**The Greatest Comeback in History**

**It’s Not Over Until It’s Over**

**Scripture:** John 19:28-38

**Write Up:** When Jesus said it was finished, as He hung on the cross, He gave up His spirit and He died. To many, this may have seemed like a defeat. The Evil One thought he had finished Jesus. The Roman soldiers thought they had finished Jesus. The religious elite thought that they had finished Jesus. However, this is not what Jesus meant. He knew that He had fulfilled the scriptures and had been faithful to the end. What was truly finished was the power of sin and death. Jesus’ death and resurrection declared victory for all who trust in Him.

**Think:** No matter how dark things may seem, there is always hope. Nothing is over until Jesus says it’s over.

**Feel:** Death does not have the last word and final say. Jesus does.

**Do:** Give Jesus the areas of your life where you feel most hopeless and allow His resurrection to bring you hope.

**Sermon:**

He is risen! (He is risen indeed!) We have gathered together this Easter Sunday to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. All around the world, Christians will come together to remember the fact that the tomb was empty then and is still empty today. It is good on this Easter Sunday to be reminded, however, that what we now consider to be the victorious defeat of death was, at the time, considered the humiliating loss of a Messiah. In the eyes of many, Easter was almost the holiday that wasn’t because it nearly ended in demise.

**STORY**: Everyone loves a good underdog story - when all of the chips seem to be stacked against someone, but despite all of the disadvantages, they are able to overcome them. One of the greatest stories in recent memory is of the 1999 Buffalo Bills NFL team. (*Consider showing a clip from this game or a picture of the win.*) At one point, they were losing by 32 points and yet they still found a way to win. It was an NFL wild card game in Rich Stadium on January 3, 1999. The greatest comeback in NFL history was all the more remarkable because it was masterminded by Buffalo's back-up quarterback, Frank Reich, and not their superstar Jim Kelly. Trailing 35-3, Reich threw four touchdown passes, the last three to Andre Reed, to propel Buffalo into a 35-35 tie in the final moments of the game. The contest went into overtime and then Steve Christie's 32-yard field goal sealed a stupendous victory for the Bills. After the Bills had a setback, they forged an incredible comeback. (*Share a story about a comeback that seemed impossible*)

This is just one example of a heartwarming story of a victory that seemed all too unlikely. There are many more, and not just in the world of sports; countless limitations overcome and boundaries broken, victory snatched from the jaws of defeat. However, there has never been a comeback like the one that took place on that first Easter morning.

After three years of earthly ministry, Jesus was arrested for his claims of being the Son of God. He had preached the good news of the Kingdom of God and performed countless miracles on his way to the cross of Calvary. The Pharisees wanted to see Jesus extinguished because of the threat he brought to their control. The Roman government wanted him dead because of the following he had gained that they saw as a threat to their power. Finally, Satan wanted to kill Jesus because it would ensure his own unthreatened rule on the earth. The crucifixion was the confluence of all three powers into one place.

Jesus was nailed to a wooden cross and lifted up between two thieves, one on his right and one on his left. He was bloody, naked, and shamed. The book of John gives the final account of his life.

**READ John 19:28-34**

The story of Jesus’ final days reveals that all the prophetic scriptures written about him had come to fruition. What many people saw as a foiled plan, was actually part of God’s will all along. The final words from Jesus’ lips were, “It is finished”. After he said this, he breathed his last and gave up his spirit.

**POINT #1 – A FINISH THAT WAS NOT THE END**

The Roman soldiers came to check the three men whom they had crucified. The men on each side of Jesus were still alive, so they broke their legs to hasten the dying process. Jesus, however, had already expired. The spear in his side was evidence of the fact that he was dead. Surely, some at the foot of the cross would have been distraught. The man who they believed to be the One sent by God to rescue the world had been killed. Many, however, would have been overjoyed. The Pharisees thought they had won. The Roman government thought it had won. Satan and evil were confident that they had won. Jesus was finished. It looked like all hope had been lost and the plan of God had been set back.

**Illustration:** The beauty of Easter is that many of us today can relate to feelings of things in life being finished. Some of you listening to me know the sting of experiencing a setback in life. Maybe it is the loss of a job that has brought discouragement. Perhaps it is a diagnosis that is heartbreaking and feels too big to overcome. The loss of a friendship, a loved one, or a dream can be devastating. It can all feel so final. In some ways, it feels like a death. (*Share about real world situations that can be overwhelming and feel final*)

If you know what it feels like to be broken, ashamed, hopeless, and lost, then the story of Easter is one for you. Chapter 19 of the book of John is not the last chapter. In fact, you have to read on to find that the story continues for two more chapters. When Jesus says that “it is finished,” what he really means is that he has accomplished all that the Father sent him to do on the earth, but things had just now truly begun. No matter how dark things may seem in the present, the hope of Easter is that nothing is ever over until Jesus says it’s over.