

## Easter 2021

You Can't Have Easter Without A Cross

*Matthew 16:13-27*

*Memory Verses: Matthew 16:24*

### MANUSCRIPT

#### Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Do you guys have a day of the year that you just loved as a kid? Did you have a day of the year that you just hated as a kid? The same day every year? I'm pretty sure that the day I loved the most as a kid is probably the same as many of you. So let's test that theory... on the count of three I want you to shout out what your favorite day of the year was when you were a kid; 1...2...3... Christmas! Mine was Christmas... I figured for many of you it was Christmas as well. I think some of you probably said "Your Birthday", others may have said the opening day of Baseball or free doughnut day at Krispy Kreme.... but for the most part every kid's favorite day of the year is Christmas. Why? The presents! The anticipation, the mystery, the magic, the food, and of course... the presents. Everyone loves Christmas.

But I doubt we all share the same day we hated as kids. Mine was the day after Thanksgiving... because that was the day we spent all day decorating for Christmas. My mom loved decorating for Christmas and so she had a never ending supply of Christmas décor. We would go to three or four different storage areas, some at other people's houses because we couldn't store it all at our house, to gather all of the Christmas decorations... and then we would work from sun up to sun down putting up lights, trees, signs, manger scenes, dancing elves, and dancing santas. You name it we put it up... and we put it up in every single room of the house; every bedroom, every bathroom... you'd open a closet... I guarantee you found some sort of Christmas something or other. And of course me and my brother hated it and complained the whole time, which made my mother crack the whip even harder and before the day was over... it was not a happy home.... but it was a decorated home.

It wasn't until my senior year of high school when something dawned on me. I thought I loved Christmas so much because of the presents and the anticipation and the food... but there's no way Christmas would have been Christmas if it weren't for the decorations. My mom knew that for us to have the best day of our lives on December 25<sup>th</sup> that we would have to set the mood. It was then I knew... you can't have the joy of Christmas without the pain of decorating day. Now as an adult... I don't mind decorating day... in fact this past year Lisa was in Michigan for a few days seeing her sister and I did decorating day all by myself... with

some help from the kids of course... and while they didn't like it so much... I actually had a good time. What changed in this grinch that made his heart grow three times bigger? I realized an important life lesson... you can't have good days without bad days... you can't have a prize without a price... and it has made all the difference because now I've learned to not just enjoy the prize but the price as well.

Why am I telling you this? Why am spending so much talking to you about Christmas on Easter? Did I get my holidays mixed up? Nope. But now that you mention it... Easter and Christmas share a lot of similarities. They are both fun celebrations where we get presents; at Christmas they come in boxes and at Easter they come in eggs. They both have mascots; Christmas has Santa, Easter has a Bunny. They both traditionally involve a nice meal with a Ham. And they both bookend the life of Jesus Christ. At Christmas we celebrate Jesus Emmanuel; God with us. At Easter we celebrate Jesus Savior; God raised for new life.

But there is also something very different about Christmas and Easter. Where Christmas is all about a new birth for a death... Easter is all about a death for a new birth. At Christmas we don't focus on the death of Christ as much... we have 33 years before that; so we just focus on the good. At Easter we don't have that luxury. At Easter we have to focus on the cruel, agonizing, torturous, and scandalous death of Christ before we can get to resurrection day. The greatest day the Earth has ever known is the day that Jesus was raised from the dead to give us new life... but that day cannot come without Good Friday, the prize cannot come without a price... and that price is the cross.

Enter Peter. Peter, like us loves the idea of Jesus as savior and Lord... but he hates the very mention of the cross. Read with me Matthew 16:13-23 if you would. Did you see it. In **verse 16** Peter proclaims correctly that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. This is the most accurate depiction of who Jesus is; he is the long awaited for, anointed one of God, who would save the world from the curse of sin. He is the son of the living God... making him also deity... making him also God. Peter gets this... and Jesus affirms him saying; "blessed are you Simon Peter, for this was revealed to you by my Father in heaven." But not 5 verses later does Simon go from being told that he has a direct line to God the Father, to being told that he is Satan. Why? Because he can't correlate these two revelations. On one hand Jesus is Savior, Lord, and God... and on the other hand Jesus says he will die. In **verse 16** Peter sees through a heavenly lens that reveals who Jesus is... but in **verse 23** Peter sees through a fleshly lens that cannot comprehend both Christ & a Cross. And here Jesus is making it abundantly clear to his disciples, his closest friends, and to us his followers the sobering reality... you can't have Christmas without decorating day and **you can't have Easter without A Cross!** There's three takeaways I want us to see here this morning that will show us the value of the cross of Jesus Christ.

## Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first takeaway is.... **You Can't Have The Church Without A Cross**. Now of course we see the cross mentioned here in **verse 21**... but go back up to **verse 18** where we most likely missed the cross in Peter's confession of Christ. Peter didn't need to wait for verse 21 to get upset... if he would have realized what Christ was actually saying in verse 18 he could have gotten upset a whole lot earlier. In verse 18 Jesus says, "You are Peter and on "this rock" I will build my church." Question; on what rock is Jesus building his church? Is it Jesus, Peter, or Peter's confession? Good thing we have **Ephesians 2:20** to help us out. It's Peter's, and the rest of the apostle's confession of Jesus as the Christ. It's this confession that's the foundation which the apostles used to begin the Church. Another question; why is it merely the confession of the apostles... and not the confession of Jesus himself? Because Jesus won't be around to speak it. If only Peter could have read between the lines, Jesus is saying, "I'm not going to be around,, the responsibility of sharing this confession and building my Church is on you now."

The point is this... Jesus is making it clear that he wants the apostles to take this confession; that Jesus is the Christ, to the lost and create a world-wide movement called the Church... but before they can do that He, Jesus, must face the cross. Why? Because the confession that Jesus is the Christ is incomplete without the cross. There can be no Gospel without a cross. This is why he told them in **vs20** not to tell people that he was the Christ. You ever wonder why Jesus would say that? It doesn't make sense... I thought Jesus wanted us to share this confession. But they didn't have the whole confession yet did they. They didn't have the whole confession yet because Jesus hadn't gone to the Cross yet!

Yes, Jesus is the Christ the son of God but his mission wasn't to just show up... it was to die. Therefore in **Galatians 1:3-5** you have a complete confession; Jesus Christ who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age according to God's will and for his glory. Do you get it... no cross... no church. **You can't have a true church without a complete confession and you can't have a complete confession without the cross.**

Once the confession was complete; a Gospel with a cross... then the mission of the church could be accomplished. We see this mission in **vs19**. The mission of the church is to loose sinners from the grip of hell and see them bound to the salvation of Christ. Once again... there is no mission without a church and there is no church without a confession and there is no confession without a cross. Everything about this church, everything about the Church universal hinges on one thing... the Cross of Christ. **You can't have Easter without A Cross** and you can't have a

church without a cross.

The second takeaway is this... **You Can't Have The Resurrection Without A Cross**. Isn't it ironic that in verse 21 Peter's anger causes him to miss the greatest news ever told. He can't hear anything but Jesus suffering and dying... and then everything goes red and he misses the rest. What does he miss in **verse 21**? He misses the resurrection. The resurrection is everything – without it we have nothing. **John 11:25** tells us that Jesus is the resurrection and life and without him we can't live – why? Because in **1 Corinthians 15:13-17** we see that, "if there is no resurrection then Christ isn't raised and if Christ isn't raised then our preaching and faith is in vain and you are still in your sins! - why? Because in **Romans 1:4 & Acts 17:31** we see that the resurrection proves that Jesus is the Christ and is God and has the power to keep his promise of saving us from our sins. It's simple... the resurrection proves that Jesus is the Christ and that he can save us from our sins as he promised. No resurrection means no Christ and no remission of sins.

The resurrection is absolutely necessary, but utterly impossible without the cross. The resurrection is needed to prove that Jesus can do what he said he can do... the cross is needed to do what he said he could do... which is, take away our sins. Why is the cross necessary for the remission of sins? **Hebrews 9:22** tells us; without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. So, if Jesus didn't die the way he did, then there would be no need for the vindication the resurrection gives. **The resurrection is impossible without the cross and the cross is in vain without the resurrection... you can't have Easter without A Cross.**

The third takeaway is this... **You Can't Follow Jesus Without A Cross**. Look with me at **vs.24-27**. Jesus had a cross... a price to pay for the prize. You have a cross too... a price to pay as well. The cross means self-denial (**vs24**). Jesus prayed in the garden not my will but yours. Our prayers can be no different. Taking up our cross means denying ourselves our goals, our dreams, and our desires. The cross means death (**vs25**). We must die to our sinful ways, we must die to our pagan ideologies, and we must die to any other pursuit but Jesus. If you can't carry your cross and follow Jesus then yes, it is possible that you may gain the world... but there's a consequence... you will lose you soul **vs26**. Jesus makes it clear here... he's coming back for those carrying crosses **vs27**. That's why carrying a cross means life **vs25**. Those who choose death as Christ chose death... will inherit life as Christ rose from the dead. It's simple... **When you choose to model the sacrifice of Christ with your life... you will find a new resurrected life.** And that's why **you can't have Easter without A Cross**

## Application

Easter is meant to be the day you surrender your life to Christ as

your savior and Lord by putting your faith in his death and Resurrection as the sole means to take away your sin. So have you looked at the Cross and given your life to Christ?

Easter is meant to be everyday. Everyday we die to our sin and our desires and everyday Jesus resurrects us to a new life found only in following him. But **you can't have Easter without a Cross**... so are you carrying your cross?

### **Conclusion**

A Church without a cross is a social club. A Resurrection without a cross is a charade. A Christian without a cross is charlatan. And, Easter without a cross is eggs and bunnies and thats it... You must have a cross because the cross changes everything... **you can't have Easter without A Cross**