



Riverlife
BAPTIST CHURCH



About

Easter is the central moment of our Christian faith. According to NT Wright, it is the 'Day the revolution began', where God initiated the greatest part of His mission to redeem the world to Himself. He came to the world in person and dealt with the brokenness and sin that has held us back from relationship with Him.

During this series, we're going to walk towards Easter following in the way of the Cross. We want to let our hearts and our heads connect with the truth of what Jesus has already done for us, and the invitation he makes to us to join Him in the same journey.

The series is based on five icons that will lead us to Easter and tell the story:

- The Cross
- The Stone
- The Door/Empty Tomb
- The Palm Branch
- The Sun



Part 1 The Path to Easter

SUMMARY

Examining the lead up to Easter, Part 1 introduces the series, preparing us to walk the way of the Cross. Each icon – the sun, the stone, the door, the palm branch and the cross – brings an element of sacrifice, of preparation, and of recognition of Jesus' work for us.

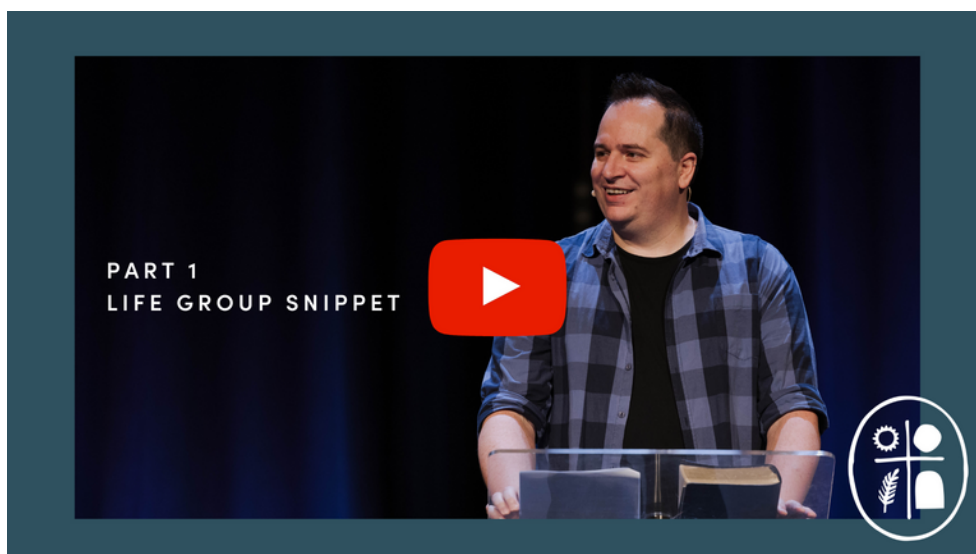
As we journey in the Way of the Cross, we are living out the life of Jesus in our own lives, just like Paul says in Romans, suffering with Him so that we may be joined in glory with Him. Easter is an invitation to prepare your heart to beat with God's heart.

Application: who are the people that God is impressing on your heart, that you can be praying for in this Easter season?

KEY PASSAGE

Matthew 28:18-20

SERMON MOMENT



<https://youtu.be/HWqayfHYnFM>



Part 1 The Path to Easter

NOTES

The events of that first Easter must have caused Jesus' first followers to have all sorts of feelings, because it was an event that marked them for the rest of their lives. As we look toward the events that would take Jesus to the Cross, we have the benefit of hindsight and can start to see the way Jesus led His followers to the truth of what was going to happen.

Because what happened that Friday changed the entire world.

Prepare the Way

All over the world, right now, Christians are preparing themselves for Easter. Easter is significant because it takes through a number of things:

- It's the basis of our personal salvation (Romans 10:8-9)
- It's the basis for all that we do as a church community (2 Corinthians 5:16-19)
- It's the basis for the in-breaking Kingdom of God triumphing over the powers of darkness and evil (1 John 3:8)

If we want to make it concrete for us here at Riverlife:

Easter makes us family, restores the access to the Father's presence, gives us the reason to be released, gives us the good news to declare and the power to demonstrate it.

