

## How Easter Changes the Ordinary Flow of Life

1. Warm-up Question: Share a favorite memory from this Easter weekend – maybe from the Seder Meal, the Good Friday drama, the Easter Egg Hunt, Easter Sunday Worship, or time with family and friends.
2. Jeff began Sunday’s sermon by telling how his parents took a super cautious approach to life. He told how, when leaving from a hospital visit with his Dad one night, his Dad told him to check the back seat of his car in the parking lot before getting into the car. Then his Dad told him to be sure no one was lurking at the shadows of the church building when he stopped by there. Then his Dad told him to watch out for ice on the bridges. It’s easy to fall into the trap of thinking the supreme goal of life is to be safe and secure
  - a. In some families, we learn to see life as something dangerous we need to survive. Safety is the highest aspiration. In other families, we learn to see life as an adventure to be relished. Bold living is the highest aspiration. What approach did you learn growing up?
  - b. Jeff told about an old man on his death bed saying, “Thank God I made it here safely.” Suppose an angel appeared to you and gave you a choice: you can either live vibrantly for 40 years or live dully for 90 years. Which would you choose and why? (Come on now, would you really have the courage to trade off 50 years of life!)
  - c. Jeff told about a recent conversation where he was asked if he would ever want to travel to Israel. He said, “Yes, but only if the risk of terrorism subsides,” which is very unlikely in our lifetime. The truth is, Jeff said, he would LOVE to visit the places Jesus walked; it would be one of THE MOST meaningful experiences of his life. Yet his instinctive reaction was to forego that experience for reasons of safety. It’s at that point Jeff realized, “I’m becoming my parents!” Where would you most like to travel in the world? If it’s a place of elevated risk of disease, crime, or terrorism, would that deter you? Why or why not?
  - d. Is our risk tolerance just a matter of personality or is it a spiritual issue? How do you see it?
3. The Easter story has a lot to say about how we approach life. Read Matthew 16:13-26.
  - a. This Gospel story takes place somewhere in the middle of Jesus’ public ministry. It sounds like most people at this point saw Jesus as a prophet. But Peter says Jesus is “Messiah” and “the Son of the living God.” As best you understand, what’s the meaning of these two terms?
  - b. Who or what is the “rock” on which Jesus intends to build his church movement?

- c. Immediately after expressing excitement about the movement he was going to give birth to, Jesus “began to show his disciples he must go to Jerusalem,” suffer, be killed, then rise again the third day.” Why do you think Peter was so upset about this?
  - d. Why do you think Jesus was so determined to go to Jerusalem despite the danger?
  - e. What do verses 24-26 tell us about Jesus’ outlook on life and the outlook he calls us to embrace?
4. For Easter to happen, Jesus had to be willing to face the danger of Jerusalem.
- a. Suppose Jesus decided to take Peter’s more cautious approach, avoiding Jerusalem and limiting his ministry to the Galilean countryside. Jesus could have lived much longer, maybe even into old age. Think of all the extra people he could have helped. Wouldn’t that have been better? Why or why not?
  - b. To live into the fullness of his destiny and become all he was meant to be, Jesus had to be willing to go to Jerusalem despite the risk. What does Jerusalem represent for you? Where in your life right now are you tempted to play it safe when God may be calling you to act boldly? How do you assess your situation? What are the tradeoffs?
  - c. In John 11:25, Jesus says, “The one who believes in me will live, even though he dies, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.” What does it mean to “live even though you die?” When in your life have you “lived even though you died?”
  - d. In John 11:25, Jesus also promises we can “live and never die?” What does that mean?
5. To get from Matthew 16 (the ordinary life in Galilee, with all its limitations) to Matthew 28 (the extraordinary life of resurrection, with all its possibilities) Jesus had to be willing to go to Jerusalem, face his fears, and take some chances. That prompted Jeff to say, “Easter is an attitude – an attitude of defiance that says, ‘I go to Jerusalem!’”
- a. What kinds of fears most hold you back? What are you most afraid of in life?
  - b. Jeff told the story of Robin Herman. Tell us about someone you’ve known who wasn’t afraid to face fears and risk failure in order to live deeply and fully?
  - c. What happens when we try and fail? What does Jesus’ Jerusalem experience teach us about that?
  - d. At the end of Sunday’s sermon, Jeff said he has decided to travel to Jerusalem sometime in the next decade regardless of risk. What have you decided you’re going to do to help you live more fully into the attitude of Easter?