

Passion Week: Easter Sunday – *The King Secures Victory*
Luke 24:1-12

Introduction: We hear the word “game-changer” thrown around today, from car commercials to certain athletes: *this is the game changer that will revolutionize the industry*. Really? To truly be a game-changer, something has to fundamentally change the way people live or think. The **printing press** was developed by Gutenberg in 1440, and by 1600 more than 200 million books had been printed. The **light bulb** brought the ability to illuminate houses without burning candles in 1879-1880, which saved numerous house fires around Christmas (lit candles in Christmas trees!). On December 17, 1903 the Wright brothers successfully flew an airplane, changing travel forever and shrinking the globe. In the mid 1980’s **mobile phones** became standard (thanks Zack Morris), and by the mid 1990’s the **internet** took off (while no person invented it, Al Gore did take the initiative to create it – thanks Al). These inventions shaped the way we live, work, think, travel, and communicate today. But none of these can touch what happened on Easter Sunday two thousand years ago.

You are here today because of the resurrection. That is true in part because it is Easter and its customary to gather together on Easter with family. But there is a deeper reality as well. We are here because we are all faced with the daunting reality of our great need. Life is not what we expected, we have faced disappointment, shame, regret, remorse, pain, suffering, sorrow, trial, diagnosis, rejection, and an internal restlessness that causes discontentment, anxiety, and even depression. What we realize is all of these are common to the human experience, because we are ALL tied together in a unique way: *we all feel the effects of sin, on this world which is broken, on our bodies which are breaking, and on our souls which are alienated from God*. Jesus came to live, die, and rise again to answer these longings of our heart. He came not to give you a **new start**, just so you can try again, but came to give a **new heart** which would radically be changed from rock hard stubbornness to soft flesh as we know our **sins can be forgiven, our relationship with God restored, and our future eternal state secured**. This is why you are here today, and this is how Jesus changed everything...

Jesus’ Resurrection: *From a cross to an empty tomb*

Luke 24:1-12 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.

The Story

The resurrection story started well before the discovery of the empty grave. It started before the world began as God’s love overflowed from the love He shared with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and was given to those that He created. God created this world to share this love, and determined the plan of

redemption to show the depths of that love. Jesus had planned to go to the cross before the world began, to redeem those whom He loved, far before He entered into humanity (see Ephesians 1:1-14)

Jesus entered into humanity as God, full deity yet veiled in humanity. He lived a perfect life, being born without a sin nature and fulfilling all the law perfectly. As His public ministry closed, He entered into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday with the intention to die, and to die exclusively on a cross, being lifted up for all to see. He was hated by the religious establishment who believed that on Wednesday of Passion week were given a gift as one of Jesus' own, Judas Iscariot came and betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, handing Him over to soldiers apart from the adoring crowds, He was tried by Jewish and Roman courts, and was nailed to a cross by Friday morning. There He hung in physical agony for a few hours until darkness veiled the scene. It was in those next three hours that God poured out His wrath against sin, and I mean wrath for my sin and yours, on Jesus, as Jesus became sin (2 Cor. 5:21) and a curse (Gal. 3:13) as the Father judicially disfellowshipped Himself from His Son and finding satisfaction for every last drop of wrath for sin. This is why Jesus cried out "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me" (Matt. 27:46), "It is finished" (John 19:30), and "Father, into your hands do I commit my Spirit" (Luke 23:46).

The rest of the story you probably know from the stories as a kid: Jesus is taken off the cross, moved to a new tomb which would have been a cave in the side of a hill, His body prepared as was custom, and a huge stone rolled in front. Soldiers were placed in front of the tomb to guard it (Matt. 27:61-66), just in case someone wanted to steal the battered body. Sometime on Sunday morning there was an earthquake, an angel of the Lord rolled the stone away, the soldiers were freaked out and comatose (wouldn't you be), and Jesus was gone. A group of ladies came, found it empty, reported it to the disciples who went to the tomb to find it empty, but only one disciple named John believed He was actually raised and not stolen.

That's the story. All at once incredible yet we can easily miss the significance and be underwhelmed. I think there are several reasons why:

The Comparison

Crucifixion

Jesus was lifted up – visible for all to see
 Bloody, visceral
 Descriptive
 Normal
 Seen and believed
 Soldiers nailed Him to the cross
 Soldiers paid to arrest

Resurrection

Out of sight for all but a few
 Bloodless
 Not even recorded
 Miraculous (why roll away the stone)
 Seen and disbelieved
 Soldiers paid to keep Him dead
 Soldiers paid to keep quiet

The cross has been our focus, which it should, but the resurrection was equally important and the implications are far reaching. On the cross, Jesus **took our wrath** that our sin deserved, so that in His resurrection, we could **share in His reward**, which is eternal life.

Jesus' Resurrection: *Power over death = Power over sin*

Why is the resurrection essential?

The problem we all face, which has plagued us from the beginning of creation, is **death**. It is sure. We feel it every day as our bodies break down, as we observe the brokenness of the world around us. Death not only comes to all of us physically, but plagues us all spiritually. Death is **alienation from God**, the One we were created to worship in an intimate relationship. Sin lead to death, and death separated us from God, which would go on forever if not for God stepping in. God is absolutely holy and righteous, and can never compromise, which means He could not simply *forgive us* without capitulating that holiness. There had to be another way that God could stay holy AND let sinful people back in His presence. **Death could only be defeated by death.**

The Acceptance

Romans 4:24 It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord,²⁵ who was delivered up for our **trespasses** and raised for our **justification**.

