

The soldiers expected the disciples to come, but not an angel.
The women expected to find Jesus' body, but not an empty tomb.
The disciples expected nothing, and they got to see Jesus.

Many times life does not turn out as we expect. I never expected to preach to an empty room on Easter.

For the first time in 34 years, I am not preaching to a packed building on Easter. But the Coronavirus didn't stop Easter from coming. It is Easter morning and you have gathered to watch this service and ponder the significance of the Resurrection of Jesus.

The Coronavirus couldn't stop Easter any more than the Roman Empire and Jewish religious leaders could stop Jesus from rising from the dead. **Jesus is the only man in history who had a guard set to keep Him in the grave.** The Roman sentry could not stop Him; the Emperor's seal could not stop Him; the evil of Satan could not stop Jesus from coming out of that tomb. God had ordained this moment from the foundation of the world. Before God said, "Let there be light," Jesus had agreed to go to the cross. Before Jesus made the first stone, He knew the stone would be rolled away. Before God made the first man, Jesus knew He would go to the cross to die for every man.

Life is filled with the unexpected. Sometimes the unexpected is good – like the first Easter. Sometimes the unexpected is bad – like the Coronavirus.

Let me ask you an important question: What do you expect when the Coronavirus is over?

Do you expect life to return to normal? People are already talking about what they are going to do when life returns to normal. Some are going to eat at their favorite restaurant. Some are going to play or attend their favorite sport. Many are looking forward to coming back to church. Some students are even looking forward to going back to school.

A woman named Candice Kennedy from Verona, Kentucky saw what her son Ben wrote in his journal after the first day of their homeschooling journey.

"Ben -- Homed School, 3-16-20.

It is not going good. My mom's getting stressed out. My mom is really getting confused. We took a break so my mom can figure this stuff out. And I'm telling you, it is not going good."

When life returns to "normal" it does not mean there will not be any more problems. The corona crisis is serious, but we will face many more challenges in the years to come. There will be deaths, disappointments, diagnoses, divorces, and depression. Where are you going to turn the next time something goes wrong in your life?

Easter can help you get ready for the unexpected problems in life.
The Resurrection of Jesus can help you in your day-to-day life.

Let's consider The Power of the Resurrection

I. The Power of the Truth – Jesus is who He says He is.

Matthew 27:62-63 Now on the next day, the day after the preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together with Pilate, ⁶³ and said, “Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, ‘After three days I am to rise again.’

The willful unbelief of the Jewish religious leaders is condemning. What will God say to them on Judgment Day? “You knew what Jesus said. You were eye-witnesses. Jesus stood right in front of you. You studied Him, and you discussed Him. You saw that He was raised, and you refused to believe. You condemned yourself.”

The chief priests and Pharisees remembered that Jesus made this claim. It is amazing the disciples did not remember it until after they saw Him alive. The disciples should have been gathered at the tomb waiting. Even the women who went expected Jesus to be dead.

Early in His earthly ministry Jesus predicted His death and resurrection:

John 2:18-22 The Jews then said to Him, “What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?” ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” ²⁰ The Jews then said, “It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?” ²¹ But He was speaking of the temple of His body. ²² So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.

Then again in the middle of His ministry:

Matthew 12:39-40 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.” ³⁹ But He answered and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; ⁴⁰ for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Then Jesus told His disciples several times in the last six months before the cross:

Matthew 16:21 From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.

Do you want evidence that Jesus is who He says He is? He said He was going to die and be buried and raised again on the third day before it happened. He called it and it happened. How much more evidence do you need?

Matthew 28:6 He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said.

Jesus told the truth. Jesus is the truth.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

When you believe Jesus, you find a well-spring of strength to make it through difficult days.

In a 1972 cover story Time Magazine called Robert Coles “the most influential psychiatrist in the U.S.” Robert Coles taught at Harvard Medical School, but he didn’t teach psychiatry. He taught classes on classic literature with spiritual themes. Philip Yancey wrote: “For an entire generation of Harvard students, Professor Coles presented Christianity as a credible option in the modern world”

In 1973 he won a Pulitzer Prize for his five volume *Children in Crisis*. For that series Robert Coles interviewed poor and disadvantaged families living in difficult places. He interviewed black families in the South during the Civil Rights movement. He interviewed families living in extreme poverty in the Appalachians. He talked and listened to Native Americans and Eskimos.

He found in many “disadvantaged” people a reservoir of inner strength he had not found in the middle class suburbs or the schools of the privileged. He was puzzled. They should have been crushed and embittered by their circumstances, but they were not. What was the source of this inner strength, peace, and character?

When asked about the source of strength they pointed to Jesus. Their faith was no crutch, but rather a source of inspiration. They found in Jesus, and the cross, a ray of hope that convinced them that God knew their suffering and He cared for them personally. They didn’t blame God for their suffering. They found in God the strength to endure and have peace.

For his last volume Robert Coles interviewed children of the wealthy. Among the poor he expected to find defeat and despair, but he found strength, hope, and courage. Among the rich he expected to find satisfaction, and instead found boredom, alienation, and decadence.

