

Why the Resurrection Matters

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[0 : 00] Open your Bibles, if you would, to Luke chapter 24. Luke chapter 24. If you're using the Pew Bible, it's on page 884.

! Luke chapter 24. We're in our home stretch, really, this final chapter of the Gospel of Luke. We've been working through Luke for the last four years, off and on. And we come now at last to this final chapter, which is perhaps the most exciting and the most important chapter in the Gospel of Luke is the culmination of Christ's ministry and this resurrection that we'll look at this morning comes to meet us and remind us of who Jesus really is.

If you joined us just a couple of days ago on Good Friday, we had a chance just to share with you some of the reasons why the cross had power. What was it about the cross that was necessary and what did the cross accomplish for us?

And maybe those of you who've been part of the church for a long time, you've heard this message, you've heard this text preached, maybe for decades, time and time and time again.

But it's been my prayer this morning that we would come to this text and be reminded in a fresh way of the wonder and the essential nature of the resurrection. Why does the resurrection matter?

[1 : 26] Does the resurrection matter? Was it really important? If the cross accomplished all that it accomplished, was the resurrection necessary? Of course, the resurrection was necessary.

And because the resurrection is necessary and kind of lays that final foundation of true hope in God, it has been that truth, that doctrine that has been assaulted going all the way back to the beginning.

From the very first century, you remember in this final week of Jesus' public ministry there in Jerusalem, Jesus is actually confronted there by a group of Sadducees who, if you remember, they didn't believe in the resurrection.

And of course, as the church got started, the doctrine and the truth of the resurrection had been assaulted and had been put down from the very beginning. The apostle Paul deals with this even in this message to the Jews and the Gentiles.

In 1 Corinthians 1, verse 23, he draws attention to it. He says, To the Jews, this gospel was a stumbling block into the Greeks' foolishness.

[2 : 35] This crucified Savior that was resurrected from the grave was a stumbling block for Jews and was absolute insanity for the Gentiles. Later, in his letter, Paul's letter to the church of Corinth, he spends an entire chapter, chapter 15, trying to help the church understand the significance of the resurrection.

Did it matter? We'll come back to this chapter a couple of times throughout our time this morning, but in verses 12 and 13 of 1 Corinthians 15, he says this, Now, if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead?

But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. Then Paul's address to the unbelievers in Athens, in Acts chapter 17, verses 31 and 32, we find the apostle Paul in the Areopagus.

This is a gathering place of the elite thinkers, the philosophers of that day, and the apostle Paul is proclaiming the gospel, and he says in verses 31 and 32, he says, He has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.

Now, when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, but others said, We will hear you again about this. The essential nature of the resurrection built into the gospel, and even though it was a stumbling block for the Gentiles, the apostle Paul knew it was necessary.

[4:19] Of course, the church of Thessalonica, the hope of the resurrection, helped them endure the hardship that they would face. And then to the church of Rome, Paul reminded them of this doctrine that was essential for salvation in Romans 10, verse 9, when he says, If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

A belief in a confidence, a knowledge, and a faith in the resurrection is essential for salvation. So it should be no surprise then that this truth, this doctrine of the resurrection of Christ has been assaulted from the very beginning.

And the church has been confronted by those various heresies that have sought to bombard the church and try to strip it away from this essential truth.

There was a heresy known as docetism in the first and second century that claimed that Jesus only had a physical body, and so thus suffering death and resurrection was only an illusion.

This, in the second century, transitioned to the Gnostic heresy, which claimed that the physical world is evil and that salvation comes through secret or spiritual knowledge.

[5:44] For them, the resurrection was just symbolic. It was not physical. So it stripped the resurrection of any power. Arianism, in the fourth century, claimed that Jesus was a created being, not co-eternal with God, and thus, while not directly denying the resurrection, it robbed the resurrection of its purpose in power.

From the very beginning, from the first century on, the church has dealt with this assault to the resurrection. But I want you to understand this morning, the resurrection matters.

