

He is Risen

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- [0 : 0 0] He is risen, he is risen. Welcome to our Easter Sunday service. Better yet, today is Resurrection Sunday.
- If there was such thing as a Christian calendar with special events given every single month, this would be the month. This is the day.
- It is the celebration that Christians worldwide lift up their voices, lift up their hands in song. Today, I want to explain why.
- Why Easter? Why this celebration? Why is it so significant that people greet each other with, He is risen.
- Two days ago, we celebrated Good Friday. If you were watching our live stream, we learned that there is a reason why Good Friday should be called Bad Friday, but it's not.
- [1 : 0 7] For with very good reason. On the subject of Good Friday, John Piper says, The death of Jesus Christ is the most important event in history and the most explosive political and personal issue of the 21st century.
- I want you to pay attention to the word 21st century, the words. We can understand this from a first century perspective. An innocent man, by every account, was killed in possibly the most painful and gruesome way possible.
- There was injustice. The people could have revolted. But why today? Why does it matter today?
- Why are we still talking about a death that occurred over 2,000 years ago? The reality is the Bible offers no shortage of explanations for this.
- But for today, I'd like to take a look at perhaps a very simple passage and perhaps one of the most neglected passages when it comes to the subject of Easter.
- [2 : 2 9] If you have your Bibles with you, please turn with me to James. The book of James. It is a smaller epistle. It's near the back end of your Bible.
- This is a letter written, but we believe it is actually the first letter that we have in the Bible that was the first letter written from the time of Easter.
- It was written by a man named James that bears its name, who is a half-brother of Jesus and a man who became one of the early church leaders.
- The letter is a very practical letter. Some people call it the New Testament version of Proverbs. It contains very practical life advice for those who call themselves Christians.
- Now that you have it open, please turn down to chapter 4 and look down to verse 8. There's this very incredible verse that many Christians use as a source of comfort.
- [3 : 4 1] The verse simply says, draw near to God and he will draw near to you.
- Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. This verse, the sentence, is actually a command.

It is a command written to draw near to God. The word draw has this idea of motion, of moving forward, to come close to, and implicit within its understanding in coming to God is to make yourself known.

And God will make himself known to you. Think about this.

This is God. God. The one who created the world. Who raised up the mountains. Who filled the oceans with water.

[5 : 10] And within it, the abundance of life that swim. The abundance of life that roams over these lands. This is the God who placed every star in the sky.

Who created man in his image. He is the God who saves and judges.

And we are being called to draw ourselves to him.

To make ourselves known. And he will make himself known to us.

Let me ask you something. Is this something you would want to do? Does this excite you? Does this surprise you?

[6 : 17] Does this perplex you? Does this frighten you? Does this perplex you? The Bible presents God as the greatest attraction in the universe.

He is incomprehensible. His deeds are too many to number. But yet, we are called to make ourselves known.

And he will make himself known to us. The creator of all life. The judge over all things.

If you can make that decision right here, right now. That you would walk into the Lord's presence. Would you? Would you freely go, make yourself known, and know God?

The Bible teaches that there's essentially three types of people. The first person is the one who says yes.

[7 : 32] Who want to and are able to go to God. They want to be known and they wish to know God. The second type of person that the Bible talks about is the one who says they want to know God, but they cannot know God.

They are incapable of drawing close. And the third type of person that the Bible talks about is there are those who do not want to know God.

They do not want to be known. And they are unable to come to him. Let me ask you those three questions again.

Would you be willing to draw near to God? Would you be willing to be known? And would you be willing to know him?

Today, this morning, I want to explain Easter in the perspective of these three types of people.

[8 : 39] I want you to understand how you can draw close to God and have him draw close to you. I want to begin with the third person first.

Those that do not want to know God. They have no interest in knowing God. And in fact, they cannot know God. They cannot draw closer. They cannot know God.

Maybe this, in fact, is you. Maybe you are listening to this sermon, this live stream on Facebook because one of your friends invited you. Perhaps a co-worker. Perhaps you're just going through your normal Facebook feed and you see this in a friend's Facebook.

And you're now watching out of curiosity. This sermon is for you. This sermon is to help you understand the significance of Easter and why your friend says he is alive.

He is risen. The Bible gives us three reasons why some people do not want to know God. They do not want to draw near.

