

Jesus Wins

Luke 24:1-12; John 11:25-27

Central Idea: The resurrection of Jesus sealed the victory of God on the cross and brings power to live out that victory!

Introduction

Just two days ago, we observed the death of our Lord on Good Friday. I said then that I wanted us to slow down, to not push the horror of the cross away in favor of thinking of the third day. They buried Jesus in the tomb of a rich man, and there his body lay.

Saturday was a day of fear for the disciples, who locked themselves in the Upper Room for fear of being the next to be crucified.

At the request of the Jewish leadership, Pilate placed at least one Roman guard at the tomb of Jesus so that no one could steal the body through the special Sabbath and Passover festivities. That is the day between faith and doubt. Friday's reality brought a sense of death and destruction to the disciples' faith in Jesus. They were questioning it all on Saturday. Was their faith misplaced? And the doubt began to creep in.

Text – Luke 24:1-12

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.

- I. Through Jesus' Resurrection, death has lost its power.
 - A. We have a living Lord as our example.
 - i. For those whose faith had been crushed by the events of Friday, the Hope of their faith had suffered and died upon that cross. Every single one of us struggles with doubt from time to time.

- ii. There's something final about seeing Jesus brutalized and murdered. They were there. It is real, as real as their own existence. These disciples had been destroyed in that day.
- iii. And so we find them on this Sunday morning afraid of the Roman empire, afraid of the loss of their friend, and afraid of the loss of the one they thought was going to save Israel, the Messiah.
- iv. People don't just come back from the dead. A lifetime of seeing others pass will teach any human being that fact. It's impossible, so impossible that when Jesus told Martha that Lazarus would live again, she understood Him to mean in the end of time.
- v. But on that day, that third day, there was a different story to be written. You see, Jesus died on a cross, like any other religious leader. His body was placed in a tomb, like any other religious leader.
- vi. Saturday, his body was still in that tomb. So many religions make a memorial out of the final resting places of their great teachers and founders.
- vii. There was a guard at the tomb and the stone would take several men to move out of the way. Jesus' body did not go anywhere on Friday or Saturday.
- viii. But then something impossible happened, and there were eye witnesses in the Roman soldiers at the tomb. The stone was rolled away and when you look inside, there is no body!
- ix. This isn't magic. This isn't legend. That is the beautiful thing about Christianity. Unlike some mystical religion, Christianity is based on historical accounts and facts. It's not some spiritual misty possibility that takes an acid trip to realize. You can see the historical accounts! You're carrying them in that book in your hand!
- x. What separates Christianity from other religions is that we can't take you to a tomb where Jesus' body lay and decayed into dust. Our Founder's body is not there. Jesus is not in the tomb. He's at the right hand of God, alive and well!
- xi. His resurrection brings that hope full into a powerful and active faith! Despite the reality of death, Jesus overcame death! He did the impossible, and we worship a risen Lord, not a dead founder!
- xii. **Application:** Death is dangerous to us, something that some people spend their entire lives trying to get out of. No one escapes death, except for Jesus, and everyone who trusts in Him! And we are in that group as Christians! Our Lord is not dead. He died, but He's not dead! He tasted death for all of us, and took on our battle, so we are free!

B. We don't have to fear death.

- i. Because Jesus lives, we will also live. Why are we so surprised as the women at the tomb were? Jesus promised that He would rise from the dead.
- ii. The angels specifically mention that Jesus told them He would be handed over into the hands of sinners and die and rise on the third day. You can see the angels reminding them of this in verse seven.
- iii. Now if you go to Matthew 20:18-19, you can see Jesus speaking about this very thing and prophesying it beforehand! Jesus told them exactly what happened, and they didn't really believe.
- iv. How many times in our lives has God told us and we have not trusted in His word, even though He has never, ever let us down! Why are we so surprised when God calls His shots and then executes them perfectly?
- v. Resurrection is more than just a shot in the arm for the believer. Resurrection is proof that Jesus beat death, not cheated death, but beat it. Through resurrection, a supernatural power must be exerted to change what has become the natural order of things in a cursed world.
- vi. You see, it's appointed to a person once to die, and then the judgment. This is clear even from observing other people's lives. But Jesus' resurrection changed everything!
- vii. No longer does death hold a grip over us. Now we are free from death. I think it's important as I make such bold claims up here to explain what I mean by death.
- viii. Death in the Bible, I would argue, has two phases. There is the phase we are all too commonly familiar with, that of physical death, where the heart stops pumping and the brain stops broadcasting waves. The animation of our bodies stops. This is physical death.
- ix. But the more important, and I believe primary meaning, of death in the Bible is not the physical death. That is more a result of the already spiritual death in those who are separated from God.
- x. **Illustration:** In Genesis 2:17, God tells Adam that the day in which he eats of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, he will die. It is a warning to not choose that tree, but Adam and Eve choose it anyway. When they eat of the fruit, they don't physically die, but there is an automatic reaction to the fruit, and that is a feeling of separation from God. The death God was referring to was first spiritual separation, and then they would eventually physically die without His presence and guidance in their lives.
- xi. **Application:** By dying on the cross, Jesus made it possible for us to regain our connection to God so that we were not spiritually dead, separated from Him. But it is at the empty tomb that Jesus shows us the effects of being

