

Encountering the Risen King!

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 20 April 2025

Preacher: Ricky Njoto

[0 : 00] Christ is risen. You know the drill.

I'm going to say that multiple times throughout the sermon just to keep you awake.! The other day, Hannah and the kids went to the Tulip Festival in Sylvan.

! I'm not sure if you've been there. When Hannah came home, she said, It's really good. You should go sometime. But I said, Really? It can't be that good. It's just flowers.

So Hannah pulled up the first evidence that it's good. Photos. And said, No, look at all these beautiful flowers. And besides, there are other things too.

But I was still skeptical and said, I don't think I'll enjoy it. Flowers just look good in photos, but not in real life. And then Hannah gave me the second evidence.

[1 : 08] People's testimonies. And said, Look at all these Google reviews. Almost 500 people gave the place four and a half stars. That's pretty good. I didn't go further.

I didn't want any trouble. But I could have said, Well, how do I know that they're not paid reviewers? There's a lot of con artists around.

The last thing that would need to happen for Hannah to convince me is personal experience.

Hannah just needs to take me there.

Now, today is Easter Sunday. On Good Friday, we remember the death of Jesus. And today we celebrate his resurrection.

Christ is risen. He's risen indeed. But the resurrection is really hard to believe, isn't it? Jesus came back from the grave. No one comes back from the grave.

[2 : 12] And so, like me in my illustration, naturally people's response when they hear about the resurrection is, I don't believe it. And so this last chapter of Luke gives us some evidence.

The chapter starts with the passage that Andrew read at the beginning of the service with a group of women who went to Jesus' tomb on Sunday morning hoping to see Jesus' body.

But in verse 3, the body was not there. And here's the first piece of evidence for the resurrection.

The body was gone.

The empty tomb. And I think this is important evidence because over the next few years, when the first Christians were going around Jerusalem telling everyone that Jesus was risen, the Roman and Jewish leaders could have easily produced a body and shown everybody the body of Jesus and said, don't believe them.

They're lying. Here's the body of Jesus. But they did not. In fact, they agreed that the body was lost. They just came up with another reason.

[3 : 29] And they said, oh, the disciples stole it. The body was gone. But that evidence might not be enough for you.

So, fast forward to verse 10. The women told Jesus' disciples what they had seen, but the disciples did not believe them.

Testimonies of women back then, unfortunately, were not highly valued. And that's why in verse 11, the disciples thought the testimony was just nonsense or literally it says, idle talk.

I think though, this is the second evidence that the resurrection did happen. If the Christians had made up the story, they wouldn't have made up a story with women as first witnesses in that culture.

They wouldn't have pictured the first disciples of Jesus as doubters either. They would have pictured themselves as the heroes so that people might believe them.

[4 : 39] But again, that evidence might not be enough for you. So, we jump to verse 36. And here, Jesus revealed himself to all of the disciples.

And even here, they did not easily believe that anyone could rise from the dead. And so, in verse 37, they thought they had seen a ghost, not a real person, until they touched his body and saw him eat.

Jesus was alive physically. physically. And I think here is the third evidence. We have testimonies of people seeing Jesus alive within days of his death.

This was not a legend that took decades to develop. In Paul's letter to the Corinthians, he even said that Jesus revealed himself to about 500 people.

That's like the 500 reviewers of the Tulip Festival. people. And he said some were still alive. In other words, go ask them.

[5 : 51] They'll tell you what happened. And just like in my illustration, people's testimonies about the Tulip Festival would be important, even though it could be faked.

So, here as well, people's testimonies are important. 500 people seeing Jesus alive at the same time. That's a pretty big deal. Another piece of evidence, of course, that's related to this, is what this caused to the disciples.

Later on, their behavior changed 180 degrees from hiding in fear to going out there and facing death and imprisonment for the sake of the testimony.

they could not have made up the story. The apostles would not have been willing to die for something that they knew was a made-up story.

So, here, we have a bunch of evidence for Jesus' resurrection. Christ is risen. Christ is risen. Of course, the resurrection can't be proven scientifically.

[7 : 08] Science can only study a repeatable event and the resurrection is not a repeatable event. But based on the study of history, the evidence is pretty good.

we have atheist historians saying that they believe that at the very least the first disciples believed that they saw the risen Jesus.

Even though the historians themselves don't believe that they had seen the risen Jesus. And also, individually, each of these pieces of evidence can't prove 100% that Jesus is alive.

But together, they make a pretty good case. But a pretty good case is not enough, is it? To dedicate our soul, our life, our all.

A pretty good case, pretty good, that's not enough. Like me, in my illustration, you might still choose to say, yes, but, but this, but that.

[8 : 26] And just like in my illustration, no evidence is enough unless there is personal experience, a personal encounter. And certainly, the disciples, too, did not believe until they personally encountered the risen Jesus.

people, and so, after presenting all these pieces of evidence to you, I'd like to take you through a story that is unique to the Gospel of Luke, a story about two disciples of Jesus who personally encountered the risen king.

in verse 13 to 17. Two of Jesus' disciples were walking from Jerusalem towards a village called Emmaus, probably to go home.

