

THE GREATEST PROMISE EVER KEPT

Responding to the Resurrection – It's Not an Idle Tale!

Resurrection Sunday 2022
Palmetto Baptist Church

Text: Luke 24:1-53

Luke 24:1–12 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. ² And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they went in **they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.** ⁴ While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. ⁵ 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?*” ⁶ *He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee,* ⁷ *that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.*” ⁸ **And they remembered his words,** ⁹ and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰ Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, ¹¹ but **these words seemed to them an idle tale,** and **they did not believe them.** ¹² But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.

Luke 24:25–27 And he said to them, “*O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!*” ²⁶ **Was it not necessary** *that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”* ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

Luke 24:44–49 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.*” ⁴⁵ **Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,** ⁴⁶ and said to them, “*Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,*” ⁴⁷ and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ **You are witnesses of these things.** ⁴⁹ *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.”*

Introduction:

We are all here this morning to celebrate the most significant event in the Christian faith – in fact, this event is so foundational that the NT writers tell us that if this event isn't true, the Christian faith is worthless in terms of its eternal value and powerless to deliver us from what we fear most which, if we are honest, is our own unavoidable, inevitable mortality – death (Heb 2:14-15). And the event that is the

foundation of everything we believe about the Christian Faith is the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And the reason the resurrection is so foundationally essential to the Christian Faith is that without His resurrection, Jesus' death on the cross would be powerless to deliver us from our sins! Listen to how Paul put it when he wrote to the Christians at Corinth in three power-packed verses: *And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.* ¹⁵ *We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised.* ¹⁶ *For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised.* ¹⁷ *And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.* **1 Corinthians 15:14–17.**

In unmistakable terms, Paul declares that if the resurrection **isn't true about Jesus** then three horrific things **are true about us** this morning: 1) the preaching of God's Word to us is **powerless**; 2) Our personal faith in Christ is **useless**, and 3) Our eternal destiny is **hopeless** because we are still in our sins and one day we will suffer eternal punishment for them in hell!

So, with good reason we gather today to celebrate the foundational belief of the Christian Faith – the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But – have you ever stopped to really think about how unbelievable this resurrection really is and how difficult it is for a thinking, rational human being to believe? Or have we heard the story so often that we just embrace it without thinking about the stunning things that have to happen for us to believe and the earth shattering danger we are in if we don't believe? Put differently, how do we believe the unbelievable?

This is the burning question that every single one of us must try to answer in our own hearts and minds – because most of us have heard the story and know it well. Jesus of Nazareth was crucified on a Roman cross and was buried in a borrowed tomb on the day before the Jewish Sabbath – a day we have come to call Good Friday – and he rose from the dead early on the morning of the third day – a day we call Easter or Resurrection Sunday.

However, knowing the story or even being able to acknowledge the global acceptance and widespread knowledge of this particular story is a far cry from believing it personally. Think of the amazing thing we are being asked to believe – someone physically died and three days later was resurrected to life. We would have a very hard

time believing this about anyone else – so it is important to ask ourselves two questions this morning:

1. Why is it so important to believe this story?
2. How does this kind of genuine belief and unshakable conviction come about?

The text before us is the story of the first Easter and it recounts how three groups of people went from incredulous doubt to unshakable belief in the central event that happened early that morning at the breaking of the dawn – the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

Luke is a gospel built around a journey. The journey starts in chapters 1-2 in the temple in Jerusalem with people marveling at the surprising, good news angels announced to an ancient priest, to a young Hebrew virgin and her betrothed, and to a group of shepherds. That news had to do with the birth of the long-awaited Messiah who would arrive via a supernatural birth and his name was Jesus. Thirty-three years later Luke ends the journey back to the temple after two angels have made a stunning announcement to Jesus' closest friends and his disciples – the wonderful news that God had raised Him from the dead!

