

April 1, 2018

Why Easter?

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand...You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly...God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us...Since, we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!"

Romans 5:1-11

As we explained last week all of us are sinners condemned under God's law of sin and death; living without hope. But God, motivated by his great love for us, allowed his one and only Son to die on the cross of Calvary to satisfy the requirement of that law. The death of Jesus as an innocent sacrifice pays the debt for our sins. We deserve to die for the sins we have committed by he has died in our place.

Grace entered the world at the moment when Jesus uttered his final words ***"It is finished"*** and gave up his spirit. (John 19:30) Three days later, bright and early on a Sunday morning, several women who had followed him came to his tomb to prepare his body. They found the tomb empty and angels told them, ***"Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!"*** (Luke 24:5-6)

The death of Jesus on the cross makes grace available to all of us and his resurrection makes our own resurrection a reality. So, how should you and I respond to God's greatest gift to us?

Paul would ask this very question in his letter to the believers in Rome. ***"What shall we say, then?"*** He writes, ***Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too might live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with...if we died with Christ, we believe we will also live with him...in the same way, count yourselves dead to sin by alive to God in Christ Jesus."*** (Romans 6:1-11)

There is, in reality, only one reasonable response to everything that God has done for us in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God gave us the life of his one and only Son and the only reasonable response we can make to him in light of this sacrifice is to give God our own lives. So, for those of us who would follow Jesus, we must begin by dying to the source of sin in our lives and that source is our own selfishness.

When we give up our constant battle for self-gratification we give up sin. When we die to our sin as Jesus died, when we allow our old sin-filled self to be buried, the Apostle would argue that we are then raised to a new life. And, in that new form we can and will live forever.

Anything we do that is less than dying to our selfish ways and the sin they produce in our lives is just not reasonable. As Jesus teaches, ***"If anyone would come after me, he must deny***

himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever want to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.” (Matthew 16:24-25) The cost of grace led Jesus to the cross and to the grave, and my own response to that greatest gift, must lead me to my own cross and to my own grave. Jesus is risen! Are you?

