

Resurrection Power

Romans 10:9-10

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Do you believe in Easter? Do you believe in Easter? Probably most of us say, "Yes, yes, sure I believe in Easter, it's just great. It's just great, it's the end of winter, it's the good weather, it's the Easter eggs, it's the Easter bunnies, and it's the Easter dinners. It's great and it's wonderful. It's new life, it's the beginning of springtime, it's summer dresses, and it's everything that's wonderful and bright and filled with life. Of course I believe in Easter."

But what I mean is, do you believe in the central fact of Easter? Apart from all the Easter eggs and coming to church and the daffodils and the Easter lilies, do you believe in the central fact of Easter? Do you believe that Jesus defeated death? Now if you could think of just you and me talking without your friends or your relatives that all think you believe certain ways, seriously, do you believe that Jesus defeated death?

I think a lot of us when we're faced with that, say, "Well, we all have our ways of looking at things. That's kind of a private thing, isn't it? We all believe different ways about different things. It's a lot to swallow isn't it that this Jesus of Nazareth defeated death. All of us here are going to see each other laid in caskets and we're going to see each other laid in graves, and we're not going to see each other again. It's a bit hard to believe that anybody can defeat that. The Easter story is really nice and it's good for children and it's good for those of us who need help in times of bereavement, but that's a lot to believe. I'm sure you don't blame me being a bit skeptical about that."

Loved ones, Easter is for skeptics. Easter is for skeptics. It's for those of us who have intellectual difficulties. It's for people like ourselves that Easter exists. Easter faced one of us immediately, as report came that Jesus was raised from the dead. There was one of us right there. Now, I'll show you where he is, he is in John 20, if you'd like to look at him. There are many of us that sympathize with this dear guy because we don't like stuff that's mystical or that's otherworldly and this guy represented all of us.

John 20:24-27, "Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger on the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe.' Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it on my side; do not be faithless, but believing.'

Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and My God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.' Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." That's the heart of Easter.

A man like us, standing in a room with open holes in His hands and a gaping spear wound in His side and nobody mopping up blood, that's it. Holes in His hands, and a gaping spear wound in his side and nobody mopping up blood. But in fact, one who is a skeptic, poking his finger into the hole in the hand to see if it was a phantom, that's Easter. Easter isn't mystical. Easter isn't otherworldly. Easter isn't dreaming.

You may say, "Yeah, but so long ago, 1900 years ago? We have stories that have been believed that are far shorter than that. It's been 1900 years, how can you tell the same story was told then as it's told now?" Well, it was told the same way 300 years ago. This is one of the most precious things we have. Well, it's not. The most precious thing we have is the church and each other and Jesus. But this is one of the most precious material things we have. It's a 300-year-old Bible. Somebody turned these pages before the Declaration of Independence. Shakespeare may have turned these pages and that's amazing. He was alive when this Bible was in existence. It's 300 years old. I bought it in England 5 or 10 years ago.

And here it is, the same story. But Thomas, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." It's the same story. Three hundred years ago, it was the same story. I have in this little book, a picture of a piece of manuscript that you can see in the university library in Manchester, England. It's dated 125 A.D. and it's part of the Gospels. 125 A.D., that's not 300 years ago, that's 1800 years ago and it's the same story. It's the same story.

The record of Jesus' resurrection is one of the surest facts in the whole of the world's history because not only does this manuscript tell of it but also there are thousands of manuscripts. There are thousands of ancient manuscripts that tell the same record of Jesus' resurrection. In fact, loved ones, to get rid of the fact of Jesus' resurrection, you would have to destroy thousands upon thousands of ancient historical books that make reference to the resurrection of Christ. You would have to destroy not only books that are included in the Bible but also books that are written by people who are antagonistic to Christianity. But not only that, you would have to wipe out ceremonies and memorials that have been practiced and observed down through the centuries from the year 30 A.D.

The communion of the Lord's Supper has been observed, without a break, for over 1900 years from the year 29 A.D. And there are other ceremonies that men and women have observed. You would have to make absolute mess of the Christian traditions, the Jewish traditions, and the traditions of all the ancient civilizations including the Roman and the Greek, in order to disprove that Christ's resurrection took place in the first century of our era.

