

What Jesus Cannot Do
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It's dawn in Galilee. Jesus is already awake.

It was rare that the sun crested the horizon before Jesus awoke from his sleep. He was an early riser, accustomed to prayer before the day began.

The disciples are beginning to stir about, each looking for something to eat and gathering up their items, eager for Jesus to give them the day's itinerary.

As each sit down to eat some cold fish and a few pieces of bread, conversation breaks out.

"If we weren't one of Jesus' disciples, what would we be doing today?" Thaddaeus asked.

One by one, the disciples reflected on their various occupations.

Peter and Andrew concurred that they would be washing their nets from their previous night of fishing and getting the night's catch ready for the morning market.

James and John's response was much the same.

Matthew said he would be sitting at his tax collector's booth, making money and enemies. The others laughed.

Bartholomew said that it was his father-in-law's birthday. If he were with the family, he would be taking the day off to cook for the family.

Mentioning his family caused each man to think of the sacrifices they were making to follow Jesus in hopes of God's Kingdom coming into its own.

Each disciple agreed that being with Jesus was worth the sacrifices they were making.

"Who knows who will happen today?" asks John. "Will our Lord calm the sea again with his voice? Will he command demons from a madman?"

Andrew said, "Perhaps he will he heal the lame or the blind or challenge the authority of the Pharisees."

"Will he take a few loaves of bread and a few fish and feed thousands? I'll never worry about having enough food again," said Thomas as he ate some leftovers from just such an event.

"Will he raise the dead?" asked James. "I'll never forget seeing that mother when she was reunited with her resurrected daughter."

Then Peter disciple posed a question that left the group pondering for the remainder of the day, “Is there anything our Lord cannot do?”

Maybe the disciples had a conversation like this, perhaps not, but it’s difficult to think that they could have lived with Jesus for three years and not wondered if there was anything that Jesus could not do.

They pinned their hopes on him, and so did the people of Jerusalem on that great day we call the triumphal entry, a week before his death.

“Look how the whole world has gone after him” (Luke 12:19), said the Pharisees, as the people praised him as he calmly rode into the city on a foal of a donkey.

There is one thing that the disciples did not believe Jesus could do.

They did not believe he could overcome death because when he told them that he was going to die, they were adamantly opposed to that plan.

If Jesus died, they believed that would end any chance for Jesus to become the Messiah; the one promised to restore Israel to their days of glory and power.

Sure, they had seen him do miracles. They had even seen him raise the dead.

But they also saw Jesus grow tired after a long day of ministry.

They saw Jesus exhausted after a day filled with teaching and ministering to the needs of the people.

Jesus suffered from the same issues of hunger as they did.

If Jesus got cut, he bled.

If sand worked between his toes and his sandals, it would rub a blister. If he ate spoiled fish, it made him sick.

Over the years, the disciples warmed to the idea that Jesus was who he claimed to be, but they never doubted his humanity.

We believe that Jesus was God incarnate. Jesus came from heaven and placed himself within the limitations of a human body to share with us the possibilities of abundant life and a heavenly world.

So, what was it that Jesus could not do?

1) Jesus could not defeat sin from the comforts of a heavenly home.

Genesis 6:5, we are told that God had come to see that every inclination of the thoughts of man's hearts was only evil all the time. (Gen. 6:5)

Every time sin entered into the thoughts, the ethics, and the relationships of people, sin acted like a wrecking ball that tore apart the goodness of life that God desired for His people to experience and enjoy, and it still does.

God hates sin, but He loves us.

God wants us to experience life to its fullest.

God wants us to have the fruit of the Spirit present in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control to be present in our lives.

We often make choices that are opposed to what God wants for us.

Jealousy, hatred, dishonesty, sexual immorality, fits of rage, a lack of discipline, unfaithfulness, mean-spiritedness, and hard-heartedness contribute to the death of relationships, happiness, hope, joy, peace, and security.

Romans 6:23 tells us that the "Wages of sin is death. We earn death because of our sin.

As long people listened to the Spirit of God, they could avoid these pitfalls. God sent prophets, priests, and kings as spokesmen, but even many of these people were flawed.

Through the millenniums, there were some successes, but many more failures.

2) Jesus could not defeat death from the comfort of a heavenly home.

"Jesus came that we might have life and have it more abundantly," (John 10:10), but we cannot have abundant life if it is in constant danger of being swallowed up in death.

In the fullness of time, Jesus came to make the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden accessible to us all.

The day that Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, death has been running loose, unfettered.

Jesus came to defeat death. Jesus came to look death in the face as say, "Your chokehold on humanity ends with me."

There's only one way to defeat death. You must pass through it and then live and never die again.

I didn't say you can defeat death by postponing it.

Some of you have defeated cancer, but you have not conquered death. You only postponed it.

Some of you have defeated an addiction, but you have not conquered death; it's still coming.

Some of you have defeated depression, but don't get depressed when I remind you that you are still going to die.

The wages of sin is death, and Jesus could not defeat death from the comforts of heaven. He had to face death.

