looked, and sure enough there were eggs. When the mother didn’t come back, I tried to talk Renee into sitting on those eggs. :)

People today are looking, hoping that something good will be birthed into their lives. The resurrection of Jesus gave birth to hope! The disciples went from fear to faith, from despair to delight, from crying to laughing. They were transformed!

Martin Luther said of Romans 5 – “In the whole Bible, there is hardly another chapter which can equal this triumphant text.”

**Romans 4:24-25**

...God will count us as righteous if we believe in him, the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was raised to life to make us right with God.

There is a change in the tone of this text from the prior verses. Paul has shifted from *they*, to *you*, to *we*... and joy is leaping off the page as he writes:

**Romans 5:1-2 NLT**

Therefore, since **we** have been made right in God’s sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. <sup>2</sup> Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege *where we now stand*, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God’s glory.

With awe and wonder, let’s peek into the empty tomb and discover what the resurrection of Jesus has purchased for you...

**We have been made right with God.** | Past

A look into the past shows Jesus climbed a hill that He formed and was nailed to a tree that He created. He wasn’t just nailed to the cross... He took our place! It’s there we see a great and shocking exchange. We see extravagant, head-turning love. We were guilty. Sin locked us up and put a death sentence on our lives, but we were legally declared NOT GUILTY!

When you look in the past you have to see more than what has been done to you or what you've done to others. You have to see what has been done *for* you! WE HAVE BEEN MADE RIGHT. Look what we were before faith in Christ: utterly helpless (v.6); still sinners (v.8); still God's enemies (v.10).

Before faith in Christ, we set ourselves as enemies of God, and sin made a hostile relationship. We tried to be king of our own lives. Where there are two kings, both laying claim to a certain area or people – there is a war. Humanity is in rebellion to the rightful king—The King of Kings—Jesus.

But look how Jesus treats His enemies: In the garden, He heals them; on the cross He prays for them and dies for them. But it's not just them! Do you see what He did for you? HE TOOK YOUR PLACE.

### **Romans 5:6, 8**

When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and **died for us** sinners. God showed his great love for us by sending **Christ to die for us** while we were still sinners.

“For us” means “on behalf of.” Jesus took our place.

**He just didn't die for you, He died in place of you!**

### **Col. 2:14 NLT**

He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.

In Christ we have been redeemed, reconciled... we are purchased by the blood of Jesus! We were made something entirely that we were not. I was the one under a death sentence. I had no way out. But, God didn't come to scare the soldiers away from Jesus. No, God came and out of love, took the place of judgment that was mine so that I could be free! Every day I walk, I'm a free man! And, God doesn't stop with letting us free... He brings us to a place of relationship.

### **We have peace with God. | Present**

### **Romans 5:1-2 NLT**

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Undeserved privilege NOW... receiving what you can't earn.

My dad when to Heaven in October of last year. Just a few days ago, I was praying in this room, thanking God. A surprising burst of emotions came over me as I thanked the Lord for the way my dad gave me pictures of what God looks like. He would come with his tools, with knowledge that I did not have, skills I did not have. He taught me that the Lord looks like this: He is the Lord your helper! I never had to earn his help! I was brought into his family... and that gave me access. So it is when we are brought into God's family!

### **Isaiah 41:10**

Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.

He will help you today – *right now!*

### **Romans 5:3-4**

We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. <sup>4</sup> And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation.

We rejoice in suffering in the present. Why?

My trouble is my transportation system to the next level God has for me!

The trouble that you face is not meant to destroy you... it's meant to develop you!

The Greek word for endurance is a compound of "under" and "remain;" it's having staying power.

I'm going to remain under what feels uncomfortable...

### **Romans 5:5**

And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

We get to experience God's love in the present – it's love that FILLS our hearts.

It fills every hole that was created by hurt; it fills every place that has been broken. It fills everything that is lacking.

On a 12-hour trip from Detroit to Cairo, Egypt, a guy on the plane was hacking up a lung. He just happened to lay down on three open seats right across the aisle from me. With every cough I wondered what he was carrying that was flying through the air. This I know – he was carrying something bad. Today, so many are carrying guilt and shame. You spend your life trying to delete the messes you have made, the places you have gone. When you get what has been done for you, you can start to carry hope... right now in the present!