- [9 : 56] And I want to cover these briefly. The first reason why these people do not want to is because of pride. Just pure and simple pride. Psalm 10.4 says, That person thinks they are this sum total of life.
- There is no need, no desire to seek anything beyond themselves because they are it. There is no need for God in their minds. The second reason why some people do not seek after God is deceit.
- And I mean by this that they have been deceived. The prophet Jeremiah in the Old Testament, Jeremiah 9.6 wrote, That heaping oppression upon oppression and deceit upon deceit, they refuse to know me, declares the Lord.
- They continue to deceive themselves in their pride, in their willingness to make themselves the center of light, that they just simply refuse to know God.
- And in the third reason why some men do not want to draw near to God is found in the words of Jesus Christ himself who said in John 3.19.20, And this is the judgment.
- [11 : 34] The light has come into the world and people loved darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.
- You see, the Bible teaches that people will forever remain in this condition. They want their pride. They want to deceive themselves. And they want their darkness.
- They do not want any light. They do not want to be known. The Bible teaches that they will forever remain in this position until God actually stirs in their hearts a desire to know God, to understand God, and ultimately to believe in God.
- The Bible teaches that God will place in their hearts this desire to search him. They will desire a desire to find out about him.
- They will want to read his words. They want to weigh what Jesus said against the reality of their lives.
- [12 : 47] And the reality is God uses many ways to draw people to him. There is no shortage of ways that God can use to get a man's attention.
- Some ways are actual real events. Some events are intellectual crises. Some are even imagined events.
- It does not matter. But whether it through loss, feelings of powerlessness, sadness, lostness, God uses these things, these times of confusion so that we may begin that search to understand the reality that we live in.
- We will find out without God this reality makes no sense. But more often than not, God draws people through pain.
- He draws them through physical pain, intellectual pain, relationship pain. These are the crises that come up in our lives that God often uses to draw our attentions to him.
- [14 : 13] Is this you now? Are you watching? Are you asking questions? Because these are the nagging thoughts that you have in your mind that you're trying to make sense of life?
- God is the only one that can bring rational understanding in an irrational time. This is that first person.
- They do not seek God and they do not seek to be known. The second type of person that I want to address is the one who wants to draw God, who desires, who talks about being close to God, but cannot.
- You try to get close. You say you are drawing close. Yet at the same time, you have no sense of inner peace before God.
- There is no sense of worship. There is no sense of closeness. And you can affirm that God's hand of blessing is not in your life.

[15 : 30] You may have high thoughts about God. You may come to church. You may use Christian church speak. You might know all the right words, the right songs, but deep in your very heart and the deep depths of your soul, you know you are deceiving and are being deceived.

It's as if there is a gate, you know the address, but you can't get in. And no matter how much you might talk to the people around you at this gate, that you know all the wonderful things that are happening on the other side, you can't go in.

Well, there's several reasons for that. Again, the first reason is pride. Judges 17.6 says, in those days, there was no king in Israel.

Everyone did what was right in his own eyes. What that means is, you know there's a God who reigns above, but you still continue to live your life as if he does not exist.

Let me ask you some questions. Who rules over your time? Your money? Your relationships?

[16 : 58] Your choices of entertainment? Your choices of entertainment? And your conversations? Are these things of the Lord or of the world?

Who sets your agenda? The second reason why people desire to know God but can is deception again. Ignorance.

Jeremiah 4.22 says, For my people are foolish. They do not know me. They are stupid children.

They have no understanding. But notice the end of the verse says, They are wise and doing evil, but how to do good they do not know.

This is the person who says, Well, you know what? I want to love God, but this Bible is just way too hard to understand. This desire to share Jesus Christ with my friends and family, that's just too tough.

[18 : 05] They might reject me. They might not have anything to do with me. When someone asks you what your prayer time is, you might say, I don't really do it.

It's too confusing. It doesn't really work for me. But what Jeremiah is saying is, we claim ignorance, folly, that we do not know how to do the things that God requires us.

And I don't mean require us in works, but there's no desire in us to know God. But we know how to get what we want in life. We are skillful in being deceiving.

We are skillful in living the life that we lead. We know how to manipulate. We know how to cajole. We are skillful in learning and living a life that we want to live.

But when it comes to living the way that God calls us to live, we cry ignorance. The third reason is, is we just simply like to make up the rules.

[19 : 16] When you live by your own desires instead of God's word, it is evidence that you do not know God. Again, the prophet Jeremiah writes in Jeremiah 9, 13 to 14, because they have forsaken my law that I set before them and have not obeyed my voice or walked in accord with it, but have stubbornly followed their own hearts and have gone after the Baals.

Those were the false gods as their fathers taught them. The reason you cannot get inside the gate, even though you may want to, is because you just choose to live your own life.

This is demonstrated in your integrity at work. Perhaps how you treat your spouse and your children. It may be seen in how you refuse to submit to authority and how you desire to be served rather than to serve.

