

Easter 2026

What we celebrate today is the most important event that has ever happened in the history of the world.

This one singular event changed not only world history, but it changes eternity.

If the resurrection of Jesus didn't happen then those that call themselves Christians have actually been tricked and have been worshipping a dead, liar and lunatic for the last 2000 years.

2 Corinthians 15:17 (NLT)

¹⁷ ...if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins.

The entire Christian faith rests on this one singular event...the empty tomb

**Easter isn't just about an empty tomb.
It's about a personal encounter with a risen Savior.**

In Matthew, Mark, Luke and John where the resurrection story is actually told, there are about 40 verses dedicated to talking about the resurrection itself, but here are around 140 verses that talk about His post resurrection encounters with people...

And that risen Savior wants to have that personal encounter with you today... And that encounter can not only change your life, but it can change your eternity...if you allow it.

Romans 8:11 (NLT)

¹¹ The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.

3 People that the resurrected Jesus had a personal encounter with

1) Seeker

Maybe you are seeking God, but you aren't exactly sure how to find him, where He is, or even who He is, but you are trying to make sense of everything going on in your life right now...

This was **Mary Magdalene**...

John 20:1; 11-16 (NLT)

Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance.

¹¹ Mary was standing outside the tomb crying, and as she wept, she stooped and looked in. ¹² She saw two white-robed angels, one sitting at the head and the other at the foot of the place where the body of Jesus had been lying. ¹³ "Dear woman, why are you crying?" the angels asked her.

"Because they have taken away my Lord," she replied, "and I don't know where they have put him."

¹⁴ She turned to leave and saw someone standing there. It was Jesus, but she didn't recognize him. ¹⁵ "Dear woman, why are you crying?" Jesus asked her. "Who are you looking for?"

She thought he was the gardener. "Sir," she said, "if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him."

¹⁶ "Mary!" Jesus said.

She turned to him and cried out, "Rabboni!" (which is Hebrew for "Teacher").

Maybe you are like Mary and you are seeking Jesus.

Here is the reality though...Mary was looking for the wrong Jesus.

She was looking for a dead Jesus. She was looking for her friend that she missed, but she wasn't looking for a resurrected, victorious, King Jesus.

And I think it is possible that people today are missing the encounter with Jesus that they are looking for because...

Of the circumstances that life has thrown at you.

The craziness that is going on in our world right now has you distracted

People have let you down or hurt you, and so you are projecting that onto Jesus.

You need to know today that... **Jesus isn't hiding from you...He is calling you**

Jesus knew that Mary was distracted by her grief and her confusion, and He simply says... "Mary" as if to say "I am right here" "I see you" "I love you" "I am with you"

Jeremiah 29:13 (NIV)

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

Doubter

Maybe you have your doubts about this whole Jesus or Christianity thing. Maybe it's hard for you to believe that Jesus actually rose from the dead. Maybe you have a hard time believing that he actually loves you.

There was a doubter that the resurrected Jesus had an encounter with as well...

His name was **Thomas**....

Thomas was a disciple of Jesus and one day Jesus comes and reveals Himself to the other disciples while Thomas is absent. The disciples tell Thomas "we have seen the Lord"

John 20:25b-28 (NIV)

²⁵...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, "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!"

There are people that have real questions...

- You're not sure what to believe
- You've seen hypocrisy in Christians
- You doubt that Jesus will make your life any better

What **Jesus did NOT do** with Thomas and what he won't do with you...

- He didn't shame him
- He didn't reject him
- He didn't ignore him

Your doubts don't keep Jesus away...

In fact, Jesus is drawn to your doubts...if your heart is open to Him.

What Jesus DID do:

- He met Thomas in his doubt
- He gave him what he needed to believe
- He invited him to trust

Christianity is not a blind faith with zero evidence for the audacious claims it makes. I believe wholeheartedly that there are answers to the questions and the doubts that you have.

But just as Jesus told Thomas to "reach out" and touch Him, you too have to reach out to Jesus.

Take your doubts to Him...He can handle them

You also have to understand that not everything will make sense, all the time, exactly when you want it to.

There is faith and trust that is required...

Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV)

**⁵Trust in the LORD with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;**

**⁶in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.**

Denier

Maybe you are denying Jesus. You are living your life as if He doesn't exist and you have refused up to this point to fully surrender your life to Him.

This was Peter...

Peter famously denies he knows Jesus 3 times at the time when Jesus needed His friend the most.

But just as Jesus never gave up on Peter, He will never give up on you.

Peter denied Jesus 3 times, but the resurrected Jesus met Peter one day and asked him 3 times “Peter do you love me?” 3 times...

John 21:15-17 (NIV)

¹⁵ When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

¹⁶ Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”

¹⁷ The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.

Maybe you believe you have...

- Gone too far
- Done too much
- Drifted too long

The reality is Jesus is right here waiting to forgive you...

To the seeker He is calling you

To the doubter He is reaching out to you

To the denier He is ready to forgive you...but you have to reach out to Him