

Our Living Savior
 Luke 24:1-12
 Tampa Covenant Church
 20 April 2025

Proposition: Because our Savior lives, we are called to live out his resurrection hope in our everyday lives.

FCF: Failure to remember the promises of our Savior and disbelief in the resurrection.

RHF: Jesus Christ is our living Savior who gave us new life through his sinless life, sacrificial death and glorious resurrection from the dead.

(#1) Introduction:

He is Risen! We sound like a community who's embraced the drama of Holy Week, now culminating in this glorious resurrection celebration. At the close of his sermon last week, Lou reminded us that *"Jesus came to do something we could not do on our own and pay a debt we could never pay...were that not the case, the story could have stopped with Palm Sunday. But it doesn't stop there. Rather in the midst of palms that waved and songs that are sung and shouts of joy, we are vividly reminded that there is yet another part/chapter of the story still to come."* What an amazing encouragement because it's tempting in our hearts and minds to stop the story at Palm Sunday and pick it back up at the empty tomb.

(#2) Sorta like Rosie Ruiz's infamous "win" at the Boston Marathon back in 1980. She crossed the finish line with her arms raised in a V, but in reality, she took a shortcut by jumping on the subway instead of running the course.¹ In so doing, she bypassed the struggle, the sweat, and pain associated with running the race so her victory wasn't authentic. See, when we rush to Easter without embracing the drama of Holy Week, we risk doing the same. **(#3 Blank) But when we** stay in the story and experience the tension of Thursday's betrayal, the intensity of Friday's suffering, and the solitude of Saturday's silence, we are spiritually formed and renewed in the gospel. And by the grace of God, our gathering reflects an authentic celebration of Christ's victory.

As we walk through this passage together, we'll witness how faithful Christ followers grappled with a range of emotions in coming to grips with the reality of the empty tomb. We'll also see how the angels reminded the women of Jesus' words, how they told the apostles and the reaction that followed. Our prayer is that we'll walk away this resurrection Sunday knowing that our Savior lives, thus we have an unwavering hope for the future. Not one anchored in wishful thinking but in the reality of Christ's victory over the grave.

Wrestling with Reality: *The tomb is empty: (vv.1-4a)*

(#4) Luke tells us it's the first day of the week at early dawn and they went to the tomb taking the spices they had prepared: Who's they? In chap 23, these were the women who witnessed Jesus' horrific death on the cross. And after Joseph of Arimathea placed Jesus' dead body in the tomb; they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. That evening they went home to prepare spices but didn't visit the tomb the next day because it was Sabbath. But now it's Sunday morning and they bee line to the tomb with spices in hand to anoint the dead body of Jesus. There's no joy and happiness rather they're full of grief and

sorrow. (#5) In v.10, we learn these women are Mary Magdalene: She appears at the tomb in all four gospels.² At some point in his ministry, Jesus casted seven demons from her; she had a lot to be thankful for. She's accompanied by Joanna: Wife of Chuza, Mary the mother of James and some other women.

All of these women from differing walks of life with something in common; they were devout followers of Jesus. They witnessed his life, death, and burial. And now they're about to make a discovery that would change the course of their lives and also (#6) the world. First, they discovered the stone was rolled away from the tomb and when they entered the body was gone; thus, the tomb was empty. Now, if I'm writing this story...they immediately run out of the tomb screaming from the top of their lungs: "HE'S ALIVE" ... YAY... "HE'S ALIVE." Close the curtains, run credits and they all live happily ever after. But that's not what happened. Instead, they wrestled with what they saw because it disrupted everything they knew to be true. They were perplexed, baffled and struggling to reconcile what they were actually seeing with what they expected to see. Their hearts were so fixated on how they thought things would play out that it led to a perplexing surprise.

Their state of confusion serves as a cautionary tale to us that we can become so focused on how we expect God to move, we sometimes miss what he's actually doing in our lives: How he's teaching us, correcting us and how he's working to conform us into his image in that very moment. These women were among the closest to Jesus; they walked with him, talked with him, loved him and now here they are stunned in the face of a reality they (#7) didn't expect. Charles Spurgeon once preached, *"Those who expect to find the road to Heaven smooth and unobstructed will discover little in the experience of the ancient saints to support the expectation."*³ Church, we know the Christian journey is not a straight, well-lit highway free of bumps, potholes and detours. (#8 Blank) The lives of the saints who came before us were characterized by struggle, confusion and dashed expectations.

And ours will be too because in this life we all go through stuff. Nonetheless, we're called to live expectantly, not in the outcomes we conjure up in our heads, but in the faithful promises of our risen Savior. Jesus has already proven his power in our past, he's present with us now through his Spirit, and he's promised to complete the good work he began in us. So, when reality throws us a curve ball, we don't go stir crazy trying to figure things out; rather we wrestle well with our dashed expectations and what God is actually accomplishing in our lives. We come before him with our questions and our confusion, trusting that his ways are not our ways and his thoughts are not our thoughts. And we rest in the fact that in the midst of it all; he's working for our good and for his glory.

