

Remembering Why Jesus Came: On the First Resurrection Sunday

Luke 24:1-8

As we open to Luke 24, we are joining those disciples on the first Resurrection Sunday, who loved Christ with all their hearts. Luke captures the fullest account of the first moments of Resurrection morning in v. 1-8.

Those faithful women are there at the scene, unlike us who are twenty-centuries removed: *they are at Ground Zero of the greatest event of history*. Think about what it must have been like to have experienced, what we read about here:

GROUND ZERO: RESURRECTION SUNDAY MORNING

At least five women have gathered, and then begin their mission on that very first Sunday morning following Christ's crucifixion and burial.

They have started walking through the Jerusalem of Christ's ministry, Palm Sunday arrival, Crucifixion, and burial; walking before dawn, it was quiet and strangely silent as they carried the oils and spices they had prepared for properly burying Jesus Christ.

While they are walking through those dark and quiet streets, and out of the city gate, God has sent an angel to open the Tomb for them; and the earthquake and the blinding brightness of the angel knocked the soldiers out and they are paralyzed with fear and then scatter.

They walk into the Garden, around that Tomb where soon Jesus will be seen, and mistaken by Mary Magdalene for a gardener.

They are not far from the crucifixion site where Christ died, earlier that weekend.

The group of women entering by the faint light of early morning, find the Garden, and are shocked at the already-opened tomb, and can see the "exceedingly large" stone is rolled away from the door.

They go into that dark, stone-cut chamber, and see inside that now empty tomb for the very first time.

They are the very first witnesses of the Resurrection, these five plus women have seen that Christ is Risen as He promised, and as yet don't even know that:

THE GREATEST EVENT OF ALL TIME IS COMPLETE

Here before us in Luke 24 we have the inspired record that these women are at that very spot, on that very day of Christ's Resurrection morning; and there they will get the very first message from God Himself after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, with our Bibles opened to Luke 24, we can join them and hear this first message from God, on Resurrection morning:

Luke 24:1-8 (NKJV) Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. 2 But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. 3 Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. 5 Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? 6 He is not here, but is risen! **Remember** how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, 7 saying, 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.'" 8 And they **remembered His words**.

God said through the angels: *Remember Christ's words.*

REMEMBERING WHAT GOD TOLD US TO REMEMBER

Today we gather as all those who love Jesus Christ have gathered for two thousand years, to celebrate our crucified, buried, and risen Lord and Savior. There are so many ways that we can remember Him.

We could go back through each of the stages of that morning and see with wonder how the disciples came to understand the wonder of His resurrection.

We could trace the impact upon each one as they saw Him, heard Him, and some even knelt at His feet and felt His touch.

All of those any many more are ways we could remember this Resurrection Sunday's wonders. But today we are looking at something else. God said remember why Jesus came: *Jesus came to save us from our sins.*

Look onward to Jesus Himself as He reminds them:

Luke 24:46-47 (NKJV) Then He said to them, "Thus it is **written**, and thus it was **necessary** for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, 47 and that **repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name** to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Jesus came to seek and save the lost. Jesus died as the Savior of the world. That is the simple lesson for us: *Jesus came to save us from our sins.*

JESUS CAME AS A SAVIOR

If we look closely at Christ's words we find He was always seeking and saving the lost.

Wherever Jesus went through His ministry He was seeking and saving lost men and women. Whether poor, rich, dreadfully handicapped or not, all were lost; and all needed the Gospel.

To His final hours, that is exactly what He was doing. As we saw on Good Friday, the very last words of Jesus, before His death, were from the Cross, where Jesus spoke in seven short, pain-filled gasps. But even with all that pain, He still seeks and saves the lost.

There is a dimension of Christ's death that always fascinates me. There had been sacrifices instituted by God that spoke of Christ for almost 1,500 years before the crucifixion. But here we see for the first time that the sacrifice God offered was no longer silent. The thousands of lambs offered over the centuries never said anything: they just portrayed a loving God making a way for sinners to be forgiven.

For all the centuries that innocent spotless lambs were slain on the altars that God had prescribed, none had ever spoken. But here, at the perfect, final, and complete sacrifice of the Lamb of God, we can hear the sacrificial Lamb Himself speaking. When the Lamb speaks it is of love, forgiveness, and salvation.

Jesus came to save us from our sins.

As soon as the blood being offered by Christ on the altar of that cross began to pour out, He began to intercede for those who murdered Him, as the Great High Priest that He was. While they cruelly abused Him, He forgives; while others mock Him, out comes love instead of anger, forgiveness instead of wrath, and intercession in place of condemnation. As the Lamb bled on the altar, we hear the kindness and goodness of God flowing out of the lips of Jesus.

Jesus came to save us from our sins.

