April 19/20, 2025

Easter 2025

"With" Series

Romans 5:6-10

Pastor Ryan Harmon

> **But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they** (that is the women) **came to the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing; and as *the women* were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, *the men* said to them, "Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here, but He has risen."** (*NASB, Luke 24:1-6a)

Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here, but He has risen." That is the historical, world-changing miracle that we celebrate on Easter. We've been celebrating, and that's just right. And we will continue to celebrate today and every day because of the reality of the miracle that God brought about at Easter. As we continue this morning, I want to invite you to join me as we consider these things, to invite you to remember and reflect upon the fact that these events—the cross and the resurrection—didn't occur in isolation. Rather they marked the critical, the crucial, the pivotal turning point in the larger storyline of Scripture. The larger story—God's very story—is one that is unfolding even now, even as we speak, and it is headed towards a glorious goal.

Did you know that God has a goal? It seems like an important thing to know, since all of history is headed toward that very goal. I'll admit that in lives like we lead…messy as they are… unstable as they are…filled with chaos…with incredible highs and difficult lows, I'll admit that there are times where it is easy to forget that God is working all around us. But God is at work, and He is moving the story forward, and it is headed towards a very sure future, absolutely guaranteed by Him. So what is that goal? Where is all of history headed? The book of Revelation tells us much about that coming day. We can't know all the details, but we can be very sure of this. In that final moment, in that final chapter when God brings everything together, He will be with His people. God will be with His people—God with us! Revelation, Chapter 21 looks forward to that future moment and in verse 3 describes it this way:

> **God's dwelling place…** (That is, God's home, His tabernacle). **God's dwelling place is now among the people, and He will dwell with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God**. (*NKJV)

God with us. That is the goal. That is where all of history is headed. It's the glorious future where God dwells among His very people. That's the end that He promises to bring about. So this morning as we celebrate, we celebrate because the resurrection of Jesus—the fact that He arose—guarantees that all of God's promises are true. And it guarantees that God's very future will come to pass. He will make sure that it unfolds exactly as he intends. And so we celebrate!

But not only that. We also celebrate because the fact of the death and resurrection of Jesus, God, through Christ, accomplished the work of salvation. He made the way clear. The path was forged for us to be united with Him, living in relationship with Him now and, yes, in that future day when all things come to pass…that final chapter…He has made a way for us to be with Him. God with us. We can live with Him now; we will live with Him then. That's where the future is headed. That's always been God's plan.

In order to think about that, we need to go back to the very beginning, the very beginning of God's story with creation. Of course, the Bible begins even before that. Before there was anything, there was God. God, in and of Himself, enjoying Himself: the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, living together in perfect, united relationship with one another…this dance of the Trinity…a perfect community. And then Genesis, chapter 1, verse 1, tells us that:

> **In the beginning…** (That is the beginning of God's story with creation.) …**In the beginning God created the heavens and He created the earth.**

As the story unfolds, as that chapter unfolds, God brings everything there is into existence. He creates it all. And that story moves towards the climactic moment when God creates the apex, the pinnacle of His creation. He creates you and me. He creates human beings. Genesis 1, verse 26 says:

> **"Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.** Then in verse 27, we learn that**…male and female, He created them.**

God set up the world perfectly for those first human beings, for Adam and Eve. Everything was just right. He made them in His image. He gave them great purpose. But most of all, He promised that He would be with them. He gave them Himself…He with them and they with Him…living in perfect, unbroken, completely dependent, intimate community. The Creator God and His creation…dwelling together. Everything was perfect.

But we know that, as we turn the pages, we move from chapter 1 to chapter 2, and we get to chapter 3. Tragedy enters the scene because the serpent enters the scene. The serpent comes on the scene and introduces a sneaky little thought, a little seed of doubt. God had said to Adam and Eve that they may eat of any tree in the garden, except for one. But then the serpent came on the scene, and he said to Adam and Eve, "**Did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the garden?"** The serpent began by misquoting God, and then, as that conversation continued, he stirred up doubt, doubt about who God was, and whether or not He was good. Did He actually know what He was talking about? Maybe it would be better to go your own way? Equipped…armed with that very doubt, temptation arose, and that temptation gave birth to action, and Adam and Eve rebelled. They took their future into their own hands. They departed from God and His wisdom and His ways, and they went their own way, rebelling against their Creator. And ever since that moment…tragedy…bad news…has been unfolding.

