

Text: [Matthew 28:1-10 \(CEB\)](#)
Date: March 31, 2024 – EASTER SUNDAY
Title: “The Truth of Easter”
Theme: The truth of Easter – of Resurrection - is worth building our lives on.

1

The idea of what’s real and what’s true has gotten pretty tough to navigate lately

Of course, there have been conspiracy theorists and conspiracy theories for a long, long time

The JFK assassination, the idea that the moon landing was faked

And certainly this week’s news stories about Kate Middleton and the Key Bridge collapse have fueled all kinds of speculation

People have always been suspicious of “official” narratives
If you keep reading even just a few verses beyond where we left off in Matthew’s gospel,

You uncover one such early belief among Christians – that the guards at Jesus’ tomb were paid off so they’d keep quiet about what they saw

So all this is nothing new

But AI and deepfake video have opened up a whole new world

I mean, how do you know I even wrote this sermon? (I did, by the way.)

2

It seems that Pontius Pilate was expressing something both primal and prescient when he wondered aloud at Jesus' trial: "What is truth?"

More and more, I'm convinced that "truth" for most of us is not about whether a statement corresponds with fact or reality

(Which is one traditional way of talking about truth)

But rather, truth today seems determined by whether it fits within the set of beliefs we've decided to build our lives on

That means the set of beliefs we choose to build on are of primary importance

Which makes for interesting preaching on Easter, the day that celebrates the belief at the very heart of Christianity

On any other day, I can be reasonably certain that no matter where someone is on the spectrum of faith, I might say something that will resonate

Something will fit, even tangentially, into the frameworks we've constructed for ourselves

But on Easter, the stakes feel higher

To use a metaphor appropriate to the day: as the Church, we're putting all our eggs in the Resurrection basket

And yet, for the majority of people who show up – even
the faithful
I'm guessing that the notion that people might get up and
walk out of graves is so far from central as to seem
almost laughable

Even the gospels themselves seem to wrestle with this
None of them describe the moment of Resurrection
They instead talk about an empty tomb, angelic figures in
white, and then a sudden appearance of Jesus

So I know people arrive for worship this morning with
different levels of commitment to this idea
Maybe a very few folks walk in the door absolutely
convinced of the bodily Resurrection of Jesus – it's
already part of their worldview
Maybe a few were dragged here by their families and are
just looking forward to brunch after –
French toast & mimosas are more their speed – just being
honest!

But I'm willing to guess that whole lot of us are probably
somewhere in between
And I'm betting that the thing that might move you today is
not whether I or anyone can demonstrate that Jesus
rose from the dead
It's not about the facts of the case!

But rather, whether there's anything here, in what we
believe about Easter, that's really worth building a life
on

So that's how I want to define truth this morning
What's TRUE is what's worth building your life on
Because we've all got to build our lives on something

And whatever we choose for that, we want it to be sturdy
enough to stand on its own
Without the need for defending

3

Now I believe that Resurrection is one of those truths
But not necessarily for the reasons that you might think
Not because Easter's message about life and death is
provable,
or even because it's the thing that really captures my
imagination

I mean, it is important – don't get me wrong
It's important to all those who face their own mortality
And maybe that's where you are today

But if you're like me – praying THAT day is far in the future
Then the question becomes:
What's the truth of Easter that really matters today?

Resurrection isn't supposed to be something we tuck
away for later
It's the central thing we believe as Christians
It matters now
And here's why:

Because none of us gets out of this life unscathed
It's like Hemingway said: "The world breaks everyone."

We'll face what feels like death many times before we ever
meet the thing itself

Death of relationships

Death of careers

Death of financial stability

Death of dreams and visions for the future

That's why Resurrection isn't just a promise for the end of
our days

It can't be

Instead, it's got to be a truth that we embrace and live out
of everyday

Otherwise, how do we keep going when life seems like
one little death after another?

We can't

It's too hard

Unless we believe at the core of our being that God has
the power to raise us up

THAT'S the truth of Resurrection that's worth building our
lives on

4

Is it easy?

No, not at all.

There is fear and confusion and the constant need for
reassurance
Even the most faithful can't live perfectly out of this truth
The women who visit the tomb don't know what to make of
what they are seeing
The angel says: "Don't be afraid"
Jesus says: "Don't be afraid"
And yet when they run back to the other disciples,
Matthew says they still feel a mixture of fear and
excitement

Even when God begins to move the stones out from in
front of our tombs
Our first reaction is almost never: "Oh wow! Look!"
At first, we don't know what to make of it
We don't know whether to trust
We don't know what to believe

Except if we are able to hold fast to the truth of
Resurrection
As a promise for everyday, and not just our final day
THEN we can find our feet again
To stand, to rise, to walk out of that tomb

5

This is my first Sunday preaching again after eye surgery
So it's a bit of a Resurrection moment for me

I suffered a detached retina on February 16
I still can't see all that well out of my left eye

I'll admit when it happened, I was afraid
I've struggled with really poor eyesight my whole life
Last year, I developed cataracts in both eyes
All very fixable conditions

But this time was different – the world was going dark on
one side

My mind started to go to worst case scenarios

And getting help wasn't easy

We were on vacation at the time

And it's only because of a lot of prayers and persistence
from some folks in the church –

and my adoring wife who made the 4-hour round trip drive
on multiple occasions –

that we found someone who would take care of me on a
holiday weekend, far away from home

The recovery is not terribly painful, but it's not easy either

Lying face down all the time for a few days

Lying on your side for a few weeks

No reading, no driving, no exertion

And even as you begin to get better and they begin to
relax some restrictions

A lot of tasks remain difficult

Standing & walking make you dizzy

Reading makes you woozy

And I still have this big black splotch in my eye that kind of
wiggles around whenever I move my head,

and makes lights kind of stretch out vertically

There were a lot of days when I felt so incredibly frustrated
Here it was, coming up to Easter
And I couldn't do some key things
Read scripture, preach
I was getting headaches all the time

I felt myself sinking into a kind of depression
The doctor was telling me, "it looks good"
And all I could think was: "what if it doesn't heal right?"
If I'm honest, I still worry about it

I've never been patient
Waiting is difficult for me in the best of times

But when you're waiting on your Easter
When you're waiting on that stone to get rolled away
Sometimes the only thing that keeps you moving forward
is the commitment to the truth of Resurrection

Maybe you're in it now
Maybe you're waiting on the results of a biopsy
Maybe you're waiting to hear from the court about custody
for your kids
Maybe you're waiting on an answer about where Mom can
go to live where she'll get the care she needs

All this is why Easter matters

Because whether its today, or next week, six months from now or 5 years from now, you're probably going to come up against one of those "little" deaths that we all have to face

And unless you've built your life on the truth of Resurrection – of God's power to renew and repair and restore in this life –
how will you see the stone rolled away?

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