The resurrection matters. And because of the resurrection, we can have hope. Paul describes this again in 1 Corinthians 15, verse 17, when he says, If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, and you are still in your sins.

Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope, in this life only, we are of all people the most to be pitied. Without the resurrection, Paul says in this chapter, 1 Corinthians 15, your preaching is in vain.

Your faith is in vain. Your hope is in vain. If your hope is in this life only, then let's eat and drink, because tomorrow we're going to die. What's the point? This morning I want us to understand, and we will see from our passage today, five reasons, and there are many, but this morning, we're just going to look at five reasons why the resurrection matters.

[7:15] So if you're there with me, Luke chapter 24, I'm going to read the first 12 verses, and then we'll begin our time this morning. It says, But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared, and they found the stone rolled away from the tomb.

But when they went in, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel.

And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, Why do you seek the living among the dead? He's not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise.

And they remembered his words. And returning from the tomb, they told all these things to the eleven, and to all the rest. That was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles.

But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter rose and ran to the tomb. Stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves.

[8 : 32] And he went home marveling at what had happened. The passage opens in these first three verses with this group of individuals. We find this personal pronoun, they, that's used in four different ways here in the first three verses.

They went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away. They went in. They did not find the body. Well, who is the they? We need to refer back to the previous chapter.

In the last few verses, give us a clue who these individuals are. In Luke 23, verse 55, it says, the women who had come with him from Galilee.

And in 24, verse 10, we find Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary, the mother of James, and other women who were there. It's the women who came from Galilee who are there at the tomb.

And they've already prepared for this day. As we find in Luke 23, verse 56, it says, after having seen the tomb where Jesus was laid, they returned and prepared spices and ointment.

[9 : 34] They had seen how Joseph and Nicodemus had prepared the body in haste. And so they could do a proper burial, they also prepared over the next day and a half so they could be ready in devotion.

And they come at early dawn, as we find here in Luke 24, 1. They come to prepare the body. Matthew says it was towards the dawn.

The Gospel of Mark says, very early on the first day of the week, the sun had not yet risen. And John's account is, while it was still dark, somewhere between 3 o'clock in the morning and 6 o'clock in the morning, these women came in devotion to prepare the body.

This is their last respects. They want to show honor to Jesus' body. But the last time they saw Jesus, there was a problem for them. A problem that we find in Matthew 27, verses 59 to 61.

It says that Joseph took the body and wrapped it in clean linen, shrouded and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut out of the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away.

[10 : 41] This becomes the burning question as we find in the Gospel of Mark. They ask themselves, who will roll away the stone from the tomb? But in Luke 24, verse 2, we see, and they found the stone rolled away.

Problem solved. Jesus raised from the dead. The stone was still intact. How he did not need the stone to be removed in order to leave the tomb, but we find from Matthew's account how that stone was rolled away.

Matthew 28, verse 2, it says, And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it.

Why was the stone rolled away? Well, the stone was rolled away to demonstrate and to prove that God's truth is accessible. God's truth is open. God's truth is available.

God's truth is public. It was verifiable. It was open. Of course, Jesus' life in ministry were also accessible.

[11:49] But in the defining moment, which would validate his message and his ministry, in the culminating end of his life here in the resurrection, it was made public.

And the reason for it to be made public was so that in this public spectacle, in confirmation of all that Jesus had said, Jesus and God is inviting those who would see to observe and believe.

He's inviting those who, through faith, would see the evidence of all that Jesus had spoken, would look into this empty tomb, would remember his words, and would believe.

The accessibility of this truth that was available to anyone who lived there in the first century. We know this was public because these women came. And they see and they observe for themselves that the stone is rolled away, the tomb is empty.

We know it was public because Peter and John would come towards the latter part of this passage. They too would look in and marvel at the empty tomb. We know it was public because the soldiers saw it.

[13:00] We know this from Matthew's account. In Matthew 28, verse 11, it says, while they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place.

