

# The Power of the Resurrection

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Grace and peace...Some years ago at a previous church, I was visiting with a member of the community who sporadically attends that church. I said, "So, which of our Easter services are you coming to?" He said, "I'm not coming on Easter." I said, "No way!" He said, "No, I'm not going." So I kind of laid the guilt trip on him as best I could, and now he can take it, believe me. He's a guy who I saw sitting out there while I was giving a message, and then I didn't see him for the next couple months. I ran into him at his place of employment in the community there, and I said, "Weren't you here a while back? I haven't seen you for a long time." He said, "I haven't been there in eight weeks." I said, "Well, why not?" He said, "Perry, the message you gave that day was so strong it lasted me eight weeks." If some of you need a line to stay away from church, try that one. But now this morning I have intentionally downgraded the quality of this message, so you'll have to all come back next week, I assure you. I actually cycled back with this guy who said he's not coming to Easter, and I said, "No really, let's talk about it seriously just for a moment. Why aren't you coming?" He said, "I didn't grow up in any kind of religious home. I never went to church. The only time I've ever gone to church is the few times I've come to your church." And he said, "I frankly don't understand what the big deal is about Easter. I don't get the significance for my daily life." That was a real wake up call for me. I just sort of assumed everyone understood Easter's significance for daily life. And so just in case some of you are like my friend, I want to share with you today what you should know about Easter.

Easter was the greatest event that ever happened. What makes it so special? Why is it such a big deal? Why will two billion people celebrate Easter this weekend around the world? Because it proved who Jesus was. Jesus made some really outrageous claims when He was here on earth. He said things like, "I'm God. If you've seen Me, you've seen God. I've come to the earth in human form so you can get to know what God is like." Things like, "I'm the only way to heaven. I'm the way, the truth, and the life." Then He said, "I'm going to prove that what I said was true by letting them crucify Me on the cross and I'll die for your sin and three days later I'm going to raise Myself back to life." That's exactly what He did on Easter. But the big issue is, so what? What are the implications for me 2000 years later in my life? Why would I care?

The Bible says there are some wonderful benefits for what happened at the cross at Easter, 2000 years ago. **1 Peter 1:3:** "*Now we live with the wonderful expectation because Jesus Christ rose again from the dead.*" Because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, we have a hope. It's good news. Why? Because now we can know God's plan for our lives and we can know God's power in our lives.

First we can know **GOD'S PURPOSE** and His plan, His reason for making us. God has never made anything that He didn't have a purpose behind. The very fact that you're alive means that God had a purpose in creating you. The Bible says, "*God has made us what we are. In Christ, God made us to do good works which He planned in advance for us to live our lives doing.*" The Bible says that God made you for a

reason. But many people live without meaning and purpose, living with an emptiness inside. Why?

**We try to fill the emptiness** in our heart with other things. We try **possessions**: If we just get a certain amount of money, then I'll be happy. Or we try **popularity**: If I can just get enough people to like me, then I'll be happy. We try **pleasure**: If I can just travel around the world, experience different thrills, get high and do certain things, then I'd be happy and fulfilled and satisfied. Or we try other **people**: I'll just get married and this person will meet all my needs. But there's no person who can meet all your needs. Only God can do that. There's that hole and when we try to fill it with anything else, it doesn't fit.

Most of us spend our lives pretending that things are better than they really are. We pretend that we're more successful than we really are. We pretend that we are happier than we really are. If you ever want to see a bunch of unhappy people, go to a Happy Hour. Only really down people go to Happy Hours. They're desperately trying to appear happy. But they're not happy. These feelings bubble up – feelings of dissatisfaction, despair, disappointment. We don't like those feelings and we try to make it feel better. We don't want to admit that life just hasn't turned out the way we wished it had. Life without knowing God's purpose is trivial, petty and pointless. You were made to know God. **Jeremiah 29**, *"God says, 'I have good plans for you. Plans not to hurt you. I will give you a hope and a future.'"* God knows what will make you happy more than you do. He has a plan for your life. There's only one problem. We make our own plans. God says, "Here! I have this purpose for your life." We say, "Thank You, God, but I'm already busy. I have my own plans. I have my own goals, my own dreams, my own ambitions. Thank You, but no thanks." When you're not being what God meant for you to be, it causes all kinds of stress.