### **We look forward with hope. | Future**

#### **Romans 5:1-2 NLT**

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We are a looking people... how? Confidently and joyfully, I look forward! The empty tomb promises a blessed hope beyond the moment. Easter reminds me that I was made for more than this world; this too will pass.

I'm eating on the run... I'm heading to a destination – the marriage supper of the Lamb!

Because I look forward, I know that my present reality is not my future reality!

Jesus is coming again! His feet are going to touch the ground again, and every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord!

#### **Rom 5:9-10 NLT**

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.

"We have been" – it's a finished work that guarantees we will be saved. Only one thing is required... faith!

Jesus, right now, stands at the door of your heart and knocks (Rev. 3:20). The Savior that was knocked around, beat, spat on, whipped, killed... who victoriously walked out of that tomb, is knocking at the door of your heart today. He is the King who knocks!

As we celebrate this Easter, will you open the door of your heart to Him?

## Will you give God your YES?

{A spoken narrative}

In the beginning, I was there. I put the trees on the Earth, the fish in the sea, and the birds in the air. All for you, I made all this for you. To be with you. But then I had to dismiss you—from the garden, that is—but never from Me. You see, I had a plan to not just correct the past. But you change all of history. A plan that would reveal the mystery... of what it would look like to have a relationship between you and Me.

This... was My promise.

Yet not everyone I promised it to saw it completed, though they still said yes to it. Why, you may ask?

It was because they had trust that was so robust, they gave their lives to follow My instruction.

Now none of them were perfect but they were worth it. Worth the blood. The tears. And all the years it took to complete the plan.

The first to play a part was Noah, yes My faithful servant that built the ark. But his story is so much more. Every time his hammer struck a nail to solidify the shape of the boat, He was also solidifying his relationship with Me. Every time his neighbors mocked and picked at him, he still chose to work. He still chose to stay committed to Me and My promise. And every day and every night he sailed on that boat, He was also sailing into a lifelong journey with Me. He said yes to the task, to the promise. . . that is now upon us. And that made all the difference between his life being saved or his body ending up in a watery grave.

Then there was Abraham and Sarah, who both said yes and their lives were forever changed and forever blessed.

You see, I put them to the test and Sarah responded with laughter as if My promise was a joke. But hey, if I told you a 90-year-old barren woman was going to have a child, you too would probably choke.

They stumbled but their faith did not crumble... Isaac was born. And their descendants outnumber all the tiny pebbles on a beach full of sand.

Even Moses said yes. Who would have guessed that a man with a stutter would not just utter... but proclaim the words of God.

He sacrificed his life to shepherd my people through the wilderness, through the complaints, through all the pains and aches.

He persevered. They all said yes. They all... said... yes.

And not just them. Century after century, many men and women heard My call and said yes to me. Now not every battle was won. Not every stone was overturned. But as My servants continued to march down the path of righteousness, they realized that My promise was not going to be completed in their lifetime. They realized that My promise may not be completed in a 100 lifetimes. But they still had faith and their faith set the pace for the race they ran.

Their yes to Me was stronger - stronger than the storms of life. Their yes to Me was fiercer than any beast that stood in their path.

Their yes to Me paved the way to this very day where you would get the chance to say... Yes. Say yes to the truth that will set you free because that truth is Me - I am the light that will guide your life and that will cut through your darkest nights like a knife.

I will be with you when you are diagnosed with cancer and when you walk out of the hospital healed. I will be with you when you are told that you will never have kids, and when you defy the odds and raise your own bundle of joy.

I will be with you today and tomorrow through the pain and the sorrow. On the days the sun shines bright and on the darkest of nights. I will be there with love, with strength, with patience, with grace.

I will be there through it all.

So what do you say? Let today be the day. Say yes to the promise that is Me and be free.

My arms are stretched wide, you have nothing to hide. Just say yes.

Yes to love. Yes to truth. Yes to healing. Yes to blessings. Yes to grace. Yes to family.

Yes To Me.

### **Romans 5:11**

So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.