

"Risen Indeed" - Easter Sunday

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[0 : 00] Wow, happy Easter, church. It's good to see you all. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed! Would you turn with me back to Luke chapter 24. I'd like to read verses 36 through 49 today.

This is Luke's account of the risen Jesus revealing himself to the rest of his disciples on Easter Sunday. Luke chapter 24 verses 36 through 49. Let me pray for us and then I'll read.

Father, we give you much praise this morning for the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Lord, thank you that the one who sits on the throne of the universe, who holds the keys of death, is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.

Lord, we worship and praise you today and ask that as we come again to your word, you would speak powerfully to our hearts. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.

All right, Luke 24, 36 through 49. As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, peace to you. But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit.

[1 : 15] And he said to them, why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? 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 his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, have you anything here to eat? I gave him a piece of broiled fish and he took it and ate before them.

Then he said to them, these are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled. Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures and said to them, thus it is written that the Christ should suffer. And on the third day rise from the dead and that repentance for the forgiveness of sin should be proclaimed in his name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem.

You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.

[2 : 24] So what is Easter all about? And why is it at the heart of the Christian faith? Why is it at the very center of God's redeeming work in Jesus Christ?

And why did the early Christians say things like this? They say, you know, if Christ has not been raised, then our faith is in vain. But if he has been raised, then nothing is in vain.

That's a pretty bold claim, isn't it? Then everything hinges on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. So what is Easter all about? Well, this passage from Luke 24 tells us.

It tells us what Easter is all about. And there are four things that were shown as Jesus comes to his disciples on that first Easter day. And I just want to look at each one this morning, each of the four of those.

And each one has the power to fill our hearts with joy and with hope and with rejoicing on this Easter Sunday. So first, first we see the reality of Jesus's resurrection here.

[3 : 28] This is verses 36 through 43. Jesus really did rise bodily from the dead. The risen Jesus comes among his disciples and says, peace to you.

Then Luke writes, they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. Okay, well, I think that's a pretty reasonable response. Don't you? I mean, think about it.

After all, here is something that people in the first century believed. That sounds very modern to us. Everyone in the first century believed that dead people stay dead.

That was a very common belief in the first century. Just like us. Dead people usually stay dead. Always stay dead. Especially after crucifixion, which was a terrible way to die.

And also a very effective way to execute someone. Especially after being in a tomb for a couple of days. Those people stay dead. So we don't want to think, we mustn't think that belief in the resurrection just sort of cropped up.

[4 : 27] Because first century people were superstitious or pre-scientific. They had seen Jesus killed and he was dead. That was the end of the story. But now here was Jesus in front of them.

How would they account for it? Okay, well, perhaps they thought it's an apparition. It's a spirit. But notice how adamant Jesus is to demonstrate that he's before them bodily.

This is not a spiritual experience that they're having. It's not a group hallucination. He's there in his body.

He says, see my hands and feet. Touch me. I'm flesh and bones. And then he says, do you have anything to eat?

And he takes the broiled fish they hand to him and he eats it before them. That's a wonderful kind of like earthy scene, isn't it? It's so kind of earthy it has this like undeniable ring of truth to it.

[5 : 30] In other words, it's sort of hard to believe the disciples making up a story like this, you know? I mean, if I were making up the story about someone conquering death and overcoming the grave, I don't think I would sort of run the story like this, would you?

There he stood in our midst. We were scared out of our minds. And then he showed us his hands and his feet, his flesh and his bones. And then, oh, then he ate some lunch with us.

Right? I mean, talk about an anticlimax, right? What's going on here? But here's the truth, friends. Jesus rose bodily from the dead.

And here's what's interesting. You know, no matter how far you go back or how far down you go into the earliest Christian witnesses and documents that we have, no matter how far down you analyze them with form criticism or source criticism, no matter how deep you go, this is the consistent message.

That from the earliest days, from the earliest records, those Christians proclaimed that he had been raised. Not spiritually.

[6 : 45] Not mystically. Bodily. So early, so deep does that witness go in our historical records that there really isn't any time for this idea of Jesus' resurrection to be some sort of elaborate story that kind of grows over time.

Sort of like whisper down the lane. You know, did you ever play that as a kid? Right? You play, like, what do you call it? Telephone or whisper down the alley or something. And someone says something like, you know, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. And then by the time it gets to the end, it's like, I wish I drove a pink Ferrari or something like that.

