

## Easter Sunday's Domino

John 20:19-23

April 1, 2018

Welcome/intro/vision

Domino's falling bumper video: found it on Youtube, which is a monument to the fact that Americans have way too much free time!

Happy Easter, so delighted you've joined us for this great day of celebration. For those of you who are new to church or new to Christianity, we're so glad that you're here

Today is the day the biggest and most important celebration for Christians all over the globe and we're glad that you're here to celebrate the party with us

Today we're going to talk about how the Easter story kicked off what we're calling the Domino Effect

If you Google "non-profit organizations" you know what you find: Jesus 's **influence is EVERYWHERE:**

United Way, American Red CROSS, Habitat for Humanity, YMCA, Salvation Army, World Vision, Compassion, St. Jude's Children Hospital, Good Will

these are just the ones that you're likely to have heard of—literally THOUSANDS more non-profits and service organizations doing fantastic work all over the globe

totaling BILLIONS of dollars and BILLIONS of men and women hours quietly making a difference

Trying to tackle some of the most difficult and stubborn problems in some of the harshest and most difficult environments on the globe

All these organizations founded by Jesus-followers, many of them continue to espouse faith in Jesus as a core part of their mission and philosophy

Question is: Why? What was it about Jesus that unleashed this domino effect of good that we can undeniably tie into this man Jesus? And it's STILL making a difference in HIS name, 2,000 years later!

Something happened 2,000 years ago that tipped off a chain of events that unleashed unprecedented generosity into the world

Today we're going to look at why and how Easter did this—how did it unleash so much generosity into the world?

**And so I** want to invite all of us to peer into the story of that first Easter Sunday and I want to suggest that what Jesus says and does there does a couple of things that changed everything

Because the WAY that Jesus tips this first domino, the grace and compassion and love with which he propels his first followers outward

Means that Easter Sunday morning unleashes not only unprecedented generosity into the world organizationally to deal with big problems in the world and society

It also unleashes a new way of relating to God that introduces a generous grace into our hearts and into our individual lives

This morning, if you're coming into Easter Sunday morning feeling the weight of disappointments or loneliness, or exhaustion or heartache

or even anger at the brokenness in the world and how messed up everything is

And if the religious answer has never quite seemed to work for you, the good news is that what Jesus is up to on Easter Sunday is much, much better than religion—it's a new way of bringing healing and new life to a broken world

as we'll see today as we take a look at the event in history that changed history forever, the day that unleashed the domino effect

Bible/no Bible: John 20:19-23

New to the Bible, so glad you're here, four biographies of Jesus, written by four guys: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John

And if you don't know the story, what's happened is after just 3 years of Jesus traveling and teaching and doing miracles

The crowds love him and the authorities are threatened by him.

And so they're looking for ways to get rid of him when one of Jesus's closest friends agrees to betray him

And so one Friday evening Jesus is arrested by the authorities, run through a mock trial with trumped up charges and conflicting witnesses

And eventually they convince the powers that be to execute Jesus.

Meanwhile, during all of this he's had this crew of twelve followers and they all scatter and flee for their lives—they don't want to be executed, they're out of here!

That happens on a Friday, he's executed and buried

and then Saturday is the Jewish Sabbath, their weekly holy day, and no one works on the Sabbath—his closest followers, the disciples continue to hide out, weep, mourn, a fog of confusion and immense grief

So on Sunday morning, some women go to the tomb to embalm the body, which was what you typically did to bodies in the ancient world

And when they get there, there's no body there. And then an angel appears to them and tells them that Jesus has risen

And then Jesus himself appears to them, and he tells these women that he's no longer dead, that God his Father has raised him back from the dead, just like he had told them would happen

The women rush back to tell the disciples, but they have a hard time believing it, obviously, and that's where we pick up this story in John 20, starting in verse 19

***<sup>19</sup> On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, \_\_\_\_\_***

Have you ever let someone down? I mean really let someone down?

Have you ever let someone down who you really respected, loved, admired, wanted to please, wanted them to respect you and appreciate you?

Have you ever let someone down and then had to face them immediately afterwards

And you kind of know that given what you did they have total permission to do or say pretty much anything they want?

This is kind of the position the disciples are in as they have their first resurrection meeting with Jesus

It's Sunday evening, they're hiding for fear of the Jewish leaders, they've been hiding since Friday evening when they first abandoned Jesus

They know that it's very possible for them to be rounded up and at least thrown in jail for being associated with Jesus

And suddenly Jesus appears among them, having passed through locked doors in order to do so

Hi disciples first thought it might be a ghost --the ghost of Jesus had come to haunt them for abandoning him in his hour of need!

