

Fil-Am Community Church

Pastor Rolly Estabillo

27 April 2016

Key Verse: Ephesians 1:19-20

WHY EASTER GIVES US HOPE

“I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God’s power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead.” Ephesians 1:19-20 (NLT)

I’m sure all of us have heard and watched on TV the atrocious bombings and killing of innocent lives in Brussels, Belgium. Certainly, those were violent, nonsensical acts. Before that, there was the San Bernardino shooting. And before that, were the Paris attacks. And I could go back in time citing all these heinous crimes against humanity. All these is just one aspect of the chaos happening in the world. We know that aside from these, people are also victims of natural disasters, economic troubles, and deadly diseases, to name a few. Which make some people wonder, “Where’s hope in the midst of all these? How can I find hope? Is there hope for me? Is this life all there is?”

The Bible says there is. God made provision for it. That's what we want to talk about today because today more than two billion people will celebrate Easter. The greatest day in the history of the world. And after 2000 plus years of critical examination and analysis we still have an empty tomb. The man who was in the tomb for three days rose from the dead. Amen?

Three men in church were interviewed and asked what they wanted people to say about them at their funeral. The first guy said he wanted them to say, “He put God first, others second and self last.” The second guy said, “I want them to say he

served God, he served his family and he served his church well.” The third guy said, “I want them to say, ‘Look, he's moving.’”

So, we are here today because Jesus wouldn't stay dead. He moved. He moved out of that tomb and into our world. And He moved into our hearts and into our lives and He is moving in this very room right now. That is the huge difference between Christianity and every other religions in the world. Christianity stands alone. The other religions had great leaders and they died and stayed dead. Never to move again and you can go to their graves and you can see where the decayed bones lie and even see a monument where they lie. But you go to the grave of Christ and it is an empty tomb and there is no monument, it's a movement. Because Christ is alive and He has moved out of the tomb into our world never to be stopped again. And, folks, that is why Easter gives us hope. We have hope because of Jesus who rose from the dead.

But I'm getting ahead of me. This morning I'd like to share with you three reasons why the resurrection of Jesus gives us hope in a world that seems to be hopeless. And in your own personal world which you may feel is hopeless, too, let me tell you, there is hope for you!

There are three very important truths that we learn from Easter. If you understand these truths and put them into your life, your stress level will go down dramatically and your peace of mind will increase dramatically. So, what are three truths? Let me now share with you three truths that prove that Easter gives us hope. The first truth is

1. GOD IS IN CONTROL

The first part of our verse mentions the “*incredible greatness of God's power.*” When you think of power, what comes to your mind? Electric power, solar power,

political power? The dictionary says that power is physical strength and force exerted by something or someone. Power also means the capacity or ability to direct or influence the behavior of others or the course of events.

Both are present in God and much more. Because God's power is not limited by physical strength. God power extends to the spiritual realm. This is why he can perform miracles. In fact, the word power here in this verse is translated from the Greek word "dunamis" which connotes the ability to perform miracles. "Dunamis" is the root word of "dynamic," "dynamo," "dynamite." So, our God is a dynamic God! Amen.

It doesn't stop here. Because see how the apostle Paul describes God's power – **incredible greatness**. That word "incredible" is incredible because the original Greek word can be translated in different ways – surpassing, exceeding, immeasurable, incomparable. It is power raised to the power of infinity. It's mind-boggling. But, to me, it says simply, God is in control. The incredible greatness of his power enables him to control the whole universe.

This is reassuring, if you think about it. Because, on a personal level, you realize that most of your life is beyond your control. Have you figured that one out yet?

There was this airliner which boasted of a modern airplane that can travel at three times the speed of the fastest planes in the world. It also bragged about the very smooth ride it offered that people wouldn't notice even the slightest bit when there's turbulence in the air. On its maiden voyage in New York, the plane's crew and passengers were all excited about being a part of history. And, as promised, the plane flew into the air smoothly and people clapped their hands and did high-fives. Then, one of the smiling flight attendants asked them to keep quiet as the PA announced, "Welcome to Flight 101. You're riding one of the marvels of

modern transportation. This plane will take only two hours to reach London. For the meantime, please sit back and relax. Because this ride will be very smooth, you can stand anytime you want, and do anything you want.

