



# REVOLUTION THROUGH RESURRECTION

*SERIES: THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE*

Luke 24:1–12

87th Message

John Hanneman

April 5, 2015

Easter Sunday shines brighter than any other day of the year. George Herbert draws attention to this fact so eloquently in his poem *Easter*:

Can there be any day but this,  
Though many sunnes to shine endeavour?  
We count three hundred, but we misse:  
There is but one, and that one ever.<sup>1</sup>

When Jesus was crucified all the hopes and dreams of his followers were dashed to pieces. But the darkness of Good Friday was swallowed up by the power of God in raising Jesus from the dead. Death gave way to life. Weeping lasted for the night but joy came in the morning. And this is what we remember, celebrate, and worship today, a risen Jesus, a Jesus who is alive and who also gives us life.

Resurrection is the core of our Christian faith. Christianity rises or falls on its truth. No other religious leader claims resurrection. Buddha died at 80 in peaceful serenity. Confucius died when he was 72. Mohammed died when he was 62 in the arms of his favorite wife. But only Christianity claims the resurrection of its leader. Without the resurrection there is no Christianity. And if there is no resurrection our “faith is in vain” and “we are of all people most to be pitied” (1 Cor 15:14, 19 ESV). But Christians believe that the resurrection of Jesus really did happen and this changes everything.

For those of you who are guests this morning we have been studying the gospel of Luke and now arrive at chapter 24 which consists of three scenes dealing with the resurrection. We will consider the first scene and then reflect on the meaning of the resurrection for our lives.

Jesus was crucified on the day before the Sabbath. The body had to be taken down and buried before sunset. When Joseph of Arimathea was granted permission from Pilate to bury the body of Jesus he wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in an unused tomb carved out of rock. At the end of chapter 23 we read that some women were paying close attention to the events of the passion:

**And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things. (Luke 23:49)**

**The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment. (Luke 23:55–56)**

These women from Galilee watched the crucifixion and then followed Joseph to see where Jesus was laid. They returned to their lodging and prepared spices to embalm the body of Jesus after the Sabbath was over. On the Sabbath they rested—a day of unknowing, waiting, and uncertainty.

**But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they (the women) went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. (v 24:1)**

After the Sabbath day this group of women woke very early, at the crack of dawn, and went back to the tomb. They took with them the spices they had prepared that would help slow the decomposition of the body. They did not expect a resurrection. We find out in a few verses that these women include “Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and some other women” (Luke 24:10). All four gospels mention Mary Magdalene coming to the tomb. The women from Galilee become followers of Jesus as recorded in chapter 8 of Luke and help provide financially for his ministry. They are a remarkable group of ladies. If I were starting a women’s ministry I would call it “The Women of Galilee.”

**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. (vv 24:2–3)**

A round stone disc was often placed in a channel carved into the rock so it could be rolled to cover tomb entrance. An incline would allow the stone to be pushed downhill into place. We read in Mark that the stone sealing the tomb of Jesus was very large and that the women had wondered how they would gain entrance to the tomb.

Luke states clearly what the women found and what they did not find—what they found was the stone rolled away; what they did not find was the body of Jesus. Matthew says that an earthquake occurred and an angel rolled the stone away. All four gospels refer to the stone being rolled away.

Anyone who contemplates the truth of the resurrection has to deal with the empty tomb. What happened to the body of Jesus? Several theories have been offered in order to discount the resurrection.

The first theory is that the disciples stole the body. Matthew tells us that when the soldiers reported the tomb empty to the authorities they were furious and paid the soldiers to say the disciples stole the body. But we have to remember that the disciples staked their life on the resurrection and died as a result. It is highly unlikely that anyone would make up a story and then die in defense of it.

The second suggestion is that the authorities stole the body to make sure nothing happened to it. However, we read in the book of Acts that the authorities warned the disciples not to preach about Jesus. They were arrested and beaten. If the authorities had taken the body they could have just produced the body. Some suggest that the women went to the wrong tomb. But again, the authorities could have just produced the body. Also Luke makes it clear that the women saw where Jesus was laid.

