

**Come Alive This Easter!**  
Living the Better Life Part 1  
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On the night of his arrest, Jesus Christ made a very strange statement that nobody understood. He said, *"Before long the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I am going to come alive, you also will come alive."* (John 14:19 MSG) What was Jesus talking about? What did he mean? The disciples must have been thinking, "Hey, we're already alive. What do you mean, we're about to come alive? How can we get any more alive than we already are?"

Easter is about coming alive. Jesus Christ proved He was who He said He was by coming alive after he was dead. He said, "I'm God. I'm going to let them kill me on a cross. I'm going to let them bury me in a tomb for three days and then I'm going to come back to life to prove I am who I say I am." And He did just that. He died, came back to life, and then walked around Jerusalem visiting with His followers before returning to heaven. In doing this He radically changed the course of human history. Jesus changed the course of history like no other person and the resurrection changed the course of history like no other event.

Almost everybody knows that part of the Easter story. What most people don't know is the second part of the story. The second part of the story involves you and me. We are told, *"He [meaning Jesus] included everyone in His death so everyone could be included in His life, a resurrection life, a far better life than people ever lived on their own."* (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:15 MSG)

What is this far better life?

Not one of us would argue that we who live in the United States of America are certainly living a far better life than those who live in other parts of the world. We live in the greatest nation on earth and we are living the good life. Think about

it. You've got a good home. You've got a good family. You've got a good job. You've got good health care. You've got good grocery stores where you can buy good food. That's how most people define the good life. Compared to the rest of the world, you've got it really good. You're living the good life. But what if there was something more? What if beyond the good life there was something better? What if you're missing something you don't even know about? What if God had intended more than just the good life for you? What if He has a far better life for you to live? Wouldn't you want to know about that? I sure would.

We often settle for less because we don't know there's anything better. I want to let you in on a little secret - there is something far better than the good life. We were made for far more than just looking good, feeling good, and enjoying the good things this world has to offer. That's all fine, but there is something far better. The better life that Jesus offers is very different than the good life the world offers. I've listened to a lot of people who are living the good life. I've listened to a lot of people who are "living the dream," as they say. Here's what I've noticed. Beneath the thin veneer of their happiness are three dirty little secrets that nobody likes to talk about.

The **first** is that **people living the good life feel EXHAUSTED** all the time. They're worn out. They say, "I'm tired all the time. I can't keep up the pace. I'm overloaded. When I get home in the evening, I crash. I'm worn out." This exhaustion always leads to **the second little secret—the EMPTINESS they feel**. In those quiet moments you're thinking, "If this is the good life, why am I so unhappy? Why do I feel my life has no meaning? Why do I feel so empty inside? What is the meaning of life anyway? Getting more, having more, and accomplishing more? If this is the good life why don't I feel good? Why do I feel so unsatisfied and so empty?"

This emptiness leads to the third little secret and that is **ENSLAVEMENT**. That's the feeling of being trapped and stuck. Maybe you feel trapped in a job you don't like. Maybe you feel trapped in a relationship you feel is going nowhere. Maybe you feel trapped in a bad habit. Maybe you feel enslaved by the past. Maybe you are enslaved by guilt for past failures. Maybe you're enslaved by the anger you've stored up over time from being hurt by people and you can't seem to let it go.

I've got good news for those of you who are feeling exhausted, empty or enslaved. There's an antidote. It's called "**the far better life**". The reason God brought you here today is so you can learn about the far better life - the life you were created to live. Jesus wants you to come alive this Easter.

**What is the far better life Jesus offers? It is three things.**

**FIRST, IT IS FILLED WITH MEANING.** The far better life begins with Christ and the meaning he gives to our lives. The greatest tragedy in life is not death. It's going through your entire life not knowing why you're here. Without meaning life simply isn't worth living. Unfortunately, most people go through life never knowing their real purpose for being here - why God put them on earth. Without meaning the good life simply isn't very good. Looking good, feeling good, having the good things this world has to offer isn't good enough to make you happy. If that was the way to happiness then Hollywood would be the happiest place in the world, but it's not. In fact the divorce rate in Hollywood is higher than anywhere else in the world. It takes more than the good life to make you happy. It takes more than a busy life to make you fulfilled. There is a big difference between a full life and a meaningful life. They aren't necessarily the same.

So we search for meaning in all kinds of ways. This past week I watched *The Wizard of Oz* on television. You all remember - Dorothy is looking for a way back

home to Kansas. The tin man is looking for a heart. The scarecrow is looking for a brain. The lion is looking for courage. It's a great story, an American classic. As I sat there watching, it dawned on me how much we are all like those characters in the *Wizard of Oz*. We live our lives thinking, **"Oh, if I only had this or if I only had that I'd be happy."** The tragedy is we can chase after these things all our lives and still never be happy. C. S. Lewis explains our dilemma so well, when he says, ***"God cannot give us happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing."***

There is only one place to find what we need to be happy. We must go to the God who created us. God made us for himself. He made us for a purpose. Until we understand that we were made by God, for God, life isn't going to make a whole lot of sense. It's in understanding God's purpose for our life that we begin to live the far better life.

The Bible says, ***"Because Jesus was raised from the dead, [and that is what Easter is all about] we've been given a brand new life. We have everything to live for including a future in heaven and that future starts right now."*** (1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:3-4 MSG) That's a very, very important verse in the Bible.