Their leader was dead. There's no more reason to stay in Jerusalem. At the end of verse 17, their faces were downcast, they were utterly disappointed, and probably feeling hopeless, because they had unmet expectations of how things should be with the Messiah.

This is what they said in verse 19 to 21. Jesus was a prophet, powerful in word and deed, before God and all the people, but the chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him.

[9 : 55] He died. But we had hoped, we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. See the past tense there?

We had hoped. The hope was no longer. They had all these expectations for Jesus, but now the Messiah was dead, and they did not know what to do with that realization.

And pay attention to what they said in verse 24. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.

They encountered the first piece of evidence. The body was missing. The tomb was empty, but they did not believe, because they did not see the resurrected Jesus.

Just like many people today, the first disciples, too, did not believe the resurrection that easily. They needed to see Jesus themselves.

[11 : 01] And so here, they were still hopeless. Their hope in Jesus was crushed because of his death. And I think this is what life is like without the resurrection.

When death strikes, we are left in hopelessness, gloom, darkness, disappointment, frustration, depression.

Either it's the death of someone we love, the prospect of our own death, or the idea of death in general without the resurrection, we are hopeless.

Death is just the enemy of all. Like the Bible says in another place, everything becomes meaningless when death is involved.

Because all our pleasure, all our work, our knowledge, our wealth, our life, all end with death. death. And so the disciples here were feeling downcast and hopeless.

[12 : 11] Their Messiah was dead. And even after hearing about the possibility that Jesus might have been resurrected from the women, they still could not believe.

Their hopelessness overcame them. I wonder if you've ever felt the same hopelessness because of death.

But here is the good news. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Jesus is alive. Someone has overcome death.

And here in verse 15, he personally revealed himself to the disciples. But they could not see who he was because of their preconceived belief.

They just could not believe that Jesus could rise from the dead. And so they did not see who he was. And Jesus did basically two things when he was with them.

[13 : 18] In verse 25 to 27, he provided an explanation from the Bible, from the scriptures, that his death had been God's plan all along. Like in Hosea 6, in our Old Testament reading, where Israel is pictured as being torn by God, but on the third day, God will revive them.

In the original context, this passage is clearly talking about Israel, but really, this passage is ultimately about Jesus' death and resurrection.

He was revived on the third day, literally. And there are many passages like this in the Old Testament that point to Jesus.

And so Jesus' death was not some failure in God's plan. There's no need to be hopeless. It had all been decreed, and in that decree, Jesus would also be resurrected, revived.

So, first, Jesus gave them a biblical explanation about himself and about why he must die.

[14 : 34] And then second, Jesus got closer to the disciples and provided not only personal explanation, but also personal communion in verse 28 to 29.

them. They got to the village of the two disciples, and they invited Jesus to stay with them, and he did. This is just a normal Middle Eastern hospitality.

But then in verse 30, instead of the hosts giving Jesus a meal, which is a normal Middle Eastern hospitality, it was Jesus who provided something that reminded them of their last supper.

He took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to them. That's remarkably similar to the last supper.

And then suddenly in verse 31, their eyes were opened and they recognized him. The empty tomb did not convince them that Jesus was alive.

[15 : 46] A personal encounter did. Christ is risen. He's risen indeed and many people in the whole world have encountered him and are still today encountering him.

And this is still the primary way that Jesus reveals himself to people through the exposition of the Bible and the breaking of the bread, that is the symbol of the fellowship of the church.

I encountered the risen Jesus in that way. When I was 17, I became an agnostic.

I left the church. I did not believe God anymore. I wasn't sure if God existed and if he did, I wasn't sure which God he was. God stopped going to church and began looking at other religions and other philosophies.

After about a year, my young adult pastor at the time noticed that I had disappeared from church. So he asked a close friend of mine at church to catch up with me, to spy on me, really.

[17 : 02] Long story short, this friend of mine answered my questions. And although at the end, I still wasn't sure about Christianity, I was a very, very skeptical young man.

But I decided to pray to Jesus. My friend challenged me to pray to Jesus. I decided to pray to Jesus, not to confess him as my king and savior, but to ask for a personal revelation.

I said, Jesus, if you're there, show yourself to me. That was a brave, brave challenge on my part. And Jesus did not reveal himself physically right there and then.

He used these means, the scriptures and the fellowship of the church. This is what happened. After that prayer, my friend challenged me to take a leap of faith and see things from the other side.

So I decided to take a leap of faith and try to see things from the other side, with the assumption that Christianity was true, to see whether it was really so. Kind of like having a scientific hypothesis.

[18 : 12] We assume that the hypothesis is true before doing the experiment, and then we do the experiment to see if it's proven to be true. From then on, I began to study the Bible more diligently and ask my pastor and Christian friends questions.

And slowly, I began to see that from the other side, from the perspective of the Christian faith, life made sense. Life made sense.

For example, it makes sense that humans long for love, because we are created in the image of the God who is love. Seeing things from the perspective of Christianity enabled me to see things more clearly.

