

Part 86: Resurrection Words

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The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not a scientific fact. Science's own method requires something to be measurable, repeatable, and tested. We cannot subject Jesus to death again, nor can we observe the resurrection of any one person apart from this. And even if we were to raise another person, we would not prove the resurrection of Jesus, only the resurrection of that other person.

But just because the resurrection is not a scientific fact does not mean it is not true, nor does it mean it does not have meaning. For science is designed to obtain facts, not interpret them.

For instance science can prove that buoyance as a principle makes boats float. But science cannot prove that on June 6th, 1944 allied boats floated off the coast of Normandy in preparation of what was called D-Day. And even if they could somehow prove that, it couldn't tell us why D-Day was important.

The reality and significance of D-Day, though not a scientific fact, is a historical fact. The day to day politics of the modern world is shaped by an event unable to be proven or interpreted by science alone.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ, unable to be proven by science, is no less true and no less formative than the events of WWII. This truth doesn't merely realign borders, it realigns eternity, it is of daily significance whether we are aware of it or not. That's because the resurrection not only proves one thing, it proves everything—everything that God has said and done and given to us in his word.

We've been working through the book of Luke here at Sovereign Hope Church and today we encounter the glorious truth of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. What we are going to see is that God's word not only provides for us the historic facts of the resurrection, but also gives us the interpretation of the events that we need in order to understand its significance. It's one thing to believe this happened, but it's quite another to allow the reality of this truth to shape the reality of our own lives.

C.S. Lewis once said, "I warned you that theology is practical...Wrong ideas about what life is, will make it harder." Today, Luke shows us what our life is about through the words and work of Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

This is going to be our main point this morning: **Aligning our minds with the word of Jesus' resurrection requires us to align our lives with the whole word of God.** We are going to see this by looking at three facts in our text this morning. First we are going to examine the miraculous phenomenon of **The Resurrected Body**, then we are going to see the assurance the women were provided in **The Resurrection Word**, and lastly we will examine the contested reality of faith in **The Post-Resurrection World**.

Our text today begins where the women left off the Friday before. Luke told us a group of women had to wait until the Sabbath was over before they returned to attend to Jesus' body, and today—they return.

Luke 24:1-6a, "But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. 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. 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 he has risen."

Sherlock Holmes had the uncanny ability to see through all the mysteries to find the one fact that would explain everything else. At the tomb that morning these women had much to wonder at, "how did the stone get moved? Who are these miraculous messengers? What happened to the guards?" But like Sherlock, these women understand the central mystery: "where is the body?" This is our first point this morning: **The Resurrected Body**

You've got to love the question the angels gave to the women: "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" That morning, they had no intent to seek the living anywhere. They went to seek the dead among the dead. Jesus was dead, so it was fitting to go to the tomb where his body was laid.

But, he is not here, he is risen. How risen? Bodily risen.

There's a famous moment in the film, *The Princess Bride*, where Inigo Montoya says to Vizzini, "You keep using that word, I do not think it means what you think it means." The word was "inconceivable."

One writer said, "In particular, most people have little to no idea what the word resurrection actually means or why Christians say they believe it." I wonder if you are guilty of Vizzini's flaw?

When we hear "resurrection life" we often simply think of life after death, some sort of spiritual or metaphorical existence somewhere while the body stays dead. But that's not what "resurrection" means, nor is it how the Bible uses it. Resurrection life is when the whole human, body and soul, is raised to life to live as it was created to live.

Christians might go visit the site of Jesus' tomb in Jerusalem. But that's all they visit. A tomb. An empty earthen closet which houses tourists and nothing more. Jesus' body wasn't there, because his body wasn't dead.

It's become popular for some allegedly "Christian" pastors or scholars to say something like, "It doesn't matter if Jesus really rose. It just matters that he lives in your heart." That may make for a heartwarming kids movie, but noting can be further from the truth. Serious minds must believe in the physical resurrection for three specific reasons.

First, it is the **Clear Historic Witness**.

If you deny the resurrection, you are not merely claiming that the Biblical writers were deceived, you're saying that they are trying to deceive you—it assumes the Biblical authors, like Luke and John making it explicit that they are writing eyewitness accounts, are intentionally lying.

It also means you have to disregard the witness of the early church as well. Paul says this in **1 Corinthians 15:3-8**, "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen

asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me."

When it comes to witnesses outside of scripture, even serious critics of the New Testament texts admit that you can't deny the resurrection on historical grounds. One such scholar says that "most exegetes hold firmly to the reliability of the biblical statements about the empty tomb," he then goes on to list 28 other modern critics who agree and concludes saying, "Most people who object to the story [of the resurrection] do so on other than historical grounds."

The cause and significance of the empty tomb may be debated, but the reality of it is a matter of historical fact.

Secondly, the physical resurrection is important because it is the ***Sum of Human Hope***.

