

**It's Easter—So What?
Philippians 3:7-11**

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Dr. Steve Horn

Text Introduction: As many will know, I am fond of coming to the conclusion of a sermon and asking the question, “So what?” Part of the reason that I do this is because this is the sermon technique displayed in the first sermon after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. We are privileged to have a copy of that sermon after the resurrection recorded in Acts 2. In the case of the first sermon though, the hearers asked the question “So what” when they said, “What must we do?”

When Peter came to the end of this stirring sermon on the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, the message pierced the hearts of many who listened that day so that they asked the question. As modern day preachers, it is important to ask this same question of the text. As I often say, “We do not study the Scriptures for information, but for transformation.” Asking the question, “So what” helps us to get at the transformational aspect of the text.

There is another reason that I ask the question “So what?” This was the technique of the one from whom I have learned the most about preaching. Dr. Rick Byargeon, my teacher and fiend, now in Heaven, closed his sermons with what he called “Walking Points.” I couldn’t steal that completely from him, but I have copied him by asking the question, “So what.”

Always be willing to ask of the Biblical text, “So what.” When we do that, we will be moving closer to the admonition of James to be “doers of the Word and not just hearers who deceive themselves.”

And so, this morning, we are here to celebrate that “It’s Easter! He has risen just as He said.” So what?

For our answer this morning, we turn to one changed by the resurrection—the Apostle Paul. This man, prior to his believing in the resurrection, was a persecutor of those who believed in Jesus. But, he was changed. We hear his resurrection testimony in Philippians 3.

Text: But everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ. ⁸ More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of Him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them filth, so that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own from the law, but one that is through faith in Christ—the righteousness from God based on faith. ¹⁰ My goal is to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, ¹¹ assuming that I will somehow reach the resurrection from among the dead.

It’s Easter, so what? What is possible because of Jesus’ resurrection?

1. A personal relationship with Jesus is attainable.

Several things are important to understand about this possibility of having a personal relationship with Jesus. First, you can only have a personal relationship with a person who is living. Second, there is a great distinction between knowing about Jesus and knowing Jesus. Knowing about Jesus is only

informational. Knowing Jesus is relational. Third, Christianity is not a religion of facts, but a relationship of faith.

Because of the resurrection of Jesus...

Knowing Jesus is a possibility.

Knowing Jesus must be a priority.

Three times in verses 7-8, Paul compares his past in light of his present. There is no comparison.

2. The power of the resurrection is available.

Ephesians 1:18-20— I pray that the perception of your mind may be enlightened so you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the glorious riches of His inheritance among the saints,¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power to us who believe, according to the working of His vast strength.

Can we understand this principle? The same power that raised Christ Jesus is available to us. Whatever the problem of your life, God's power is available to you. Now, we probably cannot get our minds around that. Then, beyond that, there is one more thought we find in Ephesians.

Ephesians 3:20—“Now to Him who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us—

William Randolph Hearst was the newspaper publisher of *The San Francisco Examiner*. Hearst had a fondness for collecting art. Biographers indicate that his warehouses became so full of art that certain pieces could never be found when he was ready to sell them or give them to someone.¹ David Nasaw, *The Chief: The Life of William Randolph Hearst*.

There is many a Christian like that. They have the power of God in them, but they do not realize this power. We have power over the grave, but we have power over sin. What do you need His power for in your life today? You can know and have that power.

3. A life purpose that is real is assured.

- You only will find purpose in life in cooperation with Jesus and in conformity to Jesus.

Karen Watson was a 38 year old missionary who died in Iraq when her vehicle was ambushed on March 15, 2004. She had written out her wishes to her pastors if she was killed. Her letter went like this:

Dear Pastor Phil & Pastor Roger,

You should only be opening this letter in the event of death.

¹David Nasaw, *The Chief: The Life of William Randolph Hearst*, p. 301.

When God calls there are no regrets. I tried to share my heart with you as much as possible, my heart for the Nations. I wasn't called to a place. I was called to Him. To obey was my objective, to suffer was expected, His glory my reward, His glory my reward.

In regards to any service, keep it small and simple. Yes, simple; just preach the gospel. Be bold and preach the life saving, life changing, forever eternal Gospel. Give glory and honor to our Father.

There is no joy outside of knowing Jesus and serving Him.²

4. **My own personal resurrection can be anticipated.**

The greatest privilege of Easter is to come to the end of life and recognize that eternal life follows.

One of my favorite stories expressing the meaning of Easter comes from a book entitled *Paris Underground*, written by Etta Shuber who was trapped inside of Paris when Hitler's storm troopers entered in the Spring of 1940. The Germans quickly shut down the country, guarded the borders, and refused to let anyone leave.

However, a small border town saw its population diminishing rapidly. The Nazis found that the town cemetery straddled the border, and that the locals had opened up an ancient gate in the rear of the graveyard wall. Every time mourners entered the cemetery for a funeral, they kept right on walking out the back gate, emerging into the land of freedom and life.³

For these French, they entered through the cemetery to a life of freedom from the Nazis. For Christians, we enter into eternal life. Because of Jesus' resurrection, we can anticipate our own eternal life.

You can only celebrate that which you know. Do you have know for certain that you have eternal life?

²Copied from *The Baptist Message*.

³From Joe McKeever Blog.