Remembering Jesus' Words: *Concerning his death, burial and resurrection (vv.4b-8):*

(#9) While they were reeling in disorientation; two men (presumably angels) show up in dazzling white apparel. And now their confusion is intensified by fear and all they could do was bow their faces to the ground. In Matthew and Mark's account, the angels begin with "do not be afraid/alarmed." Here in Luke, they get straight to the point: *"Why do you seek the living among the dead? This is one of those splashes of cold water in the face type moments: Like, what are you doing here? It's not a place for the living but for the dead.* (#10) Commentator Philip Ryken said, *"They were on the wrong premises because they had the wrong premise."*⁴

These women were sincerely devoted to Jesus but they were operating from the wrong premise and it led them to the wrong place. It's like they were in a junkyard; looking to buy a new car. But in his mercy, the Lord sent heavenly messengers to issue a (#11) loving corrective: *"He is not here, but has risen."* Those seven words serve as the very foundation of our faith. They form the basis for Christian living and the truth on which everything else stands. But let's be honest. There are times when those seven words fade into the background of our everyday lives. We might affirm the resurrection on paper, and that's a good start. However, if the truth of the resurrection doesn't sink deeply into our hearts, we'll live as though Jesus is still in the tomb. And that false premise will always lead to a defeated Christian life. It means living as if sin still has dominion over us thus believing the lie that death has the final say; allowing despair to smother the tangible hope we have in Christ.

It's the kind of Christian life where fear overrules faith, where anxiety replaces prayer, where bitterness drowns out gratitude, and where guilt keeps us from walking in the freedom of God's amazing grace. This is what life looks like when we disconnect from the truth of the resurrection. So once again, we hear the words those women heard on that first Easter morning: *"He is not here. He is risen."* May this truth sink deeply into our hearts and may we live it out to the glory of God.

And the angels follow up this loving corrective (#12) with a call to remembrance, *"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."* You see, the angels weren't sent to proclaim some new revelation; rather they were sent to remind the women of Jesus' words: It's another splash of cold water... REMEMBER!! Jesus said (#13) it repeatedly:⁵ *Luke 9:22 – After Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ, The Son of God. Jesus commanded them to keep quiet then told them, "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." Luke 18:31–33, after his encounter with the rich young ruler, Jesus took the disciples aside and told them we're going up to Jerusalem and everything written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be (#14) accomplished.,³² For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. ³³ And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise."*

(#15 Blank) Memory is a powerful thing; it's a gift from the Lord to be used for his glory. One of the unique blessings of our church family is our generational diversity. Believe it or not, TCC presently spans a remarkable six generations. On one end, we have Les Kizer at 95 years old. On the other, we celebrate Caroline Lewis, just two months old today. The rest of us fit in there somewhere. And each generation carries vivid memories of historical events and personal experiences that have shaped who we are and how we see the world. But there's one memory that binds us all together and spiritually forms us, one we must never let fade into obscurity: It's remembering our Savior's words.

Anglican Bishop, J.C. Ryle rightly noted "dullness of memory is a common spiritual disease among believers. But the cure is found in having a deeper love for Christ and affections more thoroughly set on things above." (#16) He continued in saying, *"The more our affections are engaged in Christ's service, the easier we will find it to remember Christ's words."*⁶ And we do this through worship: personal, family, and corporate. (#17 Blank) When we gather corporately, we gather to remember. We remember Christ's words in the songs we sing, in the prayers we offer, in the Scriptures we read, teach to our children and

proclaim from the pulpit. And we remember in the meal our Lord provides for us, where the grace of the gospel is made visible and tangible to our senses. You see, worship isn't about going through the motions, it's a sacred act of remembering our Savior and his glorious gospel. These women came to the tomb overcome with confusion and fear but they were reminded and they remembered. In that very moment their dashed expectations gave way to resurrection hope.

Responding to The Resurrection: *Proclamation, Skepticism, Wonder (vv.9-12)*

(#18) And so, they returned from the tomb, filled with joy, and shared the news with the disciples and other followers of Christ. But Luke tells us the apostles didn't believe them. Their words seemed like nonsense; literally the kind of talk you'd expect from one who's delirious or hysterical.⁷ **(#19)** Nonetheless, in v.12, something stirred deeply in Peter. He got up and ran to the tomb. When he arrived, he stooped to look in and saw the linen cloths lying there by themselves. That's not what grave robbers do; they don't carefully unwrap the body and leave everything in place; rather they grab and go. And after taking it all in, Peter went home, marveling at what had happened. Oh yes, something happened!!

