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Thematic Salem, Bridgeport

“It's More Than a Story”

Alleluia! Christ is risen! **Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

How many times have you heard this story?

Well if you have grown up in the church I would guess you've heard it at least as many times as you are years old. Probably you have heard it hundreds, maybe even thousands, of times.

The problem is that when we hear something over and over and over again it can lose its power.

It can become a story that is told almost by rote, a story that when it's heard goes in one ear and out the other, a story that becomes... well... just a story.

Now if we were talking about the Christmas story that might be just a story. Many scholars have pointed out that the Christmas story was never meant to be taken literally.

In fact, it's very similar to stories in other religions where a god is born and the way we know it's a god is because there's a virgin birth and there are miraculous happenings in the heavens and things like angels & wise men. So the Christmas story might actually be just a story.

But Easter?

Easter is so much more than a story.

For if Easter were only a story Christianity would not have spread throughout the world.

If Easter were only a story it would not have lasted over 2000 years.

If Easter were only a story you and I would not be here today.

If there's one thing I want you to take home with you today it's this:

Easter is more than a story.

In fact, turn to the person beside you and say “It's more than a story!”

Now turn to the person on the other side and say, “It's more than a story!”

It's more than a story - it's good news!

It's the good news that Jesus came to teach - that God wants a relationship with you!

God loves you more than anybody else in the world and what God desires most of all is to be loved back – with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.

It's not about a religion or an institution or an organization.

It's not about rites or rituals or liturgies.

It's not about rules or regulations of commandments.

It's so much simpler than that – God wants a relationship with you.

That's why this is more than a story - it's good news!

It's more than a story - it's the good news that God wants a relationship with you.

But even more, it's the good news that God can have an impact on your life!

That's why Jesus didn't just teach and preach; he healed.

He didn't heal everyone in the country but he healed lots of people.

He made the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk.

And he still heals today.

Now that doesn't mean that we're going to be immediately cured from every illness or injury magically.

And let's face it, one day we are all going to die - so at some point we are not going to be healed.

But between now and that point, God is working healing in us all the time –

sometimes through the natural healing processes God built into our bodies,

sometimes through diet and herbs and medicines, sometimes through doctors and nurses and lab technicians,

sometimes through alternative medicines like chiropractic or acupuncture or Reiki,

and sometimes through awesome and amazing miracles.  
And healing is just one of the ways God impacts our lives.  
There are so, so many others.

Oh, this is so much more than a story!  
It's the good news that God wants a relationship with us and that God can impact our lives.  
And the news gets even better.  
God not only can impact individual lives, but God can impact the world!  
That's why Jesus performed miracles.  
Why else would he feed 5000 people with 5 loaves, or turn water into wine, or walk on water, or calm a storm?  
Because Jesus wanted us to understand that God could impact the world through Jesus.  
And that means that since we are the body of Christ in the world today,  
God can impact the world through us, too. Just as God worked miracles through Jesus,  
God can accomplish miracles through us.

Oh, this is so much more than a story!  
It's the good news, the great news,  
that God wants a relationship with us, and that God can impact our lives, and that through us God can impact the world.  
And the news is even better than that because Jesus did more than teach and heal and perform miracles;  
Jesus raised people from the dead.  
Why?  
To make it clear that God has the power to do absolutely anything.  
Do you get that?  
Do you understand what that means?  
Do you see the implications?  
God has the power to do absolutely anything.

Jesus came to teach us that the most important thing in life is our relationship to God,  
that God can impact our individual lives, that God can impact the world,  
and that God has the power to do absolutely anything.  
But just because God CAN do anything doesn't mean God WILL,  
and so the most important thing of all is not the vastness of God's power but the vastness of God's love.  
Jesus could demonstrate God's power by raising people from the dead.  
But the only way that Jesus could show us how much God loved us and how much he trusted in God's love  
was to give up every bit of power and control that he had and submit himself totally and completely to God's will.  
That's why he allowed himself to be arrested and tried and convicted and sentenced –  
to show us that he was willing to suffer and die, because he trusted that God would raise him up to new life.

Oh, this is so much more than a story! Turn to the person beside you and say "it's more than a story!"  
Now turn to the person on the other side and say, "It's more than a story!"

It's more than a story. It's good news!  
God wants a relationship with you.  
God can impact your life.  
God can impact the world through you.  
God has the power to do absolutely anything.  
And God loves you more than you can ever imagine.

Easter is so much more than a story.  
It's good news, it's great news, it's the best news! It's the most amazing news you will ever hear!  
Believe it! Live it! Share it!

Christ is risen! **Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen!**