

Introduction

- Easter reflection
 - We've made it through Lent into the wondrous day of Easter Sunday
 - We are Easter people, our lives are spent in the sunlight of what Jesus accomplished in defeating the tomb
 - By rising from the grave, Jesus gives us cause to celebrate for what he is, we shall become
 - Risen from the dead
 - Life after death.
- And that's amazing. Worth the price of admission every day
- But there's more to it than that.
- The BIG Question
 - One of the things I'm hopeful to accomplish with everyone I pastor is that they'd be capable of answering the BIG question.
 - What do I mean by BIG Question.
 - Well, in the hearts and minds of most unbelievers is a big question, they want to know WHY people are Christians.
 - They want to know what draws people to spend their time pursuing a relationship with Jesus Christ.
 - And at the bottom, is a big, "What's in it for me?"
 - We like to denigrate that question but it stands in the hearts and minds of every unbeliever
 - So we've got to answer them.
 - And part of that answer should include what we celebrate most powerfully today, that Christ's resurrection guarantees our everlasting life.
 - But there needs to be more to it than that.
 - I want everyone of us so confident to be able to say the following words, "You can't lose in Jesus Christ."

You Can't Lose in Jesus Christ

- When we hear those words, we're a bit skeptical, aren't we?
- I remember being in New York City as a young man with a friend.

- We were outside of central park and there was a young man with a chessboard set up, calling on us to play him.
- Now look, we were young and, as such, overly confident of our abilities, especially because this kid looked younger than us.
- And he baited us in. He told us, “A couple of smart guys like you, you can’t lose.”
 - You see where this is going, don’t you?
 - So my friend Marc went first, “You can’t lose” said the young man, then he proceeded to beat the snot out of Marc, very quickly.
 - I went next.
 - Lost even quicker, lesson learned right?
 - No, the guy kept baiting us, “Now that you’ve seen my strategy, you can’t lose.” He’d tell us.
 - We played again....LOST
- You can’t lose sounds like an impossible deal but it isn’t. Not when it comes to following Jesus.
 - Now look, let me say this, you can lose things, heck, you can even lose people temporarily, but you can’t lose in Jesus Christ
 - What the Bible promises is that by following Jesus you will receive abundant life, in the here and now that will open up into eternally abundant life in the Kingdom of God to come.
 - Jesus tells us this is **John 10:10** – “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”
 - Then, Just one chapter over, he tells us this in **John 11:25-26** – “Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. [Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.”
- But to go from abundant life to eternal life means traversing through a world we still believe in Broken by human sin.
 - There will be bumps and scrapes along the way, won’t there.
 - Pain and heartbreak will accompany us in this world, there’s no way around that.

- IT reminds us of **Matthew 5:45b** – “For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”
- In fact, days may come where it may not feel we can see through all the rain in our lives
 - But it’s important that we remember we do not experience any of this apart from the love of our God.
 - We who believe in Jesus Christ believe we have an almighty friend who travels with us in the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - For just as we believe we are forgiven of our sins, so too do we believe that Jesus is our friend.
 - He has promised to never leave us, never forsake us.
 - You can’t lose in Jesus Christ.
- What you discover as you read the Bible is that you have a God that is in love with you. Who is looking out for you
 - Reading the Bible is like hearing the constant drumbeat of God’s love encapsulated in the words, “DO not fear for I am with you.”
 - God’s presence is with us in the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - Something promised by Jesus Christ in the Gospel of **John 14:26** – “But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

Following Jesus Christ

- That’s not to say that there won’t be challenges
- I have a friend who works for a major bank.
 - HE’s also a disciple of Jesus Christ so he invited people casually to a Bible study once, just the people in his group he thought would be interested
 - Turns out, one was offended
 - My friend got in trouble, written up by his employer
- First Peter clears this up for us

- I Peter 3:14 – “But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear their threats^[a]; do not be frightened.”^[b]
- Again in **I Peter 5:10** we hear this – “And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.”
- Think of how bold this should make us
 - To know that Jesus has our backs as we testify to the World of His amazing love and grace
 - I tell you, you can’t lose in Jesus Christ.