You don't have to worry about stumbling or falling because everything is under control, under control, under control, under control."

Like that plane, most of your life really is beyond your control. All of the major things of your life you had no control over at all. You didn't choose when you were born. You didn't choose who your parents would be. You didn't choose your race. They were beyond your control. And even today the major things in your life, you can control your reactions to things but you can't control the events that happen to you.

For instance, you cannot change the past no matter how hard you try. You cannot predict the future, no matter how hard you try. You could not raise your height by two inches, no matter how hard you try. Believe me I've tried. You cannot control the economy, which influences you. You cannot influence world events on the other side of the world, which do influence you. You cannot make people love you. As some of you have learned painfully.

Most of the things that really count in life are beyond your control. And because so much of your life you can't manage, you cannot control, that causes STRESS. Stress is caused primarily by trying to control the uncontrollable, by trying to manage the unmanageable, by trying to make people do and see things my way, by trying to make things happen that I cannot control. And it causes stress. And when you're stressed you start worrying.

On the other hand, God is in complete control. There's nothing that God cannot control because He made it all. He is the absolute power. He can do anything He wants.

How does that help me? How is that a comfort to me that God is in control?
How does that reduce my stress level?

God says in the Bible that He wants to help you manage the things that are unmanageable in your life if you'll trust Him, that He will help you control and deal with the issues that are out of your control, that He will give you His power – the same power that He demonstrated when He raised Himself from the dead 2000 years ago, He says He wants to help you with that same power. The Bible says this in Proverbs 19:21 (NIV), *“Many are the plans in a person’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails.”*

What happened in Jesus’ case was the religious leaders at that time said, “Let’s get rid of Jesus. We can silence Him by killing Him. It’s simple. We’ll get Him killed and that will be the end.” They didn’t realize that was fitting into God’s plan. Jesus Christ said, “I came to earth to die on the cross for the sins of people and then I’m going to raise myself up three days later.” So, while they thought they had their little plans, really God was in control. So, as the verse says *“Many are the plans in a person’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails.”*

Folks, how do you discover God’s purpose? How do you do his will? By trusting God. You see, when I start trusting God I stop having to try so hard. When I start praying, I stop panicking. When I start worshiping, I stop worrying. Those are the options. God says, “I want to help you but you’ve got to give it to Me.”

God says in the book of Isaiah, *“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”* (Is. 41:10 NIV) He’s got the power and He’s in control.

Let's get personal: What's out of control in your life? What is it that you say, "No matter how hard I try it's not getting together? I want my career to go in this direction, but it's not going that way.

There are habits in my life that I want to break and I just can't break them. There are good habits I want to develop, but I don't seem to have the willpower to get it going." What is it in your life that you'd like to change and you can't? Even with my best efforts, it's not working. Maybe it's with your kids, your health, your finances. It could be in some other kind of relationship. What is it that you worry about the most? You say, "I'm trying to worry about this because I can't make it work."

Would you agree that God has resources that you don't have? He says, "I'll help you. I'll be with you. I will strengthen you. I'll give you the power... If you will trust Me."

So whatever seems out of control, whatever seems unmanageable – your schedule, for instance – whatever seems to worry you the most, give it to God. While you may not be able to manage it, He can. God is in control.

Another reason why Easter gives us hope is that

2. GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISES. ALWAYS.

How do we know that? Long before Jesus Christ came to earth, died on the cross, rose again, went back to heaven, God promised He was going to do it. For thousands of years, back in the Old Testament, God said, "Someday I'm going to come to earth and I'll be called the Messiah. I'm going to come to earth and I'm going to do several things. One, I'm going to show you how to live. Two, I'm going to forgive all your sins. Three, I'm going to show you the way to heaven. And I'm going to tell you that there is a purpose for your life."