How do I discover what God put me on this earth for? If you want to know your purpose in life, if you want to know why God put you here, you have three alternatives: 1) You can **consult a human expert**. (Oprah Winfrey, Leno or Letterman) Ask, "What do you think the purpose of life is?" You're probably not going to get a reliable answer. 2) An even more popular way that is in all kinds of books and novels and movies is "**Look within yourself!**" I don't know if you've ever tried this one or not but I have. When I've had a major problem and tried to look within myself, I didn't find the answer, I found more problems. If the answer was in you, you would have had the problem solved a long time ago. 3) There's only one place you can look and that's to **look to God**. Look to your creator, your maker. Read the Owner's manual of life. You will discover who you are when you finally discover WHOSE you are. You were made by God and for God.

Finding your purpose in Christ, finding yourself in Christ, that's important but that's not all. You not only need to make in life a purpose to live for, you need GOD'S POWER to live on. The reason you need a power to live on is because life is tough. Nobody just coasts through life. Nobody has it easy all throughout life. There are bumps in the road. It takes energy, effort, stamina. It takes power. You need a power to live on and a purpose to live for.

There are two kinds of power you need in life. You need **power to control things** and **energy to get through things**. Your personal power probably peaked the first month of your life. At that point, the entire world revolved around you and you weren't even fully aware of it. But anytime you made just a little whimper in the first month of your life, all these big adults rallied to attention. You were fed, you were burped, you were changed, you were cuddled, rocked. You were given attention. And in your little infantile mind you figured out, "This works! When I cry I get attention." That's called power. As you grew up, two things changed. Two very awful things happened. One, the world got harder and two, people stopped paying attention to your whimpering. Part of growing up is realizing how much of your life is really out of your control.

When I was in my twenties, I thought I could control everything. I was kind of like that great theologian, Leonard DiCaprio, "I am the king of the world!" But the older I get the more I realize how much is out of my control. But with our human nature, we try to do it anyway. We try to control the uncontrollable all on our own power and how do you know when you're doing that? You're tired all the time. You get emotional, spiritual, and physical fatigue. It's interesting in our culture, since we like to control things in America, the terminology that we come up with for this chronic power shortage in our lives, this personal energy crisis. We say, "I'm worn out... I'm played out ...I'm stressed out.... I'm burned out... I'm run down.... I'm used up.... I'm bushed... exhausted... frazzled... dead tired... I'm on my last leg... I'm at the end of my rope... I'm ready to throw in the towel..." Regardless of the phrase you use, it represents a power shortage. Why does God allow life to be so tough? So we'd depend on Him. So we'd learn to trust Him. Jesus has all the power you need. Jesus demonstrated that He was God by showing His power while He was here on earth. He healed the sick (power over illness). He calmed storms (power over nature). He brought Himself back to life (that's ultimately power over death). That's the kind of power he offers for those in relationship with him.

What kind of power does Jesus Christ offer you? He offers you the power to change your life, the power to change the unchangeable, those things you'd like to change about yourself but you can't. You've tried but you can't. Habits, hang ups, hurts that just keep messing up your life. He gives you the power to let go of guilt, to let go of grief, to let go of grudges that keep you stuck in the past and keep you from getting on with your life. He gives you the power to forgive yourself and forgive others. He gives you the power to start over when you've really made a mess of your life and you feel like you've failed. He gives you the power to keep going and you're discouraged and you think, "I can't take another step!" He gives you the power to become what you were always meant to be in the first place. That kind of power is available.

