

## “Easter People Love Extravagantly”

Scripture: Revelation 21:1-6

Graphics: cross, Easter, city

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 love extravagantly and without limits.

### 1. Introduction

- A. **VIDEO - EASTER PEOPLE** (play right after the special music)
- B. **“WE ARE!” “EASTER PEOPLE!”** (3X)
- C. There’s a wonderful story of extravagant love by O. Henry, called *The Gift of the Magi*. The story centers on a young American couple, Della and Jim, who are very poor but very much in love. Each of them has one precious possession. Della has exceptionally beautiful long hair, which is her glory. Jim has a gold watch, given to him by his father, which he cherishes above all things. It is the day before Christmas and Della has exactly one dollar and eighty-seven cents with which to buy Jim a present. She so badly wants to express her love for him that she goes out and sells her beautiful hair for twenty dollars. With the proceeds she buys a platinum fob for Jim’s precious watch. When Jim comes home that night and sees Della’s shorn head, he is speechless. Slowly he hands her his gift, a set of expensive tortoise-shell combs with jeweled edges for her lovely hair. He sold his gold watch to buy them for her. Each had given the other the most precious gift he or she had to give. The story is a lesson of love, love so deep and so extravagant that it does not hold back or count the cost, but rather gives all that it has.
- D. In the gospel of John, chapter 12, we read about a time when Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha, used an entire jar of expensive perfume to bless Jesus. Some say the perfume was worth an entire years worth of wages...and it was poured onto Jesus’ feet. Extravagant Love.
- E. Merriam-Websters defines **extravagant** as *exceeding the limits of reason or necessity; lacking in moderation, balance, and restraint; and extremely or excessively elaborate*.
- F. When you combine those definitions for extravagant with the biblical concept of love - which is to see the other, and be with the other, and meet needs - you have a picture similar to Della and Jim...and Mary. You have a picture of something so incredible and profound that it changes lives and sets a new course for the future.

- G. **Easter People Love Extravagantly.** That's the title of this third message in our Easter People series. This whole series is a RESPONSE to the resurrection of Jesus we celebrated on Easter morning.
- H. People whose lives have been radically transformed by the power of the resurrection of Jesus are on a new course...they do things that exceed the limits of reason sometimes. All because they're Easter people who love like Mary and Della and Jim...who are loving others like God has loved us.
- I. This third message has a pretty simply aim. We'll get a glimpse into the end of all things, when Jesus returns and will dwell WITH US forever on Earth. God dwelling with us physically forever is the ultimate expression of extravagant love.
- J. Our response to that extravagant love is to extravagantly love God and every other person we encounter, no excuses and no limits. We'll find out more about what that means.
- K. Let's PRAY and dive in - or UP, as the case may be today!
- L. **PRAY!**
- M. I pray you brought your bible with you...and I encourage you to do that every Sunday. Let's open to Revelation 21...and we'll start in verse 1...
- N. Ready? If so, give me a thumbs up if you're here or worshipping online.
- O. This is the beginning of the end of the vision that an exile named John had while alone on the island of Patmos. This is the vision of the New Heaven and the New Earth.

## 2. Scripture

### A. **READ Revelation 21:1-6**

B. So far in this series from Revelation...

- i. ...we've seen a vision of those gathered around the Throne of King Jesus worshipping passionately. We, as Easter People, are called to worship passionately here and now.
- ii. ...we've seen the communion of saints, who are those who have lived and died in faith in Jesus Christ, witnessing to the world that King Jesus is on His Throne...that nothing is too great an ordeal to prevent us from making it there. We're to witness boldly to the world around us about that reality.

C. But then we get to Revelation 21. Satan has been finally defeated. The dead are judged. The ordeal is over. The only thing left for God to show John is what will happen at the end of all things - the New Heaven and the New Earth.

D. Before we go any further into what John saw, it's important for us to realize that, at the end of all things, we will not be spending eternity in some space in the clouds, floating around like ghosts. That's not what the bible says. Our

final home is right here on Earth. This vision tells us that the Earth will be transformed as Heaven comes down to recreate Earth to be the final dwelling place of God. Let your mind process that for a second. God...will dwell...on earth...with us...forever.

