Easter Sunday - April 1, 2018

**Surrender to Freedom**

Acts 2:24

**Intro:** We have begun to walk through the book of Exodus - and we are going to continue that next week - But today is the opening message of a new series titled “Surrender to Freedom”.

Jesus was executed by crucifixion in Israel right before the biggest holiday of the year for the Israelites people. It was a Friday. A number of people who knew Him witnessed His death and BURIAL in a tomb.

* One of His friends named Mary Magdalene and some other women went to the tomb on Sunday morning and found it empty.
* They ran and told Jesus’ closest friends.
* Two of those friends, Peter and John ran to the tomb and they found it empty -
* Then Jesus came and met that evening with the disciples!
* He ate with them - proving He was alive -
* He taught them -
* Thomas ….

Paul was an extremely influential leader in the earliest days of the Christian Church and he summarized a number of Jesus appearances this way:

1st Corinthians 15:3-8 - I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time… Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles. Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I also saw him.

Then the Bible tells us in one of these appearances Jesus was teaching and this happened -

Acts 1:9-11 - …he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!”

Acts 2 - the first followers of Jesus were gathered together - God’s Spirit came upon all of them in a very powerful way. They then gathered with thousands of other Jewish people at another Jewish holiday in the large outdoor court of the great Temple - and Peter got up to tell the greatest story we could ever hear -

Acts 2:14-36 NIV - Then Peter stood up… raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “… let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say…

“Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him…  This man was handed over to you by God’s deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.  But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. David said about him:

“ ‘… you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,

you will not let your holy one see decay.

You have made known to me the paths of life;

you will fill me with joy in your presence.’

 “…I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay.  God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it.  Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear…

 “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.

**Big Idea: It’s time for you to Surrender to Freedom!**

What do you mean?

Let me explain myself by giving you three truths:

**> All people are under the control of death.**

In other words - we’re all gonna die! Everybody dies! David, the Old Testament King of Israel, is the example Peter gave.

Peter was saying, “David, our greatest king, he died! He was buried! We can still go visit his tomb! His body is there! Like all men, David was held by the power of death.”

It doesn’t matter how great a king he was! It doesn’t matter how much wealth he obtained! It doesn’t matter how many battles he won! It doesn’t matter how long he reigned!

He died!

Hebrews 9:27 - And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment,

Abraham was the founder of the nation - he died.

Jacob was the patriarch whose name was changed to Israel, and the nation was named after him - he died.

Joseph was his son who became ruler of Egypt - he died.

Moses was the great leader who brought the people out of slavery from Egypt - he died.

Joshua was the great leader who took the people into the land God had promised them - he died.

Samuel was the great prophet who anointed and counseled the kings - he died.

Solomon was the son of David, who built the nation of Israel into one of the greatest kingdoms of ancient times - he is referred to as the wisest man who ever lived - he died.

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and more - all great prophets of God - they all died!

Death has its power over all of us.

Most people here have probably lost someone to death over the past year. We’ve had many funerals in our church family over the past year.

Recently, Billy Graham died.

My Great-grandfather and my grandfather were great men of God - great preachers - great leaders - they died!

I’m getting older - I’m having more aches and pains - my hair is getting more gray - I’m taking more pills - it’s coming! It’s catching up to me - If Jesus doesn’t come back before my time comes, I’m going to die!

“Pastor - this is Easter - this is not a very uplifting message!”

Hang with me - we’ll get there! We’ll fix this!

But you need to know this - this is what Peter said - All men are under the control of death. As long as you are under the control of death - you are not free - and you need to surrender to freedom.

**> Jesus was under the control of death.**

John 19:30-35 - Jesus … said, “It is finished!” Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

…the Jewish leaders didn’t want the bodies hanging there the next day, which was the Sabbath … So they asked Pilate to hasten their deaths by ordering that their legs be broken. Then their bodies could be taken down. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the two men crucified with Jesus. But when they came to Jesus, they saw that he was already dead, so they didn’t break his legs. One of the soldiers, however, pierced his side with a spear, and immediately blood and water flowed out. (This report is from an eyewitness giving an accurate account. He speaks the truth so that you also may continue to believe.)

We’ve already read from both Peter and Paul confirming this account - Jesus was beaten within an inch of his life - then He was taken to a Roman cross - and He was crucified by the most torturous means of execution possible.

Jesus died - Jesus was under the control of death.

Many have tried to debunk this - to say that Jesus never died - The soldiers and all the onlookers were witnesses that Jesus had already died before they came to break the legs …

Lee Strobel was an atheist, and an award winning journalist with a law degree for the Chicago Tribune. Unfortunately for this atheist, his wife began to believe in Christ, so he set out with all of his intellectual and investigative skills to prove it all a hoax -

He went to see Dr. ALEXANDER METHERELL

M.D. (Univ. Miami), Ph.D, University of California, practiced radiology in Laguna Beach, California; and former consultant to the national Heart, Lung and Blood institute of the National Institutes of Health.