The third suggestion is the swoon theory; that Jesus didn’t really die, but just fainted. Then when he was put in cool cave, he revived, rolled away the stone, and walked out. This takes a lot of faith to believe. One of the soldiers pierced Jesus side and water and blood came out proving his heart had stopped. John tells us that the linens

Jesus was wrapped in were weighed down with spices to the tune of 75 pounds. Guards were placed at tomb. The stone was very large. And then you have the brutal flogging that often caused death. These suggestions to explain away the empty tomb cannot stand based on logic.

**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 is not here, but has risen. (Luke 24:4-6a)**

When the women saw the empty tomb, they were confounded, stymied. “What is going on?” And then behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. They were lit up like neon lights. Luke will identify these two men as angels later in this chapter. Their appearance echoes the transfiguration. Angels are prominent in the birth narrative with Zechariah, Mary, and the shepherds. Two angels are also present at the ascension in Acts 1.

Now the women are really thrown for a loop. They are afraid and they bow their faces to the ground, an appropriate action for being the presence of heavenly beings. The angels announce to the women that Jesus has risen. He is not dead, but alive. Then the angels offer a challenge.

**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. (Luke 24:6b-7)**

Essentially the angels say, “why are you so startled, don’t you remember? Jesus had told you more than once what was going to happen.” We read these predictions in Luke 9 and 18:

**The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. (Luke 9:22)**

**... he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise. (Luke 18:31-33)**

The third day carries with it an expectation for salvation in the Old Testament. On the third day God provided a ram to be sacrificed in the place of Isaac. God descended on Mt. Sinai on the third day. Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights. Hosea gives an exhortation to return to the Lord and find healing and life on the third day:

**After two days he will revive us;  
on the third day he will raise us up,  
that we may live before him. (Hos 6:2)**

In each of the three resurrection scenes in chapter 24, there is a statement that Jesus had to suffer in order to fulfill the Scripture. It was necessary to be delivered, to be crucified, and to be raised on the third day. This is a major point in Luke’s account.

The fact that Jesus predicted what would happen means that everything that Jesus said is true. We can believe both his words of salvation and forgiveness as well as his words of judgment. We can believe that God doesn’t carry a baseball bat but loves prodigal children and welcomes all who come to him.

The fact that Jesus rose from the dead also means that God accepted his sacrifice for sin. Resurrection is God’s great “yes” to all

Jesus did. Jesus is vindicated. He is not just a guru or good person or holy man. He is who he said he was.

**And they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. (Luke 24:8-9)**

The women remember Jesus’ words and the indication is that they believe Jesus has risen from the dead. They run off to tell the others, a wider group than just the disciples. If you wanted to concoct a story in this culture, you would have never chosen women to be the first to believe or to deliver the message. Women did not have social status and were not regarded as valid witnesses. Jesus broke all the social rules and prejudice and Luke makes this clear.

**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, but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. (Luke 24:10-11)**

What an amazing contrast—the women remember, the disciples regard the report as foolish talk, nonsense. The word for “idle talk” is a medical term referring to the delirious talk of the very sick. Essentially the disciples tell the women that they are crazy. The disciples do not believe the women. Again, if you were to make up a story, you would have not included followers who disbelieve. Peter though has a different reaction.

**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 24:12)**

Peter runs to the tomb. There is no mention of John as we see in John’s gospel. Perhaps Peter is a representative disciple. It takes effort to stoop down and look into the tomb. He sees the clothes by themselves. If the body had been stolen no one would have left the clothes behind and leave the impression of resurrection. Until recently this verse was questionable, perhaps inserted to square with John’s gospel. But its validity has elevated due to more recent discoveries and it agrees with what the two disciples tell Jesus on the road to Emmaus (24:24).

Peter marvels at what has happened. A sense of wonder is often the reaction to God’s miracles. Half of the New Testament occurrences of this verb occur in Luke (13 out of 25). Peter is amazed but nothing is said about belief.

We are struck that Luke’s story is very understated. We will see in the next two studies of Luke that the disciples respond very slowly to the truth of the resurrection. Some of the disciples have to see Jesus and even touch him before they will believe. Perhaps like the disciples coming to faith was a slow process for many of us.

The Jews expected a resurrection but not like this. Resurrection was thought to be for everyone at the end of time, never an individual thing. They expected resurrection to be connected to the restoration of Israel. When Jesus entered into Jerusalem the disciples expected the kingdom of God would come, but that it would be an earthly kingdom.

