

New!
"New" Series Week 1
Easter Sunday: April 16, 2017
Luke 24:1-7

Welcome/Intro/Vision

Today on Easter Sunday we're celebrating that God has done something NEW!
And we're kicking off a brand new series of messages appropriately entitled NEW!

I love new! New stuff and new experiences!

How many of you can look back over your life and say that a NEW relationship or a NEW job opportunity totally changed your life for the better?

Looking back over my life, there are these critical opportunities where something new came along—a new job opportunity, a new friendship, a new Apple product!

And acting on that new opportunity changed the direction of my life forever and for the better

There's something about "NEW" that can bring new opportunities, a different kind of energy or hope to a situation

So we love new, but there's a problem: new doesn't last, does it? New in this world doesn't have staying power

Back in the fall our old car with 190,000 miles on it died, so I was excited to get a new used car.

Decided to go with a Volkswagen, never had one before, trying a new kind of car for my new used car decision, it was used but it was all new to me!

But days after I bought it I took it to my mechanic and he found a number of things wrong with it

and when I went back to the dealer they found all sorts of reasons why it wasn't their fault and they only paid a portion of the repair bill

and it's taking all of my restraint to not tell you which dealer it was so that you never, ever buy anything from them ever,

But if you're ever considering buying a used car from a dealer in Asheboro, either talk to me first so I can dissuade you or talk to me afterwards so I can help you to find a good mechanic

Back in January we decided that our lives were way too simple and too easy, so we decided to add some recreational chaos to the mix by getting a new puppy

There's a sweet picture of Buzz the wonder dog when he was brand new, just a few weeks old, we took him home and he was sweet and wonderful and new!

And now here's a picture of him now about 3 months later, and he's growing like crazy and as he's grown, he's left his mark on our house and lives in all sorts of NEW and less than desirable ways!

Here's a door frame seal that he shredded, here's a piece of furniture he chewed up

And here's a picture of my three kids with their clothes that he's chewed holes through, Buzz is not so shiny and new any more!

New is exciting but the problem with New in this life is that New doesn't last

New cars break down, new job opportunities become ho-hum after a while, new relationships hit conflicts and people let us down

New in this world runs on a very standard and predictable trajectory that goes something like this: ***new to familiar to old to broken to gone or over,***

And all of us whether you'd call yourself a Christian or not have the aches and scars that come with living in a world where all around us things are getting old, fraying, decaying and dying

And some of us this morning are VERY AWARE that life in this world can be very painful things haven't turned out like you had hoped—strained relationships, shattered hopes, empty bank accounts, broken bodies, broken promises, toxic workplaces

There's stuff in the past that haunts us, there are things in the present that are just killing us, there's stuff looming up ahead that threatens us

Living in a world where things go from ***new to familiar to old to broken down to gone or over,*** it's exhausting and painful and sometimes heart-breaking, isn't it?

But what if there was a New that got introduced into this world that could run that whole thing backwards?

What if Easter Sunday is the story of God doing something miraculous that starts here at the end of the cycle: dead, gone where everything ends

and instead of that being the end of the story, God does an end-around writes an entirely NEW story that goes upstream, where New never gets old, never breaks down, never ends

where NEW is the first AND LAST word over everything and everyone?

What if Easter is God's introduction of a limitless supply of new NEW energy into a weary and tired world that will never, ever end

Throughout our lives, we'll be driving along, and every so often there's an ON-RAMP for something new that pops up

A new job, a new relationship, or a new season of life: graduation, retirement, marriage, new school, becoming parents for the first time

Many of those ON-RAMPS lead you into completely new directions, into new experiences, and new opportunities, the whole direction of your life gets changed at some of these on-ramps

Today, there's an on-ramp popping up right here, right now in real time and in case I lose you along the way, here's where we're going today in a nutshell:

Easter is God's on-ramp for you

to an immediate, forever, unbreakable new [Repeat with me]

Easter is God's on-ramp for you to go in an entirely different direction, into a new life and a new experience where his immediate, forever, unbreakable new is the defining characteristic of our lives

This is the hope that we celebrate here today, it's the invitation to everyone to step into, and it's what the first followers of Jesus discovered for themselves on that first Easter morning.

Bible/No Bible/Free Bibles: Mark 16:

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. ² Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb ...

⁴ But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. ⁵ As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

⁶ "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. ⁷ But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"

Have you ever worked on some project privately for a long time on your own or with a small team: a presentation for work or a Christmas present for the kids or some art or writing or poetry

And you know that you're going to present it or go public with it, and you worked super-hard on it and you just hoped that when you present it, it sang, it soared, it resonated with the people that you were sharing it with?