Right? You know? Well, maybe, maybe if the earliest records we had were like 100 years later, maybe then we might think that the story kind of grew in the telling. But we have written records within decades or less of Jesus' death all saying the same thing.

He's risen. Now, there are lots of things we could say about the historicity of the resurrection. There are lots of reasons to give for its intellectual, historical, and philosophical credibility.

You know, we could talk about the empty tomb. We could talk about how other would-be messiahs in the first century were also killed by the Romans, but who, not surprisingly, were immediately forgotten forever because, well, they died, they failed, and who would keep following a dead messiah, right?

[7 : 58] But for some reason, Jesus, who was also killed by the Romans, was believed all the more to be the messiah. How do you explain that historically? You know, we could talk about the trustworthiness of the apostles, about how they were willing to die, proclaiming Jesus had been raised from the dead, when they didn't really have anything to gain, worldly speaking.

Who would die for something you knew wasn't true, right? There are lots of reasons, and you should explore them if you haven't. We're going to have a book table after the service.

You can grab a book from the book table and grapple with the reality and the meaning of the resurrection for yourself. Don't take my word for it. Lots of reasons we could give. But here's the thing. There's lots of reasons why you can and should believe in the reality of Jesus' resurrection. But this is also something, deep down, you want to be true. You know, when you hear a beautiful symphony, when you look at a glorious mountain range, when you look in the face of your child or your lover, and when you see there something transcendent in the material, in the physical, what the resurrection of Jesus Christ says is that it's real.

The stuff of this world isn't just a meaningless pile of matter. God became flesh and rose again in a body to redeem it, to hallow it, to make it the avenue of lasting and everlasting joy.

[9 : 45] So the beauty and the love and the transcendence that this world brings, it's not an illusion. It's not a passing fancy. It's not merely biochemical responses in your brain.

It's real. It's real. As real as the piece of fish that the risen Christ ate on the first Easter. What brings greater joy than a good meal, right?

And here's the risen Jesus, hallowing even a good meal. But we don't just see the reality of Jesus' resurrection here. Jesus goes on in this passage and tells the disciples in us the meaning of his resurrection, right?

What does it mean? Well, we see this in the second point in verses 44 through 46 of our passage, the meaning of Jesus' resurrection. What does it mean? Well, it means, ultimately, that Jesus of Nazareth really is the Messiah and Lord of all.

Let me read those verses again in verse 44. Then Jesus said to them, These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.

[10 : 57] Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures and said to them, Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead. And making and demonstrating a very startling claim that he was both Israel's Messiah, their long-awaited king, and as such, he was the world's true and only Lord.

There's been some very interesting New Testament scholarship recently that has kind of unpacked that reality, that in the Gospels what we see is Jesus making, in very Jewish, very first century kind of ways, direct claims, not just a Messianic identity, but even divine identity.

That the one God of Israel, the only true God, was now powerfully present in their midst in his own person. I'm thinking here of someone like Brant Petrie's work in a book like Jesus and Divine Christology, where he's making this claim, Jesus is.

But, you know, making the claim is one thing, right? Saying something is one thing. But what the resurrection means is that all those claims that Jesus was making are valid.

Paul puts it this way in the opening of his letter to the Romans. He says, Jesus was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead.

[12 : 48] Jesus Christ, our Lord. And in the book of Acts, he says something very similar. In Athens, when Paul is amidst philosophers and thinkers, he says that God will be king and judge of all things.

And that God 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.

How? By raising him from the dead. In other words, the resurrection of Jesus has established and proved Jesus' identity as the rightful Lord of the world.

He is the one who has all authority to execute justice, to end evil, to set the world to rights. Even though he was misunderstood.

During his ministry, Jesus said he would be crucified. And on the third day, he would be raised. And that is exactly what happened. All his claims are true.

[13 : 56] He is the Lord. But as Jesus says here in Luke's gospel, it's not just what Jesus said and did. This is what God's word in scripture had said and Jesus did.

Notice Jesus says everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms. Those were the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible in Jesus' day. The law of Moses, the Torah, the prophets, and the Psalms are the writings, right?

In essence, Jesus is saying that the whole Bible is about me. Everything God revealed about himself, about his plan of redemption, about his glory and majesty.

All of that from Genesis to Malachi. From the flood of Noah to the exodus of Egypt to the kings of David to the exile and return. It was all, Jesus says, talking about me.

