

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Series: More Than a Story

Palm Sunday 2010

Jesse Rider, Senior High Pastor

Weekend 03.27-28.10

We're going to take a little bit of time today and we're going to prepare ourselves for this holiday. And we think about what this holiday means to us and we see it's Jesus dying on the cross for our sins and resurrecting three days later. The thought, the idea is almost unfathomable to us that a man could come and live a perfect life and then give up that life for us. It's funny. We look at this and we realize what has this holiday become? We've really lumped several celebrations into kind of one holiday.

Let me show you what I mean. The Easter word comes from the Greek goddess of fertility whose name is Eastr. They have these celebrations to celebrate her and fertility and things that go along with that and they choose the rabbit as almost a mascot or a logo for it because the rabbit was known for fertility. They multiply like rabbits. And so they took the rabbit as kind of their symbol and this idea is kind of passed over from culture to culture. And it turns out in some cultures that they celebrate animals reproducing. They are celebrating their fertility.

Now, I don't know who's in charge of making holidays and how that goes about but to think about that you're celebrating that animals are reproducing – that seems like an odd day to set aside to celebrate. But that became one of the traditions. In some of the stories of the crucifixion we have so many traditions. Some are scriptural; some are kind of made up for our own personal pleasure and some we have no idea where they came from. And so we look at this rabbit and this rabbit kind of goes from culture to culture and from country to country and it makes its way to Germany. In the 1600's Germany takes this rabbit and they give it a name. They give it a bow tie and they call it O_ster Haws_e. They named this rabbit and the idea behind this rabbit is that if you have a well behaved child on Easter this rabbit will come and it will lay colorful eggs for all of the well behaved children. What a strange thought.

And so they take this rabbit and it makes its way to America and America says that's a good idea but we're going to kind of one-up it a little bit. So they take it and not only does the rabbit lay eggs but now the rabbit brings chocolates and toys and all of these other things.

And so this holiday is making its way from country to country and it goes to Australia. And Australia says, ok, we like the holiday but we don't like the rabbit. In the 1800s in Australia the rabbit was regarded as a huge pest because it multiplied like rabbits and it had destroyed land and millions of dollars of their crops. They said, you know what? We can't have a holiday with a mascot being a huge pest. It would be like us celebrating and the mascot being a giant rat or something. So they said, we're going to change it. Instead of using the rabbit we're going to have our own and call it Easter Bilby. If you squint it kind of looks like a rabbit maybe. Kind of. And so we see all of these traditions and celebrations that kind of started from this fertility.

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Some missionaries came across some of these lands and said we need to be careful what we're celebrating. They saw the celebrations going on and what they were celebrating and then what would follow the celebrations and they said how about if we celebrate this instead.

So, we've combined really three different aspects, three totally different things into one day. We have the Greek goddess of fertility, Eastra. We have the Easter bunny and then we've got Jesus dying on the cross and resurrected. And we stop to think and say how do these holidays get put together because when you lump them together like that it gives people reason to believe that well, maybe that's not completely true. So today I want to show you that it is true. The events are true. The stories are true. The people are true and it's more than a legend. It's more than just folklore; more than just some generational tale that's been passed on. This is true – but more than true is that this is a personal life changing event. And the really true areas I want to look at to help you to understand that this is a true event, more than a story.

The first one is that this was a prophetic event. That the Old Testament would tell us this is what is going to happen. That when the Son of God comes this is what it's going to look like. In fact, in the Old Testament there are over one hundred prophecies about Jesus, His life, the crucifixion and the resurrection. A prophesy is something that God is choosing to reveal a message or something through someone. For this instance this helps us understand that Jesus was who He said he was. When we look at these prophecies we understand this is who they said the Son of God would be. And that Jesus is fulfilling these prophecies.