As in each other event of His life, Jesus was staying in sync with God's Word. He knew that God's Word prophesied in Isaiah 52:12 that Jesus would display the mercy of God, so He did. Look at the last phrase of what Isaiah saw with the eyes of a prophet and wrote in the Holy Scriptures:

Isaiah 53:12 (NKJV) Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And **made intercession for the transgressors.**

The meaning of Christ's cross is distilled into these words of Isaiah. Jesus Christ did not come to condemn humanity, but to make a way of salvation for us. The reason not blast of judgment burst out of Christ is because He came the first time to offer salvation. Jesus came from God to offer mercy, redemption, forgiveness, and endless hope. In the face of the greatest crime ever perpetrated, as mankind murdered their Maker, all Jesus does is show us His mercy and compassion.

JESUS CAME TO SEEK & SAVE SINNERS

Jesus came to seek and to save sinners; and He demonstrates it for us. In fact, the first two times Jesus spoke from the Cross are right here where we are in Luke, in chapter 23. As you turn back there with me to Luke 23:32.

Luke 23:32-34 (NKJV) There were also two others, criminals, led with Him to be put to death. 33 And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. 34 Then Jesus said, "**Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.**" And they divided His garments and cast lots.

When Jesus speaks to those surrounding Him on the Cross, we are actually hearing Him praying something over and over (it is the imperfect indicative verb form). Those within earshot, those in the close circle of the Cross, heard Jesus pray over these words of compassion. I think Jesus may even have started these words as they spiked His Hands and Feet, as they roughly propped Him upright.

So, the first words of Christ from the cross were spoken either as they nailed Him or as they were lifting Him up on the Cross. Right in the midst of the routine that soldiers went through of dragging, holding down, stretching out, pounding spikes through the victims, and then raising them up and getting them stood up for all the see: Jesus is repeating over and over these words reminding us He came to die to save us sinners.

CHRIST'S FIRST WORDS FROM THE CROSS

These words, first spoken, capture the heart of God the Savior, displayed in the horrific display of His Son's sacrifice. In what is accepted by all as Christ's first word from the Cross, we can hear Christ's heart of compassion: "**Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.**"

To both the soldiers who would hear, and the criminals on either side: it was the cry of our Savior's heart to those who were there, so they could know that He offered them full and complete forgiveness.

To those criminals and soldiers surrounding Him, who were just everyday sinners living their lives, and swept into the greatest crime ever committed, Jesus said: **Father,**

don't hold this crime of mocking me (the thieves) and crucifying me (the soldiers) against them.

It is interesting that this prayer was answered before our eyes. One thief and at least one soldier of the group at His feet take His offer of forgiveness that very day. That means that they experienced Christ's forgiveness.

This Resurrection Sunday the greatest question you could ever be asked is:

HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED CHRIST'S COMPLETE FORGIVENESS?

Forgiveness is the miracle that I have personally experienced. It is the miracle that most of us in this room have also experienced. It is the greatest of all Christ's miracles: **complete forgiveness.**

Always remember what was on the lips of Jesus at the end of His earthly life. The essence of Christ's love is seen in His dying gasp, offering forgiveness to those at His feet.

Always remember that God freely offers His love through Christ, to sinners.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever believes in Him** should not perish but have everlasting life.

Jesus offered then, and offers now—forgiveness. Christ's prayer from the Cross: *makes His forgiveness available to every sinful human, but not all will avail themselves of it.*

Forgiveness must be accepted as well as given.

COMPLETE FORGIVENESS IS AVAILABLE

This Resurrection morning: have you believed, accepted, and experienced the forgiveness of Jesus Christ offered to you a sinful human? If so, you've been born again, and with God you have no past, just a future. What happens to someone who truly believes that they are forgiven?

Christ's forgiveness is like having deadly spots of skin cancer removed for us by a skilled doctor. Those spots trouble us until they are surgically cut away, or burned off and gone.

Forgiveness means my deadly cancer of sin is taken care of permanently.

Christ's forgiveness is like having that huge utility bill paid for us by another. We know that our heart or lights are going to cut off, and we are counting down the days. Then the bill gets paid and we are spared the termination.

Forgiveness means my bills are forever paid, they will never come due so that I face a termination notice.

Christ's forgiveness is like having a murderous stalker that stands in the distance threatening us with evil and dangerous intent. We can't sleep or rest knowing he is out there in the dark, waiting for us. We live in dread fear until the police apprehend him, imprison him, and lock him up for life without parole.

Forgiveness means my worst, deadliest enemy is forever gone.

Christ's Last words assure us that He offers His forgiveness and love to us, even though He knows that we have failed Him, sinned against Him, and resisted Him.

Do you know you are forgiven?

Do you know every sin from the past is forever gone?

Do you know each time you fail God, and sin against His Christ: He says I have already forgiven you?

Do you know that there is no sin you could ever commit in the future that could take away your complete forgiveness?

Have you experienced Christ's Complete Forgiveness?

