

Easter Impacts Each and Every Day and Decision
Acts 18:1-11

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

A teenager asked his father, “So what is the impact of getting married?” The dad responded, “Well, each year on the anniversary of your wedding, you have a celebration, and then in special years like your 10th or 25th or 50th wedding anniversary you have a huge celebration with friends and family, it’s great!” What do you think of his answer? Ladies, does that sound like the kind of guy you want to be married to? Why not? What’s the problem with that answer? Well, the impact of getting married is not just celebrating the anniversary. In fact, that’s only a tiny part of the impact. There are much bigger impacts of marriage than celebrating anniversaries. Marriage impacts each and every day and decision for those who are married.

OK, this is not sermon about marriage, so where am I going with this? What is the impact of Easter? If our answer either in words, or by the way we think and act is “Well, we throw a big celebration Sunday and its our largest church attendance of the year.” Is that a problem? Why? Well Easter doesn’t just impact one Sunday a year, Easter – Jesus rising from the dead – impacts each and every day and each and every decision.

This morning, I invite you to observe that reality in the life of a Christian who lived almost 2000 years ago, and then I’ll ask you to think about the potential impact of Easter on your day and your decisions.

Listen now to **Acts 18:1-11** **After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.** ² **There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them,** ³ **and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them.** ⁴ **Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.** ⁵ **When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah.** ⁶ **But when they opposed Paul and became abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent of it. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”** ⁷ **Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God.** ⁸ **Crispus, the synagogue leader, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptized.** ⁹ **One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: “Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent.** ¹⁰ **For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.”** ¹¹ **So Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.**

So, the name of the man I’m talking about is Paul. He’s quite famous – probably the greatest missionary that ever lived. But today I want you to put yourself in his shoes and think about him as just a person like you and me, a person that lives day by day with tasks to do, relationships to navigate, and decisions to make. As you do, you will see how much of an impact Jesus’ resurrection made on his day to day living and decisions. We can start with the first little phrase: **After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.** That’s a curious little phrase. Corinth might seem like the last place that a guy like Paul would go. Corinth was a city with a reputation...not a good reputation. It was best known for it’s pagan practices and sexual perversion. It was a destination for those who wanted to engage in immoral behavior – I suppose we might think of cities like Amsterdam, Bangkok, or Las Vegas today. Why go to Corinth? Two big reasons. The people there needed to hear about a savior, they needed to be confronted with sin and comforted with the forgiveness that Jesus won. Like Jesus said in Mark 2, **“It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”** The second reason – there was a growing core of people similar to him, Jewish by race and religion, so he would have some contacts, some people with whom he could begin his work. We’ll hear about two of them in a moment, but do you see what’s going on here? Easter – Jesus rising from the dead – impacts where Paul moves and lives!

Should it still today? Does it? I’ll share this little story with you. Last week I was talking to a gentleman from the congregation in Arizona where I currently have a Call. He shared the story of his many moves in a business that demands them, but for each, he made sure that before he went, there was a church that was 100% faithful to the Word of God so he and his family had fellow Christians to encourage them. I’ll share that one “must” for our own children when choosing a college was that the college itself was faithful to God’s Word or there was a campus ministry or church nearby where they would attend. I mean it when I say it was a “must.” No tuition dollars without it. Those are both what we might call the nurture side of things. But I have witnessed plenty of the Easter-inspired outreach that impacts where people move and live too. One of my best friends and his wife and family spent nine years in Japan as missionaries. Another is on the Apache reservation and has been most of his ministry. Both of their families sacrificed a lot – contact with relatives and

creature comforts to live there – why? To share the Easter message with those who need to hear it. And it's not just pastors and their families. I remember meeting a family who had been involved in three mission start congregations in their lives – and it was intentional. They moved there and found employment, but with the chief purpose of helping start the church. Undoubtedly you will have decisions coming in life about where you move and live. What will have the most sway? Money, weather, job, prestige of where you attend school, or will it be the resurrection of Jesus and what it means for your future and that of those you can reach?