So, in your program I have printed out just a couple of those prophecies so that you can follow with me. I just want to look at a couple. We're going to start in Psalm 41:9. It says even my close friend who I trusted, he who shared my bread has lifted up his heel against me. Then we find in Mark 14, then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve went to the key priests to betray Jesus. Now, we're going to talk more about these prophecies a little more in depth but I just want to kind of read through them. Psalm 22:7-8 says all who see me mock me. They hurl insults, shaking their heads. He trusts in the Lord, let the Lord rescue Him. Let Him deliver Him since He delights in Him. We find in Matthew 27:41, in this same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked Him. He saved others they said but He can't save Himself. He's the King of Israel. Let Him come down now from the cross and we will believe Him. He trusts in God let God rescue Him now if He wants Him for He said, I am the Son of God. In the same way the robbers who were crucified with Him also heaped insults on Him. Psalm 22:17-18, I can count all my bones. People stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing. We find in John 19:23, says when the soldiers crucified Jesus they took His clothes and divided them into four shares, one for each of them. With the undergarment remaining this garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.

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See, what we're learning here is that the Old Testament was saying here is how it's going to be. And the New Testament is saying here is what actually happened. And so these prophecies are validating for us that Jesus was who He said He was; that this wasn't somebody who was making up that He was fulfilling prophecies.

Now, we're going to look at the second part. We're going to look at the people of these prophecies because a lot of time with historical figures we remember them for an action that they did or an event that they were a part of but we don't know what led them to that point. And so we're going to look at the people that Jesus encountered before the crucifixion, during the crucifixion and then after the resurrection and look at their approach and how they responded to Jesus. We're going to find that maybe we have some of those responses with us today.

So, the first one we're going to look at as actually Judas. So, in your bibles go ahead and turn to Matthew chapter 26, verse 14. Page 832. In Matthew 26:14 it says Judas betrayed Jesus. Then one of the twelve whose name was Judas Iscariot went on to the chief priests and said what will you give me if I deliver Him over to you? And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. Now, if we were to try to put that into our currency today it would be a rough number because we don't know the actual weight of the silver but it could be anywhere from \$200 to \$15,000. It seems like a small price to betray a teacher. We'll come back there. It says, from that moment he saw an opportunity to betray Him. Now on the first day of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus saying where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover. He said, go into the city to a certain man and say to him, the teacher says my time is at hand and I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and they prepared the Passover. When it was evening He reclined at the table with the twelve and as they were eating He said, truly, I say to you one of you will betray me. And they were very sorrowful and they began to say to Him one after another is it I, Lord? He answered he who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me.

That's an interesting way of saying who is going to betray me. You see, because the disciples had no idea who had used what dish. The only one who knew that was Judas. Could you imagine what Judas is feeling right now as he just figures out that Jesus knows that Judas is going to betray him and the thoughts that Judas must be having? Is this too late? What have I done? All of this for thirty pieces of silver. And he begins thinking, was it worth it? Did I need to do this? And all of these thoughts just boil up inside him. And then Jesus says, verse 24, the Son of Man goes, it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.

Judas, who would betray Him answered is it I, Rabbi? He said to Him you have said so. You see, in that phrase it kind of reveals to us Judas' relationship with Jesus. The other

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disciples refer to Jesus as Lord. But to Judas he called him Rabbi which is like saying teacher. So to Judas He was just a teacher. He was just another teacher. So, we understand that Judas' relationship was not like the other disciples. But now he knows that Jesus knows he is going to betray Him and you can just imagine the thoughts that are going through him. Is there a way out? What can I do? Why have I done this? And he begins to think, you know what, it's too late. I've already taken the money. This is too big. There's no stopping me now. And sometimes, I would imagine that we feel that same way, that we get trapped with a sin or we get stuck in a situation and we just feel like there's no escape, that it's too late or that the sin is too much or it's too big. And with that way of thinking, you see, we begin to limit Jesus.

In fact, we read in Romans chapter 6, verse 6 it says we know that our old self is crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. So, what we're understanding is that Jesus' dying on the cross wasn't just for some sins or for the little sins but for all sins. And that it provides an escape for us out of sin; that we don't have to be enslaved to sin. We don't have to be trapped by sin; that He's given us a way out. We have this verse to comfort us.

We're going to look at another character so in your bibles turn with me to John chapter 19, verse 16. As we're reading this text I want you to think to yourself what your reaction would be if you were parents and you had to watch your child go through what Jesus' mother is seeing Him go through. John, chapter 19, verse 16. So he delivered Him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and He went out bearing His own cross to the place called the Place of the Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. There they crucified Him and with Him two others, one on either side and Jesus between them. Pilate also wrote an inscription and put in on the cross that read Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. Many of the Jews read this inscription for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city and it was written in Aramaic and Latin and in Greek. So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, do not write the King of Jews but rather, this man said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, what I have written I have written. When the soldiers had crucified Jesus they took His garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier. Also His tunic but the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. So they said to one another let us not tear it but cast lots to see whose it shall be. This was to fulfill the scripture that said they divided my garments among them. For my clothing they cast lots. So the soldiers did these things but standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother and His mother's sister.