Right now, if you don't know that, let me just read these words.

JESUS CAME TO SAVE US FROM OUR SINS

I did a funeral this week for a woman I had never met, but one thing I found out about her: as she lived her last days in a nursing home, and her daughter told me that she loved it when people came in and shared the Gospel with her and left her tracts.

Here are the words from a simple Gospel tract. Here is the message of salvation, available for anyone who will hear God's Word today:

IT'S GOD'S LOVE TO ALL THE WORLD THAT IS SEEN IN JESUS:

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

IT'S GOD'S GRACE THAT'S DISPLAYED BY JESUS: *Romans 5:6-8*
For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. 8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. *Romans 3:23* For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

IT'S GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT CRUCIFIED JESUS: 2
Corinthians 5:21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

IT'S GOD'S MERCY THAT OFFERS US HEAVEN: 2 *Peter 3:9* The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

THAT IS WHY JESUS CAME & DIED

That is what Jesus Christ came and died to offer you today. If you would like to meet Jesus, He is actually standing here, though unseen by us, with His arms opened wide saying, "Come to Me all who are weary and heavy laden—I will give you rest".

He offers salvation to anyone here who will call upon Him for salvation.

What happens to anyone like this thief who heard, believes, and responds to Christ's offer of forgiveness?

LISTEN TO WHAT JESUS PROMISED THE GUILTY THIEF

Do you remember Christ's words from the cross to that repentant thief who cried out for mercy? Jesus promised him eternal life on the spot: "**Today you will be with Me in Paradise.**" Listen to this amazing truth:

Luke 23:39-43 (NKJV): Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us."
40 But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? 41 And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong." 42 Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." 43 And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, **Today you will be with Me in Paradise.**"

Jesus keeps His promises. He told all who were weary of their sins that they could come to Him and find eternal rest. Here is one such weary, desperate, guilty, hopelessly lost sinner that cries out for mercy to Jesus.

What happens to all who “call upon the Name of the Lord”? They get forgiven, saved, cleansed, and headed to Paradise.

Just as hymn-writer William Cooper once said:

The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day and there may
I, though vile as he, wash all my sins away.

The important question we each need to answer is:

DO YOU HAVE RESERVATIONS IN HEAVEN?

Christ's message to the thief on the cross declares that He has a place in Heaven reserved for all who cry out in repentance and faith to Him.

Analyze Christ's response to this guilty criminal on the very doorstep of death, with no place to turn but to Jesus:

TODAY: Not after purgatory, not after limbo, not after soul sleep—
“Today”

YOU: Yes, you a guilty, convicted, no doubt very bad, man near death—***“Today, you”***

WILL BE: Not maybe, hold on, if you make it and if God doesn't waiver; no Jesus said it would happen. God never changes, what assurance! —***“Today, you will”***

WITH ME: Not soul sleep, but conscious existence. Not purging left over sins, but today with Jesus, immediately upon death, entering life with His Savior! ***“Today you will be with Me!”***

IN PARADISE: Yes, heaven, the presence of God forever, no sin, no sickness, death nor sorrow, endless conscious bliss. ***“Today you will be with Me in Paradise!”***

Jesus keeps His promises. Jesus told all who were weary of their sins that they could come to Him and find eternal rest. And that is what He offers to all this day!

So remember what Jesus said: *He offers forgiveness & He promises everlasting life.*

HAVE YOU MET JESUS?

Forgiveness and eternal life are both the miracles that I have personally experienced. They are also the miracles that most of us in this room have also experienced.

If you are forgiven, then you also have reservations in Heaven.

That is what Jesus offered from the Cross; and what He accomplished when He stepped forth from the Tomb; and what He offers to YOU today.

If you don't know you are forgiven and have reservations in Heaven, Jesus stands here offering both to you. Don't leave without knowing that you are forgiven eternally.

RESPOND TO JESUS TODAY WHILE YOU CAN

Please stand with me this Easter morning on Resurrection Sunday.

Here is a prayer you can pray, a prayer that can express your desire to transfer your trust to Christ alone for your eternal salvation. This prayer can be the link that will connect you to God. And if you pray it in faith, God will receive you.

Dear God,

I know that I am a sinner and there is nothing that I can do to save myself. I confess my complete helplessness to forgive my own sin or to work my way to heaven.

At this moment I trust Christ alone as the One who bore my sin when He died on the cross.

I believe that He did all that ever will be necessary for me to stand in your holy presence.

I thank you that Christ was raised from the dead as a guarantee of my own resurrection.

As best as I can, I now transfer: my trust to Him. I am grateful that He has promised to receive me despite my many sins and failures.

Father, I take you at your word. I thank you that I can face death now that you are my Savior. Thank you for the assurance that you will walk with me though the deep valley.

Thank You for hearing this prayer.

In Jesus' Name. Amen.