

Resurrection Sunday

Text: Luke 24:1-49

April 16, 2006

## LOOKING FOR JESUS

### Introduction

1. My friends, Jesus is alive! For almost everyone here today, that may not seem like earthshaking news (though it really ought to be every time we think about it. Our lives for all eternity depend on that fact). In a phrase, you could say that I am preaching to the choir (both literally and figuratively). Before we are tempted to tune out, assuming that this is simply old news we have heard before, we do live in a world that is greatly confused concerning Jesus and not a few of those people regularly attend evangelical churches.
2. Just in the last few weeks we have been flooded with challenges that Jesus was merely a man, married, perhaps with a child, actually in alliance with Judas who supposedly enabled him to escape being trapped in his physical body through the crucifixion. Such teaching says that any resurrection, at best, was spiritual in nature – not physically, not bodily. So, in effect we are told that the bad guy is really the good guy and God's Son is really just a man. That is what is passing as truth these days. And not a few are buying it.
3. So for us to be gathered here this morning in a place where we make no apology for believing the Bible and declaring Jesus to be God the Son, fully alive, having risen bodily from the tomb, and now present in heaven, preparing to return some day in power and great glory, and at this very moment both interceding for us and receiving our worship – perhaps what is before us is not so common after all.
4. In order that we might truthfully and effectively focus on the living Lord Jesus, I would like to direct your attention to a passage that for me holds great fascination – Luke 24. Let's not allow its familiarity to get in our way of looking at this Scripture again and perhaps discovering something we may have missed or maybe jarring our minds into remembering and affirming something we may have forgotten. Here we go. The outline is simple. We consider two important affirmations.

**I. HE IS ALIVE (How do we know that?) (Read vv. 1-9) In this passage alone, the fact of His resurrection was ...**

**A. Established by angels**

1. Can you imagine the bewilderment and astonishment of these women as they came upon the tomb, which was now open and empty? They had come to complete what they must have believed was left at least partially undone by the men who originally quickly prepared Jesus' body for burial just before the beginning of Sabbath. When the women arrive, there is no dead body but there are two angels. That would be surprising!
2. Have you ever thought about what these angelic creatures said to the women? "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" Isn't that just like people to look for Jesus in a place where He will not be? You will not find Jesus among the dead. Why were they looking for Jesus in a tomb when He clearly taught that the grave would be unable to hold Him? The reason the angels said what they said is simple. He is alive!
3. I will be the first to admit that if someone tells me that they have a message from some angels, I am going to be very skeptical. Don't misunderstand. I believe in the existence of angels, but it is way outside the norm to have visible encounters with them. I believe I am in good company. Notice verse 11. The disciples did not believe the women either. It sounded like an idle tale to them. Regardless of the reaction by the women or by those to whom they told, angels announced Jesus' resurrection – "He is not here, but has risen!"

**B. Established by consistent testimony from eyewitnesses (Have you noticed how difficult it is to track something down when you want to know exactly what happened? Talk to ten different people and receive ten different perspectives – some not even remotely resembling others! Yet here are several testimonies from various people based on a variety of proofs, presented over a period of at least several hours if not several days, and it is the same story. He is risen!**

1. First it is the women – He is risen! They based their conclusion on an empty tomb and the testimony to two angels! They continued to tell the same story, though it was not readily received by the disciples! (Whether people believe it or not – the story – if its

true – does not change!)

2. The two men on the way to Emmaus – He is risen! They based their conclusion on a personal appearance of Jesus Himself. They were overwhelmed by this unexpected, clearly, not at all anticipated, appearance. When they realized it was Jesus, they traveled the seven miles back to Jerusalem in the dark to declare this incredible news to the eleven! And when they got there ...
3. The eleven were claiming that Jesus had risen from the dead based on Peter's testimony that Jesus had personally appeared to him! And in view of Peter's earlier denial of Jesus, he was not exactly looking for or probably desiring such an encounter! (And as the 2 from Emmaus were speaking, in walks Jesus where all of them together could see, hear and even touch Him!)

C. Established by circumstantial evidence (There were at least two pieces of circumstantial evidence that must be entered as evidence).

1. The tomb was without a body. In spite of some men's attempts to suggest that they had traveled to the wrong tomb or that Jesus' disciples had somehow stolen the dead body and hidden or disposed of it. This does not adequately satisfy the fact of an empty tomb. An empty tomb was the last thing either the political or the religious leaders wanted. In fact, steps were taken to ensure that the tomb remained sealed. It was the reality of the resurrection that led to the advancement of these silly cover-ups.
2. The grave clothes were in the tomb. John gives us more details, but here in Luke's account, Peter runs to the tomb, looks in and sees the cloths and goes away shaking his head. Where did these come from and why was Peter marveling? The reason for the amazement was that these graves cloths remained in place, but without a body! How was that possible? (Could it be that He is risen?)