- E. What began at Creation, will be completed at the final return of Jesus. The love of the Triune God overflowed in the process of creating all things in Genesis 1 and 2. The love of God was expressed in a tangible and powerful way at the Incarnation, when Jesus was born of a virgin, and lived among as a sinless human...who died for our sins and was raised to new life.
- F. Yet, the love of God will become *extravagant* - limitless, beyond moderation, extremely elaborate, over-the-top and off-the-hook - when Jesus returns and Heaven comes down to physically dwell on earth.
  - i. Some say that this vision is a metaphor that just means we'll be with God forever in some other place...called 'heaven.'
  - ii. Others say, because of Jesus' incarnation, that our world is heaven now (I'm not sure I see that looking around at the mess we're making of it all).
  - iii. Yet, in order for all of creation - and the whole story of God expressed in the Old and New Testaments, through Jesus, to the early church - to reach the culmination and completion that God planned from the beginning, **evil must be finally eradicated and sin must be finally defeated**. The vision of the New Heaven and New Earth is God's clue for us what that looks like.
- G. And the vision tells us about an extravagantly loving God, who started all things because of love...and who will bring all things to completion because His love has become extravagant towards His creation...including you and me.
- H. When Stacy and I had children, we quickly fell in love with them and would do anything for them...we would sacrifice for them, provide for them, and guide, correct, and protect them. Then...THEN...we had a **grandchild**. And, I'll tell you, so far in this next phase of life, the love we learned to have for our children, has already been eclipsed by the extravagant love we have for our grandson, Levi. I can't explain it. I was surprised by it. But that little guy stole my heart so fast that I would give every penny and every minute I have to make sure he is cared for, safe, happy, and whatever he needs.
- I. That's just a sliver (a tiny glimpse) of the extravagant love of God that is poured out in the final return of Jesus...of the coming of the New Heaven and New Earth right here.
- J. John sees that expressed in several ways in his vision:
  - i. This first one is the love between a husband and wife: "...prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." I remember the day I saw Stacy walk down the aisle toward me, although my emotions were all over the place, so that

moment is cloudy. Now, as a pastor, I get to watch every time a bride comes down this aisle toward her groom. I get to see his expressions and tears... and her beaming smile and nervousness. That's the picture of God's extravagant love...so new and filled with hope and potential.

- ii. Then, in John's vision, he heard Jesus say:
  - a. "The home of God is among mortals...He will dwell with them...They will be His...God himself will be with them..."
  - b. ***Among, dwell, and with*** are all words that describe a God who will walk beside us, physically...we will SEE the Triune God.
  - c. Colossians 1:15 says, "The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation." At the end of all things, we will SEE God like we're seeing each other this morning.
  - d. This second picture of the extravagant love of God proves to us that God WANTS us to see Him and be WITH Him and dwell among us.
- iii. The final picture in John's vision is one of extravagant love being shown to all those who have faithfully lived and died in Christ.
  - a. "God will wipe away every tear...death won't be a thing...mourning, crying, and pain will be gone."
  - b. The very presence of God will heal every wounds you have, every hurt you've felt, and every source of pain - physical, emotional, relational, spiritual, and every other aspect we can think of as humans.
  - c. God will be present, and in the presence of God, His extravagant love will be poured out to make all things new, and whole, and healed, and complete.
- K. And all that will happen right here, as the New Heaven comes down to make the New Earth the place where God's extravagant love - unbounded, off-the-hook, full and free love - is experienced forever for God's people.

### 3. Application

- A. So, where's the application today?
- B. Well, it comes in 1 John 4:19. "We love because he first loved us."
- C. That was true at Creation. That was true at the Incarnation of Jesus...and at the cross and at the empty tomb. God first loved you when Jesus healed and served and ate with sinners and commanded you to love. And, that's true today.
- D. In fact, as much as we're called to love because he first loved us, I'd expand that. Because of this vision in Revelation 21, we **extravagantly** love because he has and will first **extravagantly** love us. YOU...ARE...LOVED.