The word we use to describe the tragedy is the word '*sin'*. Sin is a word that we don't hear real often in conversation. We don't hear it in our daily lives that often, but the reality stares us in the

face every single day. It is all around us. Sin is something that we encounter when we turn on the news. When we live in broken relationships, we experience the reality of sin. If we're honest with ourselves, when we look in the mirror, we know it's real. We know it exists. Sin is a departure from God's intent. God designed everything to be just right, and sin is every action—every inclination to go our own way, to do it without God, to not live in dependence upon Him, but to veer from His design, and sin marks everything! Each one of us is stained by sin. It is absolutely unavoidable. Sin ruins everything; sin corrupts everything. Worst of all, sin prevents us from living in relationship with God, with the One who created us. We can't deny the fact that sin exists. It's something that we just have to accept as we look at our world. It's right there staring us in the face.

And so it's within that very context that the Good News—the announcement of the Good News, the cross and the resurrection—come as an incredible relief…an incredible relief! We call the cross and the resurrection—these two events that we celebrate on Easter—and the salvation that was purchased there, we call that quite literally, Good News. That's what the word gospel means. It's good news. There's a change. The truth about good news is that it generally follows or comes on the heels of bad news. The reason good news is such a relief to us is because often we are stuck in the midst of very bad news—tragic circumstances—and then there is an announcement, a change is on the horizon. Something is going to change everything. Good News—the cross and the resurrection—is the good news that God has provided as the solution to the world and to our deepest problem. God entered into the story, responded to the tragedy. And the Good News is that the tragedy of sin, the tragedy of the curse, will not have the final word…not in our lives, not in the work of God's good creation. Sin will not have the final word. That's the Good News. That's the message of the cross.

The cross is an interesting thing to refer to as Good News. Of course, in the ancient world, crosses were always bad news. If you saw a cross, it meant bad news. But, of course, we call the day that we reflected upon two days ago, the day that Jesus went to the cross, we call it Good Friday. You see, only Jesus could take the meaning of the cross and transform it from incredibly bad news into incredibly good news. Jesus, God's only Son, the one called Emmanuel—God with us—came down…sent from God…came down and dwelled among us. The Word made flesh entered into our very world, entered into the tragedy in order to restore what was broken, to find that which was lost, to reconcile the relationship that was severed because of sin between God and human beings. God sent His Son to restore; He sent His Son to rescue. That's why the cross is Good News.

Reflecting upon these things, Paul gets overwhelmed with the goodness of the cross. In Romans, chapter 5, he has this to say: Chapter 5, verse 6, Paul says:

> **For while we were still helpless,** (That's us: stuck, helpless, unable to deal with the sin that is the reality in the world and in our own lives.) **While we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.** (*NASB, Romans 5:6)

Christ, the chosen One, God with us, died for the ungodly. And considering that, Paul gets overwhelmed. Who dies for the ungodly? Who does that? So he reflects on that in verse 7:

> **For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.**

But who dies for the ungodly? Who dies for the rebel? Who dies for the one that spits in the face of the very God that created them. And the answer, of course is, "God does." That's who He is. Verse 8:

> **But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.**

While we were yet sinners…while we were stuck, while we were helpless, while we were ungodly, while we were rejecting God and we were without Him, because we had rejected Him and His ways. In that very moment, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.

When we come to Jesus, we come just as we are. Sin scarred all of us, every single one of us… messy, messed up. And when we come to Him, we do not need to fear or worry about whether or not He will accept us just as we are, because He died for us just as we are. Jesus did not die for us in our righteousness or our rightness or our goodness or for all the ways that we're good and impressive. No, He died for us in all of our wrongness: lost, broken, rebelling, ungodly, helpless. We rebel; we revolt; we reject. He died for all of that. We can come to Him with confidence just as we are, because He died for us just as we are. In fact, He saw us just as we are, and He knew the only solution to our problem was that He come in and die to take away the sin of the world.

And so we celebrate the cross because of this: that the cross is the ultimate turning point in human history, because it was the only solution to the tragedy the world had fallen into because of sin. On the cross, God paid the debt of sin. On the cross, Jesus took our place. He did that which only He could do for us. On the cross, He dealt with the problem of sin that prevented us from living in restored relationship with Him. He reconciled us, and He didn't go there because we are so good or because we deserve it. No! He went there in the midst of our wrongness, as a demonstration of God's very love.