We also know that this was public because the religious leaders would have seen it. In Matthew 28, verses 12 and 13, when they had assembled with the elders and had taken counsel, speaking of the chief priests, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers and said, tell the people, his disciples came by night and stole them away while we were asleep.

They knew the tomb was empty, not only in hearing from the soldiers, but in confirming for themselves. They needed to manufacture a story, and this was the story they manufactured. We also know this is public because the people in Jerusalem would have seen it.

In Matthew 28, 15, so the soldiers took the money and did as they were directed, and this story has been spread among the Jews to this day. Those who went and observed the tomb, those who heard this story would have propagated the same message.

It was public. It was open. It was available. We also know it was public because Jesus would appear to Peter and then to the 12 and 500 disciples at once, as we find from 1 Corinthians 15.

[14:20] It says, For I delivered to you as of first importance what I received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures. that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas and to the 12.

Then he appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared to me. The resurrection proves that the truth of God, his resurrection especially, is public.

It's open. It's available. It's accessible. And it invites the observer, those who would understand and learn the details of his resurrection, it invites us to believe.

It invites us to have faith. Second, we see in verses 4 and 5, the resurrection matters because it proves that Christ's sacrifice was acceptable.

[15:25] His sacrifice was acceptable. Notice with me in verse 4. While they were perplexed, speaking about the women, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel.

And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but he has risen. The women have made their way to the tomb.

It's a small enclosure that was cut out of the rock. And so they make their way into the tomb to get a closer look. And to their amazement, the tomb is empty. And then all of a sudden, two men in dazzling robes come and are standing by them.

This word for dazzling is the word to glisten, to flash, to gleam like lightning. It's the same word that Jesus uses of himself when he speaks of the lightning that's going to streak across the sky at the coming of the Son of Man.

It's going to be obvious. This brilliance in the wee hours of the morning certainly would have caught these women off guard and struck fear into them. And as they are afraid, they fall to the floor in recognition of the presence of these heavenly messengers and they bow their face to the floor.

[16:42] They know immediately that these are angels. There they are in the presence of this tomb. They had been present in the tomb just as they were present to the shepherds there at Christ's birth.

At Christ's birth and now at Christ's resurrection. Remember, at his birth, the angels would sing on the hillside, glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace, goodwill to men.

The angels who represented God, his message, who have now come to make the words of Christ known. They have ministered to Christ throughout his ministry.

Gabriel, remember, he came to Mary at the very beginning to announce the birth of Christ. And then, of course, the angels who announced the birth of Christ to the shepherds.

The angel who ministered to Christ at his temptation in the 40 days in the wilderness. And then the angel who strengthened Christ there in the garden of Gethsemane.

[17:42] there before his crucifixion. And here again, the angels are here to carry a message and to minister the message in the service to God.

Jesus, who was the beloved son and whom the father was well pleased. But on the cross, he had endured the wrath of God for sin. And Jesus would cry, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

And the question on the cross, perhaps, in the minds of those who were standing there would be, is this the end? Has God forsaken Christ forever? And the angels are here, the servants of the Most High who are serving Christ again, now, as messengers of his word.

And Jesus' sacrifice was acceptable. and here are those angels demonstrating in a visible way that the service and sacrifice of Christ was accepted by God.

We find from Ephesians 5, verse 2, it says, and walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God.

[18:57] Christ's sacrifice was well-pleasing. It was acceptable to God. And in Hebrews chapter 9, verses 11 and 12, it says, but when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent, not made with hands that is not of his creation, he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves, but by the means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

How was that possible? Well, it was possible because the sacrifice of Christ, this once-for-all offering of the precious blood of Christ was accepted by God.

The resurrection proves the accessibility of truth. The resurrection proves the acceptability of Christ's sacrifice.

And in verses 6 and 7, we see the resurrection matters because it proved that Christ's word was dependable. His word was dependable. Notice in verse 6, it says, he is not here, but has risen.

Remember how he told you while he was still in Galilee. The son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.

