

Easter Session

Please note some of the content here has been adapted from a Derek Prince talk.

INTRO

Easter is an amazing celebration of an amazing God. I'm not into Christian special days and all that as I want to live for Jesus 24/7. Many are similar. But what is special about Easter? Why do Christians talk about it and celebrate it?

A PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank you for what you did for us. Thank you that you left heaven and came to earth as a man. You lived a perfect life, fully God and fully man. You were crucified and died on the cross for something you did not do. You took all my sin on you when you died. However, you did not stay dead but you rose from the dead and now you sit in heaven. You are the Lord, you are God and you alone are worthy to be praised. We worship you and thank you. We thank God that he sent his only son to die for us. We give this time to you and ask your Holy Spirit to speak to us, challenge us and excite so that you buzz us up to be mad for God. Amen.

HOPE

The Christian message stands out in the world today (especially in the apathetic and critical UK) because it's about HOPE. Our world offers us hopelessness and despair, mixed with the desire to do whatever feels good. The Christian message talks about hope and about following Jesus.

So what is hope? In Psalm 146.5 we read that happy are those who have put their trust in the Lord God. Jeremiah 29.11 talks about God's plans for us, to give us a hope and a future. So the Old Testament were on to something!

In the New Testament we read many verses about hope. We see that hope is directly related to what Jesus did for us and to our future if we are true disciples of Jesus.. Colossians 1.27 talks about Christ in us, the hope of glory (heaven). Titus 1.2 talks about the hope of eternal life. Titus 2.12-13 talks about living a God-filled and inspired life while we wait 'for our great hope and the coming of the glory of our great God and Saviour (the one who saves us) Jesus Christ.'

Hebrews 6.19 talks about our hope being an anchor for us, the thing that roots us and draws us closer to God in good and hard times. We learn from 1 Corinthians 13.7 that we should always hope and that hope is a

characteristic of being Godly (like God). Finally 1 Thessalonians 5.8 tells us that the hope of salvation (being saved by Jesus) should be our helmet. So hope shields our mind from hopelessness and the struggles of life.

To complete the picture, Romans 5.5 (following up from the joy from troubles equals patience equals character equals hope in verses 3 thru 4) says that 'This hope (of of sharing God's glory, see verse 2) will never disappoint us because God has poured out his love to fill our hearts. He gave us his love through the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to us.' Maybe you want to make this verse personal when things are hard.

STORIES - Abraham Lincoln

After Union defeat in virtually every major battle, April 30, 1863 Abraham Lincoln called for a National Day of Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer. He stated in part:

"...It is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God; to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord;

"And insomuch as we know that by His divine law nations, like individuals, are subject to punishments and chastisements in this world, may we not justly fear that the awful calamity of civil war which now desolates the land may be but a punishment inflicted upon us for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole people? We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have grown in numbers, wealth, and power as no other nation has ever grown; but we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own.

"Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God who made us; It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, and confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness."

Two days later Stonewall Jackson, who had never lost a battle, was shot by his own men; he died on May 10, 1863. July 1, 1863 Gettysburg commenced, and the tide of the war turned.

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I

hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." (2 Chronicles 7:14)

HOPE - A CONCLUSION

So if we are to take hope seriously, and in this world we need to, then Easter is really important as it's the culmination of what Jesus did for us!

PRACTICAL IDEAS

Here are a few ideas to use in this session:

1. Questions - What does the world put its hope in? (Examples - money, greed, sex, fame, materialism, idols, hate, governments, man, science, religion)

Point is this - we can get the latest computer, DVD player, car, clothes, body beautiful lotions but they will fail us and disappoint because they are things of this world. God tells us to put our hope and trust in him alone. Matthew 6.33 says seek God first then the things you need will be provided for. Only God will never leave us, never change, never forget us, always love us, unconditionally. Only as we see ourselves in light of God's purposes for us and his love for us, will we begin to experience true hope, true life.

2. Video Clip - Taken from The Simpsons episode when Homer gets some hair tonic which makes his hair grow back. You can show clips when his hair has grown how confident he is. Then when the tonic is spilled, things are a little less confident! The point is that we can't put our hope in things but only in Jesus.

WHAT JESUS DID FOR US ON THE CROSS

In the New Testament, God revealed his plan for humanity. This plan was so radical, so different, that many couldn't accept it (the pharisees especially!). Here was Jesus, the warrior, not of might that many Jews had longed for, but a warrior of peace and with a radical character that was the heart of God. In this new plan, God sent his only son so that everyone who believed in Jesus would not be disappointed but would gain eternal life (paraphrase of John 3.16)

So this plan, not revealed to the Old Testament prophets, was to send Jesus to be a one-off, all-time, sufficient, perfect sacrifice for the sins of man. Why did this need to happen?