Now, I ask you just try to imagine what it would be like to see your child going through that; to see your child be tortured and ridiculed and mocked for doing the right thing. Now, I'm learning this feeling more and more as I am now a father with a three month old baby. I realize that I would do anything to protect my daughter, almost to a crazy extent. And so one of the things, you know, we have friends of ours who have a boy of a

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similar age and they said to us maybe when they grow up they can get married to each other. And I told them that would be great. If your son is willing to wait till he's thirty-five and my daughter can begin dating that would be great. And this is how crazy I am about this. I've already begun crafting my line for the first boy that ever wants to stop by the house and shows some interest in my daughter. So I thought I'd share it with you today and if you've got your own, share it with me afterwards.

But this is what I'm thinking. I'm still crafting it. It's not quite done but I've got a little bit of time. So, this is what I want to do. The boy comes up to the door and gets ready to knock. I open the door before he even gets there – just to kind of catch him off guard. Then I'm going to look at him and say, come with me. Then I'm going to take him around to the back of the house and in the back of the house I'm going to have built this big shed. We're going to go to this big shed and I'm going to open the door and it's going to be pitch black in there. I'm going to turn on the first light switch and the first light switch is going to be a spot light that shines down on this giant pedestal and on this giant pedestal there's going to be this giant, dead, stuffed bear. I'll turn on the second light switch. That light switch is going to control the second spot light which comes down to the second pedestal and on that pedestal there's this big, giant, dead snake. I'm going to turn on the third switch. The third spotlight coming down on this giant, empty pedestal. He's going to look at me and say what is this room for? And I'll look at him right in the eye and say, this is for anyone who has every hurt, scared or made my daughter cry. And then he'll obviously ask what's the third pedestal for? I'll look at him, you better pray to God you don't have to find out. And I thought that's the line I want to use until the other day I was reading and I found out what Sylvester Stalone wants to do. This is what he said that he's going to do when his daughter's get old enough that the boys would show interest. When the boy comes to the house he's going to be hiding in the bushes, not as Sylvester Stalone but dressed as Rambo. Could you imagine if you walked up to somebody's house and Rambo pops out? You're probably not coming back any time soon. So, I'm still crafting that, still working on it.

You get this sense that we would anything to protect our children. And you think what Jesus' mother was feeling as she watched her son to be beaten and ridiculed and tortured and mocked and all she can do is watch. And she must be thinking why is He suffering for doing the right thing? Why does He have to go through this? And we may be having that same feeling that why do we suffer for doing the right things? Sometimes it seems like we make the right decision and it's almost like we're punished for making that right decision. And we read the story and just think about it; all these different emotions that Mary must be feeling. She's obviously hurting for her son and she's sad but at the same time she has a sense of peace because she knows He's supposed to be doing this. And we can just imagine what she's going through. And we can have that same thought of why am I suffering for doing the right thing?

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In James 1:2 it tells us count it pure joy, my brothers when you meet trials of various kinds. Now, that's a verse that's easy to read but to think in that way is almost unfathomable; that you are supposed to be joyful when you face your trials and that is not normally our response – like YES! Yes, I lost my job, yes! That's not normally our response but with this verse it comes with the understanding that we have to realize that God is in control. And it almost sounds cliché but it's true that God is in control of us, even when something didn't go our way or we're struggling through something God is still in control.

Let's go back to the verse in John. We're at verse 25, he says, but standing at the cross of Jesus were His mother and His mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby He said to His mother, woman, behold your son. Then he said to the disciple, behold, your mother and from that hour the disciple took her to his own home and you could just imagine the emotion in that situation as Jesus is on the cross and He looks down and He sees mom and He says, mom, John's your son now. And looks at John and says, John, this is your mother. Take care of her. You could just imagine the emotion that everybody is feeling at that point in watching what is happening to Jesus. We can resonate with what they're going through with Mary and suffering for watching her son do the right thing. For John, with being there and suffering watching his friend suffer.

