

## **CCC HOW JESUS REVITALIZES YOUR LIFE P1**

### **When You're Running On Empty**

**EASTER 2009**

Happy Easter everybody!

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is without a doubt the single most important event in history and I can say that without any fear of contradiction because every other event in history is dated by its relationship to the resurrection of Jesus Christ – A.D. or B.C. This is the event that split history into A.D. and B.C. When you say “2009” even people who don’t believe in Jesus Christ are using this time as a reference point for their clocks, their calendars, and their schedules. Everything is dated according to this event and for good reason because it was the biggest thing that has ever happened.

Easter proved that Jesus Christ was who He claimed to be. He said I’m the Son of God. I’m the way to heaven. And to prove it I’m going to let them put me to death. I’m going to die on the cross for everyone’s sins and three days later I will come back to life. And guess what, “That’s exactly what He did.”

If there had been no Easter, no resurrection, there would be no forgiveness for your sins. There would be no hope of heaven. There would be no purpose in living. It is the most important event.

It’s interesting and ironic that when Jesus Christ was crucified and died on the cross His followers fell apart. They just scattered to the winds. They were devastated. They were bewildered... In their minds it just wasn’t supposed to happen that way. They all thought that Jesus Christ was going to set up a literal kingdom here on earth,

a theocracy and ruin the Roman Empire. All of a sudden He's being killed between two thieves on a cross. And they're going "What's happening? Did we miss this? Did we mess it up?" When Jesus Christ was arrested all of His followers – they were actually called disciples – they ran away. They fled like cowards. Some of them even denied that they knew Him. They all just scattered to the winds.

So for several days until Jesus rose again these guys were bewildered. They were discouraged. They were defeated. They were disillusioned. They were demoralized. They were depressed. In a word, they were running on empty.

Three days later, on Easter Sunday, Jesus Christ comes back to life and that night, Easter Sunday evening late in the evening, He goes to meet with His followers and what happens in that room so forever changes them that the

transformation is unbelievable? And those who were once cowards are now full of courage. Those who were once empty are now empowered. Those who were once defeated and discouraged and demoralized are now daring. They're full of boldness now. They're afraid of nothing and no one. They're ready to take on the Roman Empire and the entire world. They have an ultimate confidence now. They're full of peace and joy and they're not even the same people that they were three days earlier. Somehow now they are incredibly empowered. So what happened? What changed them? How did Jesus refill their empty tanks when they were running on empty?

Today we're going to start a new series, I'm calling "When You're Running on Empty," and were going to give you a booklet at the end of the service on the way out that you can take home and meet with others or with your

husband, wife friends and talk over the sermon of that Sunday.

Okay I want to begin with just a little survey. How many of you when you're driving never let your gas tank get below half empty? Anybody here. A few people. God bless you compulsive people! Just kidding!

How many of you fill up when you get three-quarters empty?

How many of you see how far you can go after the little light goes on?

How many of you think "E" means "Enough to keep going"?

How many of you have ever in your life run out of gas? You're not very bright are you? And the reason I can say your not to bright... is I run out of gas all the time...! The tow truck drives at Callet's Towing they all know me by

my first name. I got to thinking one time when I had run out of gas. I'm going to do a series called "When You're Running on Empty" and compare, what are all the reasons that I have run out of gas in my car to when I run out of gas in my life?

So wouldn't you know the other day I ran out of gas but I wasn't to far from the station so while, my loving wife, Edna-Wynne was pushing the car down to the gas station? I stayed in the car and started to make a list of the reasons we run out of gas. I think over the weeks you will be amazed at how much they parallel when we're running on empty emotionally. When were running on empty financially, and running on empty relationally, and running on empty physically, and spiritually.

But today because it's Easter I want us to look at how Jesus refills our tank. How He revitalizes us. How He re-energizes us when we're running on empty.