Adam, the first man, sinned. (Romans 3.23 says all have sinned and fallen short of God's standards). Because Adam sinned, mankind sinned. In the Old Testament, the priests had to make an atonement for the sins of the people. (Atonement is broken down into at-one-ment, this meant that man and God are made 'at one' in the words of Derek Prince).

Hebrews 10.3-4 says, 'But in the old Testament sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year for it isn't possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.' If we compare this to Hebrews 9.26 we see the difference that Jesus made. '.. but now once in the end of the ages, Christ has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.'

In Isaiah 53.6 it says, 'All of us like sheep have gone astray away from God, all of us have turned away in our different ways. So God has laid on him (Christ Jesus) the iniquity (rebellion, sin and all the evil it causes) of us all.'

Jesus was the 'last Adam' and unlike the 'first Adam' he was perfect. Only Jesus could take on the sins of all humanity and make things right with God. (We have to make the choice to accept remember!) Romans 6.23 says that the wages of sin are death. So, just as we earn a wage from a job as the payment for our work, so we deserve death as the wage for the sin in our lives.

However, because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and his resurrection, he took on himself the sin we deserve and paid the price for our sin. Effectively he said, I am going to die on your behalf. You deserve to die for your sin but I am going to die in your place as your substitute so you have the opportunity of being made right with God. (2 Corinthians 5.21) Therefore, we can be made right with God only through Jesus.

Unlike the actual lambs killed in the Old Testament to act as a sacrifice for people's sins each year, Jesus is the real and spiritual sacrificial lamb, now in heaven, who has done a one-off thing. A perfect sacrifice to make way for God and man to be restored once again. We can only do this through Jesus by inviting Jesus into our lives as our personal Saviour, recognizing what he's done for us.

EASTER

This is why Easter is so important. This was the time when Jesus was crucified, died and then was resurrected. We find this in Luke 23.44 - Luke 24 and Matthew 27.32 - Matthew 28. Here we see Jesus die on the cross, be buried in a tomb, the tomb stone is then found rolled away with Jesus gone. Jesus then appears to his disciples and goes up to heaven. Pretty dramatic stuff.

CHALLENGES/MINISTRY

First, an invitation to anyone who is not a Christian but who feels that they want to make this commitment. The Bible says that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. That no-one can come to God except through him (John 14.6) There is no other way to God than through believing in Jesus and trusting your life to him..

Second, a challenge for those who are Christians. Do you truly believe and are you really thankful to God for what he has done for you? Are you living a life worthy of what Jesus did and told you to do in the Bible? If not, now's the time to get right, say sorry and make a change for the better and for a lifetime.

People can pray with leaders, pray with friends, come and kneel at the front, go to the back of the room, say a prayer in their hearts and so on. Make sure people who commit themselves to God or pray a prayer tell someone so they can be followed up, be accountable to others etc.

CONFESSION TIME

Build a wooden cross from 2 pieces of wood. Give everyone a nail and get them to hammer this nail into the cross to represent getting rid of sin(s) from their lives and laying them at the foot of the cross.

SONGS

Lots of choices really, mainly Matt Redman style stuff - Thank You For Saving Me, Jesus Christ (Once Again), Thank you for the Blood, I will love you for the Cross, and My Hope is built on nothing less, plus I'm sure you know a few others..

IMAGES

Play the sequence from Jesus of Nazareth video from the camera filming Jesus carrying his cross under the arch until Jesus dies (sequence around 4 mins 30). This goes very well with the song, 'As Angels Looked On' which is Track 9 on the Soul Survivor 2002 worship album.

THE PASSION / EASTER RESOURCES

1. Have services specifically designed around The Passion Movie (or something more recent) and make them even more informal, open, relaxing and open for non believers to come in. Have a month of doing after-church food and chats. Push this with an advertising push in your local area. Join with other churches. Get prayer warriors in place.
2. What about running a series on Jesus in the preceding weeks at your church with a follow-up afterwards. Go through Luke 22-24 taking from the other Gospels over the 4 weeks. Then the week after The Passion, go for an evangelistic event. Tie this in with people from your older teens or the church to specifically invite friends to services around the time of the movie. Maybe tie in the following week running over the resurrection of Jesus - it's near to Easter anyway!
3. Get some media presentations of The Jesus Video or Jesus Of Nazareth etc. being shown at the church so you can have a kind of Jesus movie theme going down.. Can you get your media guys to design something via video - [or use anything from our YouTube channel](#)
4. Can you get some Easter materials to tie into the movie?
Visit www.cpo.org.uk among others.. (link checked April 2019)
5. Screen the movie in your church - make sure you get licensing right, you're probably not simply allowed to show it.