

Easter 2025 | John Messerly

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Preacher: John Messerly

[0 : 00] Well, let's open with a word of prayer. Our God and Heavenly Father, we do want to thank you, Father, for the many blessings you've given to us, Father. We thank you for your word that we can learn of you, we can learn of your plan of salvation, Father. We can learn how you sent your son to die for us, Father, to be buried, to be raised again, and to sit in your right hand waiting for us, Father, preparing a place for us.

Father, we are grateful for all these things and more. We pray that you would open our hearts this morning, open our ears, pray that we would be blessed by the reading and exposition of your word. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Amen. All right, well, I don't have a joke to open with. Anna was saying I should open with a story of one Easter a little while ago.

I was like, all right, I'll use that for my opening bit. But, you know, Easter morning is this celebration of life. And one Easter morning about 20 years ago, we'd go out to get ready. Everybody's in their church clothes, everybody ready to go out, and we find that my dog of 14 years had died that morning in its kennel. And I was like, oh. And it was a good reminder, though, of death.

[1 : 23] Like, resurrection is nothing without death. And initially, the way I conceived this message was really focusing on the death. But the more and more I focused on death and resurrection, why would you want to focus on death?

Why would you want to focus on that? Why would you want to major on the minors? The thing to be focused on is life and the new life that we have. And that led me to thinking about 1 Corinthians 15. In 1 Corinthians 15, verse 12, Paul is dealing with some people that had some issues with the Christian doctrine in the church. And one of the things they didn't like, maybe they thought it was a little foolish.

Maybe they thought it was a little bizarre, a little weird. Or like, let's just gloss over that part. But it was the resurrection and the dead being raised. So in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul says, Now if Christ has preached that he's been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain.

[2 : 42] Your faith also is in vain. Moreover, we're even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised.

For if the dead are not raised, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless. You are still in your sins.

Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ only in this life, we are of all people most to be pitied.

Of all people most to be pitied. That phrase in particular, we are most to be pitied, has stuck with me.

You know, when Richard Dawkins, he was a very prominent atheist, when he was giving a speech about atheism, he had a question and answer session.

[3 : 50] There was a little girl who came up to the mic, and after hearing him talk and go on about how the Bible was fake and God didn't exist, she asked him, what if you're wrong?

What if you're wrong? Because to the atheist, this life is everything. Death is the worst thing for an atheist, because it's the end of your consciousness.

But then there's nothing after that. There's no life after death. There's no existence after death. But what if you're wrong? Instead of grappling with the question and really thinking, huh, what would the

implications for me be if I were wrong?

He just turned it back on him and said, well, what if we're all wrong about the flying spaghetti monster or the pink unicorn? He just said, well, it's not that I'm wrong about the eternal God and his son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's just that you don't believe in Zeus. You don't believe in these Greek gods. I just believe in one fewer God than you. It's nothing. It was a very relativistic approach.

[5 : 01] And that whole approach and just how circular it is and how meaningless it is could definitely be dissected in a whole different message. But my point isn't to dissect his atheism but to just have us enter into that mindset.

Kind of like Paul does here. Paul, he does what in legal terms we call a hypothetical. And I realized that young children, part of the thing about their brains forming, young children can't deal in hypotheticals.

So I was trying to tell my child about something hypothetical that was bad. But he just broke out crying because he can't think of hypotheticals and what if. What if something were different?

He says, this is how it is. And so he just started bawling because he couldn't think of, conceive in his mind of what is a hypothetical. He couldn't imagine this other sphere without it. But Paul does this in 1 Corinthians 5.

He says, what if you're wrong? What if there is no resurrection? resurrection? What does that look like? So my goal this morning is to take us through a hypothetical to just make us contemplate for a second.

[6 : 14] What if? What would things look like if Christ was not, or if Christ were not resurrected from the dead? And it's not to be a downer and to make us, oh, womp, womp.

Because this is Resurrection Sunday. We are celebrating the fact that he did raise from the dead. But I want us to understand the polar opposites that we're really facing when we contemplate these two possibilities of either Christ is raised or Christ is not raised.

There is life after death. There is not life after death. There's more that we have or this life is everything. So let's look at this passage in 1 Corinthians and let's kind of dissect it.

One of the first things he says in verse 14 is, our preaching is in vain. And he follows it up saying, we're found to be false witnesses of God. Our preaching is in vain.

That talks about what we do to other people, our ministry to other people, what I'm doing here this morning. If Christ did not raise from the dead, I'm like Harold Hill.

[7 : 32] I'm a slick salesman, a con man, here to sell you something that isn't true. I'm a grifter. I'm lying about God to everybody here.

