

Easter Sunday - 2023

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[0 : 00] Good morning, 4th. I want to welcome you this morning if you're here with us live or if you're watching us online. Get to celebrate Resurrection Sunday 2023.

He has risen. Go ahead and turn open to Luke chapter 24. We're just going to continue our narrative from where Melissa left off. And this will complete our series on, as we have looked through the Gospel of Luke, Jesus' Journeys Towards the Cross.

And this is the finish line. So we'll be looking at Luke 24 verses 32 to 43 this morning as we celebrate Easter together.

So will you join me in prayer? Father, it is indeed good to be here this morning. Lord, it's good to see many faces.

Families gathered, friends, first-time guests. Lord, I pray that each of us would have a sense that you have met with us today.

[1 : 15] Lord, I pray that we would hear from you. Lord, I want to ask that you would allow us to focus and hear from your word, to revel in the Gospel together.

Lord, I know that today can be a day of distractions as we think about perhaps events this afternoon. But Lord, we want to give you our full attention here this morning as we gather.

We want this to be an act of worship as we both adore you and as we humble our hearts to your authoritative word. Jesus, we're so thankful that you indeed rose from the grave.

Lord, that you were the first fruits. And for those that have trusted in you in this life, we have an eternity ahead to enjoy your presence and the fellowship of those that love you.

So Lord, today would you speak through the power of your word and might you give us each something that we could leave here with? Lord, more resolved in our spirit to seek after you, to serve you, and to share good news with those who are still without.

[2 : 28] So in your name we pray, Lord Jesus. Amen. Well, there is a story in the Gospel of Luke about a couple of travelers who are leaving Jerusalem, traveling to a nearby city, city of Emmaus, seven miles to the west of Jerusalem.

These two travelers, we learned one of the names back in verse earlier in the section in verse 18, a guy by the name of Cleopas.

And the other one is actually unnamed, but it may actually be that we have a husband and wife team here that are traveling. And a number of scholars have noted that there is a Mary who is there at the crucifixion on Friday afternoon, and she is identified in John 19:25 as the wife of Cleopas, which is close to Cleopas.

And so scholars believe that perhaps this is the same Cleopas who is on the road to Emmaus. And so perhaps you've never thought of them as a married couple, but as you see the interaction, maybe you can imagine in your mind's eye the conversation that was occurring.

Well, as our story goes, it is Sunday morning. It is actually the first Easter. And it's not like today, it's not a joyful morning.

[4 : 00] The execution of that weekend, it still lingers in the air. This couple, they're traveling, and as they travel, they are discussing the tragedy of Jesus' death.

We thought that he was going to be the deliverer for Israel, and now he is gone. Well, as they journey towards home, they run into an unknown traveler who joins them for a portion of their journey.

There's a lot of talk about Jesus as they walk, how he was crucified Friday night, how he fulfilled all sorts of prophecies, even talking about some rumored sightings of Jesus by some of his close followers.

Perhaps he has literally resurrected from the grave as he promised that he would. These travelers, they arrive at their destination, and they convince this mystery traveler to stay with them, and to dine with them that evening.

And while this mystery man is praying for their meal, these two travelers realize who it is that's praying.

[5 : 22] It is none other than Jesus. And as he completes the prayer, he then vanishes.

And this is where we pick up our story this morning. Look with me beginning here in verse 32.

They said to each other, did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road? While he opened to us the scriptures.

So maybe in your mind's eye you can see the interaction happening between perhaps his husband and wife, right? We are idiots. Do you realize who that was with us?

And the other responding, well, I thought it was. And then perhaps the husband, well, I was thinking about it before you were thinking about it, right? Which is how husbands and wives actually often interact.

[6 : 26] It says here in verse 33, and they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together saying, the Lord has risen indeed and has appeared to Simon.

Then they told what had happened on the road and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread. As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, peace to you.

You got the scene? These two travelers, they finally arrive home. And yet they are so amped that Jesus is somehow alive that they leave immediately for a return trip back to Jerusalem.

And it could have been anywhere from three to five hours by foot walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus. And I don't know about you, but the last thing I want to do if I get to Spokane from Seattle is immediately turn around and head back to Seattle.