The whole Bible is about the risen Lord Jesus. So what does the resurrection mean? Is it just sort of a weird thing that happened to some guy in the first century that we can't really explain?

[15 : 01] No. The resurrection of Jesus Christ means that Jesus is Lord. He's conquered death. He's fulfilled the scriptures.

And he's made good on his claims. He is Lord. And we must bow before him. Repentance. Repentance in the Bible.

It's a word that means something like changing your mind. A change of mind where we stop thinking that we are the rulers and the masters of our own destiny.

And we surrender to Christ. Who is. And when you consider the resurrection of Jesus.

And when you consider the person of Jesus and the character of Jesus. Surrendering to him as Lord. Makes complete sense.

[16:01] You know, we want to make ourselves Lords, right? But I mean, this afternoon, when you have some quiet time after the ham or whatever you're going to eat.

Right? Take a good long look. Maybe you want to journal about this question. And ask yourself. Have I defeated death? You know, when you did your quarterly review on Wednesday.

You know, April 1st. Quarter's over. You've got to do your review. You've got to revisit your long-term goals. Was conquering the power of death on your list? To crush before 2026 ends? Right? No. Only one has gone down into death. Defanged our greatest enemy and rose again. Jesus Christ.

Will you find a better Lord than that? But look. Who else would you want as your Lord and King?

[17:03] As Jesus sits among his disciples. Sharing a meal with them. What does he do? He quells their fears. He speaks peace to them.

Peace to you, he says. Which, yes, was a Hebrew way of saying hello. But don't you think Jesus had a bit more resonance when he spoke into that room?

The word of shalom. Peace. Peace. Peace to the very ones just days ago who had betrayed him and abandoned him.

And denied him. And he sits in their midst breaking bread with them and says, not forget you, but peace to you. Who else would you want to be king of your life?

And that person who speaks peace. Peace. This is the meaning of the resurrection of Jesus. He is Lord and no other.

[18:07] And that means we must turn from trusting in ourselves and trusting in our own kings that we make by our own power and surrendering to him. But third, we also see here in Luke 24, not just the meaning of his resurrection, that he is Lord, but also the result of his resurrection.

And we see this in verse 47. Right after showing us that his resurrection means that he is the Christ, he is the Lord. Jesus immediately shows us that his resurrection means that our sins can be forgiven.

Verse 46. And he said to them, thus it is written that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem.

Forgiveness. Forgiveness. The older I get, nothing. Is more powerful or beautiful than forgiveness. Forgiveness. I mean, I know it's a little passe now, but you know, you think of that scene from Hamilton where Hamilton and his wife have moved uptown trying to do the unimaginable.

[19:20] Goodness. I weep every time I see that scene. Forgiveness. And according to Jesus, all of scripture pointed to him in this way.

Think about it. In the law of Moses, the rock was struck and water poured out. The Passover lamb was slain and the people escaped slavery.

In the prophets, the return from exile is foretold. Why? Because a coming king would in a mysterious way bear the sins of his people. And in the Psalms, we hear the cry, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

But we also hear, you will not abandon my soul to the grave or let your Holy One see corruption. You see, the symphony of the Old Testament resonates with this recurring theme.

That sinners will be reconciled at a great cost. And that cost will be borne by another. And who will bear it?

[20:28] A lamb? A servant? A servant? No, the king. The king will. God will bear the cost for his people.

He will divest himself of glory and stand in the place of sinners. And the offended one, God, will take the offense so that the offenders can be forgiven.

Do you see what happens at the cross, friend? The true rock was struck. And the true lamb was slain. And the true king cried out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

What was happening there? An innocent one was condemned as a criminal. Why? Because he stood there in our place. The judge of all was judged for you.

But in the resurrection, in the resurrection, a new verdict is cast. If at the cross Jesus was condemned in the resurrection, he was what?

[21 : 30] Vindicated, justified, pronounced innocent by God himself. But that new verdict wasn't just over Jesus. Because if he died for us, then he also rose for us.

In his death, we see the depths of our sins. But in his resurrection, we see our forgiveness and our healing and our acceptance in all its beauty.

That's why the risen Jesus stands among his disciples and says, peace to you. Peace to you.

Peace to you. Peace to you. Peace to you. Peace to you. Peace to you. Peace to you.

Peace to you. Peace to you. Peace to you. Peace to you. Peace to you. Peace to you. All nations. All people.

