

Series: Death and Resurrection

Sermon: Easter Sunday – The Resurrection

Text: Luke 24

Intro

Happy Easter Mercy Church! My name is Spence and I am the lead pastor here at Mercy. We've had an incredible weekend already and today is the best part of all of it. Easter is the single most important day in the Christian calendar year and it's really the meaning behind what we celebrate every Sunday. Jesus is alive and his life promises us life. So we celebrate

Online – Hey we are glad you are here. It's been a hard year. And the message you will hear today is one of gratitude and joy. God did not abandon us. We are still here. You are still here. And because you are here, you can receive and be renewed by the grace of God today that is still here for you in full. One of my prayers for today is renewal. New life for some, renewed life for others. That spring would be a picture of what God is doing in your life.

Coming off of a difficult year I feel like it is such a grace of God to us that we can celebrate Easter in person! And hey I know for many of you this may be your first time back to church or maybe your first time ever so let me just say welcome. Whatever brought you here I am really glad you are here. And we have this saying that we expect God to change a life today. We believe in a real God who is actively involved in the world. **My big prayer for today is renewal. New life for some, renewed life for others.** That spring would be a picture of

what God is doing in your life. Awaken your heart afresh to him. Drawing you close to him and bearing new fruit in your life.

So if you are new to church here's what going to happen - I'm going to teach from the bible for a few minutes. I'm going to show you what God says about why the resurrection of Jesus matters for your life. That's the announcement of what Christians call the gospel. The good news. Really today I'm going to tell you **good news, bad news, and great news.** And I'm going to ask you to make a decision about it.

For several weeks now we've been following Jesus through his final moments on earth. We've talked about Why Jesus had to die

- Last Supper – Bring us into fellowship with God
- Argument about greatest and least – Give us an answer to our own pride
- Garden of gethsemane – To absorb the wrath of God
- Betrayal of Judas & Peter – To take away our shame
- The Cross – To show the abundant grace of God toward sinners

And today we arrive at the Resurrection. Why he had to rise again. The series is called death AND RESURRECTION. Without the resurrection, none of what we've talked about matters. In fact, the apostle Paul says without the resurrection we Christians are FOOLS.

This morning we spend our time in Luke 24. Resurrection day. We are going to go to the empty tomb and then we are going to go to where Jesus announces why his resurrection matters.

And we'll see the good news, bad news, and great news of the resurrection.

SCENE 1 – The Empty Tomb

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came to the tomb, bringing the spices they had prepared. 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb. 3 They went in but did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 While they were perplexed about this,

A few things to note here. The tomb is Jesus' tomb. Jesus was crucified on Friday. They had taken Saturday off to rest because it was the sabbath. And now as soon as they could they are coming to the tomb to perform a common ritual where they use spices to care for the body of the deceased.

And they find the stone rolled away. **There's no-body there. Get it?** And perplexed – like as soon as they were starting to think about what COULD have happened. Like what are the possible rational explanations for there not being a body.

- First – someone broke in and stole the body. An idea that Matthew's gospel tells us was created by the priests who bribed the Roman soldiers to spread as a cover up because they were confused & pretty alarmed by the whole thing.¹ Of course the huge problem is...Roman guards were at the tomb. Guarding it. That's what guards do. Bunch of disciples aren't getting in. They are holed up in hiding. We'd know if they raided the tomb because Rome would have mounted an attack on them.

¹ 28.11-15

- So what else could have happened? Maybe he wasn't dead when we put him in here? But that's preposterous. He died a gruesome death. They even stabbed him in the side to make sure he was dead. These guys were pros at killing people. They didn't guess...is he dead yet?

And I know...some of you think yeah I just can't believe he resurrected. It just feels like a myth – the evidence of their lives after this suggest otherwise. I mean the idea that they all KNOWINGLY lied about it...and then went to their deaths for a lie...seems illogical. Luke, our author, is a doctor. Like a physician. He's a rational, logical guy. He's not going to his death for a lie. All of these guys died for saying Jesus is alive. After the first couple of guys die I'd be like...never mind we made it up. It says all of them saw him. In fact, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15 over 500 people saw him.

And when Paul says that...he's actually quoting a song that the early Christians were already singing about the resurrection. "Christ died for our sins & was buried in the tomb. He rose from the grave & was seen by 500." – Probably better in Greek.

But the fact that they were singing about it shows you the belief that he physically rose from the dead was a commonly held belief among his very first followers.