But then he's going to show them his bodily scars here in just a minute and in future appearances he'll eat and do other things to prove he's not a ghost.

It turns out that the appearance of Jesus is less like a ghost passing through a door and more like an airplane passing through a cloud.

On the other side of Jesus's resurrection, his resurrected body is so real, so thick, so resilient, that everything else in this world is a vapor, he passes right through it

And so he passes through the door and stands among his disciples who have spent the past few days cowering and hiding.

And here and now in this moment, their first interaction with Jesus since they abandoned him, he has cart blanche and full authority to say almost anything he wanted to them, to let them have it

He could have said **"Shame on you!"** They'd abandoned him and left him and it's what they were feeling anyway. Anyone ever said that or something like that to you after you blew it?

Have YOU ever said that or something like that to someone else who let you down, who blew it?

VERY natural, very normal, when people you count on let you down, YOU let them have it.

But you know what Jesus says instead? **"Peace be with you."**

Peace, the Hebrew word he would have spoken to them was shalom, it doesn't just mean warm-fuzzies to you, it means 360 wholeness and flourishing, inherent in shalom is forgiveness

Instead of cursing them, he blesses them. Instead of heaping up on them more shame and guilt, he *absorbs* their offense against him, which really happened

And in exchange he offers them wholeness and healing, forgiveness and life

When someone has every right to be mad at you and they instead absorb your offense and extend grace and forgiveness to you, what does it tell you about their character?

My friends, if you're here this morning and you've failed, you've blown it, and you know it and maybe the people around you know it as well

And maybe you're carrying in some measure of guilt or anxiety about ways that you've failed

You are here this morning to hear Easter's good news: Jesus offers his 360-degree flourishing and blessing to people who have failed

This is what Easter is all about: Easter is God's great ginormous PEACE TO YOU, FLOURISHING TO YOU, WHOLENESS and HEALTH and RENEWAL TO YOU

to a world that is full of brokenness and striving and pride and arrogance and grasping and failing and falling short over and over and over again:

Peace to you from God, Jesus is Lord, he has risen, and all shall be made well and new again

Sometimes as Christians have related to the world over the past 2,000 years they've forgotten that this is what Jesus has come to do, this is what Jesus has come to declare from God to lost and hiding people like the disciples and like us:

But when Christians have remembered to keep that front and center: PEACE TO YOU, NOT SHAME ON YOU

it's been a fountain of life and energy that has propelled this domino effect of generosity we talked about earlier into the world

To a group of people who are hiding and fearful and full of grief and shame and guilt, Jesus does NOT pile on, does NOT heap up, he forgives, he blesses, he loves the story continues:

***20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.***

Can you imagine mood swing in that room in the span of just a few minutes?

From cowering and hiding for their lives to this utter incredulous overwhelmed joy and relief that the biggest mistake of your life and the worst moment of your life has just been erased?

And not just erased but turned completely into the greatest event in your life?

Can you imagine if your worst moment of your life was erased? Can you imagine if the worst moment of your life was turned upside to the greatest moment that ever happened to you?

This is what Jesus does, this is the power and wonder of the resurrection. This is part of why we celebrate Easter, this is part of the promise for you and for me this Easter Sunday.

One day all the worst days and events of your life will be redeemed, made new, turned upside down.

This dizzyingly joyful moment will catapult the disciples hiding out in this room OUT of their hiding behind locked doors and INTO lives of faith and courage that will change all of history forever

See, Jesus's word to the disciples of "peace to you" isn't spoken so that they can feel better about hiding out behind locked doors

Peace to you isn't about a little bit of personal and private faith that you just keep to yourself while you go about your normal life and business

Peace to you, flourishing to you, is an energy source to fuel a mission to change the world energy source for COURAGE not encouragement to retreat and be passive

Peace to you isn't about making us more passive, it's permission to join in the greatest movement in all of history

Peace to you is an invitation and a power and a call to bring your days, your skills, your gifts, your abilities, your relationships, your sphere of influence

into the work of reconciliation and restoration and redemption and renewal and salvation that God has been up to since the beginning of time.

And HOW Jesus does this, what motivational tactics he uses as he sends his first disciples out illustrates how wonderful and how different what Jesus did really is, take a look:

***21 Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." 22 And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."***

In 1998, Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks again teamed up to do one of the most remarkable films of the decade, **Saving Private Ryan**

If you're too young to have seen it, the movie is set in World War 2, and in the opening scene we get the news that Private Ryan is in Europe fighting the war and his three other brothers all die on D-Day.