Here on that first Easter morning, God is going public with the project that the Father and his son Jesus have been working on for years, you might even say centuries, you might even say for an eternity, before time even began—and wow has it resonated.

Today all over the world there will be more people who gather together to celebrate this event than just about any other event on the calendar—this project that Jesus and his Father have pulled off, it is majestic, wonderful, breathtaking

Easter is God's on-ramp for you to an immediate, forever, unbreakable new—it's GOD's on-ramp.

Easter is GOD's idea, his on-ramp, his project, nobody else had the resources to pull it off, he built it at great cost to himself, and nobody expected God to act like he did on Easter everyone was utterly shocked and surprised--no idea that God was going to do this!

And it's God's on-ramp because it was nothing we could ever do or invent—only GOD can take someone who's dead and make them alive again and only God could run that whole cycle where things used to only go from new to gone and turn it backwards!

we couldn't pray enough, we couldn't work hard enough, we couldn't do enough good deeds, we couldn't walk enough old ladies across the street to make death un-happen

This is the crucial difference between Christianity and religion or secularism

Religion is all about us doing what we need to do and checking off all the right boxes to get God to like us, and to get God to do for us what we want him to do.

Secularism says there's no God and we don't have any need to make him happy, we just need to live our lives, be as tolerant and nice as we can to each other, don't ask too many big questions about meaning and purpose because there isn't any, and then we die

But Christianity says that there is a problem, we weren't made to die, and all our open-minded tolerance can't undo that, only God can fix that problem

Then to religion Christianity says it's about a relationship, not religion—a relationship with God based not on our religious performance or even just our moral behavior but built all on God's grace:

forgiveness and mercy are offered to us at the cross, we receive that mercy and forgiveness, are reconciled to the God of the universe

and then from within the context of a new, ongoing, life-giving relationship with God we receive grace and become instruments of grace, participating in God's mission to make all things new

Religion is human effort to do enough good stuff to get God to like you, accept you, or act on your behalf

And there is nothing religious whatsoever about the Easter story—Jesus's followers weren't being religious, they were FAITHLESS and fearful, running, hiding, afraid that they'd be next.

The people in the Jesus story do NOTHING religious whatsoever, and God still raises Jesus from the dead—there were no religious pre-requisites for God to do what he was committed to doing on Easter

Easter is God's doing, all God's doing from start to finish—it is HIS on-ramp built at great cost to himself to extend grace and mercy to all of humanity,
to extend this immediate, forever, unbreakable new life to you and to me.

Say it with me again: ***Easter is God's on-ramp for you to an immediate, forever, unbreakable new***

Easter is God's on-ramp FOR YOU

it's available for everyone, but it's personal, it's got YOUR Name on it, built by a God who knows your name and who loves you

In another of the accounts of the resurrection story, the angels tell the women to go and tell the disciples that Jesus has risen from the dead, and especially tell Peter

Peter gets named explicitly because Peter had very publicly and very embarrassingly failed Jesus on the night of his crucifixion, Peter had denied even knowing Jesus 3 times

And so Peter is covered in shame and guilt for what he did

And so the angels tell the women tell all the disciples, but especially to make sure that Peter knows that God has raised Jesus from the dead

Because Peter needs to know that his mistakes on Good Friday don't have the power to undo what God was committed to doing *for him* on Easter Sunday

And you and I need to know, that our mistakes in our past don't have the power to undo what God has done on for us on Easter Sunday.

Our mistakes do not need to be the defining moments of our lives and to have the last word over us—this Easter on-ramp to an immediate, forever, unbreakable new can if we'll let it

God has already pre-decided to forgive YOUR sins at the cross and at this empty tomb—you're not strong enough to invent any mistake more powerful than God's resurrection, you're not that great, you're not that creative, you're not that awesome.

if you're willing to hand it all over to God, he is ready to take it away from you, set you free from it, to forgive it and welcome you into his family, to invite you onto His on-ramp.

Our sin and mistakes that USED TO block all of us from having access to this on-ramp, he's taken away and dealt with once and forever at the cross of Christ

Say it with me again: ***Easter is God's on-ramp for you to an immediate, forever, unbreakable new***

This NEW, it's immediate. It's not off in the distance, it's not waiting for us when we die, it's not this mirage always off far away

New life, new energy, a new name, a new status in the cosmos and new mercies are all given to us immediately upon taking this on-ramp

Now of course it takes time and intentionality to fully integrate God's New life into our lives.

And we're going to spend the next several weeks talking about how we do this

Being a Christian is about following Jesus and by his Spirit learning to integrate God's forever, unbreakable new into our every day lives in every day ways right now, immediately.

About a year ago I realized that I was in this nasty internal world rut that I fall into occasionally:

I was anxious and discouraged way, way too easily. Small stuff was getting to me, rattling me more than it should or needed to and it was affecting how I was relating to the people around me—probably NEVER happened to you! Just try to imagine it.

