

Luke 24:36-49

In the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy, God tells us, “*Anyone who is hung on a tree is under God’s curse.*” Those are some very **haunting** words - words which must have **echoed** again and again in the minds of Jesus’ **disciples** on the day which is sometimes called Holy Saturday - the day **before** Easter. Jesus was the person whom they had thought was their **Lord** and **Messiah**. But, He had **died** on a **wooden cross** - a **tree** - a sure sign from the Scriptures that He had died under the **curse** of the Almighty God. Jesus was **dead** and **buried**, and it seemed as if all their **hopes** had been **ruined**. As one of the **Emmaus** disciples said just **prior** to our text, “*We had hoped that He was the one who was going to redeem Israel.*” But how could that be **possible**, since He had died under the **curse** of God?

This **Jesus** is the **same** man who had asked His Father to forgive **us**, but if He died under God’s **curse**, why should God even pay any **attention** to Him? We put all of our **hope** for **forgiveness** and **eternal life** in **Jesus**, but if the last view we have of Him is a man dying under a divine **curse**, what **good** is that hope? **Easter** provides us with the **answer** to those questions. Easter is **not** about bunnies and eggs - or spring weather, blooming flowers, and green grass. Easter is about answering the **questions** that the **followers** of Jesus were asking while He was **lying** in the tomb. And they are questions which people are **still** asking today. Is Jesus our **Lord** and **Savior**? Did God the Father answer the **prayers** of Jesus? Do we really have the **forgiveness of sins** and **eternal life**? The answer is **yes** to **all** of those questions. Jesus **died** and **rose** again. He is the **Son of God**, our **Lord** and our **Savior**. And because Jesus accomplished **everything** the Heavenly Father had given Him to do in His plan of **salvation**, the Father **has** forgiven us, and we **have** eternal life in heaven. It was all **A Part Of God’s Plan**.

At the time of our text, the passage which I just quoted from the Book of Deuteronomy had already been a part of the **foundation** of Jewish **law** for centuries, and in our text for today Jesus **Himself** said, “*Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms.*” So, there should have been **no doubt** in anyone’s mind that Jesus **had to die** on a **cross** - that He **had to be cursed** by God Almighty. But that just doesn’t make any **sense** to us. How could something so **unthinkable** ever happen at **all** - **especially** to someone like **Jesus**?

We know that the **Sanhedrin** had brought the accusation of **blasphemy** against Jesus. And we know that the Roman **governor**, Pontius Pilate, had

**condemned** Christ to be **crucified** - to die on a man-made **tree**. But **why** should a good man like **Jesus** have to die **like that**? Crucifixion was reserved for the very **worst** of criminals. What was the terrible **crime** which **Jesus** had committed? Had He led some kind of blood-soaked **revolution** through the streets of Jerusalem? Had He ever even raised His **hand** to **harm** someone? Wasn't the life of Jesus always filled with **helping** and **healing** others? After all, even **Pilate** - the man who signed the **death warrant** for Jesus - openly proclaimed to the crowd, "*I find no basis for a charge against Him.*"

History has recorded the crucifixion of Jesus as one of the greatest **miscarriages** of justice of all time. But what was an **injustice** on the **human** level was actually the **fulfillment** of **divine** justice. **Why** did Jesus Christ have to die under a **curse**? The answer is found in **you** and **me**. Jesus was the **Sin-bearer** for all people, and His **death** was the condemnation which was reserved for **all** the members of the human race. Jesus had taken **our** guilt and **our** curse on Himself. And so it was only **right** that His death should **conform** to the terrible verdict found in the Book of Deuteronomy. **Our** sins and **our** guilt, were the **cause** of the **curse** which **Jesus** received, as He suffered and died on the **tree** of the **cross**.

But on Easter Sunday, the Almighty Father **overturned** all the **human** verdicts against **Jesus**, and He **reversed** the sentence of death. Jesus had been sentenced and executed for **blasphemy**. But He wasn't **guilty** of blasphemy. Every word He had spoken was **true**. He truly **was** and **is** the long-awaited **Messiah**, and the Son of **God**. The court system of the **Jews** and the **Romans** had been **wrong**, and the courtroom of the Almighty **Father** found Jesus to be **innocent** of all the accusations which had been made against Him.