The late Dr. Thomas Arnold, professor of Modern History at Oxford University, author of the widely acclaimed 3-volume

history of Rome, said, *“The evidence for Jesus's life, death and resurrection has been shown to be satisfactory (according to the standards of any historian). It (holds up) according to the common rules for distinguishing good evidence from bad. Tens of thousands of persons have gone through it piece by piece as carefully as any judge reviewing the most important case. I have myself done this many times over, not to persuade others but to satisfy myself. Throughout my life I have made a career of studying the histories of times and events, examining and weighing the evidence for what was written about each of them, and I know of no other one fact in history which is proved by better and fuller evidence than this one: Jesus Christ died and rose again from the dead.”*²

The question becomes...what are you going to do with this?

suddenly two men stood by them in dazzling clothes. 5 So the women were terrified and bowed down to the ground.

Ok. Just to be clear. These are angels according to Matthew. Not like cupid though. Think more like...warriors clothed in light. Usually when they show up they have to tell the people they appear to...fear not. And if they showed up to you...you'd probably do what these women did. And I want you to hear the question they ask. Because it is the question for us today.

“Why are you looking for the living among the dead?” asked the men. 6 “He is not here, but he has risen!

² *History of Rome*, (3 volumes, 1838–42). See also [here](#) for similar claims from contemporary scientists and history professors. (borrowed from J.D. Greear “Alive in Me” sermon on Matthew 28.1-20).

Why are you looking for the living among the dead? That's a really simple but also deeply profound question. The surface meaning of course is that the answer to their question...what happened to Jesus...is that he has risen! And what in the world would a living person be doing in a tomb? Why are you looking for the living among the dead?

But I want you to hear the angel asking you that same question. Have you noticed how we keep going back to *tombs* to try and find life. I mean can you imagine if these women came back an hour later? The next day? And every day for the next 20 years? Is he here? You'd think they were insane.

And yet that's us. We keep going to things, over and over, that we hope will give us life. But they are tombs that hold nothing but death.

There is a reason things like

- pornography exists and flourishes by exploiting trafficked children. Because people will go to that tomb over and over looking for something that makes them feel alive.
- hate crime & bullying will always be around. The evil rush of overpowering someone different and weaker – it's a tomb people try to find life in.
- Gossip – telling a story about someone's struggle to build yourself up. You kill others. There's no life but

you keep going back to it. Why are you looking for the living among the dead?

you fill in the blank. What is your tomb? Money? Relationships? Work? Alcohol? What do you keep running to...What do you keep escaping to numb reality? You may not have ever realized it but I'm telling you right now...it's a tomb. And the very shrewd lie we believe is that even though all I found was death last time...I'll go back again.

Remember how he spoke to you when he was still in Galilee, 7 saying, 'It is necessary that the Son of Man be betrayed into the hands of sinful men, be crucified, and rise on the third day?'" 8 And they remembered his words. -- Luke 24:1-8

And the angel reminds them of the very message Jesus had preached to them. It is necessary. He HAD to die. We said at the beginning of this series Jesus is the one who said he had to die. Everything that happened in the life and death of Jesus...God was fully in control of. Jesus told them this was going to happen. And that's how it happened. Just like he said.

And that is true to this very moment. God is fully in control of every single miniscule detail that got you to where you are sitting right now. He is in control of the sun shining on us, of the new life on these trees, of the relationships that are overwhelming you right now. He is fully in control and full of grace. That's our God. Fully in control.

And this scene is telling you...God planned for Jesus to die. But God also planned for Jesus to break free from death. To rise again. And that's what we celebrate on Easter. Ok let's go to our second scene. verse 36. The disciples are all at dinner

now. And Jesus shows up. Like appears out of nowhere. They are startled so he tells

36 As they were saying these things, he himself stood in their midst. He said to them, "Peace to you!" 37 But they were startled and terrified and thought they were seeing a ghost. 38 "Why are you troubled?" he asked them. "And why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself! Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have." 40 Having said this, he showed them his hands and feet. 41 But while they still were amazed and in disbelief because of their joy,

Hey that is a great picture of what happens when you become a follower of Christ. You are amazed and in disbelief because of your joy. I told you today is about joy. Renewal. These followers went from mourning their murdered savior to having dinner with him. Jesus coming back to life brought new life to them too. And joy. Man that's what characterized the early church and it's what comes to all believers. JOY. And I want that for you. Fullness of Joy. They are experiencing Psalm 16.11 – "In your presence there is FULLNESS of JOY."