For a number of reasons, which we're on time for this morning. But they return to Jerusalem and they're thinking, man, Jesus is alive?

[7 : 46] If Jesus is alive, all is not lost. And so they head back and they meet with His closest followers. And as they get there, they're discussing these Jesus sightings that are beginning to occur all over the place.

And catch this, as they're talking about this, Jesus appears. How do they respond? How would you respond?

Well, let's see. And here's what's coming up in verse 37. It says, but they were startled. Amen.

I would be startled, frightened and thought they saw a spirit. I mean, they are freaked out. They knew He died. Some in that room were there present at the crucifixion at the burial.

Verse 38, and He said to them, They were startled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? So can you imagine? They're like, shh, He can read our mind.

[9 : 00] See my hands and my feet? That it is I myself, touch me. And see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see that I have. And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and feet.

And while they still disbelieved for joy, they were marveling. This word marveling. They were astonished, right? Which is code for their standing there with their jaws just gaping open.

It's Him. It's really Jesus. And He said to them, Have you anything here to eat? They gave Him a piece of broiled fish. He took it and ate before them.

I love that Luke just includes that. Jesus is definitively saying, Hey, look at me. I'm not a spirit. I'm ingesting food. I'm not a hologram.

This is good fish. Thank you. There are a lot of coasts to go with this. I love this phrase actually that Luke records, because he says of the disciples here meeting with Jesus, he says that they disbelieved for joy.

[10 : 13] They disbelieved for joy. I don't know about you, but I want joy. I want to be hopeful.

But we get scared to hope. This is just, this is too wonderful. If this is actually true. And so we just decide maybe I just won't believe.

And that's where the disciples are here this Sunday morning. They disbelieved for joy. We want the story to end well. We want the good guys to win.

We want the bad guys to get their due. We want suffering to stop. We want evil to stop. But it doesn't seem like it's working out that way.

And so what do we do? What did the disciples do? Do we protect our hearts? Lower our expectations? And just sort of cope, endure with the grand disappointment before us.

[11 : 21] The disappointment of life. And maybe you have felt that before. Things don't actually work out. This is just wishful thinking that children conjure up.

It was the Austrian neurologist, father of psychotherapy, Sigmund Freud, that in the 1920s came up with the phrase a wish fulfillment.

And essentially what is a wish fulfillment? It's that people, they long for something so desperately that they end up making it up.

They want this thing to be true. They can't live without this thing and so they make it up in their minds. Like the kid who wants a BB gun so bad that at night he dreams that he owns a BB gun. Or the young woman who daydreams about her prince. But he doesn't actually exist.

[12 : 29] We want to think so badly so we conjure it up. You know the atheists or what they like to refer to themselves today as the nuns we believe in nothing.

They look at Christians this way. In your weakness, you cannot live without some concept of God and so you make him up.

Much like the first disciples did who needed a resurrected Jesus so they made him up. Freud then wrote about it and said they were guilty of an intellectual misdemeanor.

The atheists, the logic here is actually quite flawed suggesting that because someone wants something so bad then henceforth it cannot exist.

The logic actually of a wish fulfillment, it cuts both ways because the atheist does the same thing. I don't actually want God to exist so he cannot exist.

[13 : 48] I don't want him to exist because I have reasons. I want to live without restraint. I want accountability. And so I will believe that in fact he doesn't exist.

It's simply a wish fulfillment pointed in the opposite direction. And I would just say as an aside that the fact that we long for God, that we long for a resurrected Christ, our longing for God actually is consistent with the story that the Bible tells.

It's consistent with the Christian worldview because in Scripture it says that God created man in his image for a relationship. We were created to enjoy God.

So our longing for God is consistent with the narrative that Scripture paints. It's much like the 4th century theologian Augustine who said you made man for yourself and our hearts find no peace until it rests in you.

People spend a lifetime trying to fill that void with many things other than God.

[15 : 02] This is important here because the Bible actually, as we have just read, doesn't teach the disciples conjured up a story about Jesus resurrecting because they wanted it so badly.

They didn't do that. In fact, the disciples experienced the reality of something so wonderful they said in a sense, this is too good to be true.

