

GUARANTEED PROMISES FROM GOD BECAUSE OF THE RESURRECTION

Next Steps Devotional Guide

Easter Sunday

April 4, 2021

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1. The Christian church is bigger than China, Europe and the United States combined in numbers. It has gone from 12 disciples to over 2.3 billion people today. To put that into perspective, that means 1 out of every 3 persons says, *"I am a follower of Jesus Christ."* What does this say to you?
2. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most important event in history. So much so, that historians divide history by it with BC (before Christ) and AD (the abbreviation for the Latin, Anno Domini — "the year of our Lord" — a reference to the Resurrection). Every event is dated by this single most important event in history — the Resurrection. Even the politically correct abbreviations being used now "BCE" = Before Common Era in place of BC and "CE" = Common Era in place of AD, change nothing historically. Why do you think there is pressure to use the politically correct abbreviations than the traditional abbreviations? What does this say about our culture?
3. Read Ephesians 1:7 and Romans 5:1-2 under point #1 under the heading, *"Guaranteed Promises From God Because of the Resurrection."* Everyone blows it. Everyone fails. Everyone makes mistakes and everyone sins. We all carry guilt and shame that we need to be liberated from in life. Guilt and shame waste an awful lot of energy. Both fatigue you, both tire you, and both rob you of peace of mind. When in your life have you experienced this? How did you get the liberation you needed from them?
4. It is so easy to blame the religious leaders, the crowd, Pontius Pilate, Caiaphas the high priest and the Romans for Jesus' crucifixion. The Bible affirms these had a role, but the blame involves more than them.
 - a. Read Isaiah 53:6-10 from your sermon notes under point #1-a under the heading, *"Who Actually had Jesus Crucified?"*. 700 years before Jesus came, God used the prophet Isaiah to give us a promise of a future Messiah that would die for our sins. His future crucifixion would be because God willed it. How does that make you feel?
 - b. Read Romans 4:25 from your sermon notes under point #1-b under the heading, *"Who Actually had Jesus Crucified?"* Your sins, my sins put Jesus on the cross. This is not to make us continually overwhelmed with guilt and shame, but to appreciate and accept the grace Jesus' death on the cross offers. When in your life do you tend to react to your sins based on the guilt and shame (condemnation) and when in your life do you tend to react to your sins with grace and gratitude (forgiveness)?
5. We do everything we can to avoid talking about the subject of death. How we face our own future death now is just as important as how we face life now. What are some fears people have about death? What are yours?
 - a. Read 1 Corinthians 15:55 and John 11:25 from your sermon outline under point #2 under the heading, *"Guaranteed Promises From God Because of the Resurrection."* If Jesus Christ was not resurrected, then we are most to be pitied. Our lives would be helpless and hopeless. Death wins. Death would have the final word. When Jesus died on the cross, each disciple, in fear ran and hid. After spending 3 years with Jesus 24/7, seeing all the miracles He performed, and listening and learning from all His teaching, why do you think they felt it was all over?
 - b. What is your hope for the future?
 - c. When are you most vulnerable to forget about God's hope for you?
 - d. Think of some ways this year's Easter celebration can increase your spiritual maturity, confidence and hope. How could you this week act on one of those thoughts?
 - e. The disciples were overwhelmed by the darkness of Jesus' death on the cross. This darkness caused them to experience depression, disillusionment and and disappointment. Have you ever been overwhelmed by the darkness of depression, disappointment and disillusionment? What was it and how did you handle it?
 - f. Read John 20:25 from your sermon notes under point #2 under the heading, *"Guaranteed Promises From God Because of the Resurrection."* Thomas, the pragmatist, said what everyone was thinking. He wanted proof. Think of someone you have lost recently through death. You go to their funeral. You touch their hard rigor-mortis, embalmed cold hand in the coffin. 3 days later you run into them. What would that do to you?
 - g. Read 2 Peter 2:16, Acts 1:3 and 1 Corinthians 15:5-9 from your sermon notes under point #2 under the heading, *"Guaranteed Promises From God Because of the Resurrection."* Having over 500 eyewitness accounts about the Resurrection of Jesus is why the church exploded and continued to explode under Roman persecution. Having over 500 eyewitness accounts about the Resurrection would stand up in any court today. These early followers of Jesus, upon seeing the resurrected Jesus, were filled with courage, confidence and a contagious eyewitness testimony. Why do you think people today do not want to believe these eyewitness accounts are valid?