And why? Well, to get people to agree with me, to validate me, to make me feel better, to come into a building and pay money to fund our social club. I mean, if that's the case, if Christ didn't rise from the dead, then nothing prevents me from saying, you know what, there's not really a lot of money in this.

maybe I should go start a Ponzi scheme or find a job as a Nigerian prince and start selling people on big inheritance schemes.

If Christ isn't raised, everything that we have said to anybody about this good news is a lie. That makes us con men, grifters.

In verse 14, and then again in verse 17, in verse 14 he says, your faith also is in vain. In verse 17 he says, your faith is worthless.

[8 : 49] If Christ isn't raised from the dead, what are we doing? We're believing fairy tales. You know, some disbelief, some wrong belief is kind of harmless.

What do little kids do? They believe in Santa Claus, right? And the worst that comes from them believing in Santa Claus is one night a year they lose some sleep because they're listening for reindeer on the roof.

And maybe they, maybe the other bad thing is they aren't as grateful to their parents as they should be because they think presents came from a big, jolly, fat man coming down their chimney instead of their mom and dad. But some disbelief is, some wrong belief is very dangerous.

9-11 was done out of faith that was very sincere but very sincerely wrong. Think of the emotional baggage if Christ is not raised, if there is no resurrection.

Think of the emotional baggage that we're putting on ourselves and other people with this idea of unforgiven sin. that there's no end to it.

[10:03] There's either two points of view. You can be like the atheist and say, well, God doesn't exist at all and so we can live however we want and so you are just keeping this on people or the opposite.

If God, like the Judeo, part of the Judeo-Christian, the Jewish version is like, if Jesus was not God and God exists, well then by telling people that their sins can be forgiven, well, it's that thing that Paul talked about.

They're like, grace, grace abounds so sin can increase. We can go and we can live this wrong way and, you know, we're damned if we do, we're damned if we don't.

Literally. Our faith is in vain. We're barking up the wrong tree trying to look to Jesus for salvation. If he didn't rise from the dead, he's not the answer. There's no hope in him if he didn't rise from the dead.

We're wasting our time barking up a wrong tree by looking to him and trusting in him. Verse 17, it goes on from your faith is worthless.

[11:10] It says, you are still in your sins. If Jesus didn't take away our sins, if Jesus didn't rise again, if his death wasn't effective, we've been wasting all this time.

We should be still feeling the immense weight and guilt of our sin because we've offended a holy God. We're still in our, there's no, there's no forgiveness.

There's no reconciliation. Imagine if I were playing baseball in my front yard and I smash the ball through my neighbor's window and in a picture of what Christ did for us, my brother steps up and says, John, I will take the punishment for that.

I will do, I will take all the responsibility, everything that you owed is on me. And he goes to the other neighbor's house on the other side who has a perfectly fine window.

He goes to him and he says, I am going to take John's place. Am I reconciled to that neighbor? No. That sacrifice, that thing that was done for me was misdirected.

[12:23] There was no utility in it. There was no point in it. He took my place for the wrong person. And so, if Christ did not raise from the dead, then his sacrifice for us was worthless and we still have all that sin on us.

We've offended God. The creator has set up a way for this world to work and instead of going to him in a way that he finds is acceptable, we're coming to him in a completely obtuse direction. It was like, who is this man that we're all pointing to and saying, oh, he took my sins? God's like, I don't care what's going on there if Jesus is not raised, if the resurrection did not happen.

The next thing, it says, those who have fallen asleep have perished if Christ is not raised, if the resurrection is not real.

To the atheist, this life is all that we have. Death is the ultimate, final, and most horrific enemy. Every funeral is a dark acceptance of a bleak existence, an extinguished candle.

[13:41] Or else, those who are Christians and say that they believe in life after death, they're really engaging in a child's game of delusion because Christ isn't raised, there is no life after death.

What are you consoling yourself for? It's pointless. It's like when the dog goes to the vet to be put down and you tell a child, oh, he's gone to that happy hunting ground.

Try to console them, but there's no real consolation because this life is it. So the atheist has a bleak perception of it. But if you go on the standpoint that Jesus was not God's son, Jesus did not die for our sins, that is also horrific because it's the thought that God exists.

Those who died, died in their sins. They died offending God. The window is broken and nothing has been done there. That offense still exists and not only do the dead in Christ, or do the dead not exist, they perish, it says.

They perish. They're in eternal damnation. Rather than being simply gone, God exists. He has a moral system of right and wrong. They've offended him.

[14:58] And now they are sinners in the hands of a righteous, angry God facing an eternity of punishment for their sins if Christ is not raised.

Finally, as I mentioned earlier, we are to be pitied above all men. if Christ isn't raised from the dead, we are delusional fools.