The movie, The Case for Christ, depicts their conversation -

***Clip from The Case for Christ***

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0xaTSTKwm08>

***Can I find this with captions?***

So - Jesus did die. There were multiple witnesses to the fact - multiple historical accounts - and that fact is supported by scientific medical evidence - Jesus died -

Jesus, like all men, was under the control of death.

But here’s our third truth, in the words of Peter:

**> It was impossible for death to keep its hold on Jesus!**

Peter quoted the prophecy of David -

Acts 2:27 - you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,

you will not let your holy one see decay.

Acts 2:31-32 - David was looking into the future and speaking of the Messiah’s resurrection. He was saying that God would not leave him among the dead or allow his body to rot in the grave.

“God raised Jesus from the dead, and we are all witnesses of this.”

Some say the disciples stole and hid the body -

But think of how they died -

James the son of Zebedee, was beheaded.

James the Less - The Jewish high priest asked James to stand on the Temple wall and speak against Jesus to the crowds which had gathered in preparation for the Passover. James instead spoke in favor of Jesus as the Christ; many heard him and many were converted. So the Jewish religious leaders threw James down from the Temple wall. Yet he did not die from the fall, so they began to stone him. Still he did not die from the stoning, so a man took a fuller club (used to beat out clothing) and clubbed him to death.

Philip was beaten severely, thrown into prison, and crucified.

Matthew, the tax-collector from Nazareth who wrote the Gospel, was

preaching in Ethiopia when he was killed by sword.

Andrew was crucified on a cross, in the shape of an X, now known as St.

Andrew’s Cross.

Peter was crucified upside down, at his own request, because he said he

was unworthy to be crucified in the same manner as his Lord.

Jude, also known as Thaddeus was crucified.

Bartholomew translated the Gospel of Matthew in India. He was beaten

and crucified there.

Thomas, the Twin, famous for originally doubting of Jesus’ resurrection, preached in Parthia and India. He was thrust through with a spear by pagan priests. Do you think with the doubts he had he would go ahead and die for a lie?

Simon the Zealot preached in Africa and Britain, where he was crucified.

Matthias was stoned at Jerusalem and then beheaded.

James, the half-brother of Jesus, at the age of 94 was beaten and stoned, and finally had his brains bashed out with a club.

Would they have died this way for what they believed to be a lie?

No! They were witnesses that He was dead! They were witnesses that He was alive! He appeared at one time to over 500 - the accounts of Jesus’ death are reconciled with medical research - and the accounts of His being alive again meets more than any doubt of legal evidence.

Jesus died - and rose from the dead!

This is how He has the power over death! And this is how we can surrender to freedom - We surrender our lives to the power, the lordship, the grace, the forgiveness, and the love of Jesus!

John 11:25-26 - Jesus told her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. Do you believe this…?”

That’s the question -

So - Peter preached his message to the crowd - after seeing Jesus dead and seeing Jesus alive for about 40 days - then seeing Jesus ascend into Heaven -

Acts 2:37-40 - When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.  The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.”  Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

I may physically die - but I am no longer under the control of death -

What happened to Jesus is going to happen to me!

What happened to Jesus is going to happen to all your relatives who died while having a relationship with God having their sins forgiven by Jesus Christ -

1st Corinthians 15:51-57 - But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.

Then, when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die, this Scripture will be fulfilled:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.

O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?”

For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1st Thessalonians 4:16-17 - For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the believers who have died will rise from their graves. Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever.

John 5:28-29 - Don’t be so surprised! Indeed, the time is coming when all the dead in their graves will hear the voice of God’s Son, and they will rise again. Those who have done good will rise to experience eternal life, and those who have continued in evil will rise to experience judgment.

What I’ve said my Grandad said at his final message for years … found out it he stole it from Billy Graham - it was the most quoted statement of Billy Graham on Twitter in the days following his death - ….

You need to surrender to freedom -

You are a sinner - I am a sinner - we go through life in bondage to sin - we try to stop on our own - we try to get better - we can’t -

* You can surrender to freedom and be free from sin -

Romans 3:23 - For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard.

Romans 6:23 - For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

It is appointed to everyone to die - everyone is going to die - you will be held by the power of death -

But if you surrender to Jesus, you don’t have to be held by the power of death for long! Like Jesus, you can overcome the power of death!

Surrender to Jesus - and you will receive freedom from the power of death!

This is the ultimate surrender to freedom!

How do you surrender to Jesus and surrender to freedom?

Accept that you are sinner and Jesus is God.

Believe that Jesus died on the cross as punishment for your sins.

Confess your sins and Jesus as Lord.

**Pray -**

**Blessing -** May God bless you today to have your eyes more open to the life of Jesus than ever before.

May you know that Jesus is alive - not only by believing what the Bible says - but by having a personal relationship with Him as you do with your best friend.

May you know for certain and without any doubt that though Jesus was under the control of death, He overcame the power of death.

May you know that by believing in Jesus, and having a personal relationship with Jesus, you too can overcome the power of death. Though you may physically die, you can and will live forever with Jesus!

May you live a life of ongoing repentance - continuing to walk in the opposite direction of a life of sin - constantly walking toward God instead of away from Him - and may you receive the gift of the Holy Spirit - for this promise is for you - and for your children - and to all those who are far away.