Oh, he could have escaped death. He could have called on ten thousand angels from the cross.

I'm not talking about escaping death.

I'm talking about defeating death. Jesus could not defeat death without dying.

Why was it so crucial for death to be defeated? Because death is Satan's most potent weapon.

Sin kills.

It kills the body.

It kills relationships.

It kills joy, opportunity, peace, growth, character.

Sin kills the quality of life. Sin kills abundant life.

Wherever you allow sin to take root in your life, there is the stench of death. If you don't think it smells, Satan has you hoodooed.

He's got you to thinking that the perfume of this world will cover the stench of death that comes through sin. He's got you to thinking that you know what's better for you than God.

When we live our lives the way we want as opposed to living our lives the way God commands, the smell of death lingers in our lives. If we smell it long enough, we get used to it.

Have you ever been to someone's house that smells? Maybe they have pets, or their home is not clean, but they cannot smell the odor because they've lived in it too long?

When people live in sin long enough, they do not attempt to move out of it because they do not see anything repulsive about it.

But sin is repulsive to God. Just how repulsive is it? As Jesus died on the cross, he took your sin and my sin upon him. Jesus took upon himself the sins of the world.

That is what God saw on the cross, the sins of humanity. That is the reason Jesus felt abandoned by God. He cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46)

The good news is that with Jesus, your sins and my sins were nailed to the cross of Calvary.

“He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.”
Romans 4:25

Jesus came with the intention of doing what we could not do for ourselves, free us from the bondage of sin.

He came to defeat death, so we do not have to pay that penalty for our sin, a death that would separate us from God forever.

3) The third thing that Jesus cannot do is make you believe in his resurrection.

I would be surprised if there isn't anyone reading this message that is not skeptical about the Easter story.

Do you find that as you stoop down with Peter and peer into the empty tomb that you have doubts that Jesus came back to life?

Many people have trouble with this part of the Christian story.

What makes the rest of us so sure?

One reason is the gift of God's Holy Spirit. It's the presence of Christ within us.

It's a mystery, yes, but just because the Holy Spirit cannot be explained doesn't mean He isn't real.

You cannot explain how this world was created, but that makes it no less real.

The scripture tells us that when we believe, we are marked with a seal, which is the promised Holy Spirit, “who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession — to the praise of his glory.” (Eph 1:13b-14)

The Holy Spirit is the presence of Jesus in our hearts. He is that voice that convicts us of sin, reminding us that we are settling for far less than God wants for us and others around us if we choose to go our own way.

He's that presence that assures us that despite our lack of understanding and abilities, we can still be used by God.

He's that comfort in times of grief, reminding us that even though we grieve at the loss of loved ones, we do not grieve as those who have no hope.

Instead, at death, we receive the fulfillment of our inheritance in Jesus with the gift of a heavenly home.

The Holy Spirit is the light that points the way when everything around us is dark. He's that voice that says, "I love you," even when we are not sure we love ourselves.

He's that assurance that this life is not all there is. Even though we can love this life, we know we are just passing through.

It's not our home. It's not our destination. We have a citizenship in a place other than this country. It's called heaven.

If this were not the case, I might be compelled to live for myself. I might be compelled to take my money and spend it all on my family and me.

I might be compelled to allow the pleasures of this world to dictate most of my choices.

I might be compelled to put Michael at the center of every decision and not care about you or anyone else.

But I cannot live that way. God has shown me that I cannot find my way to joy, peace, or happiness that way.

I have decided that I want to live for Jesus, not just because of the promise of a heavenly home, but because of something that Jesus could not do and cannot do.

What would that be?

4) Jesus cannot stop loving us.

Whether you have decided to embrace the resurrection of Jesus or not, Jesus will not stop loving you or stop seeking to bring you into his loving care. Why? Because it hurt Him too much to die for you and to overcome death for you.

It hurts Him too much to think that without Him, your life will continue to find sin's wages, including death and its eternal sufferings, and you will miss out on all the blessings of this life that He wants you to have.

From his prison cell in Rome, the Apostle Paul wrote: "If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin because anyone who has died has been freed of sin." (Romans 6:5-7)

My friend, do you need to be freed of sin, which has the wages of death attached to it? Do you want to defeat death and be allowed to live again, to be born anew right now?

On this Easter, will you finally accept what Jesus did for you on the cross and through His resurrection? Today could be the most important day of your life.

It's Easter. The churches are closed, but your heart can be open to the working of God's Spirit.

Will you pray this morning for God to grant you the grace he granted Adam and Eve in the garden?

He made coverings for them because they were ashamed.

Their sin had caused them for the first time to realize they were naked, and they felt shame, and they hid from God.

God made covering from an animal and clothed them.

This morning, God wants to cover you with the love of Jesus. You don't have to hide from God. God already knows all that you have done and all that you will ever do.

Please hear me. The wage of your sin is death. But that the Lord has paid your debt and in exchange, he's given you a gift of eternal life.

Will you claim your inheritance this morning?

Call us and speak with one of the staff members today and let us pray with you.

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