The Images of Easter

We've selected five images that pick out parts of the Easter story, that also reflect the way to the Cross, and so invite us into the journey of Jesus.

The Palm Branch

- The icon of Palm Sunday
- The reminder that Jesus is the one who comes in the name of the Lord, the one to whom the ancient people of God shouted "Hosanna" – God, save us!
- There is a celebration, but also a subversion, of the world order – the powers of the world around can't save us, but the one who comes in the name of the Lord has the power to save
- The mark of the in-breaking radical kingdom of God



Part 1 The Path to Easter

The Cross

- The central marker of the Christian faith – the icon above all icons
- Worn by professing pilgrims, seeking searchers and more, it is widely seen but not understood
- The tool of Roman domination that became to the mark of the freed people of God
- A representation of the worst of human abuse and violence that has become the beacon of hope and joy to those in darkness

The Stone

- The stone that covered the tomb of Christ.
- This was the lowest moment for the first followers of Jesus. That Friday evening, as the tomb is sealed, the promises seemingly gone, their Lord slain. All the hope for revolution, for change, for the overthrow of the powers of darkness gone. In fact – it looked for everyone watching that those powers had won
- It's an invitation to each of us to know the pain and sacrifice of Jesus in that moment (Romans 8:16-17)
- The Stone, as we journey in the Way of the Cross, is a leveller of all people – that all must die, and all must come to the place of laying oneself down, must deny one's self, and follow in the way of Jesus.

The Empty Tomb/The Door

- When the first followers least expected it, the stone was rolled away, and the tomb was empty!
- The empty tomb sparks hope of resurrection, of life, or restoration, or hope
- Maybe the empty tomb is an open door to the resurrection life of Christ!

The Risen Sun

- The risen sun – the Risen Son – the resurrected Messiah.
- In 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, Paul reminds us that this story is one that is powerful to pass on to others – it's of FIRST importance! The resurrection life of Jesus is the life that we are all invited into!
- It's the resurrection power of God – the Holy Spirit – the one who raised Jesus from that tomb and overcame the power of death – that's what we see in the risen son (sun)!



Part 1 The Path to Easter

The Way of the Cross

Like any good story then – we get a taste of the ending – then get a glimpse of something bigger that is going on, an invitation to wonder.

Easter changes the way we look at the world. Indeed, it changes the way that we must live in the world. What wasn't possible before Easter is now not only possible, but in fact our commission.

Matthew 28:16-20

Mark 16:17-18

Conclusion

Who is Jesus going to now? Who does He want you to go to, with Him?

Who is in need of His resurrection power?

Who is He putting on your heart to pray for, because they're already on His heart?

And do you need to experience that resurrection for yourself?

Because the first Easter has happened, you don't need to wait to experience His resurrection power! The Way of the Cross for the believer is one already filled with Resurrection Power. In fact, His resurrection power is the only way we CAN walk in the Way of the Cross.



Part 1 The Path to Easter

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Q: How can we seek out and minister to those in need of Jesus' resurrection power in our own lives and in our communities?

Application: What are some practical steps you can take to be a source of hope, healing, and freedom for others, in the light of Jesus' resurrection?

Q: In light of Jesus' resurrection and the power it provides, how can we follow His commission to make disciples and teach them?

Application: How can you personally embody and share Jesus' teachings in your everyday life as an expression of His resurrection power?

Q: What do the five symbolic images (Palm Branch, Cross, Stone, Empty Tomb, and Risen Sun) represent in the context of Easter, and how do they invite reflection and worship?

Application: Which of these symbols resonate with you most, and how might meditating on their meaning enhance your worship during the Easter season?

Q: How does the journey towards Easter and the events leading up to it help shape our understanding of Jesus' mission?

Application: How can we prepare ourselves spiritually for Easter and how might doing so change our perspective on Jesus' mission?