



LOVE REIGNS

LIVING IN THE HOPE OF EASTER

Week 1: Love Reigns (Easter)

Scripture: Matthew 27:32-42 and Matthew 28:18-20

Write Up: As Jesus was being crucified, the soldiers mocked him by placing a crown of thorns on his head and placing a sign over his head that read “King of the Jews.” They did not see him as the true King who rules and reigns. After Jesus’ resurrection, he revealed himself to his disciples and because of his defeat of death, he claims all authority over heaven and earth. It was Jesus’ love for us that held him on the cross. His love reigns in our lives when we put our faith, hope, and trust in him.

Think: Jesus is the true king over everything. He proved his authority by resurrecting from the dead.

Feel: Do I see Jesus as the authority in my life? Does his love reign over the way I live?

Do: Repent of our desire for control and allow Jesus to take control.

Sermon:

He is Risen! (**He Is Risen indeed**) Happy Easter everyone. Today we join with churches from all across the world, and throughout the centuries, in celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It WAS the love of God that caused Jesus to come to earth and to offer himself as a sacrifice on the cross to forgive the world of its sins. It IS the love of God that continually offers us new life through this risen Savior. So, today we celebrate. Today we worship the risen Jesus!

Not only is today Easter Sunday, but it is also the beginning of a powerful sermon series called Love Reigns. Together, for four weeks, we will be discovering all the ways that God’s amazing love transforms our past, present, and future.

Story: Many people underestimate the power of love. I would argue, however, that it is the most powerful force on earth. Many men in the room may be able to relate to the kind of things that love drove them to do in order to win the hearts of their girlfriends or wives. I remember when I first met my wife, I was unsure how to start a conversation with her in the restaurant she worked at. When I finally worked up the guts to speak to her, the only thing I could think to say was, “Look at my spider bite”, pointing at a recent wound on my arm. Needless to say, she was not very impressed. But I broke the ice and the rest is history. I have heard harrowing stories of men risking total embarrassment to try and impress the ones they love. (*Consider telling a story about the great lengths you have gone to for love of a spouse, parent, friend or child.*)



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Love is the driving force behind our sacrificial actions toward our family and friends. We will gladly pay any price in order to demonstrate how much we care. Love is powerful, and it moves us to do amazing things. Before there was ever an Easter Sunday, there was a Good Friday. Before there ever was a resurrection, there first had to be a death.

POINT 1: THERE CAN ONLY BE ONE KING

For 33 years, Jesus Christ walked the earth while serving the hungry, healing the broken, and delivering the oppressed. He announced the coming Kingdom of God and the restoration of all things. He claimed to be the Son of God, and many believed him to be the true King of all things. This kind of thinking and teaching caused a lot of conflict in the area that Jesus served in. You see, at that time, the ruler of the Ancient Near East was Rome. Rome had installed a vassal king named Herod the Great to keep things in Israel under control. Herod was a tyrant and was constantly afraid that his authority would be undermined. Another potential king would be a threat to Roman rule and therefore, had to be eradicated. Both Herod and Jesus could not reign over Israel.

So, the Jewish religious leaders and the Roman centurions worked together to have Jesus arrested. He was brought to trial for his claims to be God. He was convicted and beaten, nearly to death. He then was forced to carry a rugged, wooden cross all the way to the hill that he would be killed upon.

READ Matthew 27:32-42

The crucifixion of Jesus is marked by ridicule and disbelief. The soldiers mocked Jesus by placing a sign over his head calling him the King of the Jews, even though they did not believe it. Those who passed by mocked Jesus by telling him to save himself if he really was the Son of God. The priests and the teachers mocked Jesus by telling him to get off the cross if he really was the King of Israel.

None of them understood that the true test of Jesus' power and authority was not in his ability to save himself from crucifixion, but in his ability to overcome the death that the crucifixion would result in. Sometimes we miss the proof of Jesus' lordship because we are expecting him to prove himself in certain ways, and he does something different.

Many individuals have decided in their hearts that they will never trust in Jesus unless he meets their expectations. Unless Jesus heals their relative, gives them this job, stops world hunger, or writes something in the sky, they will never trust him and obey his authority in their lives. They can never allow themselves to see him as King unless he does what they want him to do.



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I am afraid this kind of mentality is the same kind of struggle that plagued those who were there at Jesus' death. It is also the same mentality that drove Herod to be a part of the death of God's son. When we demand Jesus to prove himself on our terms, we rob ourselves of seeing His work in our lives.

Herod was not the last one to be threatened by the Kingship of Jesus. He was not the only one to struggle with the idea of Jesus being in charge. The truth is that this is still an idea we have a hard time with today.

Illustration: (*Have a chair on stage with you to demonstrate the Lordship of Jesus.*) In our lives, there can only be one king as well. It has been said that on the throne of our hearts sits the one who reigns in our lives. We must choose whether that will be Jesus or whether it will be ourselves. (*Sit in the chair.*) When we are on the throne of our hearts, we make decisions based on what we want. We often live selfishly. The other choice we have is to put Jesus on the throne of our lives. (*Get out of the chair and leave it empty.*) When Jesus is on the throne of our lives, love reigns. We listen to his leading. We put others first. We live sacrificially. So, when it comes to the way you speak, act, and live? There can only be one king.

If Jesus is dead, then none of this matters, but if he is rose from the dead, then that changes everything! He is King.

POINT 2: LOVE OVERCAME DEATH

Three days after Jesus was crucified and laid in the tomb, to everyone's shock and amazement, he appeared in bodily form to many of the disciples and others. This had never happened before. They had seen him killed. They knew he was dead and now he was eating with them, walking with them, and talking with them. Jesus' love for humanity had overcome death and defeated evil once and for all. His resurrection is the proof that he was indeed, the true King over all.

Story: The renowned artist Paul Gustave Dore (1821-1883) lost his passport while traveling in Europe. When he came to a border crossing, he explained his predicament to one of the guards. Giving his name to the official, Dore hoped he would be recognized and allowed to pass. The guard, however, said that many people attempted to cross the border by claiming to be persons they were not. He needed proof.

Dore insisted that he was the man he claimed to be. "All right," said the official, "we'll give you a test, and if you pass it, we'll allow you to go through." Handing him a pencil and a sheet of paper, he told the artist to sketch several people standing nearby. Dore did it so quickly and skillfully that the guard was convinced he was indeed who he claimed to be. His work confirmed his word. (Our Daily Bread January 6. 1993)



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Jesus' work confirmed his word as well. Though many doubted him and mocked him, death did not have the last word and final say. Love did. The scripture tells us this is true in one of the most famous passages of all.

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