6. God never planned for us to struggle with life.
 - a. Read John 14:16-17a and Acts 1:8 from your sermon notes under point #3 under the heading, *“Guaranteed Promises From God Because of the Resurrection.”* Now read from your sermon notes the explanation for the word translated as “power” in Acts 1:8. Does your life possess this kind of “dynamite” power promised by Jesus? If so, when and where have you seen it? If not, why?
 - b. Read Ephesians 1:19-20 from your sermon notes under point #3 under the heading, *“Guaranteed Promises From God Because of the Resurrection.”* The Bible affirms that the same power God used to raise Jesus from dead after three days is the same power you possess. Has that been your experience? If not, why?
 - c. If God's Holy Spirit can raise a dead Jesus, He can raise a dead marriage. If God's Holy Spirit can raise a dead Jesus, He can raise a dead career. If God's Holy Spirit can raise a dead Jesus, He can raise a dead dream. He can do anything into your life. It's the power to be free from your past. It's the power to break those memories that have been holding you back. It's the power to start over when you feel like giving up. It's the power to change things you think you could never ever change. It's the power to overcome habits, hurts and hang-ups that hold you back. It's the power to keep going when you feel like giving up. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is available and promised to you. Where in your life do you want God to raise something that is “dead?” Why? If He did, what would you do?

7. Love is probably the most misunderstood and misused word. We say, *“I love my wife. I love my husband. I love my children”* but we also say *“I love pizza. I love surfing. I love watching movies. I love March Madness.”* God's love for us is unconditional. God's love is based on Who He is, not who we are.
 - a. Read Jeremiah 31:3 and 1 John 4:9-10 from your sermon notes under point #4 under the heading, *“Guaranteed Promises From God Because of the Resurrection.”* God wants you to know He loves you and God wants you to experience His love. God's unconditional love changes us. God's unconditional love took a religious terrorist named Saul, who was out to exterminate the church by killing every Christian he could find — into Paul, the Apostle of love. Take a moment to open your Bible and read 1 Corinthians 13:1-7 and compare it with Acts 7:57-60 (especially the last part of verse 58 and verse 60). What is the contrast here? Now read Acts 9:4-5 from your sermon notes under point #4 under the heading, *“Guaranteed Promises From God Because of the Resurrection.”* What is different?
 - b. Where in your life have you seen God's love radically change you? It has been stated, *“There is no way that someone as big as God is can come into your life and not dramatically change you.”* Most people think love is a feeling, an emotion. But love as defined by Scripture in the New Testament word, “agape,” is a verb/action. This is why “agape” love dramatically changes us. What is the difference between love as a feeling/emotion and love as a verb/action.

8. You can have success without having significance. Significance comes from knowing your purpose.
 - a. Read Psalm 138:8, Proverbs 16:4, Proverbs 19:21 and John 10:10 from your sermon notes under point #5 under the heading, *“Guaranteed Promises From God Because of the Resurrection.”* God's purpose for your life is not your career — what you do to get paid. God's purpose has to do with building His kingdom. So, answer the following questions: *“Why do you exist? Why are even alive? What is the purpose of your life?”*
 - b. Read Romans 8:28 from your sermon notes under point #5 under the heading, *“Guaranteed Promises From God Because of the Resurrection.”* “All things” include the bad things, the hurtful things, the disappointing things, our dumb decisions, our mistakes, failures and sins. Where have you seen God bring good out of your hurt, your mistakes, your failures, your sins and your dumb decisions?
 - c. Read Mark 8:35 from your sermon notes under point #5 under the heading, *“Guaranteed Promises From God Because of the Resurrection.”* Is your life everything you thought and dreamed it would be? Are you totally fulfilled? Totally satisfied? If not, why? How we face death is just as important as how we face life. Do you know what you are ready die for in life?
 - d. Read 2 Timothy 4:7 and Philippians 1:21 from your sermon notes under point #5 under the heading, *“Guaranteed Promises From God Because of the Resurrection.”* What do these verses tell you about Paul?

9. Everyone dies and when they do, they either go to heaven or to hell. Read Romans 3:23-25a, Ephesians 2:8-9 and John 14:1-6 from your sermon notes under point #6 under the heading, *“Guaranteed Promises From God Because of the Resurrection.”*
 - a. Let's say this afternoon you die. You're standing before God in heaven and He asks you, “Why should I let you into My heaven?” What would you say?
 - b. Read Romans 10:9-10 from your sermon notes under point #6 under the heading, *“Guaranteed Promises From God Because of the Resurrection.”* A lot of people do not doubt who Jesus is. They simply do not let Him be God in their life. Why? Is Jesus your Lord, the CEO of your life? Is your life under new management — God's management? If so, to what degree?