The war department gets wind of this and decides to fish Private Ryan out of the war to spare his mother and the rest of their family any further grief.

Most of the movie follows Tom Hanks and his small squad as they go looking for Private Ryan in the midst of the chaos and carnage of World War 2

And in the end, the whole squad of soldiers who have gone looking for Private Ryan find him but they're all killed

**And as Tom** Hanks is dying at the end of the movie, he pulls Private Ryan down and do you remember what he says?

**"Earn this."** We've all died to save your life, Ryan, now you need to go and live a life that earns this, that is worthy of all of us dying for you and on your behalf

And of course after that scene, it cuts **to an old** man at a military cemetery, and it's Ryan, and he's crying—he's carried this burden his entire adult life. has he done enough? Has he lived a life good enough? Has he earned it? He's not sure he has.

**Jesus has just showed** his disciples his hands, his side, his scars that he bore for them. And you know what he could have said next in the THANK GOODNESS NOT the real John 20? **EARN THIS**

See, Jesus wanted to start a domino effect that would pour out unprecedented generosity into the world and he had **two options**: the religious option or the Jesus way

### **1. Religious Option: "earn this."**

Jesus had told them before he went to his death that he was going there for them, on their behalf, he was going to shed his blood for the forgiveness of THEIR sins

So that nothing would stand in between them and a relationship with God ever again

And as he's reunited with his disciples he wants to send them out!

He wants to start the domino effect, he wants them to unleash unprecedented generosity and grace into the world

And one way he could have done so would have the Saving Private Ryan way: here's my wounds, here's my pain, I died for you, now EARN THIS

Go live a life that is worthy of my sacrifice for you

This is how all religions work. There's a gap between you and God, a gap between you and who you were made to be or meant to be

And you've got to get to work to close that gap—you've got to close the gap between you and God as best you can

There is no reconciliation until and unless you measure up to some set of standards and maintain those standards indefinitely

This is how every major religious system before or after Jesus works and closing that gap through doing the right religious or social things becomes the all-consuming drive of the religious participant

This model mostly runs **on guilt, shame, anxiety, some ambition**

And the reason why so many religions continue to use this and run on this is because it works very, very well for a short period of time!

You can get people motivated through some guilt and shame and earn this! Domino's start to fall, for sure!

But the problem is that eventually guilt and shame and earn this eventually consumes us, they burn us out

If we're earnest religious types, we get exhausted by it, never secure, never sure, like Private Ryan, if we've done enough to really earn God's favor and approval and love

If we're flippant or marginally religious types, we just give up actually trying to do any of it altogether

becomes just something that we don't take all that seriously because it just starts to feel like a big guilt trip

That's the religious option and it's no wonder that so many are becoming less and less religious if that's the method of motivation that's being offered

What does he do instead? The REAL John 20 reads like this: **"PEACE to you" again.**

## **2. The Jesus Way: "Peace to you, I'm sending you as I've been sent"**

In the Jesus way, the reconciliation happens FIRST, forgiveness and relationship are already established—GAP already CLOSED

You're not sent out to earn God's love and grace, you're GIFTED it, peace is already on offer to you, you don't have to go earn it, it's been earned for you

And so he starts with peace and reconciliation and then he gives them a mission: as God his Father had sent Jesus, so Jesus is sending the disciples

And how did the Father send Jesus on HIS mission? It was as a **beloved** son, that's how.

The Father, that's how Jesus invited us to refer to God, sent Jesus, his Son, on a mutually agreed upon rescue mission to save the entire world from sin, death, destruction, forever and ever

Jesus shows us through the life he lives what it would look like if we were rooted in God's perfect belovedness every moment of our lives

AND THEN he makes that same life possible for you and I by his sacrificial death which wipes out all the sin that was standing between us and God's perfect love

In the opening scene we get of Jesus's adult life and his public ministry, before he does any teaching, before he does any miracles, before any crowds or adulation, before he does ANYTHING

The very first picture we get of Jesus's adult life is he is baptized by his cousin John, and a voice from heaven declares over him: "This is my beloved Son!"

"This is my beloved son" BEFORE HE DOES ANYTHING. Jesus is a beloved son showing us what the beloved life looks like.

