

THE STORY OF EASTER

Stepping into the Story

Easter provides a time where we can stop and remember that we have been invited into a story of love. We are invited to step into God's offer of love, grace and forgiveness, so that our story can be one of salvation.

From a human perspective, this love story, God's story, simply does not make sense (1 Corinthians 1:18). God pays the highest price to be the sacrifice that takes away the sins of the world for people who neither care for Him nor will return His love, and yet He still extends the invitation for us to step into the story.

Whether you already know Jesus and have experienced His love and forgiveness, or whether you're just trying to put the pieces of the story together - today is a good day to be reminded of the extent of His love. A love that took Jesus to the lowest of all places for the sake of all people.

The writer of the book of Hebrews talks of why Jesus endured such a painful experience.

Because his heart was focused on the joy of knowing that you would be his, he endured the agony of the cross and conquered its humiliation, and now sits exalted at the right hand of the throne of God! Hebrews 12:2b (TPT)

Despite our sin, our flaws and our brokenness, Jesus looks at us and considers us worth this incredible sacrifice. He paid the ultimate price of love - He gave His life for ours.

The Invitation

It's an incredible thing to try and comprehend that the creator of the universe would love us enough to do whatever was necessary for us to be in right relationship with Him (John 3:16; John 1:12).

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. John 3:16 (NIV)

The amazing reality is that God spared nothing so that we could enter back into a relationship with our Heavenly Father.

God's great story of love and sacrifice to take away the penalty of what we rightfully deserve, can become our story of salvation. This is the invitation to step into the story and make it ours.

This kind of love, this kind of invitation demands a response.

The Three Crosses of Calvary (Luke 23:32-43)

In this account we see in simple graphic form, an object lesson of the two human responses to Jesus' suffering and death along with the consequent outcomes of those responses.

The Cross of Jesus

He committed no sin (*He never sinned and he never spoke deceitfully* - 1 Peter 2:22). He knew no sin (*God put the wrong on him who never did*

anything wrong, so we could be put right with God - 2 Corinthians 5:21). He contained no sin (Jesus came to take away our sins, and there is no sin in him - 1 John 3:5), yet He carried all sin of humankind (Isaiah 53:6).

The Cross of the Unbelieving Thief

On the second cross is a thief. According to Luke 23:32, he committed sin, he knew sin, he contained sin, and he carried his sin because he rejected the suffering and death of Jesus for him (Luke 23:39).

The Cross of the Believing Thief

On the third cross also is a thief. According to Luke 23:32, he committed sin, he knew sin, he contained sin, but he carried no sin because he accepted the suffering and death of Jesus for him, he called out for salvation (*Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom - Luke 23:42*) and was freed from the penalty of his sin by God's mercy, and by God's grace he received the promise of eternal life (*Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise - Luke 23:43*).

The way each criminal related to Jesus made all the difference as to their state before God. But what will your response be? Which convicted criminal will you be like? We are all just like those criminals - we have committed sin, we know sin and we contain sin in our lives.

The Bible says all have sinned and fallen short of God's required standard (Romans 3:23) and are so worthy only of death or eternal separation from God (Romans 6:23) - our works are never enough to save us (Ephesians 2:8-9). Our only hope for both eternal and abundant life is in Jesus (John 3:16).

All who believe in Jesus' suffering and death on their behalf have their sins taken away by Jesus - He personally carried our sins in His body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. That's the only way to step into God's story and make it yours.

Today –What will your response to Jesus be? Jesus made a way for God's story and our story to intersect. God through Jesus' death and resurrection is inviting us into His story – the story of Easter – the greatest love story ever!

If you would like that to be your story, here's how you make that decision. You simply tell God by talking to Him that that's what you want to do. God sees your heart and if you can genuinely say this then you can be assured that He will forgive you and you will experience His love and a brand-new life, your story can have a different ending.

Lord Jesus, I need You. Thank You for dying on the cross in my place for my sins. I believe in You, and I open my life to You, and confess You as my Lord and accept You as my Saviour. Thank You for forgiving my sins and for giving me the certainty of eternal life, and the potential of a full and overflowing life as I live according to Your will as revealed in Your word. Take control of my life in every part, let my life tell your great story of love. I pray this in Jesus' name.