Jesus was killed because he was viewed as a revolutionary, an insurrectionist. There were many insurrectionists in Jesus’ day and all of them met a violent death. There is no story of any being resurrected. When the leader died the movement died as well. Sometimes the followers regrouped around another prophetic figure.

Jesus was a revolutionary, but not in the sense we normally think. He didn’t rely on the usual tactics of power and force to bring about

change. He didn't seek to overthrow the government, stage protests, or work the politicians as we normally see in those who want to change the system. Rome was still in charge and the disciples were still persecuted. And yet, Jesus changed the world through his death and resurrection. The resurrection is the turning point of history. Resurrection transformed the lives of the early believers and fueled the early church. By simply proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus the early church spread like wildfire. And the resurrection continues to transform people's lives today, 2000 years later. What changes with the resurrection? What does the resurrection mean? Let me remind you of three things.

### The Reign of Death is Over

When Jesus appears to his disciples they do not recognize him. Jesus is not resuscitated or reincarnated. Rather he has a transformed body, a body that can enter rooms through locked doors and pass through sealed tombs while at the same time consume food. Jesus is the first born of the new creation, meaning he has defeated the enemy of death.

As I grow older this truth is very comforting. My mind may think I am 25, but my body is 40 years older. The aches and pains increase and I can't do anything to slow the process. No matter how hard I try my body is not going to get better and I realize that this life will not last forever. But resurrection tells me that death is not the end.

Even though we face death of our mortal body, it no longer has power over us. We no longer have to fear death because the tomb cannot hold us. We will be resurrected to a new creation. Jesus said:

**I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die (John 11:25–26).**

And so we proclaim with Paul:

**Death is swallowed up in victory.  
O death, where is your victory?  
O death, where is your sting? (1 Cor 15:54–55)**

The words of St. John Chrysostom are proclaimed in every Orthodox Church on Easter Sunday:

“Let none fear death, for the death of the Savior has set us free.  
Christ is risen and the demons have fallen.  
Christ is risen and the angels rejoice.”<sup>2</sup>

### The Power of Sin is Broken

Jesus died for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus was raised to free us from sin, to live as we were intended. When we believe in Christ we die with him and are raised to walk in newness of life. Our old self is crucified with Christ. Sin no longer has the power over us that it once had. No longer are we slaves to sin, to our self-oriented life, to our addictions and compulsions. We are totally different people, free to love and be other-centered, to promote justice even at the risk of being disadvantaged. We are a new creation in Christ, not a patched up version of the old person. We may have the same body, but inside we are totally different, a new construction not a remodel or makeover.

### The Power of God Gives Life Now

This is the story of the cross and the resurrection—that life can come out of death. When the angels tell the women that Jesus is risen it is important to realize that “risen” is a passive verb. Jesus

didn't rise. Rather God raised him from the dead. And the power of God that raised Jesus is the power at work in us bringing new life.

We might think of Easter as a feel-good holiday. And we do feel great joy on this day. But it is also a feel-real holiday. The reality is that life is hard and filled with sorrow and grief. You all know that. Resurrection doesn't mean an end to hardship but rather life in the midst of hardship.

The disciples experienced the dismantling of their hopes. The women spent a day waiting and wondering what would happen. But God raised Jesus and turned darkness into light, death into life.

Most of us have encountered times in our life of extreme disappointment and despair. Perhaps you felt as if part of you had died. A loss, a death, an illness, a wound inflicted by another, an emotional trauma. All of these things feel like death. Perhaps you thought that your heart was broken and could never be mended again. But then you experienced the power of God lifting you up out of a dark place, rolling the stone away, releasing you from the tomb. That is power of God at work—raising us from the dead and transforming our hearts despite the struggles and heartaches. God raises us up to life. To believe in Christ is not to just follow his example but to believe that the power that raised Jesus from the dead is alive in us.

The resurrection of Christ is no mere pledge of a future resurrection. It is a principle of resurrection now going on within us, and in which we must act, moment by moment.<sup>3</sup>

1. George Herbert, *The Complete English Poems* (Penguin Books, London, 1991), 37

2. Geoffrey Tristram, “The Power of God”, cited March 2015 online: <http://ssje.org/ssje/2013/03/31/easter-vigil-br-geoffrey-tristram/>

3. Richard Meux Benson, cited March 2015 online: <http://ssje.org/ssje/2015/02/26/praying-sunday-of-the-resurrection/>