He's not spending his entire life trying to earn God's love, he's spending his entire life living as one who is ALREADY loved by God, showing us what that kind of a life could look like

And in this framework, the call to the disciples is to go and LIVE as people who are ALREADY BELOVED—you are already beloved, so go live like it!

You are totally provided for into eternity, the rest of your life you're playing with house money, nothing to prove, nothing to lose, and only everything to gain!

Religion is people trying their best to make God happy with them and reach up to God and work off their mistakes

Christianity is God putting on flesh to reach down to us, to reconcile with us, forgive us all our mistakes

And from that place of belovedness, we are invited to join in with his cosmic work of changing the world

And that place of belovedness **means that we can act in faith, hope, and love** instead of guilt, shame, anxiety or ambition

In religious settings the motivational appeals to participate in the domino effect almost always devolve into some sort of guilt or obligation or shame language

But in the Jesus way, guilt and shame are OBSTACLES to the life he wants for us to live, not motivational tactics or tools

In part because as it turns out, faith, hope and love are much more substantial and much longer-term motivational energies

The tricky part is, on the outside it COULD look exactly the same. You get two people to start an orphanage for kids in the developing world, one could be doing it out of guilt and religion and an 'earn it' mentality

The other could be doing it out of the Jesus way, motivated as one who is already beloved, full of faith, hope, and love

And from the outside, it could look exactly the same. The outward activity COULD BE exactly the same

But who we're becoming UNDERNEATH the activity are two totally different people

In the end, most of us will live our lives in one of two ways:

**we will either spend our lives trying** to justify ourselves and our lives and our life choices: to ourselves, to our parents, to our peers or colleagues or spouses or just the voices in our heads. We will either spend our lives trying to justify our existence

OR we will spend our lives as people who have ALREADY BEEN JUSTIFIED by the grace and mercy of God, the free life of the beloved who is living this life with house money, nothing to lose, everything already gained because of Christ

Jesus chooses to create this entirely new way of doing good as he starts his new movement, as he tips the first domino that unleashes unprecedented generosity into the world

He motivates out of reconciled relationship, by calling us the beloved, he invites us to change the world in faith, hope, and love, not guilt, shame, anxiety or pride. And it stands the test of time

2,000 years later, his movement is still churning out billions of dollars and man and womanpower hours of good every single week, all over the globe

And so he sends his disciples out as he was sent out: beloved is who they are, but he's also going to equip them with two things for the work:

***"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."***

The disciples are going to get to work full of God's Spirit, and with this crazy spiritual authority

Jesus wasn't just floating around beloved. He was sent in power and with power to do real work, to tip off this domino effect.

He was sent with authority to forgive sins and heal bodies and teach like no one else about what life with God was like

And so he sends his disciples out with this same power to be the next dominos to fall: to do real work that makes a difference in this world

The disciples are sent like Jesus was sent: beloved, full of the Spirit for disproportionate impact and with a genuine authority to make a difference in both the spiritual and physical world

And you know what? It worked. Imperfectly, in fits and starts, and very often getting it very, very wrong

humans are involved and any time human beings are involved the one thing you can count on is that some mess will happen somewhere, right?

But over the past 2,000 years there has been this core faithful, persistent relentless movement of faith, hope, and love that has brought more life and hope and grace to more people than any other movement in all of history

And this morning, Easter Sunday, 2018, we as the church of Jesus are gathered to receive this same good news over us and to receive this same call on our lives:

***Peace to you! Your sins are forgiven! You are beloved! Receive the power of God's Spirit and join in the domino effect!***

Peace to you from God so that you might be unleashed into his cosmic flow and his cosmic work of making all things new, making all things right and whole again

Peace and flourishing to you through the blood on the cross and the infinite power and resilience of the resurrection

Come and join the work! Come and step in, come and be a part of what God's doing, come and join in the domino effect!

This morning, there are **two TAKE-WITH's**—two wildly important take-homes for you to think about and consider as we close here Easter Sunday

**First, if you don't yet know and trust in the work of Christ on Easter weekend bless you with peace and flourishing from God to you today, we invite you to take that step**

Jesus shows us what life could be like living in constant connection with God and then he makes a way for it to happen.

He has forgiven us all our sins, everything in us that would block us from a perfect and holy God who cannot and will not share in any darkness ever.

Some of us have a hard time with this idea that we need forgiveness, we think we're pretty much good people and don't really have anything to be forgiven

How about we do this: what if we took every thought you've had for the past 24 hours and put it on the screen up here—how good would you look then? That's just one day.

