

The S word

The Death of Sin

He is risen! He is risen indeed! Good morning and welcome to the Easter celebration of Otumoetai Baptist Church! It's great that you're here today as we join churches all over the world celebrating the fact that the tomb is empty, Jesus is alive, and God's dream to rescue and redeem this old world and make everything new is already underway. This is a great day for believers in Jesus!

The S word

Over the last few weeks we've been doing a series called *The S Word*, yes that's right, we've been talking about sin, talking about 'what is sin', 'what the consequences of sin are', and 'what is the remedy for sin'. We called it 'the S word', because it is not very cool to talk about sin is it. We've said that sin is like the proverbial elephant in the room, everybody knows it's there, but nobody wants to talk about it.

For us to understand about sin and its consequences and what has been done about it, we had to go right back to the beginning of the bible.

When God made people, he breathed into them the breath of life. At the beginning there was no death; creation bubbled and sparkled with life, but as you know people chose to disobey God's life giving instructions and because of that death came into the world. Death actually just means separation, separation physically and separation spiritually. Because we disobeyed God, basically we messed up big time.

I find it interesting that our western culture tends to avoid thinking that things might be 'wrong', these days nothing and nobody is wrong, except for anyone who says something is wrong, they are wrong. Apart from that, it seems that the only place that something is allowed to be wrong is in Maths!

(Show a red X on the board. Ask the children) what does this mean if you see this on your math work at school. It means you have done it wrong. Or maybe you have seen it on 'America has got talent' when someone has tried their hardest but it wasn't right. It can be a bit sad for them can't it? We all do things wrong – adults as well as children.

We have a second X, if you saw this under someone's name at the bottom of your birthday card, what would it mean? It means love, that person loves you. I don't know about you but I like getting cards like that from my kids. All of us need to know that we are loved by others.

As I said over recent weeks we have been talking about sin, and all the different ways we might make mistakes and fall short of God's plan, when we miss the mark. And the consequences of that. But we need to remember the reason we should stop to consider our mistakes, our sin, is so that we can truly understand the amazing grace of God. It's only against the darkness that the light shines bright.

So often, sadly, the reputation of the church is about pointing out sin in people's life, but God is into life and Easter Sunday is about LIFE. It's about the new life that Jesus Christ experienced when he burst out of the grave. **Today we celebrate the death of sin.** Jesus died on a cross, he was buried in a tomb, and despite that that, he had done nothing wrong.

You see we have the cross between the 2 X's. The one on the left says 'you have done wrong, you have made a mistake, you have missed the mark. The one on the right says, I love you, you are important. The cross in the middle says 'we all do things wrong but Jesus died on the cross so that we can be forgiven and he did that because he love us.

So Jesus died on the cross, he was buried but three days later he was seen walking and talking, joking and laughing with his friends. He had a heartbeat and a pulse and was very much alive. If you haven't seen the movie Risen yet, it's worth a look.

Jesus is alive and today we celebrate that!

But wait there is more...

Easter is not just about Jesus' life and the historical event that happened years ago. It's also about our life and our resurrection that will happen to all those who believe that Jesus is the Son of the living God, the rescuer, the redeemer, the Saviour of the world, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. What happened to Jesus 2,000 years ago will one day happen to us. Despite death on earth, in the end, life wins!

But wait there's more...

Easter is about the new life of the entire universe, that one day will be delivered from the consequences of sin and suffering and sickness and death and poverty and pollution and hatred and war and violence and cancer and racism and injustice and tornados and tsunamis and terrorism and nuclear weapons and random acts of violence and all the other expressions of evil that grieve us every single day. One day this broken world will finally be fixed!

But wait there's more...

Easter is about the fact that this new life has already begun. The beginning of that new creation exploded onto a stunned and sleepy world when Jesus emerged from the tomb. The resurrected body of Jesus was the prototype, the first fruits of a whole new creation, teeming with life, no longer in bondage to sin.

And that's the best news this world has ever heard. The resurrection of Jesus is like the guarantee that more life is on the way. The new creation has begun! It started with the resurrection of Jesus and will be complete when every aspect of the universe is restored and redeemed and renewed.

That's good news!

"It is finished" is what he cried from the cross. Paid in full. Jesus paid the price to cover the cost of our mess. He paid it all. And three days later, on Easter Sunday, the cheque cleared. The payment for our sin was accepted. The resurrection confirmed that.

The testimony of Thomas

One of the significant proofs of the death and resurrection of Jesus was not just that Jesus appeared to over 500 people but the fact that there were nail prints in his hands, the scars that he showed his disciples after he rose from the dead proved that he was for real. His scars told his story. To every scar there is a story.

Scar show and tell!!!

There's a story in the Gospel of John where Jesus shows his scars. One of his disciples was a bit of a sceptic, he didn't believe his mates that Jesus had actually come back to life again. His name was Thomas, some have called him Doubting Thomas and have given him a bit of a hard time. But I think we need to give him a bit of a break because I think a lot of us would have been like Thomas. I think I would have been. I'd want to see proof that this whole thing wasn't a hoax, that this person really was Jesus. After all it's not every day that someone comes back from the dead.

And so we read in John 20:24-29,

Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came.²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."²⁶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said,

"Shalom. Peace be with you!"²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."²⁸ Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"²⁹ Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Thank God for Thomas. He's the patron saint of all us doubters! But it was the scars that convinced him that Jesus had risen from the dead. The scars told the story of God's power and God's love.

If Jesus was physically present today and he entered this room like he entered that room where Thomas was, what would Jesus say to you?

Would he say, "Stop doubting and believe."

Or would he say, "Blessed are you because you have not seen me and yet have believed."

On this Easter Sunday I want to give you the chance to receive that life if you haven't already. And if you have, I want to give you a chance to reaffirm it and thank God for it on this special day. So take a moment to quietly pray and then I'll lead us in a closing prayer.

"Dear Jesus, I believe that you are the Son of the living God, the Saviour of the world, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And right now I want to thank you for dying for my sins, in my place, and for rising from the dead. Thanks for Easter. Forgive my sin. Give me life. And use me to change this world and make it a better place like you did. Thank you so much, Jesus. In your name. Amen."