

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (ra-bone’-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (ra-bone’-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (ra-bone’-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (ra-bone’-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (ra-bone’-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (ra-bone’-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.² So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (ra-bone’-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (ra-bone’-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (ra-bone’-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (ra-bone’-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (ra-bone’-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (ra-bone’-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (ra-bone’-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (ra-bone’-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (ra-bone’-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (ra-bone’-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (ra-bone’-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (ra-bone’-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (ra-bone’-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (ra-bone’-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him."

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him."

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." ¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (ra-bone'-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him."

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him."

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." ¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (ra-bone'-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (ra-bone’-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him."

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him."

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." ¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (ra-bone'-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (ra-bone’-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (ra-bone’-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (ra-bone’-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (ra-bone’-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (ra-bone’-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.² So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (ra-bone’-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (ra-bone’-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (ra-bone’-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (ra-bone’-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (ra-bone’-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
April 1, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Siri, What Does Easter Mean?

John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (ra-bone’-i) (Which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* * *

My Smart Phone is smarter than I am. You can ask Siri any question and she will answer it. Let's ask, *What does Easter mean?* (use phone...)

“NOUN; The most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday, after the first full moon, following the northern spring equinox.” (Siri)

Wow, that's pretty boring! It's technically correct, but **there has to be more to it.**

Youtube has some sidewalk interviews asking randomly selected people, *“What is Easter?”* Here's what some of them said;

- *A holiday with a bunny and you find eggs.*
- *I think it's Christ's birthday.*
- *Something nice for kids.*
- *Candy. Lots of candy.*
- *Something to do with the Church.*

Many of them simply said, *‘I don't know what it means. I'm not religious.’*

There's got to be more than that.

It's not even clear what the word *Easter* actually means. It may stem from the Latin, *eostre* (*e'-strah*), a pagan goddess of spring. So *Easter Sunday* would mean, *“Spring Sunday?”* **Got to be more to it than that.**

So maybe it's about the miracle of God raising Jesus from the dead. That's a pretty good trick, but if you think about it, the fact that we are sitting on a blue ball, spinning at 1,040 mph, and moving around the sun at a speed of 67,000 mph, and we don't feel anything, that's a miracle! Just about everything in creation, including ourselves, the planets hanging out there in space, and the whole thing is a miracle!

So raising one guy from the dead would not be extremely difficult for God. **There's got to be more to it** than just the miracle of it. Everything is a miracle!

If today is not about Spring, not about bunnies, eggs and candy; and if it's not about a miracle, then what is the big deal about today? **It's about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

*

Imagine you are on a flight across country and the person next to you is a talker! They find out you are a person of faith and begin to ask you questions. They're

genuinely interested. So one of the questions is; “*What is the significance of the resurrection of Christ?*” How are you going to answer?

I’m going to help you! The resurrection of Christ says a couple of very important things to the world;

1. **It’s not *how* the resurrection happened, it’s *who* was resurrected.** For we Christians, Jesus was God in human flesh. So we crucified the Son of God. Plenty of people have been tortured and martyred. Lazarus was raised from the dead, as was the young man at the gate of Nain. It’s *who* Jesus was that makes the difference. This was God in Christ.
2. **We’ve already established that it’s not that God *could* raise Jesus from the dead. (The miracle is not really a big deal.) It’s that God *would* raise Jesus from the dead.** The question is “**Why?**” If we crucified the Son of God, why would God raise him from the dead? There could only be one motive. That’s LOVE. The real miracle of the resurrection is that God *would* do it. The world should have been destroyed. But that didn’t happen. The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love for the world. For us.
3. **The resurrection also says that God is at work in the world in spite of us.** That’s good news! God doesn’t need our understanding, belief, faith or consent. The resurrection did not happen because they believed it. It happened without belief. No one in this story saw it coming. That gives us hope! Could God be at work in this world today, even without our belief or our recognition? What’s happening that we don’t see coming? This gives us hope!

*

Everybody in this story missed the truth of it, while it was happening! The women came out to anoint a dead Jesus. They weren’t out there believing in the resurrection. Mary thought someone had stolen the body and then when she did see Jesus, she thought he was a gardener. (You can’t make this stuff up!) The disciples thought it was “*an idle tale.*”

If I was going to make this story up, I would have told it a lot better! Everybody would believe in this thing. No confusion. The disciples would have stayed out there

all night waiting for him to appear. They would have been faithful. Jesus would have looked like himself. That would help! And I would have had him go to Pilate and say something like, *"I'm back!"*

But none of that happened. God is out there doing something in spite of everything. **This is God loving humanity in our darkest hour, when we don't deserve it; when we don't believe it, or even understand it.**

The plane lands, and you did a really good job! Wouldn't it be great if we Christians could communicate this grace to the world? How cool would it be to go out and ask folks what Easter means and hear all of them say *"GRACE! Easter means grace and hope for the world! God loves us, in spite of our darkest sin."*

I'm going to call *Siri* back and tell her she is technically correct, but she has missed the heart of it. **God loves the world and is up to something!** That's what Easter means.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!