The story of what Jesus did with His followers on Easter is recorded in God's word, the bible in John 20. This is Easter night. *"On the evening of that first day of the week [Sunday] when the disciples were together with the doors locked for fear of the authorities. And Jesus came and stood among them and He said 'Peace be with you.'* After He said this He showed them His hands [where He had the nail prints] *and His side* [where the centurion speared Him in the side when He was on the cross] *and the disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you. [This is the second time] As My Father has sent Me, I'm now sending you.'* With that He breathed on them and He said, *"Receive the Holy*

*Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins they are forgiven..."*

Then on down to verse 29 *"Then Jesus tells Thomas 'Because you have seen Me you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet they believe.'* Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and by believing you may have life in His name."

I don't know what kind of week you've had. And I don't know what kind of month you've had or what kind of year you've had or what kind of life you've had. But if you've ever felt like you were running on empty, you thought, "I don't know whether I can go on. I'm at the end of my rope. I'm ready to throw in the towel of life. I feel like I'm going to resign from the human race." If you've ever felt

frustrated, fatigued, fearful or just weary. Sick and tired of being sick and tired – you’ve picked a great Sunday to come to church, because, I’ve got Good News for you.

And why I say that because what Jesus did with His disciples, He can and wants to do for you in your life this Easter. The first thing that Jesus does when He wants to refill your tank when you’re running on empty is first

**1. He meets you where you are.**

The disciples were scared, they’re afraid. They’re hiding in a room with the doors locked. They don’t know what to do and what I want for you to try and see here is: When you’re running on empty Jesus doesn’t wait for you to come to Him. He doesn’t say get your act together and come to me. He comes to you. He takes the initiative. In fact it says here in verse 19 *“It was late that Sunday evening. The disciples were gathered together behind*

*locked doors because they were afraid of the authorities.*

*Then Jesus came and stood among them.”* The point is Jesus went to them and listen your not here by accident today and He is here now for you.

**Notice:** It’s late in the evening. Have you ever been so tired, so upset you couldn’t get to sleep? This is what’s happening here with these guys. They’ve had a roller coaster week with emotional highs and lows. They had a life of emotional highs and lows. They’ve gone through the arrest and the trial and the crucifixion and the death and the burial of their leader, Jesus Christ. These guys are emotionally spent. They’re drained. But they can’t get to sleep. And it’s late in the evening. Most of them probably hadn’t slept for days. They were tired of it all. In your life’s circumstances... right now you may feel God’s a million miles away. You may feel like He’s on some

distant planet. You all alone in your life... But the fact is He's closer than you realize. He's here and He's near.

And He wants to help you.... The second thing He does is

## **2. He gives you encouragement.**

Notice the very first thing Jesus says to them. Verse 19

*"Then Jesus said, 'Peace be with you.'"* I love this. He

says, "Calm down you guys! Chill out! Take a deep

breath. Relax. I still am in control nothing has happened

that I haven't allowed to go on, everything is going to be

ok. I've got it under control." The very first thing Jesus

says to these guys who were defeated, demoralized,

depressed, discouraged, running on empty, He says *"Peace*

*be unto you.* He encourages them, He says, It's ok. I've got

it handled."... You know why I really love this part of the

scripture. I love this because of what Jesus didn't say.

Jesus could have walked into the room and the first thing

He could of said was, "What in the world is going on..."

Why did you guys leave Me? Why did you abandon Me?

He didn't say, "Where were you when I needed you most?"

But he didn't criticize them. He didn't rebuke them. He

didn't put them down. He didn't correct them or reprimand

them. One of the first things Jesus does when you're

running on empty? He encourages you. *Peace be unto*

*you.* Why did He do that to them or let me make it more

personal, "Why is Jesus saying it to you right now?"

Because He understood your confusion, He understands

right where you are right now.

If you don't get anything else I want you to get this right

now. Nobody understands how you feel as much as Jesus

Christ does. No body understands how much you hurt

right now if that's the case then Jesus feels. God

understands how you feel more than you understand how you feel and He says to you to, “Peace be unto you.” .