Generally speaking, most people fall into one of two ditches regarding what humanity really is. There are some who are materialists, all humanity is, is flesh and bone, chemicals and compounds and whatever is immaterial is unimportant at best. Then there are spiritualists, who think we are essentially immaterial souls and the body is what is actually not that important.

But the resurrection of Jesus affirms the holistic view of humanity which the Bible presents and which our own realities often admit. We are body and soul. Jesus wasn't raised body without a soul, or soul without a body. We are flesh and spirit, material and immaterial.

Which means that nothing speaks to our material and immaterial longings like the resurrection of Jesus. It shows us what humanity is, and how it can be made whole again.

If your car suffers an oil leak, you go to a mechanic. If your dog suffers, you go to a vet. If your hair suffers, you go to a hair stylist. And if you suffer from death, you're going to need a resurrection. No other worldview accounts for the fullness of your human experience like Christianity because in the resurrection of Jesus all of our immaterial and all of our physical realities are shown to be redeemed, remade, and restored in our own resurrection of the dead.

What happened to Jesus, will happen to all who have faith in him when he returns. It's the trailer to the feature film. Paul says it this way, **1 Corinthians 15:20-23**, "But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has also come the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruit, then at his coming those who belong to Christ."

The resurrection is for the humanist. It shows us that the reality of the gospel, and the hope of redemption is the very stuff of life itself.

But lastly, the resurrection is the ***Lynchpin of Christian Hope***.

I was sharing the gospel once with a non-believing professor of theology. She tried to compliment me and say that she knew there was nothing she could say which would shake my faith. But I told her she was wrong.

What would it take for me to admit that Christianity were not true? Find them bones. If you unearth some Middle Eastern body, or some closet where the corpse of Jesus was stashed, I'll recant everything.

Do you realize the Bible actually tells you of two things, which if true, should cause you to dump Christianity because your faith would be in vain? The first is if we find another way to salvation outside of Jesus Christ, another gospel (1 Cor. 15:2). The second is this: **1 Corinthians 15:14**, "And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain."

The Bible does not promote blind faith. It promotes biblical faith. The Bible is not true regardless of what is true or not. The Bible is true because it is true. And if Christ did not rise, then we have nothing at all. Paul goes on to say, "If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied."

The author John Updike once wrote this: "Make no mistake: if he rose at all / It was as His body; /If the cell's dissolution did not reverse, the molecule reknit / the amino acids rekindle, the Church will fall."

If Jesus has no life, neither do we as the church. But he is not here, he has risen. How do we know?

Well, for us we have to take him at his word. You might wish that you could be these disciples who had something as a more concrete proof. But notice how the first proof the angels gave these women was just that: Jesus' word: **Luke 24:5-8**, "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."

Here is our second point this morning: **The Resurrection Words**.

The greatest proof of the resurrection was not what was presently at hand, but instead what Jesus said in the past. This is so important because it shows us that seeing the facts of reality not equal to understanding reality.

The facts of reality were clear here, there was no body. Yet they were perplexed. But the beauty of what the angels did is that it set the precedent that what we need more than anything is an explanation of the facts—and they use Jesus' word to do just that.

They recount one of the three times in Jesus' ministry where he predicted his death like this: (**Luke 9:22**) "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders the chief priests and the scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised."

The resurrection was the work of God, but in order for these women to make sense of it they needed to turn back to the word of God. The word explains the work.

Jesus not only had told them that this was going to happen, but he told them why it was going to happen: "he must be delivered, crucified and rise." Why? Jesus already told them, **Luke 19:10**, "For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost."

To take Jesus at his word is not to simply admit the cross and resurrection happened, but that it had to happen. Why? Because that alone is the way in which sinful people are saved by grace and through faith. This necessity means that Christianity is not a supplement to life—it is life itself.

And look at what happened when God's word explained God's work: **Luke 24:8-9**, "And they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest."

From frightened and perplexed to faithful and proclaiming. What they were confused by moments ago, they now confessed with clarity. Why? Because they remembered Jesus' words. What can have a similar change in your own life? Remembering Jesus' words.

One commentator said it this way: **"No deed of Jesus, and certainly not this last and greatest, has been without its accompanying word. No event has been left unexplained. Nor has any part of God's creation or man's life...Yet both the church and world are often quite unnecessarily ignorant of these words, a system of faith which takes everything into account and interprets all of life as one connected and meaningful whole."**

This is not only true for this one supreme work, the resurrection of Jesus, but it's true for all of God's work in our lives. The resurrection means that if this word is true, then all of God's words are true. If God was faithful here, he's faithful everywhere.

You show me a man who cannot be kept by death, and I'll show you a man who can keep his word. In this way the resurrection makes sense of our life because it affirms Proverbs 30:5, "Every word of God proves true."

We will often find ourselves in situations like these women and in those moments we remember a resurrection worldview. In other words when we wrestle to believe God's word, when we wrestle to find our peace in him we can remember that we can entrust ourselves to God's word and God's work in general because we've seen it trustworthy in the specifics of the cross.