[20 : 21] Jesus had prophesied at least on three occasions that he would be delivered over, that he would be crucified, that he would die and rise again. and according to his very word to these women there in Galilee, Jesus had done exactly as he said.

The word of the prophets and the word of Christ were dependable. Paul, in speaking to the Jews in Antioch and Pisidia, would use the prophets in his gospel proclamation to help affirm that it was the prophets who would talk about this resurrection.

In Acts chapter 13 verses 34 to 35, the apostle Paul in his sermon says this, and as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, I will give you the holy and sure blessing of David.

Therefore, he says, also in another psalm, you will not let your holy one see corruption. These two phrases that are lifted first from Isaiah chapter 53 and the second from Psalm 16, the apostle Paul uses these phrases to describe this future prophetic word of how Christ would see resurrection.

He would come to life and Jesus was alive and Jesus was the resurrection and the life as he had promised Mary and Martha just a few months earlier at the grave of Lazarus.

[21 : 55] And Jesus remains the living God. And as the living God, he is active, he is present, he is eternal, and thus he is powerful, the source of life and sustainer of life.

Jesus will say in John 11, 25, I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. it's because of the dependable word of Christ, this confirmation of resurrection that Jesus raised from the dead and now extends to us this promise of eternal life for those who would believe.

And we can trust this dependable word because of the confirmation of this resurrection of Christ himself. He becomes the first fruits of resurrection.

And so the effects of the resurrection are to be experienced today in newness of life, this life not just for the future, but a life that we can enjoy today as we find in Romans chapter 6, verses 1 to 4.

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means. How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

[23 : 16] We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father we too might walk in newness of life.

The life that Jesus purchased for us was not just a life for eternity but a life we can begin to enjoy today. This newness of life through the power of God, the dependable word of God that we can enjoy for those who believe.

We also see in verses 6 and 7 the resurrection matters because it showed that God's power is unstoppable. God's power is unstoppable.

The first phrase of verse 6 is he is not here but he has risen. And at the end of verse 7 it says he was delivered into the hands of sinful men and crucified and on the third day he rose.

The greatest enemy of humanity is not Satan. The greatest enemy of you and I of all of mankind is sin and death.

[24 : 28] Sin that we inherited from Adam that we gained from him because of his initial sin that was then transferred onto us and because we are inherently sinners we sin.

Sin is the thing that separates us from God. Sin is what leads us inevitably to death not only in a physical way but also in a spiritual way as we find from Romans 6.23 the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Why? Because of the resurrection. His resurrection life has purchased for us life with God through faith in his son.

Jesus conquered. Jesus was ultimate. Jesus was powerful. And love his statement in John chapter 10 where Jesus says this he says for this reason the father loves me because I lay down my life that I might take it up again.

No one takes it from me but I lay it down on my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my father.

[25 : 48] Jesus was not a victim of some tragedy. Jesus walked head long into crucifixion. He laid his life down so that he could raise it up again so he might offer us victory and deliverance and salvation over sin and death once for all only for those who believe.

He is the savior of the world. He did destroy the ultimate enemy of sin and death. We find from Hebrews chapter 2 verses 14 and 15 it says he himself likewise partook of the same things that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death that is the devil and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

Jesus died in our place so that we could enjoy resurrection life through him. He conquered and that conquering power is the same conquering power that we have access to through the work of his Holy Spirit we find in Ephesians chapter 1 verses 15 and 21.

Paul will pray for the church when he'll say for this reason because I've heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints I do not cease to give thanks for you remembering you my prayers that you might know what is the immeasurable greatness of his power towards us who believe according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named not only in this age but also in the one to come Jesus Christ's power is unstoppable and because of his resurrection power by his grace and through his Holy Spirit he gives us access to enjoy that same power the power to live a life that is growing in likeness to Christ the power to kind of live a life that begins to demonstrate a heart of love and faith towards him and love towards one another it's a power to overcome the power of sin in our life and to live in a way that is pleasing to God power to grow and power to suffer the power of God through the power of his Holy Spirit living within and finally the resurrection matters because it proves that the gospel is credible the gospel is reliable notice beginning in verse 8 it says and they remembered his words and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to the rest they remembered this word in the Greek is a passive which means they were recipients of this remembering it wasn't an active remembering it was a reciprocal kind of remembering it was a work of God on their life to help them finally remember help them finally see help them finally compute all of the factors that were in front of them now they're beginning to make sense these women needed an awakening they needed sight they needed the work of the spirit in their life to open their eyes to remember and to see things for how they were up to this moment they couldn't put it together all the evidence was there and Jesus clearly states that the work of the spirit was necessary to do this work of remembrance