But not only that, you would have to wipe out or explain in some other way the amazing phenomenon of the Christian Church that has continued to survive despite all kinds of opposition and prosecution and you would have to explain away thousands of lives that have been changed by a power that is beyond themselves, thousands of bodies that have been healed by a power that is bigger than themselves, because that's the fact. The power that enabled Jesus to live without a heart transplant, or without a kidney transplant, or without blood transfusions, the power that enabled Him to live again, remained in our world and continued to be used to transcend the laws of nature. That's right.

That power life that raised Him up despite the normal laws of nature requiring Him to be dead, that power is still alive and was used from the earliest days to overcome the same weaknesses of physical

nature. I'll tell you one of those loved ones, if you'd like to look at. It's in Act 3:6. There was a man that used to sit at the gate of the temple. He'd been lame from when he was born and he held out his hand for some alms when Peter was passing and then in Acts 3:6,

"But Peter said, 'I have no silver and gold, but I give you what I have; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.' And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. And leaping up he stood and walked and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God." Loved ones, the way Peter explains that is a few verses down in verse 16.

Acts 3:16, "And His name, by faith in His name, has made this man strong whom you see and know; and the faith which is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all." That same power gave this man power to walk. That power that made Jesus able to live with gaping wounds in His hands and in His side remained in the world. That power, loved ones, has power to rearrange the protons and the neutrons of matter. That's what happened. Look at Acts 12:6-7.

Acts 12:6-7, "The very night when Herod was about to bring him out, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the door were guarding the prison; and behold, an angel of the Lord appeared, and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, 'Get up quickly.' And the chains fell off his hands." And Peter walked out of the prison.

In other words, the power that enabled Jesus to stand with open wounds that should have killed him days ago, the power that enabled him to appear in different places over a period of 40 days, moving at tremendous speed, the power that enabled him to walk through walls, that power remained in this world and continued to be used by his followers to heal sicknesses and to enable people to live despite the physical weakness in their bodies.

Loved ones, that's what has continued right up to this present time. That's what caused the miracles that were seen in the New Testament times. I'll point you to them in Hebrews 11. It's that great chapter you know that tells about the amazing things that happened in the early centuries.

Hebrews 11:33, "who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life." All of these things were done by a power, a resurrection power that is beyond our normal human strength. That power is still alive in our world. There is a power of life that enables you to live despite the weaknesses of physical nature and that power still exists today. It is still here.

Do you believe in Easter? That's not the real question. The real question is do you speak Easter? I'll give you the verse now, and then I'll explain it. It's Romans 10:9-10, "because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved."

When you get a cold, do you like me, (or like I used to), do you say, "This cold is killing me! This cold is killing me, it's just wearing me out!" If you say that, you're proclaiming that you don't believe in Easter. You're proclaiming that you don't believe in Easter. Because when God raised Jesus from the dead, He destroyed the power of sickness to incapacitate us for the things that God

has given us to do. That's what the Bible says. When God destroyed death in Jesus, He destroyed sickness. He destroyed the power of sickness to incapacitate us. He made that power over sickness available to every one of us who has faith and who confess that faith with our lips. And wherever we confess that faith with our lips, that power begins to be activated in our lives. And wherever we do that, that power begins to deal with the sickness within us.

Now, it's up to God, it's up to God what He does with your sickness. It's up to God whether He leaves the symptoms there and gives you strength to fulfill all that you have to do in your job or in His commands to you, despite the symptoms. It's up to Him whether He makes His strength perfect in the midst of your weakness and gives you that resurrection power so that you can carry on despite the dripping nose and despite the cough. It's up to Him to do that or it's up to Him to decide if He wants to remove the symptoms from you.