Sickness and Sadness

- But what about sickness and sadness?
- Do you really think you’re left alone then?
- **II Corinthians 1:3-4** – “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.”
- Served as a chaplain
 - Met a woman in her middle sixties
 - She was having a cardiac incident but was being held for surgery the following morning
 - There were all sorts of thing hooked up to her but she was in a state of calm repose
 - We got to taking, her husband was in the room and it really gave way to her testimony
 - IT was powerful stuff
 - God had accompanied her all the days of her life, she knew it and was telling me about how God had delivered her, healed her, led her and redeemed her through Jesus Christ.
 - That was when she told me that she knew her time was short but she knew where she was going so it was all right.
 - She died the next day in surgery.
 - One of the verses she cited several times was **Psalm 34:19** – “The righteous person may have

many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all.”

- The Psalms are great reminders of what it sounds like to be faithful through the difficult seasons life on this side of eternity presents.
- There is a strength that can never be taken from you when you realize that God is really with you in all your struggles.
 - Isaiah puts it this way in **Isaiah 41:10** – “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”
- Over the years as a pastor, I’ve seen congregants go through some amazingly difficult times. Only to see them emerge victorious and with a renewed sense of faith in their Lord Jesus Christ
 - Looking back, they see the presence and guiding hand of the Lord in even their darkest days.
 - An unquenchable hope emerges as you realize that God’s promises are true, every one of them.
 - The opening verses of Psalm 62 capture this perfectly
 - **Psalm 62:1-2** – Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from him.
 - ² Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.
 - God’s strength is beside us, even in our struggles, I tell you friends, you can’t lose in Jesus Christ.

Grief and Sorrow

- Last church met a woman, I confided in that I’d had a really miserable 2014.
 - She said, don’t I know it.
 - Turns out her husband had died unexpectedly and very suddenly in 2014, along with both her elderly mother as well as a brother.
 - My loss compared to hers was small but she didn’t boast or brag.
 - I only found out about it later.
 - What she had done was find inspiration to work with a charity that had been dear to her husband’s heart, a community center for kids in a rough part of town,

- She said that doing the work her husband loved doing kept her connected to him in a special way
 - We know that work also glorified God in a special way
- That woman had a verse she quoted quite a bit
- **Psalm 34:18 – God is close to the brokenhearted and draws near to those who are crushed in spirit.**
 - She said that while her spirit was crushed by all the loss, she felt the presence of the Lord ever more strongly
 - IT matches what Jesus Christ says in the Sermon on the Mount
 - **Matthew 5:4 – Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted.**
- Even when we mourn, when our eyes are filled with tears, Jesus is with us, telling us of a coming day when death itself will be defeated.
 - God is with us ever more closely as we mourn others
 - I tell you, you can't lose in Jesus Christ

Sin and Redemption

- But what of those times when the misery we're feeling is, for lack of better words, self-inflicted
- What happens to us when we tread the path of sinners and find ourselves with the bitter fruits of it?
 - Where is God then?
- Oh, I tell you, you can't lose in Jesus Christ for when you've backslidden, God is coming to Get you...in a good way.
- Hear these words from Psalm 40 – "I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry.
²He lifted me out of the slimy pit,
 out of the mud and mire;
 he set my feet on a rock
 and gave me a firm place to stand.
- Story about baseball camp
 - Dad rescued me from the muck and mire of my own causation
 - So much more so God does for us!

The Resurrection

- Today we celebrate Christ walking out of the tomb, forever reminding us that death, our final enemy has been defeated
- We will live everlasting life in the Kingdom of God, a place where the Bible tells us there will be no sadness, no warfare, no deprivation, no death
 - Jesus is the first fruits of the resurrection showing us what resurrected life will look like
 - Breaking bread with friends and singing to the Glory of God forever and forever.
 - In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.
 - Amen.