It shouldn't surprise us that those who received this amazing news struggled to believe what they heard. And it wasn't because they hadn't seen miracles before. All of them had been with Jesus and witnessed the mighty and undeniable miracles he performed during the three years of his earthly ministry. Jesus did spectacular miracles beyond walking on water, turning water into wine at a wedding, or multiplying bread and fish to feed hungry multitudes. He healed incurable diseases. He opened blind eyes and made the lame to walk. On two different occasions he even raised the dead back to life!

And they were right there – they had front row seats watching it all happen! But their hopes came to a crushing end on a Roman execution hill outside the city gates one terrible Passover Friday. Jesus who had healed and delivered others from death was unable to deliver himself. His body, beaten and bruised almost beyond human recognition, had been hastily placed in a borrowed tomb, and now, in one final act of shameful indignity, the body was missing and only the linen grave clothes

remained as evidence that the tomb had once housed the body of their precious friend and master.

Luke opens this last chapter by introducing us to a group of Jesus' closest and most intimate friends – those who had been with him, had seen his miracles and heard his words. But they struggled to believe the most important thing about their friend and master – he was no longer dead. There was a fantastic reason the tomb was empty and his body gone—he was alive!! The two strangers in blazing white garments put it this way, “*Why do you seek the living One among the dead ones?*” (24:5)

So, how did these close friends of Jesus journey from doubt and disbelief to unwavering, unshakable belief that Jesus was alive? Obviously, the empty tomb was not enough. Surprisingly, even when Jesus physically appeared to them, they still doubted (24:13-31; 36-41).

However, by the end of the story, they were so convinced they were willing to die for their belief that Jesus really had risen from the dead! So, how did this kind of belief happen in them and more importantly how does it happen in our own hearts and lives?

Luke describes their journey from doubt to belief in a five part story that I want him to tell us as we join these disciples on the road to faith!

I. Act One: The Resurrection Announced (Lk. 24:1-12)

The journey from disbelief to belief starts with an enigma – an event or a reality that defies belief and human explanation.

In this case, that event began early on the morning of the third day when the dawn was just starting to break and a group of women returned to the tomb where they had hastily placed the body of their beloved friend and master, Jesus.

And it is at this point in the opening act of the story that Luke wants us to **pick up on three things**:

A. The Reality of the Resurrection is Uncomfortable (vv. 1-3)

- When they arrived at the tomb they found some disturbing things – the stone had been rolled away and the tomb was empty – and there was no sign of the body of the Lord Jesus.
- And the Scripture reports that they were perplexed – more than confused and more than questioning – they were concerned and worried about what they found and more importantly, what they didn't find.
- Clearly something undeniable and disconcertingly uncomfortable had happened during the night – and it shook these women to their very core. As disconcerting as the empty tomb may have been, things were about to get even more uncomfortable for these grieving women.

B. The Revelation of the Resurrection is Undeniable (vv. 4-7)

- ***Announced by Angels***: As the women were perplexed, two men appeared in dazzling garments and the women immediately recognized them as angels and bowed down in reverential fear.
- ***Prompted by a Question***: The angels asked a penetrating and uncomfortable question – “Why are you doing what you are doing? Why are you seeking the One who is living among those who are dead?”
- ***Followed by a Pronouncement*** – “He is not here but has risen!”
- ***Predicted by His Words*** – “Remember!” Remember how he told you back in Galilee that all these events **had** to happen? That for God's plan to be accomplished the Son of Man (Messiah) **must** be delivered over to the hands of sinful men and that he **had** to be crucified and that he **would** rise again on the third day?
- ***Remember*** – more than mental recollection in view; it is alignment with and recognition of the truth of the words that Jesus spoke. ***We remember, we recognize, we believe, and we agree!***

C. The Response to the Resurrection is Unsettling (8-12)

- ***by the women*** – they remembered and believed! And they returned to report the wonderful news to the 11 disciples.
- ***by the disciples*** – they could not comprehend the magnitude of what the women had come to believe and were now reporting. In fact, their words

seemed like the delusional story of a grief-stricken person – an “idle tale” – and they did not believe!

