

“Easter People Follow Unswervingly”

Scripture: Revelation 21:10, 22-22:5

Graphics: cross, Easter, city, river, road

Big Truth: We are Easter people - people who are transformed because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and alive and living in us. What’s our response? Our response is to live the everlasting Kingdom today as Easter people who passionately worship God, who witness boldly to the Risen Christ, who love God and others extravagantly, who follow Jesus unswervingly, and who hope confidently in the new Kingdom and new Earth. We are Easter people!

Focus Phrase: Easter people follow Jesus unswervingly despite the twists and turns of life.

1. Introduction

- A. **VIDEO - EASTER PEOPLE** (play right after the special music)
- B. **PRAY!**
- C. ***“WE ARE!” “EASTER PEOPLE!”*** (2X)
- D. If you’ve been driving long enough, I suspect that what I’m about to describe has happened to you. I also suspect that just the memory of the event may cause a little flutter in your stomach.
- E. For me, it was while driving home from a long day of deer hunting on the family farm in Attica, NY. It was raining pretty hard and very dark and cold on the back roads that lead from the farm to our house in Alden. No streetlights. Windshield covered with the rain that just wouldn’t stop. I’m not sure if I was completely awake in my rear-wheel drive red 1998 Dodge Ram truck with, unfortunately, no extra weight from a deer in the back...another unsuccessful hunting trip had me bummed.
- F. The road ahead had a long curve to the right, so I begin to take my foot off the gas for the curve. As I began to enter the curve, I was going too fast for the conditions and the light backend of my truck began to hydroplane to the left. And then came that moment of utter panic that you get when that uncontrolled slide happens. Fortunately, my dad was a good driving instructor, so I turned into the slide as I was taught, and the backend caught the road and stop the slide. Unfortunately, I oversteered a little and the backend then slid wildly to the right and onto the shoulder. So...steer into the turn and try to get that backend to come back to the road. Which it did. Cool. But then it went back to the left and into the other lane again. Only this time, as I was feeling the backend swing into the other lane, there were headlights coming around the curve toward me.
- G. It was only by the grace of God that I steered into the turn fast enough to bring that backend back to the right and onto the shoulder again. It seems to me that I did that 3-4 times before I was able to slow down enough, pull over, and rethink my entire life.

- H. Swerving uncontrolled in a car - whether on ice or snow or water - has to be one of the most helpless and scary feelings in life. I don't recommend it.
- I. We can draw a metaphor between the experience of swerving out of control on the road and the experience of going through life without a clear path to follow or a destination to focus on. We go too fast. We let things get out of control. We over-correct. And, soon, we find ourselves fishtailing without a good way to get into the center of the lane. Or we find ourselves 180 degrees to where we want to go, and life seems like it's never going to be right again.
- J. As followers of Jesus Christ, we're not immune to this. The Good News is that God has given us a clear path and a lighthouse to focus on. As Easter People, we worship and witness and love a God who empowers us to Follow Unswervingly.
- K. The problem with fishtailing in your car is that you feel out of control. God gives Easter People the ability to keep the car on the road of life and moving toward him at all times, even WHEN life has you starting to fishtail.
- L. If you're taking notes, write this down: **Easter people follow Jesus unswervingly despite the twists and turns of life.**
- M. Today, we're going deeper into the city that is the New Heaven on Earth. This is the vision that John saw while in the Spirit, in exile on the island of Patmos.
- N. In Revelation 21:10, we read these words: "And in the spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God."
- O. From there, John described a scene that gives us great encouragement in this life. That not only are we NOT alone in this world, but we can see God's path, His light, and follow Jesus unswervingly in this life, with confidence and faith, despite all the things that might try to send us into a fishtail of faith.
- P. Easter People Follow Unswervingly.** That's our message title...
- Q. Let's jump to verse 22 and see what John saw...