God made all these promises and when Jesus did come He made a bunch of promises and the most famous one being, “I’m going to let these people kill Me and three days later I’m going to raise Myself from the dead and this will prove I am who I claim to be.” God always makes good on His promises.

And these promises are to benefit you. Our verse says, “*the incredible greatness of God’s power for us who believe him.*”

No doubt all these happened because God has the power to make it happen. And he made it happen because he loves you. He came to earth to die for you. This same power is available for you now in a practical way. His power will help you to overcome and be victorious over life’s nagging problems. That is his promise. He never breaks his promise.

Notice what the Bible says. In the book of Numbers it says this, “*God is not man, that he should lie, not a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?*” (Numbers 23:19) There are over 7000 promises in the Bible for you. They’re like gift certificates waiting for you to cash, waiting for you to use. Over and over again in the Bible, God says, “If you will do `this’, then I will do `this’.... If you’ll trust Me about this area of your life I will do this and bless you in this area of your life.” Seven thousand times.

It’s like an insurance policy. If you have a policy and you know what’s covered in that insurance policy, you don’t worry about stuff when your house catches on fire or your car gets dinged, because you know the policy is going to pay for it. But if you don’t know what’s covered in your insurance policy, then you start worrying about it.

The reason why so many people worry today is they don’t know what’s covered in the contract, in the policy. It’s all here. Seven thousand promises.

They are waiting for you to claim. If you don't know them how can you claim them? We could spend a lot of time today looking at 7000 promises but let me give you two.

One of them has to do with your hereafter – what's going to happen to you after you die. The other has to do with the here and now, the problems that you're facing today. Which leads us to the third reason why Easter gives us hope.

3. GOD CAN DO THE IMPOSSIBLE

The last part of our verse says, *“This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead.”*

One thing that many skeptics and atheists claim is that Jesus never rose from the grave. Many theories have been put forth since the first century A.D. – that his body was stolen and hidden by his disciples, that he never really died, he just fainted and was revived later on, that it was Judas who was actually nailed on the cross and not Jesus, and therefore, Jesus, did not resurrect.

All of these and others more have been debunked and refuted. I won't go into any details about the falsity of the claim that Jesus did not die and rose again. Let me just say that many scholars and reputable men who were skeptics at first became believers after they investigated the facts surrounding the death and resurrection of Jesus. Simon Greenleaf, is an example. He was an American lawyer and one of the founders of the Harvard Law School. He set out to disprove the resurrection of Jesus using legal evidence but came to the conclusion that the witnesses in the Bible were reliable and that the resurrection did in fact happen and he became a Christian as a result, even writing a book called, *“Testimony of the Evangelists.”*

Then, there's Frank Morison, the pseudonym of Albert Henry Ross, who was skeptical regarding the resurrection of Jesus, and set out to analyse the sources and

to write a short paper to demonstrate the apparent myth. In compiling his notes, he came to be convinced of the truth of the resurrection, and set out his reasoning in the book “Who moved the stone?”

And, in our own time, there is Lee Strobel, a former award-winning legal editor of the Chicago Tribune, who converted to Christianity after being an atheist since his teens. The results of his investigation on the resurrection of Jesus became a book called, “The Case for Christ.”

The Bible is clear and the facts attest that Jesus rose from the dead. His resurrection proved that God can do the impossible. In fact, the Bible says, “*For nothing will be impossible with God.*” (Luke 1:37 ESV)

The Bible says that Jesus rose from the dead in order to prepare a place for you. Where? In heaven. Several years back, *Time* magazine came out with an article about heaven. It says “Does heaven exist?” The writer says this about heaven (Quote): “Heaven is destination and reward, succor and relief from earthly trials. It is reunion with those we love, forever, as we loved them. It is our real home, our permanent address, our own true country. It is the New Jerusalem and Paradise Regained, the community of Saints and the eternal Eucharist; everlasting Easter and a million Christmases. It is an end to death's sting; it is the eternal, ongoing, ever growing experience of God. It is the ecstatic dream of St. John: “Holy, holy, holy.” (end of quote)