Now look what Paul does when he gets to Corinth: **There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, ³ and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. ⁴ Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.**

He finds a Jewish couple – oh and what else do we find out? All the Jews had been kicked out of Rome. So why does Paul seek them out? They were tentmakers. Paul was a tentmaker. Was this a business opportunity – a chance to make a dollar or two? Well, “yes” and “no.” It's clear from what we read next why Paul wanted to make some money – it's so that he could support himself so that he could stay and do mission work on the Sabbath in Corinth. Not only that, but we find out later that he witnessed to Aquilla and Priscilla who became mission workers themselves. The whole point of his occupation decision and those he chose to establish early relationships with was once again Easter inspired. The end goal was to share forgiveness and heaven through Jesus' rising from the dead. Easter impacted Paul's occupation, or vocation as we sometimes call it. Does it still?

God desires every Christian to whom he has given a vocation to use it to share the impact of Easter. From the obvious – offerings given to support pastors and teachers, missionaries, and schools, to the less obvious – the physician who finds opportunity to encourage a patient to seek a church home. The nurse who prays with the frightened patient. The mechanic or plumber who works hard and does a good job and does it cheerfully so that customers might take notice and there might be an opportunity to share the “why!” “Because of what Jesus has done for me!” The mom who sacrifices greater income or career promotion to spend time with the kids to lay a strong spiritual foundation. So what vocation decisions are you facing? What career to choose? Whether to seek a new job or promotion? Whether to stay at home for a time? Whether to switch careers? What will have the most impact on that decision? The money you make, the prestige, the vacations you can take – or how it will impact your opportunity to stay close to Jesus and to share the future the you possess with others?

The next choice Paul makes is a tough one. He stops his mission work to his fellow Jews and concentrates on the Gentiles. Why? They actively rejected the message and were abusive towards Paul. Maybe what Paul did, would seem like the obvious choice, but not so fast. These were people like him, people he would have been comfortable around – maybe some of them were even relatives. And to be rejected by your peers? Often the choice is to abandon Jesus and retain the friendship and respect of my peers. But Paul knew that would be giving away his eternal future – betraying the savior who gave his life for temporary comfort and popularity. So, he chooses to move on. He doesn't seek retribution; he doesn't hate them. But he does move on. And that is a life impact of Easter.

How about you? “It's your church or it's me, dad!” “If you're going to come over to my house – I don't want to hear a word of your religious bigotry...” “There isn't any room in this profession for your miracles and make-believe...” And so, you are faced with a not so pleasant choice. But what will have the most impact? The acceptance of your family or peers? The ability to advance in society? Or the eternity-altering, death-altering message of Jesus rising?

Fortunately, the account ends on a happier note. Paul leaves the synagogue, sets up headquarters in the house next door of all places, and the synagogue leader becomes a Christian as do many more Corinthians. And then he receives God's assurance that he will be safe there and he stays a year and a half, one of the longest stays of Paul's ministry. Here is by far the biggest ongoing impact of Easter. It still changes hearts. It still changes countless futures from an eternity in hell to an eternity in heaven, and God gives us a front row seat, a part if you will, not in the actual power to change, but in the role of using the power that does – the Bible and baptism. So, what is the impact of that? For Paul it brought joy and renewed energy in the face of the pain of rejection by his peers. I can't tell you how many times God has brought that person to my office door or to church on Sunday, just at the time when I was feeling like my work didn't really matter, or what contentment it brings at the funeral of a brother or sister in Jesus knowing that I will see them again, and knowing Satan has no more chance to lead them away – the race is finished. The impact of everyone else and everything else is temporary. The impact of Easter? It's forever.

Oh, the anniversary of Easter might be over for another year, but not Easter itself – not the rising of Jesus from the dead. No, that still impacts every day and decision. And that is a good thing! AMEN.