

## Resurrection Morning

Luke

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**Bible Text:** Luke 24:1-12

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If you would please join with me in turning to the Gospel of Luke 24. On September 18, 2011 we began our study of the Gospel of Luke so we have walked with Jesus from Luke's account from the time of his birth all the way to his crucifixion on these Sundays for over 3 years and when we began on September 18, 2011 there was no way that I had it planned that on Easter Sunday, April 5, 2015 we would arrive at the account of the resurrection. It's just God's good Providence that lands us here on this Sunday and so this morning we read beginning in verse 1 down to verse 12 Luke's account of the resurrection of Jesus. Verse 1,

1 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.

Let's go to our God together in prayer this morning.

*Lord, we have asked your blessing now upon the preaching of your word and we ask again for we are indeed dependent upon you for everything, literally for everything and, Lord, that includes our understanding of your word. If you do not teach us, we will not learn. If you do not grant us understanding, we will not understand. If you do not grant repentance in faith, then no one will believe. And so we look to you and we ask for an*

*outpouring of your mercy and your grace upon this audience, upon this church, upon this gathering, to the end, Lord, that you would glorify yourself and that men would taste of your goodness in a saving way and that your church would rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory as we think about our Savior this morning. We ask for these things in Jesus' name. Amen.*

When I look at Luke's account of the resurrection of Jesus, there are 4 things that scream out at me, stand out to me in a way that I cannot ignore or escape and as we walk through these 12 verses this morning and as we walk through the entire chapter in the next few Sundays, I want you to keep your eyes on the lookout for these 4 things. I want you to see what I'm going to point out here. I want you to see it and I want you to think about it. Four things that will stand out this morning and throughout the entire chapter. The first thing I want you to recognize with me in these verses is that none of the disciples expected the resurrection of Jesus, not a single one. None of the disciples expected the resurrection of Jesus. Now, that's important because that says to me that the idea that they would make up a resurrection story or that they would fake a resurrection is contrary to every account we have of their thought process, of their words, of their attitudes, of their mindset directly following the death of Jesus and even directly following the resurrection of Jesus. We don't find a group of people who so want to believe in a resurrection that they would create one, that maybe even they would take a set of facts like an empty tomb and then somehow exaggerate it into a resurrection story. That's not what we have here at all: we have people who did not expect it and, in fact, when they first met with it they didn't believe it.

The second thing I want you to notice: our God's work in them, talking about the disciples of Jesus, those who truly believed in Jesus in this account, our Lord's work in them and his commitment to them is greater than their own faith or understanding. God does not cast them away due to their initial lack of faith or understanding when it comes to the resurrection. They didn't understand. They didn't initially believe but our God did not cast them away, instead what does he do? He takes the initiative to make sure that they get the resurrection, to make sure that they understand what has happened, to make sure that they believe in what has happened. Our God is taking the initiative throughout this entire account. He's taking the initiative to make sure that his people believe in the resurrection. That tells me that his work in them and his commitment to them is not explained by them but by him. Salvation is the Lord's work. He is the author and the finisher of our faith.

So they don't expect it, God makes sure they're going to get it. The third thing I want you to notice with me: he, God, takes pains to make sure that their faith in the resurrection is tied to the Old Testament Scriptures and to the words of his Son. Throughout this entire account, God is taking great pains to connect their faith in the resurrection with his words. They are going to meet with some astounding experiences but every time they meet with these experiences, what does God do? He ties their faith not to the experiences but to his words.

The fourth thing I want you to notice: the disciples must believe in the resurrection. If they are going to follow Jesus, they must know and believe that he is not dead but he is alive. He has been raised from the dead bodily. Even this morning as we celebrate the resurrection, I want to remind you: we're not celebrating some concept. We're not celebrating some religious idea. The message of Easter is not new beginnings. We're celebrating what is historical fact: Jesus of Nazareth died and 3 days after they placed him in a tomb, he came out of that tomb alive physically, bodily. It is a fact and God wanted his people to know that and, in fact, if they were going to be followers of Jesus, they had to know it and they had to believe it, that Jesus was raised from the dead bodily never to die again.