And they had a hard time coming to belief. It's like a groom on his wedding day staring into the eyes of his new bride.

Heart about to explode. Young man about to melt into the ground because he can't believe that she would say yes to sorry old him.

Disbelieving for joy. See, Jesus was dead three days in the grave, brutalized on the cross, and he's now alive.

[16 : 06] What is going on? What were these men experiencing? Were these men simply having hallucinations, fabricating a story based upon what they thought that they saw?

And by the way, the hallucination theory is alive and well today that the disciples didn't actually see the risen Jesus.

The problem with this theory is simply that hallucinations are individual experiences. And Jesus appeared to numerous individuals as well as to groups.

In fact, in 1 Corinthians 15-6, it says that he, Jesus appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time. The leading atheist of our day, Bart Ehrman, known as the Apostle of the Deconverted, is a New Testament scholar.

[17 : 14] This is what he says about hallucinations because this is what he embraces, that these men, they were hallucinating. And he writes, so how does this work?

My answer is, I don't know. This is on his blog, I just cut and paste, guys. I'm not making this up. My guess is that one person says they see something and others are persuaded to see it too or later remember that they saw it, but it is just a guess.

This man has devoted his life to convincing others that God does not exist. But it's just a guess. I don't really know.

And here's the thing about these hallucinations of Jesus of origin, Christ, they completely altered the lives of His followers because it was Friday night and the apostles were nowhere to be seen.

[18 : 26] They were demoralized and yet then they give the rest of their lives to following and proclaiming this risen Jesus. To the point where history records, the majority of them gave up their very lives for what they believed that they saw.

Something happened. These men encountered the risen Savior and henceforth gave the rest of their lives. These men were undone by Jesus.

Believing that it's all true. It's all true. I guess He does have power to forgive sin. I guess He does have power over death.

This is something too wonderful. Church, the Gospels are replete with stories of real people totally undone by Jesus.

In fact, people that wanted to disbelieve for joy after they met Christ and He altered their lives forever.

[19 : 39] Let me give us just a mosaic here this morning. How about the man who, in desperation, threw himself on the ground, begging Jesus to heal his leprosy and it records in Luke 5, Lord, if You will, You can make me clean and Jesus stretched out His hand, touched him, saying, I will be clean.

Can you imagine being that man? I'm healed. I can enjoy fellowship. I'm whole again. I'm no longer unclean.

Can it really be? Or how about the anguished widow whose only son being carried out of the city to be buried in Luke 7? Jesus, who says, has moved a compassion on her, says to her, don't weep. Jesus stops the crowd, goes over to the only son, and says, young man, I say to you, arise. And the dead man set up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.

Could you imagine being that mom? Jesus too. This is unbelievable.

[20 : 53] Or how about the demoniac living like an animal outside the city amongst the tombs in Luke 8? Jesus heals this man.

He is then later described as being clothed and in his right mind. He's no longer living in a graveyard. He's able to go home. Jesus, I encounter Jesus, and He's changed my life forever.

I don't know what to say. How about the woman at the well in John 4? Jesus says to her, hey, go call your husband and come here, and the woman answered, I have no husband.

Remember Jesus calls her bluff? That's right. You've had five. The guy you're with right now. It's not your husband. But then Jesus doesn't condemn her.

Everybody else has, but not Jesus. Instead, He says, hey, I'd like to give you some living water. I'd like to give you a new life.

[22 : 03] Really? But Jesus, you don't know the decisions I've made. No, no, no, I've got living water for you. I want to give you a new life.

It's too good. Or the adulterous woman dragged by a mob. Jesus doesn't condemn her.

That wasn't the spirit of Christ. I mean, sometimes that was the spirit of the apostles. Right? We recall the Samaritan city. They walked through and like, hey, Jesus, you want us to bring fire down on these guys?

No, put your swords back in the sheath. Not today, guys. You see God's heart here. Jesus scribbles in the sand.

All the eyes are on Him, not on her. He says, hey, you go live. You leave this lifestyle rut. I don't condemn you.

[23 : 06] In fact, you're not damaged goods. I am the one who makes all things new. Or how about Zacchaeus?