Indeed it's even up to Him if He wants to decide to take it to heaven. He knows what He needs in heaven. The one thing that you can be certain of is, you won't go to heaven because of the sickness. You'll go because He wants you. Or, you'll go because He has something for you to do. But you won't go because of the sickness. Because when God destroyed death in Jesus, He destroyed the power of everything that leads to death. It has to appeal to your common sense whatever you think about spiritual healing. It's just logical that if you destroy death, you destroy the power of everything that leads to death. That's plain common sense. If you destroy the greater, you destroy everything less than it and sickness is what causes death.

So when you destroy the power of death to incapacitate our physical bodies, you destroy the power of sickness to incapacitate our physical bodies. And that's what happened right through the New Testament. You could look at it if you'd like in Matthew 8:14. This was the normal life loved ones, for people who believed in Jesus.

Matthew 8:14, "And when Jesus entered Peter's house, He saw His mother-in-law lying sick with a fever; he touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and served Him. That evening they brought to him many who were possessed with demons; and He cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, 'He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.'" That's it.

That is, it plainly states that when Jesus died and was raised in Calvary, He took our sicknesses and our infirmities and bore them in His own body so that those of us who have faith in Him and who speak that faith forth, can live in such a way that we are not incapacitated by those diseases. It's up to God whether He removes the diseases, whether He removes the symptoms, but the promise is here that God has destroyed the power of sickness to incapacitate us. But it's more than that.

For all of you who have lived under discouragement and depression for years, it's more than that. The Bible says that the world was crucified with Christ. When God destroyed our sickness and our sin in Jesus, He destroyed the principalities and powers that work in our world. All the strange spirits that work in the financial realm to bring all kinds of twists and turns to our national economy, all the principalities and powers that work underneath the people that you work with in your day-to-day jobs, that make them critical, that make them antagonistic to you, all the principalities and powers in the spirits that lie behind the things that operate Murphy's law, that make the thing always fall on the wrong way, that make the thing always work the wrong way, all the principalities and powers and spirits that work in your life to make things go so wrong, the things where you sense there's no control and no one in control, God destroyed that world in His Son Jesus. Every one of us who

believe that, and truly believe in Easter and believe that in Easter there is an Easter power, a resurrection power that can overcome the weaknesses of the physical body and can change circumstances and can change financial problems and personal problems, every one of us who live that way and speak that way, begin to experience that power operating in us.

Here's what I am asking you to do. When the clotheswasher goes on the blink and it's full of clothes, when the car is just about to breathe it's last, when your job situation is just beyond anything that you can make any sense of, would you stop talking as if there's no Easter power? Would you stop? I know it because I've done it better than you. We Irish can cry in our beer better than you Americans can.

So I can tell you the story from the inside. You know what we do, we say, "That washer has gone again. Everything is going wrong! The car's breathing its last, and the washer is gone!" Stop that! Stop that hellish talk. That is what it is. It is hellish talk. We're all so bright, aren't we, when we hear somebody saying, "Oh you'll never amount to anything." We say, "Oh, what a terrible thing to say. Don't say that to them. It will discourage them, and make them failures."

Well, what about this other stuff? You think the washer can't hear? You and I know it's not the washer that can't hear, everybody else around us can hear. Moreover, we can hear. And I'd ask any of you men. Is it easier to tackle a difficulty from the top or below? Is it easier to tackle a problem at work if you go to the job that day filled with enthusiasm and optimism or if you go to the job that day filled with pessimism and worry and despair? Purely on a psychological it just makes sense.

But it's not the psychological level that's important. This is not a game. Loved ones, the fact is, there is a power that has been released at Easter that is able to begin to move in our ordinary everyday lives and yes, can affect the protons and the neutrons in that wood, (Pastor tapping on the pulpit). Sure it can. What do you think God affected? What do you think He affected when He was able to take a dead body and make it live again? Of course He affected the protons and neutrons.

What do you think He did with the protons and neutrons and their speed when He was able to get that body to walk through walls? Of course He affected it. Of course He is the Creator of the world. He is able to change things by this power that He released in His son Jesus. He is able to change them, if we will confess with our lips and believe in our hearts that God has raised Jesus from the dead.