But I still did not see Jesus clearly. And that process was happening over probably two to three years after I asked Jesus to reveal himself to me.

And then suddenly, I remember this very clearly. One night, I was running on a treadmill, something that I don't do anymore. That's why I'm not healthy. And I was listening to a Christian song, and the lyrics said, we have found our hope, we have found our peace, we have found our rest in the one who loves.

[19 : 40] I remember clearly, that's when everything that I had learned through Bible reading and through Christian fellowships came together in my mind and revealed Jesus to me.

God's And I could see him. Not physically. I could see Jesus not physically. The Bible is clear that Jesus is not here.

Yes, ascended and is now at the right hand of the Father. But I could see Jesus spiritually. I could see his beauty. And he's so glorious.

And I'm so dirty. And he's so merciful. Although I'm so sinful. And I just had to get off the treadmill. I was brought down to my knees and I cried like a baby. That's when I started personally encountering the resurrected Jesus.

[20 : 49] And from then on I experienced him personally more and more. I have experienced healing when I prayed to Jesus. Like physical healing.

Seemingly impossible prayers had been answered. Some people here might have encountered Jesus in that way. I know some people who look back in their lives and see Jesus guiding them through life.

I've received strength that was certainly not for myself in getting out of my porn addiction. I've received comfort through depression.

Multiple sessions of depression. I've experienced surges of joy when I read the Bible. people. I'm not saying that everyone who encounters Jesus personally will experience all these things.

But these things helped me encounter the risen Lord Jesus. He is alive. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed.

[22 : 00] The historical arguments for Jesus' resurrection are super important. Super important. But just like the disciples here, it's a personal encounter with King Jesus that changed my life.

And more and more, many people around the world, you can see it, you can read it on the news, more and more, many people around the world, in the UK, in the US, in Australia, are encountering Jesus the risen King.

And like the disciples here, and like me, it changes their lives. This is how their lives changed.

First, in verse 31 to 32, they realized that it was the resurrected Jesus. They realized that Jesus was alive.

death. Friends, to realize that someone came back from the dead is not a trivial thing. That doesn't happen every day. And so, second, they went from being hopeless to being hopeful.

[23 : 09] In verse 32, their hearts were not downcast anymore. They were burning within them. Earlier, they said, Jesus died, but we had hoped that he would redeem Israel.

And now, death no longer has its thing. And we can say, Jesus died. And that's how he redeemed Israel. And then third, in verse 33, they just had to tell people.

At once, it says, they returned to Jerusalem. It was night time already, but they didn't care. their hearts were burning. They had to tell someone. This personal encounter changed everything. They had to tell someone. And when they got back to Jerusalem before they were able to say anything, it turns out that another disciple of Jesus, Simon Peter, also had a personal encounter with Jesus.

And they could not have waited for the two guests to settle in before telling them. right when they came in, everyone said, it's true. The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.

[24 : 32] Your life changes when you encounter the risen King Jesus. There's no turning back. Suddenly, you realize that someone has defeated death.

suddenly, you realize that there is hope for the sick and dying, for the martyrs, for the losers in the world, for everyone, because death is the enemy of everyone.

There is hope because Jesus can bring them back into eternal life, into eternal glory. Suddenly, you realize that you don't have to experience the death that is the consequence of sin and brokenness anymore.

Even if you die, Jesus said in John, you will live. Because Jesus has paid it all and he came back, proving that the payment is indeed finished.

suddenly, you realize that you can encounter the reason Jesus because he's alive. And you can see that he is just so gloriously beautiful and that you just have to tell others about him.

[25 : 52] Like finding the best food in town or seeing the most glorious scenery, you have to tell someone. And no wonder when Jesus talked about the preaching of forgiveness of sins to all nations, in verse 47, he did not frame it as a command, you go and do this.

He framed it as a promise, this will happen. Because if you have encountered the reason Jesus, you want him to be preached everywhere to all nations, this news is too good to be kept private. So friends, if you haven't believed in Jesus yet, pray that the risen King Jesus might reveal himself to you. I pray that you do.

And because he reveals himself primarily through the scriptures, his word, in the context of the fellowship of Christians, the church, consider asking a Christian friend, a Christian from this church, or ask me to pray the Bible with you.

I pray that Jesus will reveal himself to you through that. And if you have believed in Jesus, be reassured that Christ is risen.

[27 : 23] at times we might doubt. I have doubted from time to time. But then I remember.

I remember the evidence, the evidence that Jesus has indeed risen. And I remember my personal encounter with Jesus.

And I remember my current personal relationship with him. and then I get reassured that, yeah, he's alive. He lives.

And then let the risen King Jesus change your life until you can't help but tell others about him. Let him burn your hearts in a good way.

let's pray. Father, we thank you for this great reminder that Jesus has indeed risen.

[28 : 25] And there is hope because he lives. So help us, Lord, through the power of your spirit to remember that every day so that we are empowered, we are hopeful in our lives, and we might share the hope that we have with the people around us.

In the name of Jesus, the one who lives, we pray. Amen.