(#20 Blank) What had happened was nothing less than the fulfillment of God's plan to reconcile the world to himself through the person and work of his Son. The dawning of a new creation happened. Christ had broken the curse of death, and all things were being made new. Again, the angels didn't reveal a new message; they simply told the women to remember what Jesus' said to them: *He must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.*" Church, this was the mission from the very beginning; not a backup plan. And Jesus didn't side step it; he fully embraced the Father's plan of redemption. Because it was of divine necessity that he would take on flesh and bond himself to humanity in living the life we should've lived, in dying the death we deserved, and rising again in victory. If the resurrection didn't happen, it's the greatest sham in human history. And there would be no reason to call Jesus Savior only the greatest fraudster of all time. As Paul says, that would make Christians the most pitied people on this earth.

But praise God it happened! And that reality stirred a range of emotions among Jesus' closest followers. And honestly, the same range of emotions are still alive and well in the world today. Maybe some of them are swirling around in this sanctuary.

1. Like the women, many of us here have been transformed by this good news and are fully rejoicing in our Savior's victory over the grave. It means that you have been united to Christ thus he's your living hope. You've died with him and you've been raised with Him. Therefore, all the spiritual blessings of salvation are yours in Christ as you trust in him for your future: assurance of his love, peace of conscience and joy in the Spirit of God. So, the call is to grow in his love and proclaim the good news of his resurrection life to those who are in desperate need of a savior.
2. Some here may be skeptical (idle tale); *"I can't believe that because I believe something else."* Recognize what happened on that day didn't make sense to those in Jesus' inner circle. Even worse his apostles remained skeptical at the good news. But as you keep turning the pages of scripture; you'll see how those same skeptics were transformed into bold witnesses of the resurrection. So maybe this isn't the end of your story; it just might be the beginning. Evaluate what you believe with

the claims of Christ that he willingly gave his life to rescue you from the brokenness we witness in this world. And his resurrection grants real freedom from utter despair in giving you an eternal hope through his resurrection. So let the truth of his resurrection challenge your skepticism and awaken your heart to the hope only he can give.

3. And still others, like Peter, may find yourselves somewhere in between. You've heard the news, the tomb is empty, and you're filled with wonder but you're not quite sure what to make of it. Unlike Peter, we can't run to the tomb and see it for ourselves. But we do have the gospel; a reliable witness that testifies to the truth of Christ's resurrection. So, the goal isn't to go home marveling at the empty tomb but believe that the tomb is empty because Christ was raised from the dead and lives forevermore. And that sense of wonder may be the sign that your heart is being quickened by the Spirit of God. So, may he grant you the grace to continue the journey. Ask questions and remain curious about what's taking place in your heart and how does belief in the resurrection of Jesus make a difference in your life.

Conclusion:

Church, the resurrection of our Lord shatters every assumption, we've ever entertained about what lies beyond the grave. Thanks be to God; death never gets the final word; it's abundant life because we serve a risen Savior who is now reigning and ruling over all of his creation. And as we've seen today; he fulfills all of his promises to those who love him and are called according to his purpose. And he promises one day to return to receive us as his very own. In that day, our mortal bodies will put on immortality and we shall be changed and death will be no more. So may the Lord open eyes to see, stir our hearts to believe, and shape our lives to reflect his victory over the grave; both now and forever. Amen.

¹ <https://time.com/3822577/rosie-ruiz-history/> (Accessed, 14 April 2025 @ 1545hrs)

² See Matt 27:61, 28:10, Mark 15:47-16:11, Luke 24:1-11 and John 20:1-18

³ Charles Spurgeon, *Through The Eyes of C.H. Spurgeon*, quotes from a Reformed Baptist Preacher, compiled by Stephen McCaskell, (Lucid Books, 2012), Logos Bible Software.

⁴ Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, vol. 1, *Reformed Expository Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 393–406.

⁵ Jesus predicted his death and resurrection three times in Luke's gospel: Luke 9:22, 9:43-44 and 18:31-33. Important to note that Jesus doesn't explicitly mention his death, burial and resurrection but alludes to it in Lk 9:43-44.

⁶ J.C. Ryle, *Luke*, ed Alister McGrath and J.I. Packer, *The Crossway Classic Commentaries*, (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books, 1997), 308.

⁷ As idle talk (ὡς ληρος [*hōs lēros*]). Old word for nonsense, only here in the N. T. Medical writers used it for the wild talk of those in delirium or hysteria. **Disbelieved** (ἠπίστων [*ēpistoun*]). Imperfect active of ἀπίστεω [*apisteō*], old verb from ἀπίστος [*apistos*], without confidence or faith in. They kept on distrusting the story of the women.