And because He understands exactly how you feel there’s nothing you can’t talk to God about. There’s nothing too big. There’s nothing too small. There’s nothing too insignificant. There’s nothing too frivolous, there’s nothing too ugly that you can’t talk to God about. Because He understands everything you’re feeling at every moment of your life. So listen, Go ahead and talk to Him about it. Right now... Unload yourself and receive encouragement from Him. Let’s just give it to God, right now. I don’t care if it’s big or little. Let’s pray about it. What’s stressing you out? Worry? Kids? Work? Finances? Health? A conflict, an addiction, a relationship.? Whatever has got you running on empty, why don’t you give it to God right now? Let’s just pause

for a moment right now and give it to God. Just tell Him, Talk to him from your heart right now. Just say something like this... “God, I really need Your encouragement right now. Jesus, give me Your peace. Give me Your comfort. Give me Your strength. Help me to know that I do not have to face \_\_\_\_\_ this alone as I trust in You. Thank You for Your love. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

When you’re running on empty the first thing He does is He comes and meets you on your territory, where you are and then He encourages you. He doesn’t put you down, He lifts you up... He says Let me help you.

The third thing that Jesus does when He wants to refill your tank when you’re running on empty is:

### **3. He shows you His love.**

That’s the third thing He does when you’re running on empty. This is what He did with His followers that very

first Easter. The Bible says this *“As He spoke Jesus held out His hands for them to see [He said look at the nail prints in My hands where I was crucified] and He showed them His side. [Look at where I was stabbed – speared – by the centurion when I was hanging on the cross.]. And they were filled with joy when they saw their Lord.”* What is Jesus doing? He’s first validating His identify to them. He’s saying, “It’s me, guys! It’s Me. See the nail prints here. You’re not looking at a ghost. You’re not looking at a vision. You’re not having an illusion. You’re not dreaming. Touch Me - It’s really Me. This is Me. I’m back.”

The second thing He’s doing is He’s showing how much He loves you. He’s saying, “I loved you this much.” Most have heard or even know that Jesus Christ died on the cross. But, did you know that He died on the cross just for

*you?* Not just for the whole world, for all the sins of the world. He died for you. If there had been nobody else living on earth, He would have still come to earth and died for you so your sins could be paid for so you could go to heaven. See heaven’s perfect and you’re not perfect, I’m not perfect, and the person next to you isn’t perfect. We have all messed up. And neither am I. So He did it for you.

The greatest act of love ever done in your behalf was not done by your parents, it was not done by your husband, your wife, your boyfriend, your girlfriend or anybody else. The greatest thing that’s ever been done in love for you is when Jesus died for you on the cross. He says, “Look at this. See these nail prints. This is for you.” When Jesus stretched out his hands on the cross He’s saying, “I love you. I love you this much. This much is how much I love

you. I love you so much it hurts. I love you so much that I'd rather die than live without you." No one will ever love you like Jesus does. No man will ever love you. No woman will ever love you the way Jesus Christ does.

*"God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners."* How does that help me when I'm feeling stressed out? When I feel overwhelmed. When I feel at the end of my rope. When I'm running on empty, how does that help me.

I'll tell you how it helps. When you really feel unconditionally loved by God you relax. When you really feel His unconditionally love... life just takes on different meaning and you just seem to relax. The reason you overwork, the reason you push so hard, the reason you drive yourself, the reason you have to stay busy... the reason you experiment and take things and put them in

your body... is you don't feel loved. What you feel is insecurity and the fear of failure and the feeling that I have to prove myself and what drives that is you don't feel that love I'm talking about and you're running on empty.

When you don't have anything left to give and your running on empty, It's driven by your insecurity.

When you really feel totally loved by God, and most people have never felt that, they've heard about it, they can even say I intellectually understand it, "I know God loves me!" but they've never experienced the unconditional love of God. When you experience it... let me share, all of a sudden you don't care what other people think any more.

If God loves me and I like me, then what's your problem?