2. Scripture

A. READ Revelation 21:22-27

- i. Let me stop there. The picture John saw was of crowds of people, all walking in the same direction, into this city that came down from heaven. They were all moving toward the Light at the center of the city.
- ii. They weren't walking toward a temple or a building. They were walking toward Jesus, who is at the center. I love the imagery that the Light is God's glory and Jesus is the lamp.
 - a. Think of a lightbulb for a second. The light the bulb gives off fills a room, eradicates darkness, and warms the whole space. Yet, that light

comes from a bulb...or more specifically, the elements in the bulb that are heated up by the power that runs through it.

- b. Jesus is the lamp - the bulb - empowered by the Holy Spirit, to shine the glory of God onto the whole city. And when people see it, they want to move toward it...toward HIM. They aren't tempted to turn around. They aren't tempted to turn to the left or to the right. They SEE the light and they follow unswervingly.
- iii. John saw the 'nations' and the 'kings of the earth', as he described them. The nations are the peoples of the world that have come under the authority and Lordship of Jesus Christ. The kings of the earth, who up until this point in Revelation have been under the influence of Satan, now bring their glory - their presence - into the city...also under the Lordship of Jesus.
- iv. The city gates are open and will not be shut...no barriers to moving confidently toward the Light at the center.
- v. John told us in verse 27 that only those whose names have been written in the Lamb's book of life are in that city. The Lamb's book of life contains all the names of the people who have put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ - his life, death, resurrection, and ascension.
- vi. The nations and the kings of the earth were all following unswervingly as they moved together to the Light at the center - to worship, and witness, and love God and each other.
- vii. Let's read the second part of our text today from Revelation 22:1-5.

B. READ Revelation 22:1-5

- i. It's interesting that John tells us that there's ONE STREET. That makes me think of Jesus words in John 14:6, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
- ii. Now, in the New Jerusalem, we see ONE street leading to God, lit by the Light of God and coming from the Lamp of the Lamb...shining so brightly that no other light is needed...and night will never be again.
- iii. But there's more! There's a river also running down the middle of that one street. The street may be a pathway for navigation, but the river is for healing and wholeness and provision.
- iv. Along the banks of the river grows a tree - the tree of life. The fruit of that tree gives nourishment and the leaves are for healing, John heard.
- v. So, people were following this street, to King Jesus at the center, and they were being healed by the leaves of the tree, which were being fed by the river. They were being provided fruit continuously by the tree of life.

- vi. And when they got to the throne, they worshiped! They saw His face! And...and...His name was on their foreheads. We're not totally sure what that will look like, but they were marked by Jesus.
- vii. So, not only are they worshipping and witnessing His face, loving God extravagantly, but they also had been marked by Jesus. Claimed by Jesus. They were HIS.

3. Application

- A. Church, do you know that Jesus has claimed you? That you are HIS? The One on the Throne not only knows your name but has marked you?
- B. Of all the truths of this life from God, the fact that Jesus' name is somehow written on the foreheads and hearts of those who have put their faith in Jesus is probably the best one.
- C. The day that I was fishtailing all over the road, there were a few seconds that I was pretty sure I was about to meet Jesus. And PRAISE GOD that in that moment, that was my thought. "I'M ABOUT TO MEET JESUS!"
- D. There've been times in your life that have taken you to that same place...if I die today, will I meet Jesus? I pray that everyone who can hear my voice has and will respond with YES!
- E. Because if Jesus has claimed you and marked you - and you'll be in the multitude of the nations and/or the kings of this world, walking resolutely toward the Throne and being healed and made whole by the river and the tree - then **it's time to follow Jesus unswervingly** today.
- F. The confidence that comes from knowing the outcome of all things at the END of all things, gives you the power, today, to do everything Jesus is calling you to do in this life...to follow Him unswervingly.
- G. When Joshua was ready to take over for Moses and lead the people into the Promised Land, he could easily have run away or give up. That's not what he did. He led the people and they walked unswervingly into the Promised Land. Here's what made the difference...in Joshua 1:7, God said to Joshua, "Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go."
- H. Can I get real for a minute? I'm very aware of the world's desire to send your rear-end fishtailing out of control. It comes in the form of schedules, activities, work and play, downtime and vacations. It comes in the form of greed, lust, success, and comfort. It comes when you're young, middle aged, and old.
- I. Now, those things aren't all bad. Some are necessary. But when any of those things work against unswervingly following Jesus Christ for life, then you are in danger of physically, emotionally, and spiritually fishtailing all over the road.