So they don't get it. God makes sure that they are going to get it. God takes the initiative. He ties their faith in the resurrection to his word and they must get it. They must believe it. Now, those 4 observations that we're going to see throughout the chapter have lasting meaning for every believer in this place. It reminds us that God's work in us is not explained by us but by him. God's work in us is greater and more certain than our expectations, than our faith, than our understanding, than our maturity. Aren't you grateful that God doesn't cast you away when your faith is weak? When your understanding is limited? When your expectations are far too low based on God's promises? Aren't you glad that he doesn't cast you away? That he doesn't let go of you, believer, but his work in you is certain? And what he has begun he is doing and he will indeed finish? Aren't you grateful for that this morning? That God is doing more in our case than we will ever understand. He has done more than we will ever understand. He is doing more than we will ever understand.

It also reminds us in this place today that where God wants our faith stationed and anchored is in his word. I believe in the resurrection because I believe the Bible. He wants our faith stationed and anchored in his word and even where we meet with experiences, I know as Butch described earlier that the Lord has transformed my life. At 17 years of age I came to know Jesus as my Lord and Savior. He has transformed my life but my faith is not tied to my experiences, my faith is tied to the word of God. That's where he wants my faith anchored.

It's what God wants and it also reminds us in this place today that the resurrection of Jesus is not a throwaway item when it comes to the Christian faith. It is central. It is essential. It is nonnegotiable. If you don't believe that Jesus was raised from the dead bodily, you are not a Christian. You cannot be a Christ follower and deny the bodily resurrection of Christ. Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we know he was who he said he was. Because he was raised from the dead, we know that he accomplished what he said he came to accomplish. Because he lives, all the sins of all those who trust in him have been completely forgiven. If Christ was not raised from the dead, we are still in our sins. Because Jesus was raised from the dead bodily, we know that we're going to live one day with him. We are alive now spiritually but we're going to live one day with him physically.

I want to remind us that our hope as believers is not just eternal life in the present but we know from God's word that one day we're going to have a new body that matches the new us. We, too, will experience a physical resurrection and we're going to live body and soul with our Savior in a new heavens and a new earth forever and ever and ever. That's the hope of the Christian. Because he lives, our King not only rules in the present from the heavens but he will rule forever and we live in expectation of his return. Because Jesus lives, there is no sting in death for all those who are in Jesus. We go to sleep in death, we awake in the presence of the Lord. Because Jesus lives, we know the power for sanctification. The same power that raised him from the grave is the power at work in our lives now transforming us from glory to glory into the image of Christ.

No, this isn't a throwaway doctrine. This is at the heart of the Christian faith. 1 Corinthians 15:14 says if Christ has not been raised then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. I mean, if Jesus wasn't raised from the dead, dismissed, let's go home. No need for a sermon. No need for you to sit here. 1 Corinthians 15:17, "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile," empty, "and you are still in your sins." If Christ was not raised from the dead, every person in this room is still unforgiven so this is the most important stuff we could ever consider on this Sunday.

This morning what we witness in these 12 verses is how God begins to establish the faith of his people in the resurrection of Jesus. What we have is not, strictly speaking, an account of the resurrection. You'll notice by the time they discover the resurrection, it has already happened, right? The tomb is empty. Jesus is not there so this is not, strictly speaking, an account of the resurrection. Luke doesn't describe that. None of the Gospel writers describe the actual resurrection of Jesus. What he is describing is the aftermath of it as the people of God come in contact with the knowledge of it and how they initially respond to their knowledge of the resurrection. That's what we have here, their initial response to the resurrection of Jesus. And this morning I want to point out in these 12 verses 6 responses on the part of the disciples. Six responses to the death and then to the resurrection of Jesus.

The first thing we see, verse 1: devotion. Devotion. Verse 1, "But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared." Now, the words "they" in that verse refer back to chapter 23, verses 55 and 56, "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." Next verse, "But on the first day of the week," that's Sunday, "at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they," those women, "had prepared." These women had witnessed Joseph of Arimathea taking care of the body of Jesus, the burial of Jesus. They had already determined, you will remember, they were going to return after the Sabbath and do a better job of preparing his body, anointing his body, and so what do they do? They returned to the tomb. When do they do it? Early Sunday morning at dawn, at daybreak, the earliest part of the day. Why were they coming? To prepare his body. They have no expectation of a resurrection but what motivates them is love. I want to say this and I want you to remember it as we look at all these verses: these true disciples, even though their faith was weak and their

understanding was off, you still see the marks of genuine faith. You still see the marks of genuine salvation. They loved Jesus. That's what motivates them on this early Sunday morning. They're going back to prepare his body. Why? They love him. They are devoted to him even when their hopes have been crushed. They are devoted to him even as they are overwhelmed with grief.

