

Sermon: Reactions to the Resurrection

Text: [Luke 24:1-49 ESV](#)

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Introduction: You can ask just about anyone on the street what Easter (or Resurrection Sunday, as some insist it needs to be called) what it means to them, and you will get a wide variety of answers. Some think of large bunnies both alive and made of chocolate. Other people will insist it is about family meals or traditions or searching for multi-colored eggs. Of course, Christ followers I hope have a different lens through which we see its real and original meaning. But even in the first days after Jesus rose from the tomb, there were a great number of “reactions” to this event we call Easter.

The first witnesses to the resurrection were not men, but women. They were not dressed in pastel dresses, but in clothing appropriate for the work of mourning and grieving. These women mentioned in our text had come to finish preparing the body for a proper burial. In this resurrection story account, there was a lot of **surprise** married with sadness at what they found, or should we say - didn't find.

In these opening verses ([vv. 1-12](#)) of our text, we hear other words that carry the weight of the women's surprise like *perplexed* in [v. 4](#); and *frightened* in [v. 5](#). And the apostles are disbelieving the women's account of what has become of Jesus. It surprises their sense of what was possible and seemed like an *idle tale* to them in [v. 11](#). Even Peter's run to the tomb in [v. 12](#) produces a form of surprise by the truth and reality of what he saw. The word translated there as *marvelling* or *wondering*, as the NIV has it, literally means *against belief* ([απιστεω](#)). Simply unbelievable...

Yet again it is Luke who tells us of the importance of the women who witnessed an empty tomb that early Sunday morning. And who heads the list, but Mary Magdalene. Scripture never says that she was a prostitute or the unnamed woman caught in adultery in [John 8](#). She had seven demons removed by Jesus. And like all who have been born, she was a sinner. Mary of Magdala as she is also called was there for the mock trial of Jesus, heard the sentence against him, witnessed his beating and his humiliation and then followed him to the cross to show support and help comfort Jesus, and then we see her coming to the tomb.

Let's be clear here that in these opening verses the problem of disbelief is not with the women, but the men and the formal leaders of this band of disciples. The men, we are about to hear, think the women are experiencing some kind of delirium.

We should not be too hard on people who can't quite believe all this talk of a risen Savior. Even casual followers, today, need reminding of words of faith and Scripture that point us toward our own salvation.

Listen to the first part of our Easter narrative. Let's look at the first twelve verses:

Luke 24:1-49 ESV

The Resurrection

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, **(a possible sign of respect or even reverence)** 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 (not expecting) what had happened.

In Paul Beasley-Murray's book, *The Message of the Resurrection*, p. 63, he makes this important comment: “The fact that Luke records that the women “remembered *Jesus*' words” (v. 8) implies that they too, and not just the disciples, had been told by Jesus of his forthcoming betrayal, crucifixion and resurrection. Indeed, the clear impression is that for Luke the women were as much disciples as the men. Perhaps it is this that accounts for Luke's omission of the command, found in the other Gospels, to go and tell the disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead. As far as Luke was concerned, the women were not errand runners for the disciples--they were disciples!”

All of this that happened should not have surprised anyone, but it did. A person can hear Jesus (God) speak and still not hear Him.

There are still surprises to follow in our story. We will need to listen at how these two walkers in the country did not even recognize the Savior at first. They were surprised (v. 22) or *amazed* by the story the women were telling. It was simply an incredulous tale, they thought. The women said they had even seen angels.

I am still surprised how we encounter Jesus in ordinary places, or in the words and testimony of others. We might encounter Him in a storm on the lake or in a garden used for prayer. The Apostle Paul not only didn't believe in (or recognize) Jesus, he was having Christians executed. But an encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus would be the turning point for Paul to hear and believe in Jesus. In this encounter, Paul heard convicting words while his companions heard only noise.

Even today, there will be many people who will not believe you just because *you* say so... Even if someone checks out what you tell them concerning the resurrection, they still may not believe you right away. Even the Apostle Peter didn't believe at first!

“All that Luke says about the resurrection of Jesus and his appearance to his followers takes place on the Sunday after his crucifixion.” - González, *Luke*, p. 276

On the Road to Emmaus ¹³ That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, “What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?” And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?” ¹⁹ And he said to them, “What things?” And they said to him, “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. ²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. ²² Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, ²³ and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.” ²⁵ And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

²⁸ So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, ²⁹ but they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.” So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. ³¹ And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight.