- E. Before we can talk about what it takes to be loving, you and I must understand in the deepest parts of our hearts and minds that **WE ARE LOVED**. And you and I can't love if we think we're unlovable or unloved. **YOU ARE LOVED**.
- F. Then, as Easter People who worship passionately and witness boldly, we're called to get busy extravagantly loving others and extravagantly loving God. That's how Jesus summarizes all of God's commands - love God and love your neighbor. Because of the extravagant love of God shown in his willingness to dwell with us for eternity here on earth, our response **MUST** be to extravagantly love God and extravagantly love others. That doesn't begin by going out to do stuff...
- G. It starts with **humble repentance for the times you've failed to love God and love others**.
- i. Because God's first act of extravagant love was to send His sinless Son into the world to save you and me from our sin, Jesus is the plumb line... Jesus is the standard by which we measure all things.
  - ii. When we do that, especially in our love for God and love for others, you and I soon find that we fall short. We don't love like Jesus loves some times. We don't love God like Jesus did or love others like Jesus did.
  - iii. Now, that doesn't mean that you give up because you can't be perfect. **NO!** We repent and turn back to God and begin again and again and again. As you keep loving, you keep growing in loving.
  - iv. And, remember, that the love you share with God and others doesn't come from somewhere within you. It comes **THROUGH YOU** from Jesus, who is the standard for love.
  - v. Practically, that means that when you fail to see the other or treat others with contempt or apathy or even hostility, the Holy Spirit works on you to train you up in a new way. That takes humility and a willingness to repent and start again.
  - vi. I've recently had the opportunity to repent of some attitudes I've had and words I've said about leaders in our denomination. God's still working on me, and it's not always easy, but I can see God growing me. I think maybe He's working on you, too, in your life.
  - vii. Once you've repented and are ready...
- H. Then, **open your eyes to the world around you**
- i. See every person you're with as a person of worth. In fact, see every person, anywhere, as a person of worth in God's eyes.
  - ii. Jesus created the world for everyone. Jesus died on the cross so that everyone could look to him and believe. Jesus is coming back to make the world right again for everyone.

- iii. Does that mean that everyone will accept the gift? No. Does that mean all will be saved in the final judgement? No. What it DOES mean is that everyone is a person of worth that needs to be saved, can be saved, can know they are saved, and can be saved to the uttermost (the 4 alls).
- iv. The way people come to know and believe in the salvation of God through Jesus is not by shouting at them, bible thumping in the head, or shaming them into submission. People come to know the extravagant love of God through you, extravagantly loving them despite your own brokenness and their failures and flaws.
- v. There are many things that divide us, and some are things that we'll never agree upon with the other. But we're still called to extravagantly love God and others.
- vi. But let's get even more practical. You've repented and opened your eyes...

I. Then, **Love Extravagantly, without excuse or limits.**

- i. Are you nuts, Pastor Steve? Without excuse? Without limits?
- ii. I'm profoundly aware that what God asks of us is one of the hardest things for us to do. To love...extravagantly. I'm aware that loving without excuse and limits seems like something we can't do.
- iii. But think with me, for a second, what God has done for you.
  - a. He created you - knit you together in your mother's womb.
  - b. He sent his only Son to die for your sin.
  - c. He saved you when you realized you can't save yourself, even while you are still a sinner.
  - d. He's given you the gift of everlasting life, in the New Heaven and Earth.
  - e. And He has promised that when it's all said and done, He will come to live with you forever in that New Heaven and New Earth.
  - f. Extravagant Love! (turn to your neighbor and say, "That's extravagant!")
- iv. Your response **MUST** be to use the rest of your life, from today on, to love Him extravagantly and to love others extravagantly.
- v. **SEE** the other and meet every need. Lend every ear. Allow God to work through you to witness boldly to God's grace and mercy. Be patient and kind and filled with joy and peace. If someone is sick, reach out. If someone is lonely, spend some time. If someone needs to talk, listen.
- vi. In the process, love God extravagantly by worshiping passionately (and regularly), giving generously, witnessing boldly, and serving sacrificially.

**4. Conclusion**

- A. Easter people love extravagantly and without limits.

- B. God dwelling with us physically forever is the ultimate expression of extravagant love. US dwelling with others and with God is the how WE love extravagantly, as we share the Good News about Jesus.
- C. Della and Jim gave their all - extravagantly - to show love to the other. As it turned out, they were without a watch and without ling hair. Yet, they had something that would last: a greater love for each other and for God.
- D. Imagine a church that goes out into our everyday lives to pour the expensive perfume on the feet of others. Imagine a church that has no limits or excuses why we can't love God and others.
- E. Easter People are driven by our desire to love extravagantly because God loved us extravagantly first...and last...and every time in between...He is WITH us, and will be forever!
- F. We want Jesus to return...but while we wait, we'll love like no one has ever loved before. Go! Extravagantly love God and others like He loves you!
- G. Let's pray...