So their faith is weak, their understanding is under-informed but they love Jesus. We see devotion. These women are devoted to the Savior. Second response we see to the death and then to the resurrection of Jesus, second response: discovery. Verse 2 and verse 3, "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." So they make their way to the tomb early Sunday morning and they discover something. They find something and there is something they don't find. What do they find? The stone rolled away. They didn't know, by the way, that a Roman guard had been stationed at the tomb. That happened on the Sabbath day when they were resting. They had no knowledge of that, in fact, the women were wondering how they were going to get the stone out of the way to prepare the body of Jesus. They arrive at the tomb and the stone is rolled away. We know from Matthew's account that there was an earthquake and an angel rolled the stone away.

So they're not aware of this, they just find the stone rolled away and then they find, verse 3 going in, that the body of Jesus is not there. The body of Jesus is gone which leads to the third response we see as they initially encounter the knowledge of the resurrection, verse 4: we see perplexity. Devotion, verse 1, they come to love Jesus by preparing his body. Discovery, the tomb, the stone is rolled away, the body is not there. Perplexity, verse 4, "While they were perplexed about this," perplexed about this. Luke is telling us their emotional and mental reaction to what they found, they are perplexed. That is, they were at a loss. They are confused. They don't know what to make of this. They don't have an explanation for this. This word translated "perplexed" is used in John 13, a form of the word is used in John 13 when Jesus is telling his disciples in the upper room that one of them is going to betray him. They were perplexed about that; they didn't understand it. A form of this word is used in the book of Acts when Festus presents Paul's case to Agrippa and he admits he doesn't know what to do with the charges brought against Paul. He is perplexed about it. A form of the word is used in the book of Galatians when Paul says to the Galatians in Galatians 4:20 that he is perplexed about them.

So far from expecting a resurrection, when they first meet with the evidence of the resurrection, they don't make any connection at all. They don't see a stone rolled away and an empty tomb and think resurrection. No, they see a stone rolled away and an empty tomb and, frankly, what they're thinking is someone has stolen his body. They were confused. They were perplexed. They were befuddled. They don't know what to do with this. Utterly baffled by what they find which leads to the fourth and we see in verses 4 through 9 and that is: clarity. Devotion, discovery, perplexity and now clarity. Verse 4, "While they were perplexed about this, behold," look, "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. 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.' And they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest."

There are several things I want to say about this clarity. First of all, this is gracious clarity. God is having pity upon them, isn't he? God is doing this. This is God's message to them. I want you to remember what angels are: they are messengers, holy angels, messengers of the living God. So they didn't come on their own initiative; they didn't come in some independent fashion. These are not 2 angels who say, "Hey, let's just head over there and see what's going on." No, these angels are sent by God so they are his messengers, they are his mouthpieces, they are giving his message and God is giving them a clarifying word about what they are witnessing. He doesn't owe this to them, this is God loving them. This is God instructing them. This is God guiding them. This is God establishing their faith. This is God taking the initiative to make sure that his people get what they are witnessing.

This is gracious. We did not deserve Jesus. We didn't deserve his coming. We didn't deserve his living. We didn't deserve his dying. And we didn't deserve an explanation of his resurrection. Yet God gives and gives and gives and gives. He is gracious and that includes the graciousness to guide his weak people into an understanding of what he's done for them. That's what he's doing. "Let me show you and tell you what I have done for you." This is gracious clarity.

This is striking clarity. I mean, God does this in a memorable, striking fashion by sending these 2 angels because their dazzling appearance is noted right in verse 4, "stood by them in dazzling apparel." So God gives them a visual aid to help them understand where this information is coming from. These angels have a human form and appearance yet their dazzling appearance also says these are not mere men. So moving is this that the women have a sense of fear. They are frightened, verse 5, and they bow their faces to the ground. So there is this heavy, thick sense of the presence of God. God is making sure that this is memorable and it's striking, driving this message home.

Gracious clarity, striking clarity, notice it's also a quizzical clarity. God leads his people into, these women, into this knowledge through a question, a memorable question. The angel says to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" I love that. It's a mild rebuke, isn't it? It almost has a tinge of humor in it. "Didn't you hear Jesus? Didn't you know he was going to be raised from the dead? What are you doing in a graveyard? You're in the wrong place, aren't you, if you want to find the living Savior? He's alive. Why are you seeking the living among the dead?"