Jesus said, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.” And He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” The way to life is to know God, and to follow Jesus. This is the message of Easter.

II. The Power of the Love of God

John 3:14-16 *As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; ¹⁵ so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.*

¹⁶ *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*

Philip Yancey grew up in a legalistic religious environment that focused on all he did wrong. He grew to resent the church. He said he realized that he closed himself off from people and built up walls around his heart because he felt unlovable. He was afraid if someone really got to know him they would not like him – so he never let anyone get close to him. Do you feel lovable? Do you feel loved?

The cross is a reminder that you are loved – you are valuable and lovable because God loves you. Jesus loves you so much that He was willing to die for you. You are important to Him; therefore, you are important. God loves you and He calls you to love others.

Paul Brand’s parents were missionaries in a remote place in India. The people in that region of India did not practice abortion. If they had a baby they didn’t want, they left the child out by

the road to die. Paul Brand's mother would find these children and bring them to her house. Some years after Mrs. Brand died Paul Brand went back to visit the place where she lived.

People gathered along the road into the mission compound and waited for him to arrive. When he arrived there was a celebration of his parents' lives. One lady said, "I was left out by the road to die. Mrs. Brand took me in – there were dozens of us through the years. She treated all of us like her children. She loved us and she taught us and when I did well in school, she paid for me to go to college. I earned a Master's degree and now I teach nursing. I have traveled hundreds of miles today to honor the Brands and the impact they had on my life and many more just like me. I was left out on the road to die by my own family. Mrs. Brand was from another country and another culture, yet she took me in because the love of Christ dwelt in her heart and she thought I was important because God thought I was important.

Because of their faith in God and their understanding of the heart of God, the Brands saw every person as important, and they loved them. Paul Brand gave his life to helping lepers – people considered untouchable and cast out by their own families. He treated each person with dignity and he willingly touched them as he treated their injuries, repaired their hands and feet and in the process he brought healing to their souls.

III. The Power of the Cross I John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The power of the Cross is the forgiveness that is made possible because of what Jesus did for you on the cross. Jesus died in your place. He paid the price for your sin. You sinned against Holy God. Because of your sin, you deserve to die, but you don't have to because Jesus died in your place. He died so your sins can be forgiven and you can have a relationship with God that is very real.

John Prine died this week. John Prine wrote a lot of songs that others sang. John Prine lived a rough life for many years, but he had incredible insight into the lives of people.

He wrote a song titled Boundless Love; hear the words of the chorus:

Surround me with your boundless love
Confound me with your boundless love
I was drowning in the sea, lost as I could be
When you found me with your boundless love

I don't know if John Prine ever came to know Christ as his Savior, but he describes what it is like to be lost and drowning in sin. That chorus makes me think of the words of Love Lifted Me:

I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore,
Very deeply stained within, sinking to rise no more,
But the Master of the sea heard my despairing cry,
From the waters lifted me, now safe am I.

o *Refrain:*

Love lifted me!

Love lifted me!

When nothing else could help,

Love lifted me!

All Your Sins can be forgiven because of the cross and only the cross.

IV. The Power of the Gospel

The Power of the Gospel means that anyone can be saved, but everyone must be saved individually. You have to make that choice to confess your sin, repent, and follow Jesus.

Jesus died for you. I am convinced that if you were the only person that needed Jesus to die to pay for your sins, He would have done that for you. This is the message of the Bible. It is all throughout the Bible. Every salvation experience is individual. Jesus died for you. You must choose to surrender to Him.

Conclusion:

The Coronavirus makes us face our own death and Jesus is the one who gives eternal life.

The Coronavirus may make you slow down enough to ask, "What am I doing with my life?" I want to ask you, **"What have you done with Jesus?"**

One day you will die and then you will stand before God. God will not ask what kind of car you drove. God will not ask how many trophies you won. God will not ask if you were a Democrat or Republican. God will ask what you did with Jesus. Jesus? Yes. Jesus.

Jesus didn't have to come to earth, but He did.
Jesus didn't have to go to the cross, but He did.
Jesus didn't have to die in your place, but He did.
He did it for you because He loves you.
What have you done with Jesus?

Have you ignored Him? Have you denied Him? Have you rejected Him?
Have you deduced Him to just a good man? What have you done with Jesus?

Have you believed in Him? Have you trusted Him? Have you received Him?
Have you surrendered to Him?

Where do you want to spend eternity? Do you want to be with Jesus? If you do, surrendering to Him in faith is the only way.

Is Jesus not a big deal to you? Do you not really want to follow Him? Do you not really care about being with Him in eternity? You don't have to. God will not force you. You are free to choose to not follow Jesus. But you must know the Bible says that if you do not surrender to Jesus that you will spend eternity in a place called hell. You will never have another chance to be with God and it will be worse than you can possibly imagine.

Jesus chose to die for you to give you a choice to follow Him. Easter is a reminder that God makes the rules – no one could stop His plan. Easter is a reminder of the love of God. He loves you. Why would you reject that kind of love?

You can come to Him now.