- **by Peter**—who was so impacted that he ran to the tomb, looked inside and saw what the women saw – and went away wonderstruck but not yet fully convinced.
- So what was it they did not believe – everything the women told them which was far more than just an empty tomb, a missing body, and the announcement by the two angels. Part of what the words reported by the women were the words the angels said to help them remember and believe what Jesus said before he died!
- So, why did **these words result in these two different responses** – belief in the women and unbelief in the men? How will these men come to full belief?

II. Act Two: The Resurrection Confirmed (Lk. 24: 13-35)

- To help us understand that part of the story, Luke turns to Act Two where we meet two loyal followers on their way home to Emmaus.
- Notice they are traveling away from Jerusalem – Up to this point Jerusalem has been the center of Luke’s focus. Everything has been leading up to Jerusalem and now that it is all over and the story has come to a sad ending, the players are headed back to their old lives taking their shattered dreams along with them.
- While they are walking and talking a third traveler comes and joins their conversation. And there are two important things you know that they don’t. You know the identity of the third traveler – Jesus; and, you know what he intends to do through this conversation.
- Unbeknownst to them, He intends to confirm what they have heard about the resurrection of their friend Jesus.
- However, this is no small task considering one more piece of important information Luke gives us – “Their eyes were kept from recognizing him!” This was more than just that they didn’t recognize their friend; it was that their eyes were kept from perceiving the truth before them.” In other words, it wasn’t that they did not want to see or that they were too dumb to see; they were incapable of seeing the truth about Jesus without divine help – without someone opening their eyes so they could see and understand! And the person walking beside them was

an expert at doing miracles to open the eyes of blind men (Lk 18:35-43). So, how does Jesus open their eyes!

A. By Means of a Penetrating Question (vv. 17-24)

- As they walk together Jesus asks, *“So, what is it that you are discussing so adamantly?”*
- And the question stops them in their tracks, and they look at him and ask, *“Are you the only one in all of Jerusalem who is ignorant of what has happened?”*
- Luke has a good bit of irony and not a little humor here – because they just happen to be talking to the one person in all of Jerusalem who fully knows what is really going on!
- They then proceed to tell him the sad tale of what has happened to their friend and master Jesus who they had hoped would deliver Israel but instead had been crucified, and now even his body was missing along with their shattered dreams and hopes.
- *“The women reminded us that He told us he would rise on the third day, when the third day is over, his body is missing, and He hasn’t appeared so obviously they must have got it wrong.”*

B. By Means of a Gracious Rebuke (v. 25)

- *“Oh foolish ones and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.”*
- The problem was not mental – not merely a lack of recollecting the words of Jesus. It was that ***they did not really believe what they knew*** the prophets had said about the Messiah!
- In other words, they had all the facts and all the necessary information to see the truth but they couldn’t see the bad things the prophets really said would happen to the Messiah because of the good things they expected the Messiah to do when He arrived! They were so eager to see Messiah come and rule His kingdom (and they with him), that they totally missed the part about his suffering and dying before entering His kingdom!

C. By Means of His Word (vv. 26-27)

- So how did Jesus bring about belief in their hearts?
- Notice what He did not do – He did not reveal himself to them at this point in the conversation.
- Instead, He pointed them to the words God had given through the inspired writings of the Old Testament prophets.
- *“Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things (the crucifixion) and then enter into His glory?”*
- And to prove his point, he started with Moses and went through the Prophets explaining to them all that the Scriptures really taught about himself.
- ***Then and only then did He open their eyes*** so they could see the truth they had just been reminded of from the Scripture pointed to the necessity of His death and the reality of His resurrection and then and only then, were they enabled to see and recognize His true identity! (v. 31)
- But how will the larger group of disciples come to share the firm faith that the women and these two travelers have come to believe about the Resurrection?

III. Act Three: The Resurrection Affirmed (Lk. 24:36-43)

- How would Jesus affirm His resurrection to the rest of his disciples who had been with him for 3 years, who should have been the first to believe, and who would establish the church He was about to start and build? How would they come to believe?