God sees and knows all of it, and he is perfect light, he will destroy and forgive our darkness but he will not merely shrug at it or dismiss it or accommodate it.

There will be ZERO room in God's kingdom for my pride or yours, for my entitlement or yours, for my selfishness or yours. All of it must be dealt with if we're going to spend this life and the next in the presence of a perfect and holy God who is all light and in whom there is no darkness

Most of us know someone who THINKS they're good at something but they're really not: they think they can sing, they can't. They think they're good at tennis, they're not, they think they're a hard working contributor to your team, they're actually the weakest link

Very easy for us to overestimate ourselves in all kinds of areas. Nowhere is it more common to overestimate ourselves than in the area of our own moral goodness.

Most of us also have a tendency to underestimate our contribution to a conflict

With your spouse your ex-spouse a coworker a neighbor if there's a disputed or problem who's primarily at fault automatically?

In Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, God very gently and lovingly but very clearly tells us that there was a rift between us and God.

And it was so bad and we contributed so much to it that he had to send his son to die in order to heal that rift.

And he loves us so much that he has done it. He bled and died that his word to you and me on Easter Sunday 2018 is peace to you.

So when someone comes to you and tells you that your part in a conflict was much worse than you think it was, you can either listen or dismiss.

But when God comes in the flesh to tell us, it's probably worth giving it serious attention.

Because just like in a human relationship, reconciliation requires both parties to enter in. So this morning, hear the good news:

Forgiveness is at the center of Jesus's offer of peace to you and to me this morning—this great word SHALOM, flourishing, right relationships all around your, everything as it was made to be and should be

INCLUDING so that we might enter into a relationship with a perfect and holy God who is all light and in whom there is no darkness.

And so that we might more fully be a part of his great, big, glorious work of redemption and healing and renewal here in this place

Will you receive the generous gift of Jesus's "Peace to you" that includes a real need for forgiveness for the ways that we've chosen darkness and loved it rather than the light?

The second wildly important take-home is going to be about our joining in with the domino effect

**to join in on the domino effect that Jesus started 2,000 years ago.**

To do so as a beloved one, in faith, hope, and love, to participate in the great word "peace to you" that has echoed for the past 2,000 years across every continent as Jesus followers have participated in his great peace to you work

We're going to pass out some note cards now and this is going to be a chance for you to show us how you're participating in the domino effect

And maybe help an organization that you love get \$1,000

Here's how it'll work:

**1. Take your domino to an organization that is making a difference in this community where you currently volunteer.**

If you don't currently volunteer anywhere, this is your opportunity—go and find a place where you can plug in and do some good in an area or sphere that matters to you: several options just in this morning's bulletin, lots more out there we can help you with

Go and bring the "peace to you" from Jesus to that place! Even just a one-off volunteer gig would be fine!

**2. Take a selfie with the domino in front of a logo or sign that helps us to know where you are (if that's possible--see the front for a few models!).**

So here's my picture: me, my domino, and the new Chatham YMCA location

About six months ago I joined the board of the Chatham YMCA.

I didn't know much of what they were doing before I joined the board but they are totally crushing it when it comes to serving kids in our schools, doing amazing work all across Chatham County

That's one place where I'm participating in the domino effect

**3. Post the picture on Facebook with the #DominoEffect and tag @ChathamChurch**

**4. In the body of the post, tell us about the organization. Give us their name, their mission or purpose, and a story of the kind of impact they make in our community.**

**5. We will keep an eye out on Facebook for your posts throughout the course of our Domino Effect series** which will run for three more weeks, our last Sunday of the Domino Effect series will be on April 22nd

Every Sunday during this series we'll be talking more about how the Domino Effect spread in the first years after Jesus's resurrection and how it continues to play out today.

**6. On the final week of the Domino Effect series, April 22nd, we'll award a \$1,000 gift at both our Pittsboro and Woods Charter campus to an organization that has been nominated by someone at that campus.**

This is your chance to not only highlight an organization that matters to you and that's making a difference in our community

It's also a chance to help them get some cold, hard cash

So take this handout, take your domino, and we invite you to enter into the Domino Effect over the next few weeks

My friends, happy Easter! Peace to you. My prayer for all of us is that we might know the wonder and the joy and the flourishing peace of Easter this year

And then that from that beloved, forgiven, flourishing place, that we might hear the music of a wonderful invitation

To be sent out, to participate in the flourishing of a world that was made for good and blessing but has collapsed in on itself over and over again

To bring that same PEACE TO YOU to a world so badly in need of healing and repair and restoration.