This man met Jesus. He was a throwaway. As far as people were concerned, he's a traitor.

Collecting taxes for Rome. Jesus calls out to him in the crowd.

He's up in the tree. Zacchaeus, you're my guy. He says, come down. I'm going to stay at your house today. Luke 19 says, we're going to dine together.

In fact, he's me. Jesus, nobody sees me. And when they do, they don't like what they see. The kindness of Jesus changes this man's life forever.

I'm sure disbelieving for joy. Or how about Mary Magdalene? Totally affected by Jesus. Jesus transforms this woman's life.

[24 : 09] Rescues her out of heavy bondage. Luke 8 records she had seven demons. He loved her despite whatever filth that she walked in that opened the doors for these demonic hitchhikers.

Jesus doesn't condemn her either. What does he do? He offers her healing. There is kindness in the eyes of Jesus. Not contempt.

Isn't this what the world needs, church? Amen? That's why we're here. Because we have experienced the kindness of the risen Christ of Jesus.

And it's altered our lives forever. We are much different people. For those that are here in Christ, we are much different people than we would have been otherwise.

Amen? Mary loved Jesus a ton because he gave her a second chance on life.

[25 : 12] I mean, who does that? Especially for someone like me. And finally, how about Peter? Right? Bold face, denial of Jesus.

Doesn't deserve grace. Hey, do you know this guy? No. Another individual. Hey, do you know that? No. Hey, do you know it? No!

Over and over denying Christ. I mean, we're all Peter at one point or another. Either through our words spoken, not spoken, or perhaps sinful duplicity.

Hands raised on Sunday and then in a drunken stupor on Friday night. And yet for Peter at the end of John's Gospel, it's Jesus cooking breakfast for this man.

Peter, come. Come here. Dying with me. Peter, I have a good plan for your life. Despite how much you struggle.

[26 : 25] What? Me? Really? It's a hard one, Jesus. Jesus, remember the night you were betrayed?

Do you remember? And I? No. No, I don't, Peter. I've chosen not to. In fact, I think we have these messianic words from Isaiah 43-25, and this is the heart of Jesus.

I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.

Everybody else remembers our sins, and yet the one who it matters with doesn't.

It's good to be true. We disbelieve for joy. And the resurrection of Jesus declares that our sins are forgiven, that death has lost for good.

Our final enemy has been defanged. I like how Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15 that death is swallowed up in victory.

[27 : 41] Ha-ha-ha. Mm? Jesus wins.

The day is coming when those who have repented of their sins and trusted in Jesus as their Savior, they will greet Jesus face to face. And that's the day that we look forward to. That's why we say, Maranatha.

And we look forward to that day, not based upon anything that we have done. It's not the goodness that we have done. It's not our good works. It's everything that Jesus accomplished on that cross 2,000 years ago on our behalf.

Amen? And we long for that. I asked Julie this morning, she didn't know she was going to be inserted into my sermon.

I didn't ask her, so we'll see how this afternoon goes. But I said, when you see the Lord, what are you going to say? What's the first thing you're going to say?

[28 : 47] I know it's kind of not a fair question at 5.30 in the morning. She's like, I don't know.

I think I'm going to be speechless. I don't know. Ditto. What are we going to say?

I don't know. For every person who trusts in Jesus in this lifetime, we will someday experience exactly what the disciples felt in the upper room.

A disbelief for joy. And yet, it's true. It's all true.

It's like being a five-year-old again on Christmas morning. You can't believe. It's true. It's true. I want to end with this quote.

[29 : 48] I appreciate the way that C.S. Lewis puts it in the last battle, the final book in the Chronicles of Narnia. I think he captures the joy of Easter and the promise of forever that lies ahead for those who have trusted in Christ in this life.

And this is what he says. And as he spoke, he no longer looked to them like a lion. But the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us, this is the end of all the stories. And we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them, it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page. Now at last, they were beginning chapter one of the great story, which no one on earth has read, which goes on forever in which every chapter is better than the one before. Isn't that good? It's all true, you know. So let's stop disbelieving for joy. [31 : 14] Let's believe. Because Jesus said in John 14.19, Because I live, so shall you live. Amen. He is risen. Let's continue to worship together.