Hanging around Empty Tombs leads to empty lives but walking with the risen Jesus brings you FULLNESS of JOY. I promise you. My life is not MISSING OUT because I chose Jesus. I don't envy the world of sin that God saved me from. I am tempted to it. All the time. And sometimes I still go back to those tombs. Don't look to me for perfection. BUT...I'm telling you...Jesus is better. Fullness of Joy.

he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" 42 So they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate in their presence.

He's not a ghost!

44 He told 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, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled." 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.

Listen church – The resurrected Jesus keeps going back to the bible to teach these disciples. Like, I would think him standing there would be the main point of attention. But no The angel at the tomb said...remember how Jesus talked about the bible? And Jesus on his way to this dinner met a couple guys on the road...disguised himself...and taught them how the whole bible pointed to himself. And here at dinner he's saying...LOOK AT THE BOOK! It's all in there! If you knew my word, then my resurrection would not be a surprise. It would be an expected victory. He's a man of his word! He keeps his promises. And the resurrection is this big stamp of proof that God keeps his promises to you. So his promise that in Christ your sin is removed from you as far as the east is from the west. Resurrection is your guarantee of it.

46 He also said to them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead the third day, 47 and repentance for forgiveness of sins will be proclaimed in his name to all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 And look, I am sending you what

my Father promised. As for you, stay in the city until you are empowered from on high." -- Luke 24:36-49

The meaning of the resurrection – the thing that will be proclaimed – Is repentance for forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus. To all nations.

I want to share with you the good news, bad news, and great news of the gospel that Jesus sums up in "Repentance for forgiveness of sins." And it is summarized in one bible verse. Maybe one you've heard before

6 For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. -- John 3:16

GOOD NEWS – God created you and he loves you

God loves you. Listen to me that is really good news. And you were created to know and love God. That's why you search for life in those empty tombs. It's because you were created to find life, to find contentment and happiness in something outside of yourself. You are created, Genesis 1 says, in the image of God. That's why TRUE Christianity is so compassionate. Why we are so insistent that all people, from the very moment life begins to the moment it ends, its why we are so insistent people are treated with GREAT dignity. It's because we believe people bear God's image. YOU – you are created by God. And he created you experience fullness of life in relationship with him. God loved the world in this way. Where you see God loved the world...man I want you to see a collective aspect to that – He loved all of us...But there is also an individual aspect to that. He loved YOU. He loves you.

And I think a big hurdle some people come across is whether or not they can believe they still qualify for God's love. And the answer from scripture...the answer from the cross and the empty tomb...is yes. You can still have God's love. Did you know Judah was an adulterer? Moses was a murderer? David was a murderer and adulterer? Paul persecuted Christians. Church history is filled with people who did not deserve God's love. But when they encountered it, they were changed by it forever. And he loves you. He knows your name. he knows the hairs on your head. He knows you. He created you. And he loves you.

Bad News – We each sinned, rejecting God

God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him WILL NOT PERISH. See there is a reason Jesus is called the Messiah. The Savior. The Christ. It's because we are in danger of perishing. And the thing that puts us in danger of perishing is our sin. Jesus himself said it. The one reason he did everything he did...was so that **47...repentance for forgiveness of sins will be proclaimed in his name to all the nations,**

You and I, each of us, have sinned against God. When we seek the living among the dead...when we search for LIFE in anything apart from God...that's actually sin against God. Any time we choose our ways over God's ways. That's what the bible calls sin. It literally means "to miss the mark."

And I think anyone who isn't stuck under a rock will admit that some things seem wrong with the world. Both the whole world and your specific world. Not everything is perfect. And

the bible has an explanation for that. Sin. Sin corrupts the world...sickness and death and injustice and betrayal and hurt...none of that is supposed to be in the world. There are just some things we all feel universally should not be. And the Christian message is saying...YOU ARE RIGHT!

That is the effect of this thing we call sin. We often refer to it as brokenness. And we just go even further to say...The same thing that causes people to do terrible things...it lives in me and it lives in you. And at the core we care about self above all. That's WHY Reality TV has existed for so long. Because we know if you put a bunch of people in a tense situation where only one can win...they will cheat, steal, lie, betray...they will destroy one another...all to get a rose.

The bible says ALL have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We missed the mark. All of us. And that sin is what causes us to perish. When Jesus says perish he means spend eternity apart from God. There is no sin in God. God is holy and perfect. And our sin is a rejection of God. And the consequence of sin is death. It's death here on earth and death eternal.