God wants to be sure at the same time through these angels, he wants to be sure his people won't miss it so you have emphatic clarity because now he just states it. Verse 6, "He is not here, but has risen." God is so kind through these angels. He doesn't leave any room for misunderstanding. He puts it in a memorable way but then he puts it in an unmistakable, simple, straightforward statement: "He is not here. He has risen. He is alive."

But now notice something and this is what I mentioned earlier about tying their faith to his word. The Old Testament Scriptures, we'll see that later in the chapter, but here the words of his Son, verse 6, "Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered," that takes us back to the Old Testament Scriptures. We read it in Isaiah 53 this morning. "Must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." This is refreshing clarity as God through these angels refreshes their memories. He wants to make sure their faith is tied to the words of Christ and to the words of the Old Testament Scriptures.

In Luke 9 we read what Jesus had told them earlier, Luke 9:18, it says, "Now it happened that as he was praying alone, the disciples were with him. And he asked them, 'Who do the crowds say that I am?' And they answered, 'John the Baptist. But others say, Elijah, and others, that one of the prophets of old has risen.' Then he said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' And Peter answered, 'The Christ of God.' And he strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one, saying, '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.'" I mean, he told them in unmistakable terms but they had forgotten. He told him on more than one occasion but they didn't remember and so here they are, though they are devoted to him, when they discover this empty tomb and the absence of the body of Jesus, they are perplexed instead of believing and so God graciously gives them this clarifying word in a memorable, striking, quizzical but emphatic fashion, "He is not here. He is risen. Don't you remember?" And so he refreshes their memories. "Don't you remember what Jesus told you? When you were in Galilee, you followed him all the way from Galilee, ladies, don't you remember what he told you?"

So we see devotion, talking now about responses, right, to the initial encounter with the knowledge of the resurrection. We see devotion, we see discovery, we see perplexity, we see clarity but now we see something else that's very sad: we see unbelief. You see, they receive, these ladies received this clarifying word from God, verse 8, "And they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest." Not just the 11 but to all the gathered disciples, all those followers of Christ beyond just the apostles. "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." This is amazing, isn't it? It's amazing that, first of all, the first people who had knowledge of the resurrection given by God in this fashion were women. What an honoring, exalting thing this was that women would receive this first testimony, that they would be the first ones to be able to report the resurrection.

Then they go and they report the resurrection to these men who were chosen by Jesus to be the foundation for the church moving forward. These are the leaders of the Lord's church. These are men who have been specially prepared by him to lead his church into the future and yet when they meet with this report of the resurrection, they don't believe. They don't believe. It reminds us, again, of our weakness, of the fact that salvation is not our work, it's God's work, that what God has done in our case is greater than anything that could be explained by us. Salvation is mercy. It is grace. Their weakness is a

testimony to that. In fact, we're told in verse 11 what their attitude was, "but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them." An idle tale, that is, these ladies have been under a great stress, they have been very sad, it must be their imagination, it must be exaggeration. You know, I don't know what they were thinking exactly. I don't know how they explained this but in some way, they took this to be made up like an idle tale and they flat out don't believe it. They did not believe them. Unbelief.

But the 12th verse tells us something more encouraging: there is someone who in hearing the report of the empty tomb, something in these words that drives him to a hope. Verse 12, "But Peter rose and ran to the tomb," John's account tells us that John the apostle was with him as well, "ran to the tomb, stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened." John tells us that as soon as he walked into the tomb and saw what he saw, he followed Peter in, he believed. John believed. Peter is marveling. I don't know at what point he comes to full grips with what he has seen but at this point he's pondering, at least, what he has witnessed. You talk about evidence of a genuine faith even where there is enormous weakness. Talk about evidence of a genuine love for Jesus even where there is a weak understanding. Peter is exhibit A. Here is a man who has denied Jesus 3 times. Here is a man who when he hears the news of an empty tomb cannot stay in his place, he rises and he runs. He runs to the tomb. "Why do you run to the tomb, Peter?" Well, because, you see, he does love the Lord Jesus. He finds the grave clothes and he returns amazed by what he has seen.

