

We are spending the season of Easter talking about what Easter means for us today. Easter means many things to many people. For some, Easter is a moment of time amid many moments – a celebration – a time for egg hunts, honey glazed ham, scalloped potatoes and deviled eggs. You wake up on Sunday morning, hunt for the eggs, maybe go to church, come home, eat too much, go to bed then get back to the normal grind on Monday morning.

A few weeks ago, we talked about the truth that Easter only has an affect on us if we allow it to. I hear a lot of people complain these days that faith does not have an impact on their life. They don't attend church, they don't get involved because the life of the community of faith does not impact their life. Mainly – I find that this is true for those who wont allow God to have an influence on them. It's like a self fulfilling prophecy.

So how do we allow Easter to affect us – that is what we are talking about. We can spend a lot of time talking about the theology of Easter – but that isn't too helpful for us in our day-to-day lives. We started the conversation talking about the fact that Easter is for us – God did it for you and for me – so that we could experience the abundant life that God promises us. How can we tap into God's power for living our lives with the greatest potential for happiness, fulfillment and purpose? Simple – listen to Jesus and follow what Jesus tells us to do – that was the

topic of last week's conversation. We can spend all of our time chasing after what the world tells us is important – but, in the words of Jesus, that will just lead to a life that suffers destruction and death. Or we can listen to the voice of Jesus and follow his lead and we can enjoy a greater satisfaction in life, a greater sense of meaning and purpose. That is what the abundant life is all about.

Today I want to take us a step further along the road of abundant living and talk about Easter that opens up a pathway for us to follow – a pathway that helps us order our lives precisely so that we can begin to enjoy abundant live today. We do that by seeing that, through Easter, God has revealed for us what the way, the truth and the life of our lives are all about.

The reading that I shared with you a moment ago is found in John 14:1-14. Jesus is aging talking about what will happen to him. Even the disciples did not fully understand what the Messiah was all about. I'm sure that they thought that Jesus was going to be the kind of Messiah that they wanted him to be and dying was not part of the deal. They wanted a military Messiah – one that would lead Israel in a revolt against Rome and establish Israel as the world's greatest nation, with the 12 in prominent positions of power and authority. They had a very ego-centric and self serving view of what the Kingdom of the Messiah would look like.

But that is not what Jesus is offering and after telling them once again that he will die – they are upset. Jesus tries to comfort them by telling them that he is leaving to prepare a place for them and all those who follow. Then in verse 6 Jesus uses a very familiar style of speech that should have removed all doubt as to who Jesus is: **Jesus says “I AM** – the way the truth and the life.” Those two words, “I am” are very powerful in the Bible. **Only one other person in all of scripture has ever invoked that term to describe themselves – yep, you guessed it – God.**

Here is where we call upon those Sunday School lessons of long ago. Remember when Moses was talking with the burning bush? He is told what he needs to do and then he wants to know the name of the one that is sending him on this mission? The voice from the burning bush says “tell them I AM.” I AM is the name of God – and Jesus is telling his disciples that I AM is his name too. Jesus is God – they are one and the same. So if Jesus says something – it is God saying it.

And what does Jesus say? **First Jesus says I am the way.** The road to living our lives abundantly is the road of The Way – not “a” way but THE way. Jesus is the way to live our lives in the most abundant way possible. Sounds pretty simple doesn't it? Perhaps it does but we live in a world of many, many “ways” and sometimes it's hard to know which way is the right way – especially if you listen to what the media and advertising tell you. So many people are chasing this thing and

that thing because they have bought into the lie that – if I only have this, if I only do that, if I only commit to this thing – then I will be happy.

There is a story that I heard when I lived in Maryland about a teenager what had been told by her father that if she ever gets stuck driving in a snowstorm that she should always follow a snowplow. Well one winter day she indeed was driving in a terrible snowstorm so she looked for a snowplow and started to follow it. After a while, the snowplow stopped and the driver got out and came back to her car. He said, *“Lady, I just finished plowing the K-Mart parking lot and I’m on my way to Wal-Mart, you can follow me there if you want to.”* The point of the story was that she was following – but she wasn’t getting anywhere.

That is the problem that so many in our world face today. That are very busy following – but they aren’t getting anywhere and at the end of the day that are not better off than when they started. And the real tragedy is – they think that kind of life is normal!! Well. It’s not normal and we were not created to experience life as mindless lemurs following whatever dangles at the tips of our noses. We were called to a much higher calling – Following the way of Jesus and following the way of God.

But how do we know that following Jesus is the way to go? Simple. Jesus does not just say that he is the way, but he also says that he is the truth. **I AM the**

truth, Jesus says, God is the truth!! God does not lie, God does not deceive, God does not offer that which God will not or can not deliver on. That's why Jesus never promises those who follow that they will enjoy a trouble free life – because that is not part of what one gets when one follows Jesus no matter what those yahoos on the TV tell you! Following Jesus is not about getting what you want from life. It is not a bargain that we strike with God that, if we follow then God will take care of every trouble and problem that we might encounter, as if we have a “get out of jail free” card safely tucked away in our wallets.

The Truth that Jesus is simply is that we are granted a greater perspective in life that allows us to see beyond the individual circumstances of our lives. The Truth of Jesus allows us to see our role in the Kingdom of Heaven so that we can experience a life of real purpose and meaning. It is not that we are immune to the realities of life - that life following Jesus means is that the realities of life do not and will not overcome us. You ever wonder why there are those people in our lives that seem to be happy and content and fulfilled with their lives no matter what is happening all around them? I used to think that they were just not too connected to what was going on – but then I learned that these folks have tapped into something much greater than the life that we all see and experience. It is not that they are ambivalent or that they lack self awareness or that they are walking around with

Rose colored glasses – it is that they have embraced the truth of what life is all about – that truth is the truth of Jesus and his lordship and direction and leadership in their day to day lives.

Lastly, Jesus says I AM the life. The way of Jesus is all about life – individual and corporate. A relationship with Jesus fosters life and strengthened relationships. Many places in the Bible Jesus talks about himself in terms of life and not just that he is the giver of life, but that he is the sustainer of our lives together.

I believe that what the devil wants most is for churches to become places of conflict and disagreement – complaining and dissatisfaction. Why? Because these are the things that lead to the death of the church. Churches, for the most part, fail to be what God has called them to be because of internal conflict more so than any other factor. When you look at the disciples as an example of the church, you discover an interesting phenomena. What do the disciples do when they are not doing what Jesus calls them to do? They fight among each other. The same is true for the church. When people who have been trained to fish don't fish – they fight!

Jesus tells us that this is not the pathway that we have been called to follow and it is not the way of Jesus. Jesus is not about death, Jesus is about life and when

we follow Jesus, when we subordinate our will and our desires to his – we enjoy the life that Jesus has promised us that we can have.

Easter is about life, Easter is about truth and Easter is about The Way. Easter is about Jesus and what Jesus offers us today – right where we are.