

# THE WAY OF THE CROSS

## Part 1 - The Path to Easter

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 to 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.

We're going to take the next five weeks to walk towards Easter, to follow in the way of the Cross, to see Easter maybe a little differently, and 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.

### Prepare the Way

All over the world, right now, Christians are preparing themselves for Easter.

Easter is significant because it takes us 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.

"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Hosanna" – God, save us!

### **The Cross**

The central marker of the Christian faith – the icon above all icons.

### **The Stone**

The stone that covered the tomb of Christ.

Romans 8:16-17

### **The Empty Tomb/The Door**

When the first followers least expected it, the stone was rolled away, and the tomb was empty!

### **The Risen Sun**

The risen sun – the Risen Son – the resurrected Messiah.

1 Corinthians 15:3-8

## The Way of The Cross

Like any good story then – we get a taste of the ending – we 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.

## Discussion Questions

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

**Context:** We are urged to consider who Jesus wants to reach through us and to seek those in need of His power.

**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?

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

**Context:** The commission given by Jesus to His disciples and the role of His resurrection in giving believers authority and power to carry out this mission.

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

3. 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?

4. 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?