What do we see in our verses? We see an Almighty and altogether gracious God tenderly leading his people into an understanding that the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, is not dead but has been raised just like he promised. His work is greater than these weak little ones that he has saved. They don't understand. They don't get it. They don't remember. They don't believe. But he has granted them a genuine faith though it's not a perfected faith and what he has begun he will complete and here he is a tender Father, leading his people into an understanding of what he has done to save them. They will get it. He's going to make sure they get it. They must get it. And this is just the beginning of them getting it. Beginning in verse 13, the Lord Jesus will take the initiative to make sure they get it too. One of the most astounding passages we'll ever read as Jesus teaches about himself from the Old Testament Scriptures on the road to Emmaus.

So this is what I ask you this morning: have you gotten it? Do you believe that Jesus is not dead but alive? Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God? Do you believe that he came from heaven to earth? The eternal Son of God took to himself a sinless human nature, born of a virgin, lived a sinless life on this planet, on this sin-sick planet, lived a sinless life and then died on the cross as a substitute for sinners like us? Do you believe that God poured out his wrath upon his own Son so that everyone for whom Christ suffered, everyone who trusts in Christ as Savior is and will be fully forgiven? So that there's no condemnation for us as we sang about this morning? Do you believe that and do you believe that 3 days after they placed him in a tomb on an early Sunday morning when these women came to take care of his body they found an empty tomb and the explanation for the empty tomb is not a dream, not a made up story, not a fake but a



resurrection that Jesus is alive? And that, in fact, he made many appearances over 40 days and then he ascended back into heaven and the same Jesus who ascended into heaven is coming again? Do you believe that? And can I say something to you? Though your faith in Christ may be weak, may lack understanding in some places, every truly saved person in this place, you not only believe in a resurrected Jesus, you love him and the resurrection is not something that you celebrate once a year. The resurrected Christ has transformed your life. You see, you don't just know about him, you know him. You have come to know him by faith and now you love him and you have a relationship with him. You have fellowship with God through faith in Christ, through the person of Christ, and the resurrection means that your life has been transformed from the day you met Jesus for the rest of your life. You live for him every day. You rejoice in his life every day. You rest in the finished work of his death and resurrection every day.

Is that your story? I have great compassion for the folks who come to church twice a year: Easter and Christmas. I do. Do you know why? That's the home I grew up in. That's the home I grew up in until I was 15 years old, for us, it was twice a year, Easter and Christmas, and when my parents were having trouble. "Time to get in church. We want to make sure we get the kids in church." That's the home I grew up in so I don't condemn you if that's you sitting here this morning. I'm so glad you're here but at 16, I went from knowing about Jesus to placing my faith in Jesus as the Lord who saves and he saved me. He forgave my sins. He transformed my heart from someone who had no real interest in him, a passing interest, a passing curiosity, to someone who now loves Christ and I'm devoted to him. My faith is still weak at times. I still lack understanding in so many places but what I know as a reality is a love for the Son of God that God has produced in my heart that does not let me go and no longer is Jesus for me a twice a year interest or just when I'm having trouble but he is my life. And it's only when you can say that to live is Christ that you'll be able to say that death is, what church? Gain. Death is gain but only when you can say, "Jesus is my life." And I invite you this morning to make Jesus your life. He really is alive. You really can know him by God's grace. The Gospel commands, the Gospel commands men everywhere to repent, that is to turn from life as you've known it, living in your sin, in your alienation, in estrangement from God, you repent, you turn from that life and you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. And the Bible gives us this promise" that whoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ is saved.

Would you this morning believe? Would you call out to the Son of God, the living Son of God and ask Jesus to save you? What a Savior he is. Isn't that true, church? What a Savior he is.

Let's pray.

*Our Father in heaven, we thank you for our Savior, your Son. We thank you for the life that we have in him. We thank you for the forgiveness of all of our sins. We thank you that Jesus died so that we wouldn't and that in him we never die in the sense of eternal destruction. We have been made alive by you and we live forever and we looked forward to the day when body and soul will live with our Savior forever in a new heavens and a*

*new earth. Until then, Lord, we rejoice in the life that we have in him right now and the knowledge and the fellowship we have with you.*

*O Lord, I pray for the poor sinners in this place who have yet to be reconciled to you, who are still in their sins, who have yet to trust in your Son. May today be the day when you have mercy upon them and they move from empty religion into a relationship with Jesus. Grant them, Lord, we ask repentance and faith that they would turn from a life of sin to trust in your Son this day, the living and resurrected Son of God. Lord, we love you. We thank you for your love to us in Jesus. It's in his name we pray. Amen.*