A. By His Personal Presence (vv. 36-37)

- When the two from Emmaus returned to the disciples with their amazing report, they discovered that the Lord had also appeared to Peter – and this ensued in no small discussion among the disciples who were gathered behind closed doors in Jerusalem.
- While they were in the midst of an animated discussion – Jesus suddenly appeared in their midst.

- Note their immediate response – it is not one of belief in His resurrection – *they think they are seeing his Spirit*, or as we would say in our day, his ghost (v.37).

B. By His Penetrating Questions (vv. 38)

- “*Why are you troubled at my appearance? Why are you afraid?*”
- “*You have been reminded of what I told you when I was with you.*”
- “*You have been reminded of what the Scriptures testified and prophesied of me.*”
- “*Why are you still doubting the reality of my resurrection?*”
- While they were in the midst of doubting, He gave them proof.

C. By His Undeniable Proof (v 39-43)

- “*Look at my hands and feet*” – the evidence of his crucifixion
- “*Touch me and feel me*” – the evidence of his physical body
- *And since that isn't enough and you are still doubting – give me something to eat and you will see that I am as fully human now as I was when I was with you before my death on the cross!* – the evidence of distinctly human activity.
- ***But what does all of this mean? We need an explanation!***

IV. Act Four: The Resurrection Explained (Lk. 24:44-47)

A. ***Established by the Scriptures*** – everything written about Messiah in the OT (Moses, Prophets, and Psalms) **MUST** be fulfilled and the entire OT had a central focus on one person - Jesus the Christ!

B. ***Centered on Christ*** – the heart of the entire story-line of Scripture is that God would send an anointed and appointed Champion to redeem and restore fallen people to the image of His Son! And for that to happen, this Champion would have to suffer death and then conquer death by rising from the dead on the third day!

C. ***Essential for the Gospel*** – it wasn't enough for Jesus to die; He had to rise from the dead in order to redeem and restore fallen men! ***Put differently, a dead Jesus can't save anyone!***

D. ***Required for Salvation*** – based on the authority of the resurrected Jesus, repentance and forgiveness can now be preached to all nations! ***This is the central message of the Gospel and the chief mission of the Church!***

So ... what are these disciples to do in light of their new found faith in the resurrected Jesus? You would think they would run out and announce it to everyone – but again, Jesus did something unexpected. He told them to stay in Jerusalem and wait! Because, just like they were powerless to believe apart from His enablement, they were powerless to open the eyes of those they were sent to tell so that they would believe in the resurrected Jesus! So, how would Jesus help them tell the story to unbelieving hearts?

V. Act Five: The Resurrection Applied (Lk. 24:48-49)

A. ***By means of a commission*** – you are witnesses of these things!

B. ***By means of a consecration*** – you will be clothed with power from on High – the Holy Spirit My Father promised to send!

Conclusion:

But would this work? Would Jesus keep His Promise to send the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of people throughout the world who needed to hear and believe the story of the resurrection? The answer is obvious – for more than 2000 years the story of Jesus' death and resurrection has been told to every generation in every nation on the earth – and people have come to see and truly believe the story– the good news of the gospel!

And like the women, the two travelers on the road to Emmaus, and the 11 disciples in Luke's story – they didn't believe on their own! Jesus kept His promise, and His Spirit opened their eyes so they could see and understand what the Scripture teaches about Messiah's birth, death, and resurrection.

What happens when the Holy Spirit opens the eyes of a person to the amazing reality of the death and resurrection of Jesus?

1. They repent of their sins and ask Jesus to forgive them.
2. They put their whole faith and trust in Him alone.
3. They joyfully receive His salvation by grace alone.
4. They determine to follow Him and serve Him with their whole life for all their life!
5. They share this truth with others!

When this stunning truth was first reported by the women in Lk 24, the disciples dismissed their testimony as "an idle tale." God had to open their eyes so they would see what the women knew to be true. And to be honest, that is what many will think of our words when we share the story that Jesus rose from the dead and is alive interceding at the right hand of our Father on our behalf.

These are no idle words. They are the ***truest and most foundational words in the universe, and they are our words.***

So receive them with joy; believe them with confidence; live them with thankfulness, and share them with conviction!