These two travelers experience the person of Jesus as they eat with Him. It seems clear this meal is not ordinary because the words are familiar: “took...blessed...broke and gave.” We should point out that this meal begins with an act of hospitality and ends with Jesus being recognized. He serves the role of both guest and host at this now extraordinary meal. “Christ is in a sense the guest (‘Come, Lord Jesus’), and yet he is the host who breaks the bread, blesses God, and shares with those at table.” (Craddock, *Luke*, p. 286)

What a quick transition in two verses from eating bread to recognition of who Jesus was in their midst. For Luke every meal seems a little like the Lord's Supper, and if one is careful here with the reading, you might assume this is the first communion service. And then, Jesus left them - and what did they need to do and quickly? but tell others of their personal experience with Jesus. This becomes a preview of the ascension of Jesus to heaven in a few short weeks. Here there is no command or commission to tell others Jesus is alive, just a reaction to having encountered the risen Lord Jesus. We have to tell someone!

Upon Reflection:

32 They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, **while he opened to us the Scriptures?**" **33** And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, **34** saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" **35** Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

And here in Luke's gospel, he reminds us that these travelers that were leaving Jerusalem in despair and disbelief, changed their plans of staying overnight some seven miles away and returned in haste to Jerusalem - only to not be believed just like the women earlier.

I hope you are not surprised by Jesus' fulfillment of Scripture (The Word of God is so important and vital to our spiritual lives), nor our assignment to share that he is the Messiah of God for all peoples and nations. We should know he gives us the promised Holy Spirit of God to help with our responsibility to tell others of this beautiful Savior we claim for ourselves - this Savior who can be theirs as well.

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

36 As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" **37** But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. **38** And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? **39** See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." **40** And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. **41** And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" **42** They gave him a piece of broiled fish, **43** and he took it and ate before them.

44 Then he said to 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 and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." **45** Then **he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,** **46** and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, **47** and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. **48** You are witnesses of these things.

49 And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

This is like the great commission at the end of Matthew. And in Mark we hear: **Mark 16:15-16 ESV** ¹⁵ And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. ¹⁶ Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Conclusion: Darrell Bock writes, “Without resurrection, Christianity is just another human approach to reach God; it is emptied of transforming power and hope; it is a mere shell, not worth the energy one devotes to it.... To believe in Christ is to believe not merely in his example, but in the power of his resurrection to grant new life” (*Luke* [Baker], 2:1881).

“The resurrection was not created by the church; rather the church was created by the resurrection.” Bock, *Luke*, p. 606

There are transitions that are quite natural and predictable that we may experience in *our* walk with Jesus. We may be surprised with how we meet Jesus for the first time. It may come through a Christian friend or parent or a complete stranger. There may be sadness and even despair for us as our assumptions about Jesus may be proven false. There may be initial disbelief because Jesus did not meet *our* expectations, but with patience, time and prayers, that can change. Disbelief even antagonism can turn to understanding. And understanding can become submission and faith. And if we truly believe in Jesus, and do as he asks, we will be involved in witnessing or proclaiming what we now know to be true: the risen Lord wants a relationship with us and will bless us with eternal life if only we will place our faith in Him and do as He asks us.

Not so very long ago in our preaching series in I Peter we heard:

I Peter 1:3-9 ESV

Born Again to a Living Hope

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. ⁶ In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹ obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Jesus is a pioneer who has gone ahead of us to heaven and is providing for us an abode with God. Someday we will not be exiles or sojourners in a foreign land, but settlers, citizens in a new and perfect land. If we are Christians, we are an exodus people on our way to the Promised Land!

I wonder what you expected you might experience this Easter as you made a conscious decision to come and worship, today? I like the way Fred Craddock (*Luke*, p. 287) explains what I am trying to say: “There are three times in which to know an event: in rehearsal, at the time of the event, and in remembrance. In rehearsal, understanding is hindered by an inability to believe that the event will really occur or that it will be so important.” Jesus had told his followers that he was going to suffer and die and then raise from the dead. His disciples knew he must not have meant that literally because they had a different idea and dream for their Messiah. “At the time of the event, understanding is hindered by the clutter and confusion of so much so fast.” Almost 20 years ago there was the NASA shuttle disaster (Columbia) where a whole crew (7 people) was incinerated because of wing damage from debris during launch. No one saw it coming and when it happened it was difficult to take in. “But in remembrance *of an event*, the nonseriousness of rehearsal and the busyness of the event give way to recognition, realization, and understanding. This is a time of understanding, an important trip, a wedding, a gathering of friends (maybe like reunions where memory is recalled), or in our case - a conversation with a stranger turned Christ at table.”

If we are Christians, the week after Easter is no less important or less memorable to our faith. Let’s share what we know to be true about Jesus and live to His glory! Let’s celebrate THE LORD’S SUPPER here today. This is no ordinary meal! Jesus is in our midst because NOW Jesus is in us and with us wherever we go. And make no mistake He will never deny us if we remain faithful. May we do that with all our hearts.

John McKenzie to lead Communion time after Invitation Song...
COMMUNION SONG - Worship Team

I Corinthians 11:23-26 ESV

23 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for[a] you. Do this in remembrance of me.”[b] 25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Footnotes: [a] 1 Corinthians 11:24 Some manuscripts broken for

[b] 1 Corinthians 11:24 Or as my memorial; also verse 25