



Nick and Joe Save Easter

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Well, Easter is my favorite Sunday, and it's a favorite Sunday for many of us. And really, if you're a Christian, this should be your favorite Sunday as well. And if you're not a Christian or you're not even sure about the whole God, Bible thing, this should be fascinating to you. Christians celebrate Easter because everything that we believe really hinges on what happened on this day 2,000 years ago. There are a lot of religions. There are a lot of belief systems, and those religions and belief systems embrace a book. They embrace a prophet. They embrace a teacher. They embrace teachings. They embrace values. They embrace all kinds of things. But for Christianity, the whole thing really hinges not on a teacher, not on a philosophy, not on teachings.

The entire Christian faith hinges on one single event: *the resurrection*. It's not the Bible; it's not even Jesus, just in terms of Jesus, the person Jesus. It really is this event: the resurrection. And because Jesus rose from the dead, it verified and validated everything that he said and everything he claimed to be. And so that's why Easter is such a big deal for Christians, because the whole thing hinges, not on a teaching, not on a philosophy, but on an actual event in history. And because of that, this is a big Sunday for us. And we don't have a lot of traditions here on our campuses, but one of the traditions we do is that we give people an opportunity every Easter to make a decision to become Christians and make a decision to become followers of Jesus.

So let me just give you a heads up. At the end of this service, so you'll know it's coming at the end of the service, if you have never made a decision to become a Christian, if you've never made a decision—a point in time decision to become a follower of Christ—maybe you've been coming for weeks, or months, you're halfway through Starting Point, or you finished Starting Point, or you've read a book, and along the way you're beginning to think, *You know what? I think I believe this. I really think I believe Jesus came from God to be my Savior.* But there's never been a moment in time when you decided once and for all, *I'm placing my faith in Christ; I want to be a follower of Jesus*—we're going to give you an opportunity to do that.

And we do that on Easter because you can remember it, and you can always look back to Easter 2011, you know—made that decision. So we're going to do that at the end, and if you want to, this is optional, we're going to give you an opportunity at the end of our service to stand, to say publically, *I'm not ashamed for my friends and family to know that today was the day I put my faith in Christ.* And we're all going to stand and sing a song and go home. You don't have to stand, but you may want to as you listen to today's message.

Now, today's message is called *Nick and Joe Save Easter. Nick and Joe Save Easter.* And I know it's kind of funny, but I'm going to tell you the back-story to Easter. You know what a back-story is? A back-story is like a background narrative that supports the primary narrative. Every story has a back-story, the background narrative that supports the primary narrative. Now, the primary narrative of Easter, you know. The primary narrative of Easter is that sun came up on Sunday morning 2,000 years ago and some of Jesus followers showed up to mourn his death and to take care of his body. And they showed up and the tomb was empty. The stone had been