

Easter 2024

Welcome! Thank you for celebrating Easter with us here at City Hope. My name is Bobby and I get the honor of serving here as the Lead Pastor.

For those of you that this is your first time, we don't want it to be your last time. We want this church to feel like your church!

I would love to take 30 seconds of your time after service and meet you if we haven't yet.

Today is obviously a highly celebrated day in churches all over the world. Did you know Christmas and Easter are the two holidays that many churches have their highest attendance for the year...can anyone guess what the 3rd one is?

Mother's Day! – We are thinking ahead and want to help you make this the best Mother's Day ever. Get your phone out and mark it down on your calendar. "Im going to church with mom." May 14. We are doing some cool giveaways...We have some really cool gift baskets from Cassandras Kitchen in Bluffton. Mark your calendars.

Now, when it comes to Easter many people celebrate it or pay homage to it, but they don't always get the point.

For Christianity, this is the single most important event in the history of mankind. This is what separates us from every single other belief system in the world.

If I could sum Easter up into just a few words...**Easter is the celebration of the resurrection after the crucifixion.**

Some of you may be thinking, what in the world? Resurrection? Crucifixion? Sounds a little outrageous.

For others, it's easier for you to accept this story that is truthfully mind blowing.

No matter where you sit, you get the decision to choose for yourself what you are going to believe.

In the short time we have together today, I want to give you **3 reasons why you can believe in the resurrection.**

Go to Matthew 27

Context and set-up | Jesus was in the last days of his journey on earth. He was walking the country doing ministry for anyone willing to listen. He always had his team with him. (Disciples)

One of the disciples named Judas would turn his back on Jesus and sell him out for 30 pieces of silver.

Jesus took 3 of his guys and went to a place called Gethsemane to pray. While He was there praying, Judas showed up with a mob of people to finally capture Jesus.

This is where the process of death begins for Jesus. He soon found himself standing before the governor being accused of blasphemy. And he was turned over to the soldiers to be killed.

Stand with me in honor of the reading of Gods Word.

Matthew 27. 27-31 | ²⁷ Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the governor's residence and gathered the whole company around him. ²⁸ They stripped him and dressed him in a scarlet robe. ²⁹ They twisted together a crown of thorns, put it on his head, and placed a staff in his right hand. And they knelt down before him and mocked him: "Hail, king of the Jews!" ³⁰ Then they spat on him, took the staff, and kept hitting him on the head. ³¹ After they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe, put his own clothes on him, and led him away to crucify him.

Jesus is then nailed to a cross between two thieves and that's where He dies. A follower of Jesus names Joseph asked that he could have Jesus' body to put in his tomb. And he was allowed to take it.

Some very interesting things happened next.

Matthew 27.62-66 | ⁶² The next day, which followed the preparation day, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate ⁶³ and said, "Sir, we remember that while this deceiver was still alive he said, 'After three days I will rise again.' ⁶⁴ So give orders that the tomb be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come, steal him, and tell the people, 'He has been raised from the dead,' and the last deception will be worse than the first." ⁶⁵ "Take guards," Pilate told them. "Go and make it as secure as you know how." ⁶⁶ They went and secured the tomb by setting a seal on the stone and placing the guards.

There are guards outside the tomb watching so that no one steals the body. But we find out that the grave and guards were no match for Jesus.

Matthew 28.1-8 | After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to view the tomb. ² There was a violent earthquake, because an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and approached the tomb. He rolled back the stone and was sitting on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. ⁴ The guards were so shaken by fear of him that they became like dead men.⁵ The angel told the women, "Don't be afraid, because I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here. For he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the

place where he lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has risen from the dead and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; you will see him there.’ Listen, I have told you.” ⁸ So, departing quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, they ran to tell his disciples the news.

Jesus did what He said He was going to do! He rose from the grave. He told them to go spread the good news! But check out another story that was shaping up.

Matthew 28.11-15 | ¹¹ As they were on their way, some of the guards came into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. ¹² After the priests had assembled with the elders and agreed on a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money ¹³ and told them, “Say this, ‘His disciples came during the night and stole him while we were sleeping.’ ¹⁴ If this reaches the governor’s ears, we will deal with him and keep you out of trouble.” ¹⁵ They took the money and did as they were instructed, and this story has been spread among Jewish people to this day.

Wow! Two different stories about what happened to Jesus. He rose from the dead and appeared to His people or his people stole his body. Let’s revisit our assignment for today.

3 reasons why you can believe in the resurrection.

1. No body found.

We are going to play a little detective here for a minute. If you believed that someone stole this body, you would go to the ends of the earth searching for the body. (If they got caught lying, it was the end for them.)