This was definitely a **victory** for Jesus, but it was also much **more**. This was a victory for every member of the **human race**. The curse of sin against **all** people had been brought to its **conclusion**. And once that conclusion had been **reached** - once Jesus had declared, "*It is **finished***" - the **curse** no longer hung over us. The penalty had been paid in **full** by Jesus' death on a tree, and the **curse** was completely **removed**.

It's Jesus' **resurrection** from the dead that **assures** us of all these truths. The Bible tells us, "*(Jesus Christ) was declared with power to be the **Son of God** by His **resurrection** from the dead.*" Once or twice, when Jesus' enemies demanded that He give them some kind of a **sign** that He really had been sent from **God**, He told them the sign would be the sign of the Prophet **Jonah**. "*Just as **Jonah** was in the belly of the huge fish for **three** days and **three** nights, so the **Son of Man** will be*

*three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*” Jesus clearly told them that three days after His **death**, He would **rise** again. And He **did**. That’s what makes Easter a day which is worthy of great **celebration**.

But celebration is only **part** of what the whole Easter Season is about. When Jesus came and stood among His disciples again, they **weren’t** celebrating - they were **hiding** behind locked doors. We’re told, *“They were **terrified and frightened** and thought they were looking at a **ghost**.”* How **wonderful** it is, that Jesus **immediately** took **away** that terror and fear - by showing them His **hands** and **feet** - and by opening their **minds** to **understand** the Scriptures. Very soon Jesus was going to be sending them on a **mission** - a mission that has lasted for **2,000** years - a mission to spread the account of Jesus’ **resurrection** to **all** people. You see, it wasn’t only Jesus’ **disciples** who were supposed to know why Jesus’ resurrection is so **important**. This is news which is meant for **all people**.

So, Jesus sent His **disciples** out to the ends of the earth, to **proclaim** the news of the **resurrection** and its **meaning** for the whole human race - and they **went**. Men like Peter, Paul, and Thomas traveled to the most **distant** parts of the known world, in order to proclaim the **Good News** to those who had not yet **heard** it. As time went on, **other missionaries** would cross **oceans** and **mountain** ranges to find people who had not yet learned that their sins have been **forgiven** through Jesus. Over the centuries, great **hardships** have been suffered - and lives and fortunes have been **sacrificed** - so that the news of the **resurrection** would be spread from **Jerusalem** to **all** nations - even to nations which Jesus’ **disciples** could never have **dreamed** of, as this mission **began**.

And **now** that mission has become **ours**. We are the ones who are to **follow** in the footsteps of the prophets and apostles. We are to go out into the world, to call sinners to **repentance**, and to assure them of the **forgiveness** of all their sins through **Jesus**. Whether they are **frightened**, or **burdened**, or **confused** - whether they’re in search of the **truth** - whether they’re **not** taking Jesus **seriously**, or are refusing to **acknowledge** their sins - we can bring them **comfort** and **peace** by telling them that **Jesus has risen** from the dead, to provide **forgiveness** and **eternal life** for **all** people. And, we can **also** take that comfort for **ourselves** whenever the sins **we** have committed threaten to **haunt** us and **condemn** us.

This year the season of Lent lasted for 40 days, as it does **every** year. It was a **dark** time - a time for **contemplation** - a time to focus our attention on our **sins**, and the **curse** which they bring. But everything is **different** on Easter morning, with the light of **life** streaming from the **empty** tomb, and with the risen Savior’s

**greeting**, "*Peace be with you!*" Jesus' resurrection has **destroyed** the curse of death for us. Pass that Good News on to **everybody**. Through the **suffering, death,** and **resurrection** of Jesus from the dead, we are eternally **assured** that the Father has **forgiven** us for all of our sins. It was all **A Part Of His Plan**. Amen.