In other words, I'm not a slave to your expectations of people any more. I'm not driven by the approval of others and I don't have to prove anything. When you feel totally

loved by God it turns off the pressure valve in your life and you stop trying to perform. Anything you do is now because you're called to do it. You're not driven to do it. Your feeling led to do it, by something much bigger than any person here on earth.

That is what God says I want to do. I bring you My love.

#### 4. **He helps you believe.**

I love this point... In spite of all your doubts He helps you believe. The twelve guys that Jesus chose to follow Him my favorite of the twelve is a guy named Thomas. I love this guy. I love him because he's honest, he's authentic, he's real and I love him because of this story that is right here in this chapter. It says this "*Now Thomas was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.'* But Thomas said, '*Unless I see the nail marks in His hands and I put my hand into His*

*side wound, I'm not going to believe.'* A week later the disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them this time. Though the doors were locked Jesus came in and stood among them and He said, '*Peace be with you.*' [That's the third time Jesus says this] *He said to Thomas 'Thomas put your finger in My hand. See My hands. Reach out your hand and put it into My side.* [Go ahead. It's all right. Touch Me.] *Stop doubting and believe.'* Thomas said to Him, '*My Lord and my God.'*"

I love that story. First, because Thomas is honest and open about his doubts. He's not putting you on. He's not pretending. He's not jerking you around, Thomas is an honest seeker. He says I've got some honest doubts. I don't just automatically accept what somebody tells me. I check it out for myself. To me that sounds pretty logical. Pretty rational. Pretty sane. I don't just automatically

accept what people tell me. I want to check it out for myself.

People have gotten a bad idea about doubt. Doubt has gotten a bad rap. Doubt is not a bad thing, friends. Doubt is good if it motivates you to investigate. If the purpose of doubt is to motivate you to investigate that's a good thing. If it causes you to say, "I think I need to check this out." And that's Great. When in doubt, check it out.

You may say, "Bill do you ever have any doubts?" Of course I do. A lot of times I'm reading the Bible and I'm going, "Why did God say that? Why did God do that? If I were God I wouldn't do that."

I don't mean to be disrespectful to anyone here today, but the truth is if you can figure out why God does everything he does, and there are people who think they can and try to make themselves sound like they know it all,

but if that was the true case... guess what, they would be God. But you can't because you're not. Because you're just like me your imperfect, your sinner just like me.

A guy came to Jesus one day. He's got a daughter who's very sick, very ill. She's about to die. The guy comes up to Jesus and says, "Lord, I need You to heal my daughter. She's dying." Jesus looks at the guy and says, "Do you believe I can heal her?" And the guy's answer is classic. I love it because it's honest, authentic. He says, "Lord, I want to believe. Help me with my doubts." That's classic. Jesus says that's good enough! And He heals the girl. I love that. Did you know that you can say that to Jesus Christ today? You can say, "Jesus, I want to believe. Yes, I have doubts... but would you help me with my doubts." You don't need to understand it all because

you never will understand it all. But if you ask Jesus he will help you with your doubts in the days to come.

**Prayer:** As we close this Easter service I'm going to pray a prayer like I prayed many years ago when I stepped across the line and I invite you to follow me in this prayer right now. Just say it in your mind and God will hear you. It's the reason God brought you to this service today. Just say, Me too, as I say this prayer. "Dear Jesus Christ, You know when I'm running on empty. You know I'm hurting. And You know when I hurt others. This Easter I ask You, Jesus to revitalize my life. Revitalize me, physically, emotionally and spiritually. Thank You for meeting me where I am. God, I need Your peace to handle the things that stress me out. Thank You for showing Your love for me by dying for me. I ask You to forgive all my sins and help me to let go of the people who've hurt me. I ask You to fill me with

Your presence. I need Your power and love and self control. Help me to discover Your purpose for my life. Help me to believe. And to learn to trust You more each day. Today, with all my doubts I want to step across the line and begin a relationship with You. I ask You to save and revitalize my life. In Your name I pray. Amen."