You know the truth. You know right and wrong. But you ultimately set it aside when it conflicts with what you really want.

And the fourth reason why you cannot get in the gate is because ultimately the heart of the issue is you find satisfaction in other things other than God alone.

[20 : 52] you have other idols. Jeremiah once again writes, Jeremiah 2.13, as he writes to God's people, for my people have committed two evils.

One, they have forsaken me, the fountain of living water. And two, in hewed out cisterns. What that means is they dug out these wells for themselves that were broken and can hold no water.

Ultimately, they reject God's word and they make up their own ways that please their hearts. They set aside God's purposes.

It could be for advancement at work, to have a perfect house, to look like you have successful children. Perhaps you pursue recognition of abilities, intelligence.

Reality is, this person may attend church, they may be involved in all sorts of Christian ministries, they may be faithful in Bible reading, yet have no knowledge, no saving knowledge of God.

[22 : 08] So although with their lips they say, I want to draw close to God, they cannot. Titus 1.16 reads, they profess to know God, but they deny Him by their works.

They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work. Perhaps you're the second person and you're sitting there and you legitimately want to be on the other side of the gate, but you just find yourself wandering all the time after these pursuits of the world.

What the Bible talks about and what theologians talk about is there are issues that every man and woman's heart has and they're called root issues.

And these are these roots that are attached to the heart that we need to pull out, we need to destroy, we need to get rid of.

And you've heard me say these roots before, but I'm going to repeat them again. The first one is just pride again. And I want to define pride for you. Pride tells us that we are the most significant, the most, we are the most significant beings in all the universe to put it simply.

[23 : 37] We believe that our work, our family, our friends, everything exists, including God, to serve me. We see everything through the me lens.

This pride is so clearly seen when we know we are acting in a bad or horrible way, but we will blame others. We will always cite there was another reason which is causing us to act wrong rather than admitting that the problem resides in my own heart.

Our desires and how we feel is given the highest priority regardless of whom it hurts. Now, pride works in this other way.

And that second way is unbelief. Unbelief is defined as the things which God has told us about himself, but we doubt.

We read our Bibles, we hear sermons, we've been taught good and godly things from our friends, our loved ones, our parents, but we doubt them.

[24 : 58] It ultimately questions whether sin, which is rebellion against God, is actually poisonous to our souls. And we begin to argue in our heads that if we live a holy life, it will not produce happiness, it will not produce joy.

So we start to design our own ways to get joy, to feel complete. You see, unbelief, motivated by our pride, decides that our ideas about all these matters of life are more trustworthy than God's ideas.

and obviously what follows the third root, sin root, is selfishness. Selfishness whispers in our ears that we cannot be happy unless we get the things that we want.

We will exalt our self above all theirs. Thus, from pride and unbelief and selfishness flow every other type of sin.

Maybe you never ever thought about what it means to draw close to God before. Maybe you've never really understood why you can't get on the other side of this gate.

[26 : 39] But, you want to. when I ask the question, do you want to know God and be known? You want to.

This brings me to the final person. And this is the person who is able to draw close to God and wants to.

The Bible tells us that this person can draw close to God if they have four characteristics. four characteristics. The first characteristic is reverence.

Is reverence. Psalm 25:14 says, the friendship of the Lord is for those who fear Him. It's for those who fear Him.

It's to understand and recognize who He is. The second characteristic of a person who wants to and is able to draw close to God is those that are pure in heart.

[27 : 39] Jesus Christ stated in Matthew 5, 8, blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. The third characteristic of one who can draw close to God is the childlike, those that are innocent.

again, Jesus Christ states in Matthew 11, 25, I thank you Father, Lord of heaven and earth that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children.

The truths of the kingdom of God are simple. And the fourth way, the fourth characteristic of one who may draw himself close to God is found in John 14, 21 and it's the obedient.

Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he, it is who loves me and he who loves me will be loved by my Father.

Let me ask you, are you reverent? Are you pure in heart? Do you have a childlike innocence?

[29 : 05] And are you obedient? If you are, then you are capable of drawing close to God.

Now if you are like me and you're reading these things or hearing these things, you're thinking, well maybe I'm not perfectly reverent. Maybe I'm not pure in heart all the time.

Sometimes I'm not that innocent. And although the majority of the time I am obedient, I can honestly say I am not perfectly obedient.

obedient. You see, this is the catch. No one is able to draw close to God unless you have Easter.

Easter is the means by which we are able to draw in the presence of the Lord to be known and have him know us. this is why we celebrate.