spiritually alive. It is a life that transcends natural death. It is not that our bodies don't give way, but that when our heart stops, our eternity begins.

II. Through Jesus' Resurrection, all believers will live to the full.

A. The power of the resurrection gives us hope for life.

- i. When we look at John 11:25-27, this delineation between spiritual and physical death is more than helpful. Jesus says that those who believe in Him will live even though they die. He speaks first about physical death.
- ii. The second sentence is that those who believe in Him will never die, and this refers to spiritual death. So unless Jesus returns to take us home, and we are the last generation to live before His coming, we will experience physical death, but not spiritual death!
- iii. This is the power of the resurrection, that physical death is overcome because Jesus paid our price. He made us innocent like Him in His death, and so when we die physically, we can be part of the resurrection too.
- iv. This hope that we will not die and be lost or separated from God forever gives us a great hope, and we can put our trust in the one who rescued us from death, in Jesus.
- v. Think about the power we can wield if we are not afraid of physical death, and will never experience spiritual death! We could take this world for Christ! We would not be afraid of anything!
- vi. This knowledge and hope in the resurrection teaches us that this life is more about growing and spreading the gospel than trying to make a name for ourselves, or hoard our wealth, or any of those things.
- vii. **Application:** Rather than investing in ourselves to try and cheat death, we can focus on those who are going to experience both physical and spiritual death. There is a mission for each of us, and we must get to bringing the life of Christ into this dead world.

B. The power of the resurrection is still at work in us.

- i. Paul demonstrates the power of living with the hope of the resurrection in the letter to the Philippians. In Philippians 3:7-11, he tells us that his goal is to live for Christ, to suffer with Him so that he can gain the resurrection.
- ii. We have talked about how we suffer, not to the extent that Jesus suffered, but in the same vein. We suffer persecution, trials, afflictions, but we also see the same reward, resurrection and eternal life with God.
- iii. But the resurrection isn't about a past historical event or a future reward and hope. It has the implications for how we live right now. Jesus provides eternal life, but He also provides an abundant life here and now.
- iv. That same power that raised Jesus from the dead is a supernatural power, a power that defies the natural order of this fallen world. The curse and the

Fall did not affect the world just in salvation of our souls, but also in the sicknesses, the toiling and trials, the struggle of life.

- v. That same power that conquered the grave is the power of the Holy Spirit to see not only salvation, but divine healing, miracles and the like. We can see God do extraordinary things today, not just in the past.
- vi. The question is if we are willing to be like Paul, to follow so hard after God and seek Him so diligently that we will see that power in our lives and in our church and in our community.
- vii. The greatest miracle God has ever done is the miracle of quickening my dead spirit to see His glory and grace, and making me alive in Christ and dead to sin.
- viii. **Application:** But beyond this miracle are the many works that God does through the power of His Spirit and through the power that is beyond the laws of our world. I want to see the power of the resurrection like Paul did! But it takes a commitment to seek Christ wholly and completely.

Conclusion

Jesus rose from the dead, and when we acknowledge that historical event, we acknowledge that God can use that same supernatural power to do amazing and impossible things in our own lives. So what can God's resurrection power do for you and in your life? Jesus' resurrection is not merely a doctrinal belief. It is the foundation for every great act that God is doing in your life. His power is beyond this creation and this world. And we can see that power today if we seek Him in our deepest need!

Action Points

- Our faith is not grounded in mystical experiences or esoteric knowledge or secret insights that no one can prove. Instead, the Christian faith stands on the facts of historical accounts. It's as real as the world around us!
- Our hope in the resurrection starts with Jesus, who showed us how it's done. The resurrection reverses physical death because we are not spiritually dead! The New Testament church actually called death sleeping because it was simply a door into heaven.
- You can't scare a Christian with death, because death has lost its sting. Our destiny is not to lay in the ground but to walk the golden streets of heaven with God!
- How would you live differently if you knew that death was not final? For those who know Christ, that is reality, not a dream.