You would do your best to prove that you are correct. They never found the body!

Not only is He not in the tomb, He then teaches people publicly for 30 days and there are over 500 eyewitnesses.

The disciples now start preaching and teaching a Resurrection right in the region where it happened.

Why not easily disprove this fictitious tale by just producing the body?

We believe there is only one logical answer. That Jesus Christ...Resurrected.

A second reason we can believe in the resurrection.

2. Nobody flipped.

If the disciples were lying and made it all up why would they start proclaiming this in the region where literally everyone knows what had happened.

If the Apostles were lying, why would they start there where they could be easily disproved?

Why wouldn't they tell their lies to people in a different region who had no clue to what happened so nobody could dispute it?

Moreover...nobody flipped. No one ever changed their story.

Even in the face of death...these disciples never changed their story. People don't die for a lie.

So, there was no body found, and we see nobody flipped, and finally...

3. Nobody forsaken.

Jesus made it very clear that his death, burial, and resurrection was for all.

Romans 5.6-8 ⁶ For while we were still helpless, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For rarely will someone die for a just person—though for a good person perhaps someone might even dare to die. ⁸ But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

This is why all this matters for us today in 2024.

In our eyes Easter is all about Jesus...but in Gods eyes, Easter was all about you!

There are wonderful stories of life transformation throughout the Bible. Stories like a man named Paul, who went from persecuted Christians to preaching about Christs love. Paul wasn't forsaken.

Before we leave today, I want to look at the short story of one guy named Barabbas.

Matthew 27.15-26 ¹⁵ At the festival the governor's custom was to release to the crowd a prisoner they wanted. ¹⁶ At that time they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. ¹⁷ So when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Who is it you want me to release for you—Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" ¹⁸ For he knew it was because of envy that they had handed him over. ¹⁹ While he was sitting on the judge's bench, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for today I've suffered terribly in a dream because of him."

²⁰ The chief priests and the elders, however, persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to execute Jesus. ²¹ The governor asked them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" "Barabbas!" they answered. ²² Pilate asked them, "What should I do then with Jesus, who is called Christ?" They all answered, "Crucify him!" ²³ Then he said, "Why? What has he done wrong?" But they kept shouting all the more, "Crucify him!" ²⁴ When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that a riot was starting instead, he took some water, washed his hands in front of the crowd, and said, "I am innocent of this man's blood. See to it yourselves!" ²⁵ All the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" ²⁶ Then he released Barabbas to them and, after having Jesus flogged, handed him over to be crucified.

This exchange that does not make any sense. This is what Easter is all about. A murderer for a King.

Barabbas is not just a character in a story...Barabbas is me and you.

Barabbas thought it was the people who set him free....it wasn't, it was the love of the Father. **The Love of Christ is what sets you free.**

It's kind of illogical...Jesus knew that God would have to treat Jesus like Barabbas so that he could treat Barabbas like Jesus.

Jesus wanted Barabbas to go free...That's the kind of love he has for you church.

While we were still sinners Christ died for us. Christ did all of the work.

The opposite of the Gospel is that we have to do all the work to earn this kind of love.

You are no match for the powers of hell. All of our temptation, sin, struggle....you wont shake yourself free.

You will not overcome the powers of sin without Christ.

He's the one who stood on the platform and said take Barabbas.

Jesus is calling today...Let me have it. Let me have your sin, your pain, your brokenness, your shame,

Its still Jesus. It has always been Jesus. It will always be Jesus.

His blood is sufficient for your salvation. Jesus is enough. Nobody is forsaken.

Conclusion:

The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is not based upon our deserving it or not. Its based upon the character of God. Love, Grace, Forgiveness, Mercy, and kindness.

Romans 2.4b | God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance.

Song: Pastor Brad sings "Kind"

Response Time:

At the heart of that first Easter, is a truth that shines through the darkest moment on Golgotha. He is offering forgiveness that waits to be embraced.

He promises paradise, not just to the thief and criminal next to Him, but to all of us. No rituals, no works, required!

Jesus, carrying our sins, experiences utter separation from God taking on what Paul calls, “the wages of sin (which) is death, (and reminds us that) ... the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” -Romans 6:23

In Jesus’ last words, He declares the completion of His mission — our redemption paid once and for all.

Last words can reveal a lot about someone. Before your last words on this earth, will you consider these words Paul writes in a letter to another church in Rome?

He writes, “If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” -Romans 10:9

If these words are stirring to your heart, we believe it is because God is revealing to you that He wants you to accept His Son’s gift of forgiveness and freedom today, just like the criminal on the cross next to Him on His last day.

Lead in Salvation Prayer | (Show boxes for those who prayed with me)