The third character we're going to look at is Peter, another one of Jesus' disciples. We're going to jump ahead a little bit. After the crucifixion they buried Jesus in the tomb. Three days later He comes back to life and He leaves the tomb. Peter, known for his doubting behavior hears this and runs to the tomb to check it out because he wants to see well, what's really going on? So, he gets there and Jesus isn't there.

So, turn with me in your bibles. We're going to John 21, should be over just a page or two. John 21, verse 1. After this Jesus revealed Himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias. And He revealed Himself in this way. Simon Peter, Thomas called the twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. Simon Peter said to them, I'm going fishing. They said to him, we'll go with you. They went out and got into the boat but that night they caught nothing. Just as day was breaking Jesus stood on the shore yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, children, do you have any fish? They answered Him, no. He said to them cast the net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.

Now, you can just imagine what Peter's thinking. Peter is known for his doubting behavior is questioning what happened to Jesus, not knowing what's going on, under a lot of stress, spent the whole night trying to fish, didn't catch a single fish and then daylight comes and some guy comes to him and says, hey, why don't you put your net on the other side of the boat. And you can just imagine the thoughts in his mind like, who is this guy to tell me how to fish? And in verse 6 He says to them cast the net on the right side

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of the boat and you will find some. So, they cast it. And now they were not able to haul it in because of the quantity of fish. The disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, it is the Lord. When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord he put on his outer garment and threw himself into the sea. The other disciples came in the boat dragging the net full of the fish for they were not far from the land but about a hundred yards off. And you can just imagine when Peter's doubt was answered. And he was sitting there and John leans over and says it's Jesus. He's back and just the expression on Peter's face, just disbelief and that his doubts were answered. He was so excited that he just dives into the water and swims. He out-swims the boat in order to go and see Jesus. And we think – we can understand that feeling when our doubts have been answered or our struggles we've made it through. And we see this is how Peter responded that he was so excited to see Jesus. He was so excited that Jesus was who he said he was. His doubts had been answered.

I'm going to have the musicians come back out here in a second but while they're playing this song I want you to be able to have a time to just be honest with Jesus. Maybe you feel like Judas and you're trapped in a sin right now and you're just kind of stuck and not really sure of a way out. Maybe you feel like Mary and that you're just suffering and you don't really know how to get out of it. Or maybe you feel like Peter and that your doubts have finally been answered and you just get to be excited. If that's you – I just want you to be honest and if you're feeling like Judas – say God – help me. I'm struggling. I'm confused. I'm hurt. It will be up to you to be honest with God. Maybe it is that you just want to say God, thank you for giving me everything. Thank you for this excited. Thank you for giving me life and family and friends. Thank you for this opportunity.

When the music is over I'll come back up and I'll close in prayer but I want this to be a time of you being honest with God. Just saying, God, I love you. I'm sorry. Help me.

Let's pray. Dear Lord I thank you for the time you've given us today. I thank you for the scripture you've given us today. I thank you for the chance we have to come before you and just celebrate you and the amazing things you've done for us. I thank you for the conversations that we get to have with you. For the honesty we get to have with you. I pray for the people here that we would prepare ourselves to celebrate the resurrection that you would be with us that we would honor in all of our words and our actions. Amen.

When I was in high school I volunteered at an after school ministry and one day, we were there everyday after school with elementary age kids and one day I remember this young girl. It was the day that she finally got it. She finally understood that Jesus died on the cross for her sins because He loved her and she was so excited, she finally understood it and we're sitting in a group and she raises her hand and she says can I just go and tell everybody I know, just go from house to house and tell them about Jesus and how amazing His love is. She was so sincere. I remember it to this day. She wanted to do it because she wanted everybody to experience Jesus' love. And she told me that and up to

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this day I can still remember that entire moment. I think sometimes in our life that maybe we take some of this for granted. That we take Jesus' love for granted. Or maybe we just kind of forget about it or maybe we just lose focus because of the struggles we're going through. So, what I thought we should do today in order to prepare ourselves to celebrate the resurrection is just to celebrate just how amazed we are with God. So I ask to sing one more song. So, everybody just stand to your feet and let's just celebrate God's amazement together.