[30 : 21] You see, the Christian is the one who understands that God, who is perfect justice in holiness in all matters of life, he is so much more and more perfect and good in every way that we cannot measure up.

The Christian is one who understands that he is not perfect in holiness or justice. In fact, we understand that we are prideful, we are unbelieving, and we are selfish.

For the Bible says we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God. And a Christian knows that he or she has sinned in their life and there is absolutely nothing they can do to atone for it.

But a Christian believes in the truth about Easter. the Bible teaches that over 2,000 years ago, it actually began 33 years before the weekend that we celebrate.

A baby was born in Bethlehem to a woman named Mary and a man named Joseph. And they called the baby Jesus. And he grew up under God's word and he showed great wisdom and he did not sin.

- [31 : 42] God gave us a man to live perfect purity of heart, perfect innocence, and perfect obedience. You see, God knew from the very beginning we could not live such a life.
- So he sent his son to live the perfect life for us. He was perfect before the law. No fault could be found in him.
- And on that good Friday, wrongly accused, unjustly judged, condemned to die the most cruel way known to man, he died on that cross for us.
- You see, God already knows us. He knows that we are prideful. He knows that we are unbelieving.
- And he knows that we are selfish. We don't actually need to draw close to him for him to know these things. He already knows us.
- [32 : 53] God is perfect, holy, and just. He could not look away. He could not ignore my sins, nor could he ignore your sins.
- So Jesus, who lived perfectly, suffered the punishment that was rightfully due for us. God is to see on Good Friday, Jesus died that day and died a death that we could not die.
- His body was then taken from a cross and he was placed in a tomb. And then came Sunday.
- Please read with me in Matthew 28, the account of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Which is the reason why we can draw forth ourselves to God with no shame and no need to hide and be in a place where we can know God.
- Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.
- [34 : 25] And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it.
- His appearance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him, the guards trembled and became like dead men.
- But the angel said to the women, Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said.
- Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead and behold, he is going before you to Galilee.
- There you will see him. See, I have told you. So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to tell his disciples.
- [35 : 34] And behold, Jesus met them and said greetings. things and they came up and took hold of his feet and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, Do not be afraid.
- Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee and there they will see me. Even in this writing by Matthew, we see what it is for us to draw near to God.
- Notice how they run to Jesus with great fear and great joy. If you were with us on the live stream, we found out that God is our greatest enemy.
- He is the one who has the power to destroy our souls, to destroy our bodies. And by destroy our souls, I mean the ability to cast it away from him into hell.
- He is the only one with that power. So there is fear there, but at the same time there is joy and trust for we know that he is good and that he is God.
- [36 : 55] Jesus, by coming alive, demonstrates his power over death. What is interesting, the half brother of Jesus, James, who writes this letter, did not believe in Jesus Christ when he lived.
- Only after he died and rose again did he believe in his brother. Even though he saw Jesus' perfection, his eyes were not open till after he rose again.

what occurred on that day is what theologians call the great exchange.

What that means is the perfect life that Jesus lived is now credited to anyone who believes in Easter, who believes in Jesus Christ, who believes that Jesus Christ died the death that they should die and now rises again so that we can have his life.

So when God looks upon us, he sees his perfect son. It is now ours.

[38 : 12] Now let me read to you the rest of what the letter of James says in this section. Verse 6, it says, therefore, God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Submit yourselves, therefore, to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.

Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. You see, cleanse your hands, you sinners, is the first person who does not want to know God, nor desire or incapable of coming to him.

And the second one is to purify your hearts, you double-minded, is the call to those who love God, say they want to be on the other side of the gate, profess to know Christ, but ultimately don't.

be wretched and mourn and weep, let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom, humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

[39 : 28] You see, acknowledging Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior is the most humblest of acts. It is the action that says and testifies that I cannot clean up myself.

I cannot take off my bad and actually I can't even take off the good things that I do. So I accept that the only person who can save me is Jesus Christ.

It's to accept the word of God and what it tells me about what happened on a resurrection Sunday. purify your hearts, you double-minded.

James is saying, for those who know better, start acting it. Confess, repent, declare that the Lord Jesus is for real and that he died to save you.

today. Sadly, we do not meet together physically, but we meet together spiritually. We meet together to worship our Lord, to give him thanks, and to celebrate he is risen.

[40 : 53] if you are still unsure about God, my prayer is that you would ask God to reveal himself in a real way to you, a mighty way.

Plead for his mercy, plead for his grace. Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you.

Come celebrate with us. come worship with us. Thank God that he is risen.

Christ the Lord is risen today. All the Lord is risen today. Amen.