John 14 26 says the helper the holy spirit whom the father will send in my name he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you that work of the spirit to help them remember and guess what and they remembered they remembered and this flood of emotion and faith and hope began to ignite their hearts and what does it lead them to it leads them to testimony it leads them to witness it leads them to proclaim this work that they saw here at the tomb up to this point the words had been hidden but now this gospel seems credible this gospel is verifiable and even though these words as we find seemed like an idle tale in other words it was too good to be true God would take the beginnings that seed of faith that was planted in their hearts and the words of Christ and begin to develop that so that by the time we get to

[30 : 44] Acts chapter 1 we see the beginnings of this church so small 120 believers now begins to propagate this message and this work of God in their lives this testimony of the gospel that has become very credible verses 9 it says and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to the rest that was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles but these words seemed to them an idle tale and they did not believe them but Peter rose and ran to the tomb stooping and looking in he saw the linen claws by themselves and he went home marveling at what had happened of course the fragile faith this words that were too good to be true would develop into the strengthening power of God working in their life to help them be people of faith it transformed their life it helped them to be a unified group of individuals it helped them to speak with courage it helped them to love one another it helped them to suffer well in very difficult times especially at the beginning of the start of the church and as a result we find this church that began as just 120 believers would bear fruit and for 2,000 years we have experienced the blessing of this credible gospel witness in the lives of those who have gone before who have demonstrated their faith in God through good times and hard times and this will continue to endure until Christ comes and it's because of the credibility and the power of the resurrection that Paul concludes his chapter in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 in this way he says this therefore my beloved brothers be steadfast immovable always abounding in the work of the Lord knowing that your labor is not in vain your labor in the Lord is not in vain because their preaching was no longer vain because of a resurrection that happened that the hope that they would experience would continue after death that this life wasn't all they were going to live the apostle Paul concludes this chapter with a certainty of the credibility of the resurrection and what it would produce in the lives of true believers and those who would be filled up with a desire to be steadfast and immovable in continuing to proclaim like these women did this message of the gospel wherever they would go

I wonder this morning have you placed your faith in Christ not just in his death but especially in understanding the power of his resurrection and all that is available to us because of his resurrection power the power of the resurrection to lead us to real life not just eternal life but life today have you come to a place of recognizing your sin your need for God have you confessed your sin have you recognized that he is the Lord as Paul says in Romans chapter 10 verse 9 if you confess your sin he is faithful and just to forgive your sin and to cleanse you oh that's 1 John 1 9 sorry Romans 10 9 if you confess with your mouth thank you getting some help here from the front if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you'll be saved have you placed your faith in Christ have you confessed it with your mouth do you believe not only that

Jesus died but that he rose again and for those of us who have placed our faith in Christ in that way is there an ongoing testimony of a life that is steadfast a life that is resolute a life that is robust and confident because of the dependability of the word of God and because of the hope we have after this life to lead us to Christ is there a ministry a ministry of confidence in the fact that God's work the Lord's work will never be in vain praise the Lord for his resurrection God thank you for sending your son Jesus thank you for his work on the cross thank you that you have accomplished this on our behalf and I pray this morning Lord if there's anyone who does not know you as their savior that you would convict their hearts and lead them to yourself thank you that your truth is accessible but Lord

I pray that just as these women needed the Holy Spirit to inform their hearts I pray that you would do the same for us inform our hearts convict us of sin lead us to yourself in Jesus name Amen Amen