Because everyone who believes in Christ and is sharing his good message with everyone, well, they have a good heart, but they have a wrong way of doing it.

They're trying to go help people, but they're helping them with a worthless message. It's like, I tried to think of a good example to explain what it would be like, and the closest I got is somebody walks

by a burning house and they hear yelling and they think, oh, they're hungry. And so they get out a hot dog and roast a weenie because they think that that is what's going to satisfy them. If we're proclaiming Christ is the way to a perishing people and Christ is not raised and Christ is not the answer, then our hearts are in a good place, but we're idiots.

[16:15] And we're bringing this message to somebody and it doesn't help them at all. It doesn't change their standing before God one bit. Think about the hopelessness of what went on in Passion Week if Jesus wasn't raised from the dead.

I just want to lead us through this in our minds. Don't worry. Again, hypotheticals, little kids don't like them. They can get confusing if you think about it enough, but we're not staying in the hypothetical like that video says.

It's Friday, Sunday's coming. But I want us to just think about that Passion Week from a perspective of no resurrection. It started off with a triumphal entry Palm Sunday.

Jesus coming, the one who had been doing miracles all throughout the countryside, healing, sick, lame, preaching about being good and honoring God and loving your brother.

This one comes into town and everyone comes out to celebrate. People throw off their coats. Little kids wave palm branches. They say, save now.

[17:30] We need this Savior. We need this one to come and to give us freedom from this Roman oppression. To give us freedom from this Pharisee oppression.

The Romans were the civil government and they oppressed them, but the Pharisees were the civil government and they oppressed them too by all these hypocritical rules and regulations that they put in place.

They said, save us now and it was the pinnacle, the apex, the peak. and then everything started going downhill. Downhill, downhill, downhill.

Jesus was so close to success with his triumphal entry. He was finally going to topple everything. We are finally going to have a good leader and then all of a sudden the Pharisees start saying, no, we can't do this.

They start looking for a way to kill him as quickly as they can. Judas says he sees him accept worship from this woman who takes a vial of perfume.

[18:38] She breaks it and pours it out. And Judas is like, that could have been sold for hundreds of thousands of dollars. You just, like that could have financed, think how many Roman guards we could have bought off or how many soldiers and mercenaries we could have done to set up our kingdom.

And Judas finally despairs and says, you know what? This guy doesn't have it in him. It doesn't have it in him to set up this kingdom that I was hoping to ride on his coattails.

I'm out. And so he goes to betray him. From the apex it starts picking up speed. Judas is like, I'm going to get my one last payday.

He goes to the Pharisees and says, I want to betray him. And they say, we'll pay you 30 pieces of silver. That was the price of a common slave and he was giving up the Lord of Glory.

30 pieces of silver for the best man he'd ever seen in his life. Thursday night, the plan springs into action. The other disciples are still wondering what Jesus is going to do.

[19:49] and then that night he's ambushed. He's captured. He's railroaded into an illegal tribunal, an illegal courtroom that shouldn't have been conducted at night.

A night court with highly irregular proceedings. The disciples were all scattered. It should have been his cabinet members setting up the government. Instead, they're scattered everywhere.

Peter cuts off a guy's ear. John Mark is so scared he runs out of his clothes to get away out of fear of being captured. Things are unraveling fast.

In this courtroom, they're bringing false witness after false witness to jury rig a conviction. And they can't get it straight. With the writings on the wall, they're determined they are going to get their man.

Outside, Peter, the one who is so brave, now is swearing up a blue streak to a little servant girl saying, I don't know who this Jesus is because he's scared stiff. It's all unraveling.

[20:57] It's all gone. The Pharisees can't agree on anything. They finally get him to say he's the Christ. They try to get him to say he's the Christ, the Son of the God.

He doesn't say it. He says, well, that's what you say. From now on, you're going to see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power. And they say, well, that's good enough for us.

That's a good enough excuse to get him. They rip their clothes. They beat him up. And they bring him over to Pilate hoping to get him executed.

The despair of the disciples of John who was watching. John went in and listened. John was following, but, man, sure looks dark.

Sure looks like this is headed. Jesus is going to die. Who knows how many other disciples are going to die. This is a rough situation. You know, maybe John had some hope since ultimately they didn't get a charge to stick.

[22 : 00] Maybe the Romans will let him go. Who knows what John was thinking. But the Romans, they kind of waffle. Pilate's like, oh, jurisdictional question.

Let's kick him over to Herod. He says, I don't know what to do. Let's kick him over here. Pilate's wife tells him, hey, this guy is innocent. Don't, don't do anything to this guy.

He's innocent. Well, Pilate tries to kick him over to Herod. Herod can't do anything with him. Sends him back. And Pilate says, okay, well, let's try and let him free on a technicality.