If you say to me, "Well, how should we talk?" When the washer goes on the blink, you say, (you force these dumb, miserable, rebellious lips to form words) "I thank God that He has a solution for this. I thank God that He has an answer to this. I thank God that in a moment, we'll see this solved and that already the power that He released in His son Jesus is moving and will either give me the wisdom to do this or will move even in that miserable old solid matter and will change the way the protons are in the steel and will deal with a particular thing, a particular hose that is broken." You start talking as if you believed in Easter, that's it. That's it, loved ones.

If you say to me, "Oh, that's intellectual dishonesty." It's intellectual dishonesty not to say that. Every time you write the date, you state that this is intellectual honesty. You write 1985 A.D. Anno Domini not B.C., not Before Christ. You don't write 1985 the world before Christ, you write 1985. This is the 1985th year of the world's life since Jesus came and released His supernatural resurrection power into our universe. Every time you write the date loved ones, you declare that we're living post-Christ. We're living in the days that have followed the revelation of

Christ and the release of His resurrection power among us. It is intellectual dishonesty NOT to talk victoriously and triumphantly. It is.

Oh brothers and sisters, will you think about it? Think about those situations that we find ourselves in. You've just discovered the overdraft and you're just about to say to her, "Why did you not send that last check in?" or you're just about to say, "We'll never pay that other bill." At that moment believe Easter. Believe Easter. Stop getting all worried about what will happen. "Well, what will happen? Will the washer just start going?" That's not your problem. That's not your responsibility.

Even if you say to me, "If I do it, when I get sick, will I get well?" That's not your problem. That's up to God what He will do. You have one responsibility and that is to believe Easter. In the midst of a predicament or a difficult situation, be it with a clotheswasher, or an automobile, or a recalcitrant child or with a disagreeable colleague or with a business situation that cannot be solved, at that moment, thank God with your lips that He has released in Jesus a power that is already beginning to sort this thing out and that you're confident that that thing will be solved. Loved ones, that's it. Is that hard? Is that hard? I am asking you to stop crying and start laughing. Is that hard? That's not hard. That's what Easter is.

If you say to me, "Oh it's a trick, it's a trick." It's a trick in that it's "unto you according to your faith." That's a basic spiritual principle. God says, "It will be unto you according to your faith." If you believe that, if you begin to live that, and you begin to speak that, you will begin to see this power being released in your life. That's the miracle, that's the amazing thing about it.

Loved ones, it is for you, even if you've come to church this morning and you think, "Oh, it all sounds a bit strange and I've never been very religious." You don't have to be very religious, just start being honest intellectually and start making your responses to problems line up with the fact that God has already solved those problems in His son's death on Calvary. Will you try it?

Just begin. Think of it. If it doesn't work this week, you have another wonderful 40 to 60 years to be miserable. So why not try it for a week and then you can get back into misery on your own. It appeals, doesn't it? It just seems right. The problem is that you think it's too good to be true. But actually it is true, loved ones. That's what Easter is about, that's what Easter is.

So, I am not going to ask, do you believe in Easter? I am going to ask, will you live Easter? Will you start living Easter in your home, by the words that you speak? Speak life, not death and God's life will begin to move into the situation. Oh yes, it works. The situation will be changed. The situation will be solved. Let's pray.

Dear Father, You know how difficult it is for us to think that this could be true, it seems too wonderful, seems just too good to be true, seems too easy and yet Lord, those words stick in our throats because we realize it isn't easy. It's easier for some reason to speak pessimistically. It's easier for some reason to blame everybody else. It's easier for some reason to complain. Lord, we repent of that now.

We tell You we're sorry Father for that kind of behavior. We tell You we're sorry for all the misery we brought to our loved ones by doing that. Father we've tried to protect our own rears by that kind of behavior. Lord, we are prepared to start going out on limbs of faith. We're prepared to start

saying what we do believe: that You have crucified the world in Christ. You have borne our sicknesses and carried our pains. You have defeated the principalities and powers that make things go wrong in our jobs. Lord, we're going to start saying that we believe that and we're going to start confessing that with our lips and expecting You to move mightily in our lives. We commit ourselves Father, to living Easter, each day of our lives, for Jesus' glory. Amen.