Here on earth – its pursuits that keep coming up empty. It's looking for the living among the dead. And in eternity its separation from God in what scripture calls hell. It's a place of perishing. Of death apart from God.

This is what our sin earns us. Death. Spiritual death on earth and eternal death. But Jesus says he didn't come to preach eternal death. He came so that we might have LIFE. He said so

that they may not perish but have Everlasting life. He said we are to preach about REPENTANCE from SIN that brings FORGIVENESS of SIN. So let me conclude this sermon telling you about the great news

THE GREAT NEWS – CHRIST OFFERS FORGIVENESS OF SINS & FULLNESS OF JOY

The reason Jesus came into the world is so that if you believe in him...you will not perish but have eternal life!
The offer of the gospel is forgiveness of sins. Your sin deserved death. But God loved you too much to leave you in your sin. He made a way. And that way was sending Jesus to die for your sin. And you can RECEIVE it. You can be saved today from your sins. You can be HEALED from your sin. No more guilt, no more shame. Salvation. Freedom. New Life! Whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

The Resurrection gives hope and new purpose to every area of your life.

If Jesus rose from the dead

- **Guilt** doesn't have the last word in our lives.
 - Yes, we stand condemned because of our sin, but we have been forgiven! Our sin debt is cancelled!
 - Romans 8.1!
- The empty tomb means **injustice** doesn't have the last word!
 - Yes, we live in a world where unfair things happen. But God is going to overturn all of

those things and bring us into a world one day where all wrongs are made right for eternity

- The empty tomb means **addictions** don't have the last word
 - In the resurrection God has released a power that really can break every chain & it can renew all that sin has destroyed.
- **Pain** doesn't have the last word
 - We've dealt with real pain this past year. But the resurrection shows you that pain isn't forever. It reveals a day is coming with no more crying and no more tears.
- The resurrection means **Despair** doesn't have the last word Listen, as long as Jesus is alive, there is hope for you.
- No **matter how dark the night may seem** to you right now, because Jesus is alive he can bring the dawn of resurrection into your life.
 - (I love the image given in Matthew of Jesus being resurrected at dawn. They all went to bed in despair, tossing and turning with worry in their beds. **All that changed with** the dawn of resurrection.
- The empty tomb means **Death doesn't have the last word.**
- All those who die in Christ are raised with him to an eternal existence—life forever with him and those that love him.
 - I love this quote by **Billy Graham**: "*One day you will hear that Billy Graham is dead. Don't you*

believe it. I'll be more alive than ever; I will just have changed addresses." (PIC)

So what are you going to do with the Resurrection of Jesus? It is news to believe. The disciples didn't have this all figured out. Not even after seeing Jesus. You see that in Acts. Still figuring it out, but they trusted Jesus and worked through it.

There are those in the resurrection account though who refused to receive the joy of the gospel. Matthew tells us that the Roman Soldiers accepted a bribe so they wouldn't talk about the resurrection. They had knowledge of the risen Jesus, but not knowledge that led to joy.

What will you do? Will you reject him or receive him? Those are your only two options. And today you gotta make a decision.

Some of you are curious...you need to come back for the next 3 weeks as we look at one chapter of the Bible, Hebrews 12, and talk about the Christian life.

But others of you are ready to believe now. I'm going to call you to believe that & then to make that public through BAPTISM. We've got someone planning to be baptized today so I'm going to extend the offer to you to respond. The immediate response is what we see in the New Testament. Baptism is a public profession of faith. Jesus died publicly for your sins. You declare publicly that you believe it.

- *Baptism is the public declaration... first act of obedience.*

- *Others of you may have been saved in the past... a confession of your faith in Jesus.*
- **What if I was baptized as an infant?** I always say this: I respect that—but baptism in the NT is always a confession of your own faith, a declaration that you are not shamed to go all in with Jesus. So, it's time to ratify your parents' decision with a choice to get baptized on your own!
- **We have everything you'll need.**
- "MY FRIEND WON'T WAIT..." YES THEY WILL. IF THEY ARE SO SELFISH AND DEGENERATE THAT THEY WON'T... UBER DRIVERS?
- ****COUNSELORS** getting into place: *not a good time to go to the bathroom!*

Prayer

- Receive Christ
- Strength to stand and step
- **No one should come alone:** do what we did last week and **turn to your neighbor**

Good news – he loves you.

Bad news – you sinned and ran from that love

Great news – You can receive forgiveness from your sin & new life in Christ