It started in Jerusalem, but it didn't stop there. This forgiveness, this reconciliation is for Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria.

[22 : 30] It's for India. It's for Ethiopia. It's for Rome. It's for Shanghai. It's for New Zealand. And it's for New Haven. The burden that you carry.

The shame and the guilt that you hide. The failures. The condemnation. Jesus says, come to me. Give it to me. I've already borne it in the cross.

Come to me and find peace. Find forgiveness. In his name. The name of Jesus Christ the Lord. Your sins are forgiven.

And friends, you know what that means. If our sins are forgiven. It means the new creation has begun. If anyone is in Christ, Paul says, there is a new creation.

All your sins are wiped clean. The old is gone. The new has come. This is why Christians, when they really understand the resurrection, live such radically new lives.

[23 : 40] Why can Christians be joyful and peaceful even in difficult circumstances? Why do we see the apostles singing hymns in prison? Why are they fearless in the face of oppression and persecution?

Why can Christians be unrelenting in their pursuit of justice when so many setbacks seem to come? When the world looks so broken. Why? Because Christ has been raised.

Our sins are forgiven. And the new creation has burst upon the world. In our lives. In our churches. And as we go forth in our communities. And that's what brings us to the fourth and last point of our passage.

We've seen the reality. And the meaning. And the result of Jesus' resurrection. Last thing that Jesus shows us. Is the mission of his resurrection. The mission. This is verses 48 through 49.

He says. You are witnesses of these things. And behold. I am sending the promise of my father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.

[24 : 42] And just a short time later. The risen Jesus would ascend to the father. And enthroned at the father's right hand. Jesus would send the promised Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit would empower the followers of Jesus to be his witnesses.

And by any measure. Those disciples literally changed the world. You know.

I think one of the greatest challenges facing people today. Is boredom. Yeah. We're drowning in entertainment. But we are bored to death.

The ancient spiritual writers used to call this. Sloth. Which on the surface means laziness. But at its heart. Is the unbelief.

That humans. Really are creative in God's image. And through the redemption of Christ. And the indwelling of the spirit. We are made witnesses. And agents. Of the risen Lord's new creation.

[25 : 46] The disciples. Huddled in that room. On Sunday evening. Were probably thinking. It's all over. At best.

At best. They'd go back to fishing in Galilee. At worst. The authorities would find them. And arrest them. Or worse. Ah. But little did they know.

What God. Had in store for them. Those. Disciples. Would turn. The world. Upside down. As followers of the risen Christ.

Filled with his spirit. They would lay aside their fear. And their sloth. And they would pray. Play.

Their great part. In the drama. Of redemption. They would follow Christ.

To the ends of the earth. And they would scheme schemes. And they would dream dreams. As big. As the kingdom of God. And as wide. As the glory of his name.

[26 : 49] And what fueled them. What took them. Through shipwrecks. And arrests. And famine. And nakedness. And sword. What was it. That built communities. Of faith.

And hope. And love. That endured. Even when the Roman Empire. Crumbled to dust. And even when successive regimes. Throughout history. Have tried to stamp them out. What was it. That fueled their courage. And comforted their hearts. And fired their imaginations. The resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our Lord. He is not dead.

He is alive. And you. You are partakers. And participants. And witnesses of these things. The old things.

Sin. Death. Condemnation. They might look. Like they have the last word. They might. Puff their chest. And rattle their sabers.

[27 : 48] But the last word. Friends. Belongs to the risen Lord Jesus. He. Has disarmed. The authorities. And powers. He holds the keys. To death.

And Hades. He's poured out. His spirit. Upon his church. And the world. Will never be the same. So what dreams. Friend. Are you dreaming.

For the glory of Christ. What schemes. Are you scheming. What big. Audacious prayers. Are we praying. Lay aside your fears.

Let's lay aside. Our sloth. Brothers and sisters. We are witnesses. Of the risen Christ. And he is risen indeed. Let's pray.

Father. Father glorify yourself. In us. Your people. Christ. Be magnified. As risen Lord. In all that we say.

[28 : 43] And do. We rejoice. And we praise you today. As the one who has conquered death. Forgiven our sins. And empowered us. To be your witnesses. And your agents. Of this new creation.

That we inhabit. Lord. Extend your kingdom. Through us. In our day. We pray. That you might receive. All the praise. Of which you are worthy. Amen. Amen friends.