Look at these promises. The Bible says this: *"I can do everything God asks me to do with the help of Christ who gives me strength and power."* **Phil 4:13** *"God will strengthen you with His own great power so that you will not give up when troubles come."* In other words He not only gives you starting power, He gives you staying power. **Isaiah 40:31** says, *"God never grows faint or weary. He gives power to those who are tired and worn out; those who wait on the Lord will find new strength. They will fly high on wings like eagles!"* If you're tired, you just need to get plugged into the source by developing a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Finally we can know **GOD'S PRESENCE** in our lives. One of the great themes of the Bible is this: God made you to love you. You were made as an object of His love. God made you to have a relationship with you. That's hard to see. It's mind boggling that the creator of the universe would want to have a relationship with me. But He does. That's why He sent Jesus Christ so I could see what He was like and get to know Him and relate to Him. How do you get to know God? Not through religion. Not through rituals. Not through regulations. Not through rules. You get to know God through a relationship...with Jesus Christ. That's what Easter is all about, knowing God. I'm not talking about knowing about God. You may have learned about God as a little kid in catechism or Sunday School or synagogue, whatever. You learned about God. But do you really know Him? You see, I know about Tiger Woods, but I don't know him. I don't have a relationship with him. God wants you to know Jesus. When you get to know Christ, you will have His purpose to live for. You will have His power to live on.

Everybody in the whole world knows that the most expensive and the most successful film of all time is *Titanic*. If you've seen the movie, you know that it's a story of the difference between classes, the distinction between the rich and the poor. A big deal is made about this in the movie – those who are on first class deck and those who are down in the lower decks. It highlights the differences between the famous and the not so famous, the young and the old, the educated and the non-educated. On the *Titanic* there were a number of different distinctions. There were immigrants and there were non-immigrants. There were rich and there were poor. But when the *Titanic* did sink, in newspapers all around the world, they printed two columns side by side and those were the only distinctions that mattered. It said, "Those known to be saved" and "Those known to be lost." Those are the eternal categories. Saved and lost. James Cameron says, "The *Titanic* is a metaphor of the inevitability of death. We're all on the *Titanic*."

I don't know if you've checked recently, but the mortality rate in America is 100%. We're all going to die at sometime, just different times. When someone tells me, "She's terminal." I say, "We're all terminal." Only a fool would go all through life totally unprepared for something you know is going to happen. One day you're going to stand before God. Your life is going to end. He's going to say, "Did you get to know My Son, Jesus Christ? Did you follow the purpose that I put you on earth for? Did you receive Him as your savior?" The only categories that are going to matter are: **were you saved by Christ or were you lost without Christ?** One day when you stand before God, it's not going to matter whether you're rich or poor, educated or uneducated, famous or not so famous. The bottom line, the reason why Easter is so important: **You were made by God and for God and God wants to have a relationship with you.** He loves you. He's seen every day of your life and He still cares about you. He came to earth in a human form of Jesus so you could get to know what He is like and love and trust in Him. How do you get to know Jesus Christ? By opening up your life and saying, "Jesus Christ, I want to get to know You." It's that simple! God made it so simple nobody could say it was too hard to understand.

In a crowd this size, I can almost guarantee you that probably every problem known to man is represented here today. I am certain there are some people here today

who are right now in the middle of a separation or divorce. I am certain that some of you have just buried a loved one and the grave is still fresh. And the grief is still there. I'm certain that there are others here who are having marriage problems. There are others who are having problems with their kids. There are others who have an ache in their heart and a loneliness. I know there are people here who are going through financial problems. And I know there are people who are facing health problems. And I know there are people who are questioning, "What am I going to do about my career?" and "Am I going to go to school?" "Should we move?" There are people here dealing with stress and guilt and grief. There are people here hiding things that they're ashamed of.

The good news is this: You're not here by accident. Jesus Christ says to you today, **"You matter to me, and I love you."** "I see everything you're going through. I see the ache in your heart. I see the pressure in your mind. I care about it. And I can help you." God has a purpose for your life that is greater than the problem you're going through right now. And God has a power for your life that will help you through the problems you're going through right now. If you'll just open up and let Him come in. Ask Him. Say, "God, I need Your help. Jesus Christ, I want to get to know You. I want to put my faith in You."