I have to release somebody. Let's release Jesus back to them. Everyone will be good. The conviction, the smear will be there. I'll be free of this man's blood.

And maybe the disciples in the crowd thought, this is going to be it. Like, praise the Lord. Jesus is going to be freed and he'll be able to set up his earthly kingdom. But no.

[23 : 06] The crowd that said, save now, says, crucify him. They call for the rebel murderer Barabbas to be released instead.

And all Pilate can do is wash his hands and say, I'm innocent of this guy's blood. But then he sends his troops to lead him away. The way the last glimpse of hope for this dies.

Again, we're thinking if there's no resurrection, think how bleak this is. They were thinking earthly kingdom. They were thinking Jesus sitting physically on a throne.

And if he dies, the dream dies. Well, now he's being led away. The soldiers are mocking the dead dream of a revolutionary governor by putting a crown of thorns and a scarlet robe.

Here's a king. This is the guy that'll save you. This is the guy that'll overthrow Rome. The rough splinters of the cross are driven into the shredded skin on his back as he's forced to death march through the streets.

[24 : 19] He has to struggle uphill. Uphill to the place of execution. He's not even able to do it. He collapses and they recruit the guy out of the crowd to carry it for him.

At the summit, his garment is stripped from him and gambled away by the soldiers. And they only pause before they gamble to hammer iron nails through his hands and his feet.

To the disciples, they're like, wow, this is how it ends. This is it. His mother has been following the whole thing. She now is weeping at the foot of the cross.

Her son dying. She's weeping. The crowds are streaming by and mocking and reviling him.

Above his cross is written, King of the Jews as evidence of his crime. And all it does is cause the gawkers to yell for the great delivering governor, the great revolutionary.

[25 : 28] Well, start by saving yourself. Save now. Save yourself. Even the other people being executed mock him from their crosses using their last breath to ridicule him.

This is the end. It was a good run, but the darkness is closing in. His mouth is as dry as a bone.

His tongue is sticking to his mouth. The hours on the cross have dislocated his arms. His legs are cramping from dehydration and pushing up, trying to push up for every breath.

His lungs screaming for air. He cries out to the God that has forsaken him. He screams, it is finished.

There's darkness, an earthquake, and a cold spear confirms what everybody knew, that the king who triumphantly entered Jerusalem was dead on the cross.

[26 : 40] If someone as perfect as this man, couldn't save the world, humanity is doomed. There's nothing more. But the hypothetical ends.

Verse 20, but the fact is, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man, by Adam, death came into the world, so by a man, the Lord Jesus, also came the resurrection of the dead.

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive, but each in the right order. Christ, the first fruits, after that, those who are Christ, it is coming, and then comes the end when he hands over the kingdom to our God and Father, when he's abolished all rule and all authority and all power.

That revolution is coming. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death.

in verse 51, behold, I am telling you a mystery. We will not all sleep, but we all will be changed in the moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, for the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

[28 : 14] For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

But when this perishable puts on the imperishable, and this mortal puts on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, death has been swallowed up in victory.

Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law, but thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ is raised. We do have that life. We are not to be pitied. The dead in Christ have not perished. Our salvation is bought.

The dead in Christ live. Our sins have been forgiven. We are not still in our sins. we've been forgiven. That weight of offending a God and not having any way to be reconciled with Him, that weight is off for everyone who puts their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His death and burial and resurrection.

[29 : 34] Our sins have been forgiven. God has raised Him from the dead with glory and honor and seated Him in His right hand forever. our faith is not in vain.

Forgiveness through Christ is possible. There is a way to be reconciled to God. It can be done. Isn't that awesome? Our preaching and our witness is not a lie.

We are not deceiving people. We are not snake oil salesmen. We are not in this for what we can get from it. We are bringing the truth.

We are bringing the joy. We are bringing the life to the dead. Verse 58 Therefore my beloved brothers and sisters be firm immovable always excelling in the work of the Lord knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Labor let's labor preach let's preach Christ is raised He is risen He is risen indeed Praise the Lord We have work to do It doesn't stop here with a feel good message reminding ourselves that we have this hope We have this hope to share We have life for the dead We have the good news We need to share it with those who are perishing We need to snatch them out of the jaws of hell and bring them into the wonderful radiance of life in Christ Christ is risen Praise the Lord Let's close in a word of prayer Our God and Heavenly Father Thank you for your plan of salvation

[31 : 40] Thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ thank you that we have life beyond this life we have life in him because of his death and his burial and his resurrection God we praise you we worship you what an amazing God what a wise God what a powerful God we serve may we express our gratitude towards you today and all throughout this week let us bring that good news to the lost Father we pray this in Jesus name Amen Amen