- **God showed He accepted the death of Christ by raising Him from the dead**

Jesus death on the cross accomplished what it set out to do, which was to satisfy God's wrath. God treated Jesus like a sinner, becoming sin for us, so that God could treat Jesus like He should have treated us. In this, God could **forgive our trespasses or sin**. But if the story ended there, we would still be in trouble. When God raised Jesus from the dead, He not only "**loosed the pangs of death**" (Acts 2:24), He also accepted Christ's death completely, and was then able to **justify us, or declare us righteous**. We needed a **NEW RIGHTEOUSNESS, NOT JUST A DO OVER. WE NEEDED A NEW HEART, NOT A NEW START!** By faith, when we believe God sees us no longer as sinners destined for punishment, but righteous people clothed in Jesus Christ's righteousness.

- **God accepted us because of the work of Christ on the cross**

Because God accepted Jesus' work completely, He now can accept us. Acceptance is one of those things our hearts have longed for since Jr. High. We want to belong. We want to fit in. We want someone to say they love us, are proud of us, and who sees all that we are and does not run away. We long to be **fully known and fully loved**. This is what God does with us when we are declared righteous because of Jesus. There is a transfer of relationship, from alienation to family, from slave to son. God now becomes Father, not judge, and Jesus is Lord, not avenger.

The All-In Trust

1 Corinthians 15:14, 17, 19 *And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain... And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins...* If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people **most to be pitied**.

- **If Jesus never raised from the dead, we should be pitied**

The Bible also is crystal clear about the need of the resurrection. In a city called Corinth, there were some who were denying the resurrection, not just of Jesus but in general. Paul built a case that if Jesus had never risen, we are practicing **vanity, futility, and living a life of pity**. In fact, if Jesus did not raise from the dead, throw out the New Testament, close the church, stop preaching, hope in nothing, live for yourself, take what you can, give nothing back (basically live like a pirate!).

- **If Jesus DID raise from the dead, everything changes**

But Jesus did raise from the dead. The tomb was empty. He showed Himself to hundreds. He ascended to heaven on a cloud. The promises of Scripture were confirmed. This was the miracle of miracles, the one that changed it all. **Why do people not believe?** The same reason the Jewish leadership bribed soldiers to lie: we don't want Jesus to truly change our life. We want to keep the status quo, keep the things in our life that we think will make us happy when there are unlimited joys to be had. We hold on to our sin like a child who wants to keep eating mudpies when there is a banquet of steak inside. We think that Jesus will take away our fun, cause us to leave our friends, and lead us to boredom. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Jesus' Resurrection: *Victory and Future Secured*

The Signal

1 Corinthians 15:20-23 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.

What was the game change in the resurrection? *This life is NOT all there is!* In fact, the whole of the Bible, the whole of what Jesus brought to us, is that we are living for something future, not now. Life is hard. Sometimes we can even say life stinks (or fill in a stronger explanatory word). And here is the reality: Jesus did not come to make you life *better now*. This world is broken and Jesus was extremely clear that we will face trial, tribulation, suffering, and persecution here. Too often we come to church, pray, or say we believe in Jesus because we think it is a cosmic game of appeasing the Genie in the bottle, that Jesus is the cosmic butler that will fix our problems or get us the house we *really wanted*. But Jesus said, "**If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.**" (Luke 9:23-24).

Sound good? Here is the point of the resurrection: *because Jesus was raised from the dead, it signals that we will too!* Everyone will live forever. We will either live with Jesus, worshipping Him in joy, or live in judgment apart from Him. We bank our eternity on a risen Savior because that is what we are hoping for: **eternal life.**

The Living Hope

1 Peter 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a **living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is **imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept** in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being **guarded** through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

This can all be summarized in a word: **hope.** Hope is faith in the future, that God is not done and the story is not over. If Jesus took the wrath that we deserved on the cross, He also gave us the **reward that was His by raising again.** When we follow Christ by faith, we have a future that is secure, guarded and guaranteed for us by the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. We live in a world of **uncertainty**, where we hope Social Security holds out, that the stock market doesn't crash, and that maybe, just maybe we will have enough to retire on our own terms. But God offers us something locked, secure, and that lasts forever. It is a future in a new earth with Jesus who is King and Lord. This is the type of security that cannot come through any type of cheap means but can only come through the precious blood of a Messiah, a King, our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Jesus' Resurrection: *Our opportunity to repent*

So what do we do if we want this? Do I pray a prayer? Do I need to sign something? What do I do?

- Acknowledge God as perfect and holy, and in light of this, that you are a sinner. We have fallen short of His glory, which means He cannot accept us as is and that we are deserving of judgment
- Ask that God would be unfair to you and save you, forgiving your sin- The thief who hung next to Jesus on the cross simply asked "remember me when you are in paradise" - this was asking for **mercy**, knowing that he was getting what he deserved but longed for salvation. If God were fair we would all go to hell. So we ask God for mercy that He would save us
- Repent of your sin - This means that you not only confess your sins, but turn from them - turning in mindset, in desire, and action from your sin - and turning to God to worship Him in all that you do
- Freely follow God in Christ - Now that you have been forgiven, yield your life to Christ as Lord, seeking to trust Him, obey Him, and follow Him with all that you are.

This is possible because Jesus' death and resurrection was the true game changer, signaling the end of our hopelessness and the beginning of our joy. Today is a day of change, a day of joy, and a day of salvation. Are you willing?