**First**, it tells us that **the far better life is somehow connected to what Jesus Christ did at Easter**. Somehow His coming back to life enables us to live a far better life - better than anything we could find on our own.

**Second**, this far better life is not just something to add on to an already good life. **It's something totally new**. It's not just "new and improved" like so many products we see advertised that are nothing more than a new label. The far better life God offers us in Christ is a totally new way of life. God says, "I want to give you a brand new life. I want to give you a chance to start over - a chance to begin again. All those dumb things you've done in the past, all those

stupid mistakes, all those sins, faults, failures, I'm going to forgive them and I want you to let them go." God is offering us a brand new start in Christ. It's not something we do - it's something Jesus has already done for us.

The entire Bible could be summed up in this: **You were made to have a relationship with God - a personal relationship with the God who loves you.** But there is this one problem. God is holy and you are not holy. Neither am I. There is a tremendous gap between you and God because of your sin. There isn't any way you can bridge that gap, but God has already done it for you. He came to earth some 2000 years ago in the person of Jesus Christ to live the perfect life of obedience to his heavenly Father. He was then worthy to lay down His life as a payment for your sins, so that you could have a brand new start in life. Through Him you can have a far better life than you've ever known - a life of meaning and purpose.

The Bible says, "*He [Jesus] died so we would no longer live for ourselves but for Him who died for us and was raised to life for our sake.*" (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 5:15) Do you hear what that says? We weren't made to live for ourselves. We were made to live for God. Only then will our lives have meaning and significance.

This far better life is not just a life filled with meaning.

**SECOND, IT'S A LIFE FREED BY GRACE.** What does that mean? The Bible says, "*We're free to live a new life in the freedom of God.*" (Romans 7:6 MSG) This freedom to live a new life is not something we deserve. It's not something we earn. It's not something we merit. It's not something we are entitled to. It's a gift from God because He loves us. It's an act of God's grace. Grace is when God gives you something you don't deserve. There is something incredibly freeing when you realize that everything you own, everything you've accomplished, everything you are, is a gift from God. Even the very breath you

breathe is a gift from God. Your whole life, from beginning to end, is a gift from God. Your freedom is a gift from God. We often think of freedom as the right to come and go as we please, one of the many constitutional rights we enjoy as Americans. Those freedoms are very precious to us, especially in light of the past couple months when we have almost daily through the TV witnessed the lack of freedom of people living in other countries.

While those freedoms are so important, the most important freedoms are the ones Christ has won for us. **He has set us free from the power of sin and guilt.** He has paid our penalty so we are no longer in debt to God. He daily gives us the strength to overcome temptation and make good decisions. **He has set us free from the fear of death.** I'm not afraid to die because I know God loves me and He will care for me in the world to come just as He cares for me in this life. **He has set us free from the past.** Not only from the sin and guilt, but he has also helped me to heal from the pain I've experienced in my past. God can lift that pain from you, as well, when you enter into the far better life and are filled with the knowledge of Christ's love for you. Then you can let go of the anger and bitterness as you take hold of His love.

**He sets us free from the expectations of other people.** We have only one person to please now and that is Christ. **He sets us free to be who He created us to be.** We're free to grow and develop into the person He wants us to be. **He sets us free from worry, fear, anxiety, boredom, meaninglessness, hate, anger and malice.** He sets us free to be filled with His love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, the fruits of His Spirit living in us.

It's all a gift. The old system of earning God's favor just doesn't work. The Bible says, *"The old system...was canceled because it didn't work. It was weak*

*and useless for saving people. It never made anyone really right with God. But now we have a far better hope, for Christ makes us acceptable to God..."*  
(Hebrews 7:18-19 MSG)

The better life is free to us. But it wasn't free to our Lord, Jesus Christ. It cost him tremendous suffering and even death. The Bible says, "*He gave His life to purchase freedom for everyone.*" (1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2:6 MSG) In order to receive the new life He has purchased for you, you have to let go of your old life. The Bible says, "*The best thing to do is give it [the old life] a decent burial and get on with your new life.*" (Romans 8:13 MSG)

Not only is this far better life filled with meaning and freed by grace, it's also a life full of energy. It connects us to the greatest power source in the entire universe. The Bible says, "*Those who feel tired and worn out will find new life and energy.*" (Jeremiah 31:25 MSG) God wants you to tap into His power. He says, "*You will not succeed by your own strength or power, but by My Spirit.*" (Zechariah 4:6) The far better life must be lived in the strength and power of his Spirit in us. The Bible says, "*Once the Spirit lives within you, He will bring to your whole being new strength and vitality.*" (Romans 8:11 MSG) God wants you to have a life full of energy.

It's your choice. It's your decision. You can go through the rest of your life disconnected from God's power or you can live the far better life plugged in to God's power. The choice is yours. God promises to renew us if we will only come to Him. The Bible says, "*Even though on the outside it often looks like things are falling apart on us, on the inside, where God is making new life, not a day goes by without His unfolding grace.*" (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:16 MSG)

Maybe you've come here today feeling tired and empty. Maybe you're ready to give up hope that things will ever be better in your life. I want to encourage

you—don't give up. Instead, look up. Look up to God. Ask Jesus Christ to fill your life with meaning. Understand that you are freed by grace. Let God pour into you the strength and energy you need to live the far better life that Jesus has made possible for you by taking your sins upon himself on the cross, that power he demonstrated when he rose from the dead.

The tomb is empty. Our Savior lives. Come alive with him this Easter.