And so I started to pray regularly that God would fill me with a more resilient Spirit. Resiliency has become my favorite prayer word.

I'm asking if this new, resilient, unbreakable life that we're talking about might go to work in new ways to make me a less anxious, less easily discouraged person

So that I might replace anxiety and discouragement with faith, hope, and love

So when my not-so-new used car spends two days in the shop because they can't find the right part to fix it, I can respond in faith, hope, and love rather than losing it and using the choice words that I'm not supposed to say

And when my dog chews up the furniture or my children or their clothes, I can respond in faith, hope and love rather than losing it with the dog

And when I face disappointments at work or with friendships or challenges or difficulties, I can respond in faith, hope, and love and sleep at night rather than anxiety over-running my life

Now of course, faith, hope and love doesn't mean I'm a doormat—it includes wisdom and courage to have good healthy conflict and hard conversations, wise boundaries with the car dealer and the dog and anyone and everyone else I'm in relationship with

But you know how ugly those interactions can get, right?

When I'm operating out of an anxious place or self-righteous place or entitled place or a fearful place I'm going to either over-react or under-react to the situations I'm dealing with

When I'm living out of this New resilient life in Christ, I can respond, not just react, in faith, hope and love: wisely, courageously, with a different kind of strength and peace.

All day every day we are becoming beings. We are becoming either more and more of who God made for us to be or we're moving further and further away from who God intended us to be

Imagine you, 20 years from now, and all your decisions have been made through some combination of anxiety, ambition, pride, selfishness, apathy, and/or self-righteousness. Can you imagine what kind of person you'd become?

Now imagine you 20 years from now and all your decisions, all your conflicts, all your problems and all your opportunities have been navigated in faith, hope and love. Can you

imagine how much wiser, more alive, more settled, more joyful, more peaceful you would be no matter what happened?

Faith, hope and love are available immediately, here and now, for you because

Say it with me again: ***Easter is God's on-ramp for you to an immediate, forever, unbreakable new***

But it's not just immediate. Not just a flash in the pan. Not just a brief feel-good quick-fix.

It's not just an Easter Sunday with some warm fuzzies for a few minutes but then back to the real world with my real problems and real issues divorced from God

This Easter new that God has introduced into a fallen world, it's forever and it's unbreakable.

It won't ever break, perish, spoil, become dull, boring, familiar, won't fade or die

THIS is the first ever permanent new. It is unbreakable, always becoming more resilient, more buoyant, more powerful, more wonder-full.

And in the vision that we get in the Scriptures of what God is up to at the end of all things, we get the voice of Jesus declaring over all of creation: ***"See! I am making everything new."***

Easter morning is the lighting of the fuse that results in this "making everything new" explosion that all of time is hurtling towards.

And if on Easter morning Jesus has risen from the dead to make this whole world new, then you know what that means? What that means is that maybe he can make you new, too.

Maybe he can make your marriage new. Maybe he can make your job situation new. Maybe he can make your relationship with your kids new. Or your relationship with your parents new. Maybe he can make your body new.

Maybe he can make your mind new, your heart new

maybe you can have Jesus's same resilient energy coursing through your life to help you to persevere through all the challenges that you're facing.

We always close each week with some sort of a take-home question to consider or an exercise to step into because we believe a life of faith is rather worthless if it doesn't integrate into real-life in real-time

So here's today's Take-WITH:

If Easter is God's on-ramp to you for an immediate, forever, unbreakable new, then question is, will you take that on-ramp?

If you're like most people, you're living your life driving along and in the car with you is some sort of baggage—some place or situation where you need an infusion of NEW: new hope, new options, a new perspective, new resilience, new energy

And this morning, you're coming up to the Easter on-ramp to lead you in a new direction, an entirely different journey, where Jesus offers you his immediate, forever, unbreakable new

And if you're already a Jesus-follower, this on-ramp isn't totally new to you

but you've still got stuff in your car where you need God's immediate, forever, unbreakable new to bring healing and fresh perspective, new resilience, courage, peace, confidence, hope, wisdom

and there's still miles to go before this new life is fully integrated, right?

And if you're not a Jesus-follower, if faith isn't really a part of your life in any sort of ongoing, integrated way, then this a brand new invitation into a brand new life—a brand new DIRECTION

To get on this on-ramp following Jesus by letting his path and his presence re-shape your life

We're going to be spending these next several weeks unpacking how the new of Easter gets integrated and applied to the places where we need something new

But to start with this week, ***If Easter is God's on-ramp to you for an immediate, forever, unbreakable new, then question is, will you take that on-ramp?***

Prayer