He may be close to the truth. But, this is the real truth according to the Bible. We don't have time to look at everything but look at this one verse. 1 Peter 1:4-5 (LB), “*God has reserved for his children the priceless gift of eternal life that is kept in heaven for you...And God, in his mighty power, will make sure that you get there safely to receive it because you're trusting him.*” There's a couple of very important things you shouldn't miss about what God says about heaven here

because you won't find these in *Time* magazine. First it says that heaven is not for everybody. The Bible says that God has reserved it for His children. You've got to have a reservation. Have you put in your reservation for Heaven yet?

Or are you just planning to one day show up before God and go, "I didn't have any time for You on earth, I didn't listen to what You said, I never got to know You or Your Son Jesus Christ, and I never discovered what You put me on earth to do. I did my own thing. And, by the way, You ought to let me into heaven now." That's pretty arrogant. Incredibly arrogant.

The Bible says that heaven is only reserved for God's children. Aren't we all God's children? No. We aren't. The Bible makes it clear that God created everybody in the world, no doubt about that. And the Bible makes it very clear that God deeply loves everybody in the world, no doubt about that. God has never made a person that He didn't love. But you are not automatically a child of God. You've got to be born into His family, become a part of His family and say "God, I want to become a part of Your family. I want to get to know You. I want to get to know Your Son, Jesus Christ. I want to learn to trust You. And I want to live the plan that You put me on earth to live."

How do I become a child of God? That's probably the most important question you'll ever ask. What does the Bible say? What does God say in His word about becoming a child of God? John 1:12 says "*Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.*" When you were physically born you were born into the family of the human race. But when you believe in Christ and accept Him, you are spiritually born into God's family. God promises you the impossible, you'll get to heaven

when you put your trust in Christ. It's as simple as that. With God nothing is impossible.

That's a promise about the hereafter. God is also interested in what's going to happen between now and when you die. In fact, He's interested in the problems you're facing right now. He's interested in the things you worried about on the way to church.

Some of you are in an impossible situation, or so it seems to you. Your spouse doesn't seem to love you anymore. There's an enormous gulf between you, as wide as the ocean, and you wonder whether it can be bridged again. Or, your children have grown up to be disobedient, they are rebelling, they're not listening to you. Or your finances have been down. You don't know where to get the money to pay the bills, to buy food, to pay the rent. Or your health has deteriorated or you're experiencing physical pain or disease and you don't know whether you'll be whole again. Or you're facing a dilemma, you can't make a decision and you need guidance. What is the difficult and impossible situation you are in at the moment? Jesus says in Matthew 11:28 *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."*

Let me show you a video clip from a movie that is showing at present. It will reveal to you that God can do the impossible for you if you just trust him.

VIDEO FROM "MIRACLES FROM HEAVEN"

Who told the girl? I won't spoil it for you. You can take a guess. Well, let me give you the spoiler anyway. What the trailer doesn't show is that the girl went to heaven while she lay unconscious after her fall and Jesus appeared to her.

Now, since God is in control and God always keeps His promises and God can do the impossible, what should be my response to this? How should I react to it?

God wants you to do one important thing: To trust Him. If you're already a Christian, God wants you to put everything in his hands. He has already saved you. You're going to heaven.

And on this earth, he promises to protect you, to provide for you, to be there for you, to come through for you. He's got everything under control. He'll do the impossible for you.

If you're not a Christian yet, God wants you to also put everything in his hands. You may feel that your life is out of control, you have no direction, you're not going anywhere, but God says, "I've got everything under control. Just trust me. I'll make everything right for you." Turn over your life to Jesus. Believe he died for you on the cross. Believe that your sins will be forgiven once you confess and repent. And you, too, will experience his peace in this world and expect the reward of heaven when you die.

Friends, this Easter, why don't you take the important step of saying, "God, I trust you. I believe that you're in control. You keep your promises. And you can do the impossible."