How far will God go to be with you? He'll go all the way to the cross…all the way to the cross, and that's why the cross is Good News! That's why Friday was Good Friday. The cross is Good News, but it's the first part of the Good News, because this is Easter morning. Today is Easter. It's properly referred to as Resurrection Sunday. The women went to the tomb thinking they were having to live without Jesus. In their mind, Jesus was gone. They thought they were facing a reality of a future without Jesus in their lives. But then the angels met them and asked them, **"Why are you looking for the living One among the dead? He is not here. He is risen."** Our very hope is based on the fact that the One who died for us also rose again and lives now and forever. We just sang about it. We said there's no body in the grave now…no body. God's story doesn't end at the cross. The cross launches a brand new beginning, a new creation, a new life for you and for me. And so Paul continues in verse 9:

> **Much more then,**

Now that is a phrase—those three words—that we are liable to just breeze right past when we read our Bibles. But I want to encourage you to read them slowly. Read them emphatically, because Paul is overwhelmed when he says those three words. Shout it when you're reading it at home! **Much more then!** Do you ever go and order some French fries at a restaurant, and they bring you

out just a few and they say, "Do you want some more?" And you say, "I want much more. Pile it on." And Paul is piling on the abundance of grace that has been offered to us.

> **Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath *of God* through Him.** (Vs. 9)

Much more then, having now been justified, is what Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross! Our justification means the debt was paid…paid in full…once and for all, by Him, not by us. Justified! It is finished! Sin has been taken care of! And because of that, we will live with Him in unbroken fellowship, now? "Yes, but also forever, all the way unto that future day." And Paul says, **"Much more**," "**We will be saved from the wrath that is to come through Him,"** which is to say, "In that future day, when God sets all things right, we who have been justified, can live confidently. Confident that we live a **much more** life of unbroken fellowship, within which sin will never block us from relationship with Him. Never! **Much more…**an abundance of grace. Paul continues in verse 10:

> **For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.**

Why do you look for the living one among the dead? We shall be saved by His life. Jesus rose from the grave, and the fact that He arose and that He is alive, vindicates what He accomplished on the cross and accomplishes the victory that we now step into with Him, His very life. He asks us; He invites us; He allows us to enter into His very life with Him, the **much more** life of unbroken fellowship with our God and Savior. **Much more**! We went from being enemies… (That's what we were.) …rebellious…without Him! But through the cross, we became friends. Now as His friends, we will live with Him, forever united to Him, living His very life now unto the very final day when God remakes and renews the heaven and the earth. And that is why the cross is Good News, and the resurrection is Good News. The cross is not the end of the story. The cross ushers in a brand-new reality that we step into. **Much more**…having been justified; **Much more**…having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His very life.

A new reality, a new life with Jesus now and forever. A new life free of the worry that somehow our sin is too much, that it will prevent us from living in communion. We never need to worry about that. It has been paid in full! A new life within which we can enjoy unbroken fellowship now, yes, and forever, absolutely because Jesus is alive. And so we join Him in His life, and we live with Him. And because of that, our future with God is absolutely sure. The cross and the resurrection, they are God's miraculous solution to the tragedy of sin. You can't deny the fact of sin. It's all around us. We have to accept that it's a part of our world. It's a part of our very lives. But accepting that, let us not deny God's solution to the problem of sin. Let us come to the living One, to Jesus Christ, and accept His offer to do for us what we could never do for ourselves.

He died. He rose, that we might live with Him! And if you have given your life to Jesus this morning, rejoice this day! For every day is a day where the debt of sin has been paid, and we now get to live with Him now and forever, until God accomplishes all that He intends.

If you haven't placed your faith in Jesus, if you're still living in that place of unbelief, living in that "without God" reality, the movement from "without" to "with" is just one decision away. Make the decision to cast your cares upon Jesus, to place your faith in Him, to believe that He died for your sin, accomplishing the victory that you could never accomplish. And that He rose again, and He now lives and reigns, and He invites you to come to Him just as you are, and accept what He did on your behalf, as a demonstration of God's love. To believe is to surrender, to surrender to the King. He's the One, of course, that paid it all. Once and for all, for all of us, sin will never again impede our relationship with God. He's the One who rose. He rose once and for all, never to die again, which means we will live with Him now; we will live with Him forever. That's true today; that will be true tomorrow; that will be true every day until the day that God brings the final chapter to its proper and guaranteed conclusion. And so until that day, let us trust the living One, Jesus Christ, who calls us to come to Him just as we are. Come by faith. Live with Him and give to Him all the broken pieces of your life and let Him do what only He can do…make all things new!

Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE
Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1987, 1988, 1995
The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.
Lincoln Berean Church, 6400 S. 70th, Lincoln, NE 68516 (402) 483-6512
Copyright 2025 – Ryan Harmon. All rights reserved.