You can imagine the clarity and joy these women had in this moment. Full of trust in God's word and God's work, they run back to the disciples and burst open the doors with excitement to share their story. I wonder what they thought the disciples responses would be?

I imagine this isn't what they expected: **Luke 24:10-12**, "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. 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."

And here we see our final point this morning: **The Post-Resurrection World.**

Not what they expected, huh? There's a wild experience you will have as a Christian. You will come to church, and you will read your Bible, and like these women the truth and beauty of the gospel will captivate your minds and will carry you to places where you can't wait to share the good news of Jesus with someone—we call that evangelism.

But often, when we share this gospel, we are reminded of how stupid our message sounds to a present world. I've done many funeral with non-believers in attendance and it's not a position of worldly academic credibility to stand in the midst of a graveyard and say, "One day these graves will be empty."

But it's true. It's helpful for us to notice when we come to that tension that what we have is not a world of contested truth, but of contested faith. Look at where Luke places his emphasis. He doesn't say they didn't believe the women. He says they didn't believe "them." What is "them"? "Them" are "these words." What are "these words," it's what was told by the women. And what was told by the women (vs. 8), "his words." They didn't believe Jesus. At this point they didn't doubt the empty tomb. They doubted the word of the one who wasn't in it.

The fact was the tomb was empty. Peter proves that by showing up. But that fact alone was insufficient. We don't need more facts, we need more faith.

I love the old State Farm commercial where a wife walks downstairs and catches her husband talking on the phone at three in the morning. She assumes some sort of scandalous secret and she says, "Who are you talking to?" He says, "Jake from State Farm." She grabs the phone from him and says, "What are you wearing Jake from State Farm?" The camera cuts to Jake from State Farm sitting in an office and he just replies, "Khakis." She looks at her husband in disbelief and says, "She sounds hideous." And he says, "Well, it's a guy."

What would have made the most sense of that situation was to take Jake from State Farm at his word. But many of us live our lives with State Farm theology—we struggle to take Christ at his word. We want anything other than God's word to make sense of our lives. We demand our emotions to explain it, our sexuality to explain it, our professors or our parents to explain it. But only God's word does and the resurrection proves it.

Kid's I wonder if you've talked with classmates or teachers and found out that they have an opinion on the Bible or about Jesus? Perhaps they do not believe in Jesus, or what the Bible says. But notice here that what people believe is not the basis of what is true. Just because these men did not believe that Jesus rose from the dead did not mean that it wasn't true. It just means that they would not believe it.

The reality of the resurrection gives us a wonderful sense of self-forgetfulness in our evangelism—we share what is true because it is God's word, not our word, and it is a true word. We are on the side of truth—the whole truth.

Even as Peter ran to the tomb to verify the facts, he didn't come to grips with the fullness of that truth. Luke says **Luke 24:12b**, "he went home marveling at what had happened."

Another translation could say, "wondering about what happened." While the word itself doesn't indicate belief or unbelief, what is clear is that he is wondering about what had happened. In other words, Peter here admits to the facts, but he wrestles still to believe in Jesus' explanation of the facts.

Luke is showing us that we can't just believe some of God's word. We must believe it all. To believe Jesus rose from the dead, without believing that everything else Jesus said will only leave us engaged but frustrated.

If we want to know truth, we submit ourselves to all of God's truth—all of which was validated in this empty tomb. You can try to make sense of life on your own, you can pick and choose which parts of God's word are true—or you can believe the full word of an empty tomb.

The resurrection shows us that Jesus didn't come to meet his own needs. But to meet our needs. He didn't come to explain anything to himself, but to explain everything to us. We need the cross, and because we have that we put all our trust in him.

Charles Spurgeon once said, "**Brothers, if you do not believe in anybody else, believe in God without stint. Believe up to the hilt. Bury yourselves, both as to your weakness and your strength, in simple trust in God...Believe your own doctrine! Believe your own Savior.**"

Because the tomb is empty, it beckons us to place things inside of it. Lay your fearful doubts in it. Lay your arrogance in it. Lay your sin in it. Lay your pride in it. There's room for it all because Jesus is not there.

As John Updike continues in the poem from earlier:

**The stone is rolled back, not papier-mache,
Not a stone in a story,
But the vast rock of materiality that in the slow grinding of
Time will eclipse for each of us
The wide light of day.**

**Let us not mock God with metaphor,
Analogy, sidestepping, transcendence,
Making of the event a parable, a sign painted in the faded
Credulity of earlier ages:
Let us walk through the door.**

Let us walk through the door. Let us not seek the living among the dead. He is not here, he is risen.

Dead men save nothing. Dead men explain nothing. But our King is not dead, he is risen. He is not silent. He has spoken. So let us walk through the door by faith and find the life we were made to live.