- J. Easter people are called to something different. A different life than the world. We're called to a life on the ONE street and the river of the water of life...with the tree of life to heal us and nourish our souls. We're not called to floor it and hope we can steer well enough to keep it on the slippery road until we die.
- K. Easter people are called and empowered to follow Jesus unswervingly despite the twists and turns of life.
- L. One of the cool feature on new cars is the Lane Departure Warning. When your car starts to drift toward the white line or the center line, you get an audible beep that warns you to pay attention.
- M. Life doesn't come with a Lane Departure Warning. But we have something better! Easter People who follow Jesus unswervingly need to allow the Holy Spirit to be that lane departure warning system in our lives. This isn't about behavior, necessarily. This is about devotion to the ONE who has given you and me ONE street and marked you and I as His. Here's some application:
- N. In order to be Easter people who follow Jesus unswervingly:
 - i. You need a **clear picture of the ONE at the center** and keep heading toward Him.
 - a. This is a matter of being in the presence of God. That happens when you pray. That happens when you read the bible at a level of engagement that's more than mere perfunctory duty.
 - b. And, the picture of Jesus becomes clear when you worship consistently. Post-COVID, Pew research tells us that the new standard for worshipers in America is to be in worship once every 6 weeks. 10 years ago it was every four. 25 years ago it was twice per month. I love the increase in online worship opportunities, and appreciate our online congregation. Either way, in-person or online, can you spend more time in worship and less time on other things?
 - c. The One at the center desires your worship. He desires your prayer time and when you read about Him and talk about Him. God loves that!
 - d. Replacing those things with the things of this world, however great they may seem, makes the picture of Jesus blend into the other things in view.
 - e. Intentionally keep getting a clearer picture of Jesus at the center of your life in order to follow Him unswervingly.
 - ii. Second, **stay in your lane**.
 - a. We may not have a lane departure warning system, but the Holy Spirit has filled every person who's come to faith in Jesus Christ.
 - b. The Holy Spirit is your comforter, your teacher, your advocate, and your teller of truth. The Holy Spirit is also the one that convicts us of our sin.

- c. When you sense - after prayer (that's critical) - that you're starting to drift out of your lane, spiritually and emotionally, then it's time to adjust, before you start fishtailing out of control.
 - d. Jesus is calling us to walk the narrow road of holiness and faith. The vision in Revelation is of a road with boundaries that leads to Jesus. Staying in your lane means getting honest about and repenting of your sin. That may be different for each of us, but not keeping Jesus in the center leads us to more sin...and we begin to swerve.
 - e. And remember that Jesus doesn't call you to resist temptation and pursue holiness so that you aren't any fun. He empowers you to stay in the lane He has given you in His Word so that you won't fishtail and crash.
 - f. Following Unswervingly is devotional, humble, resolved, and confident...which is the opposite of life lived outside your lane.
- iii. Finally, **keep going**, fueled up for the road.
- a. I don't know about you, but my favorite part of road trips is the snacks. They allow me to keep going, even when I feel the fatigue.
 - b. In order for Easter People to follow Jesus unswervingly, you have to keep going...re-centering every day, releasing things that aren't of God, and then steadily moving toward the One at the center.
 - c. Be fueled up by the Holy Spirit and filled with gifts of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. That's the fuel to keep moving, unswervingly, toward the Throne at the center of the city.

4. Conclusion

- A. You're on the right track! How do I know that? Because you're HERE.
- B. Your life isn't perfect...and yet, the One at the center is calling you to a new resolve and confidence that there's just ONE WAY that leads to full life...Jesus.
- C. There's a river of life flowing from Him so you can be healed and whole in every way today.
- D. Easter people follow Jesus unswervingly despite the twists and turns of life.
- E. Hebrews 10:23 reminds us of this: "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful."
- F. Don't let this world, or anything in it, push you off-track. Keep Jesus in your sights, stay in your lane, and keep going.
- G. Let's pray...