D. Established by prophetic testimony – Jesus had not been silent during His ministry about His death and resurrection. He had made it clear to His disciples on several occasions, including the night before His crucifixion! Notice how the doubters are directed.

1. The angels had challenged the women to “remember how he told you...that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified **and on the third day rise.**” We are told that after the angels said this, that the women remembered

Jesus' words!

2. Jesus Himself, though at this time unidentified, used the OT Scriptures to show the Emmaus disciples that “the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory.”
3. To those in the upper room late that first resurrection Sunday, Jesus, standing before them in the flesh **showed them in the Scriptures**, “that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead.” The point is simple. He is risen! He is alive! I want you to hang on to that for now. We will return to this all-important truth in a few minutes. But before we do, we need to consider one more important affirmation.

## II. HE IS AT WORK

### A. He opened their eyes to see Him

1. In the passage before us, Jesus appeared to the Emmaus pair, but they did not recognize him. There was something strange going on in them, but they were kept from knowing it was Jesus. But when they invited this stranger to remain with them – the appropriate middle-eastern hospitable thing to do – he, essentially taking the lead as a host, broke bread with them and prayed.
2. And after He did, He opened their eyes and they recognized him – and then He vanished. You see, everything in them was saying, “This is Jesus.” But their eyes were saying, “No it’s not.”
3. Right now, everything in you may be saying, “This is Jesus - the real deal He is God the Son. He is truly the Savior.” But your eyes are saying, “No He’s not.” The reason is that your eyes are blind. But just as Jesus opened the physical eyes of the blind during His ministry, He is able to open the eyes of the blind - those who cannot recognize that He is Jesus the Christ! How does He do that? Is He going to suddenly appear to us? Surprisingly, even in this context, He chose the normative way to open their eyes. He used the Scripture! That is how He did it then and that is how He does it now.

### B. He opened their eyes to understand His Word (Let’s retrace our steps back to the beginning with the women at the tomb and then the Emmaus pair and then the eleven).

1. The angels could have showed the evidence of Jesus resurrection to the women, but instead they referred back to Jesus’ word – “Remember how he told you...” When

they remembered his words, they were convinced.

2. The men from Emmaus were in the presence of Jesus but did not know it and clearly they did not understand what had happened in regard to the Christ's death and resurrection. Jesus could have said, "Look guys. It's me! See the prints of the nails! (Those are legitimate and He does use these things on Thomas later). Here, Jesus does not say anything like this. Instead, "Beginning with Moses and the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all of the Scriptures the things concerning himself." After the men finally recognized Jesus (and after Jesus vanished from their presence) they realized that it was the opening up of the Scripture to them that led to their eyes being opened to see Jesus.
3. Even when Jesus walked into the midst of the eleven in the upper room, listen to what He said. "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. Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures and said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations...'"
4. Jesus approach was not then nor is it now one of experience – ("try Jesus", "Hey guys, check me out."). His appeal was to Scripture. That is the way God has chosen to open the eyes of the blind so that they might see, so that they might be saved. My friends, there is no eternal life; there is no salvation apart from the Word of God. Apart from the Scripture, no eyes will be opened, no true faith will be given, no sins will be forgiven, no eternal life will be gained.

## **CONCLUSION**

1. We have stayed pretty much in Luke 24. I want to turn back a few pages to one other passage very briefly – Luke 16. The story is a fascinating one. It seems that two people have died – one a beggar and the other a rich man. The beggar went to paradise. The rich man found himself in torment. The torment was so intense and horrific, that the rich man pleaded that he might be visited by the beggar for just a second that this beggar might simply dip his finger in water and touch the rich man's tongue because he was tormented

in the flame. That would not be done. The rich man than requested that the beggar might be allowed to return to earth and tell his brothers about this awful place so they may do whatever they need to do in order to avoid this terrible end. Listen to his words: “Then I beg you, father (Abraham), to send him to my father’s house – for I have five brothers – so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.”

2. Now listen to the words of Abraham – just like the words of Jesus – “They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.” What is he saying? Before we answer let’s read on.
3. The rich man speaks, “No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.” Abraham responds, “If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.”
4. Even Jesus risen from the dead did not and does not produce repentance and faith. It is God using His Word to open our eyes and minds to understand, believe and trust the Savior for eternal salvation. He is alive! For some of you right now, that yields a “So what” response. But I am praying that since you have been exposed to the Word of God today, that He who is risen will also be at work in you to open up your blind eyes to see the risen Lord and to repent of your sin and embrace Him as your Savior! When that happens, you and the rest of us will rejoice, for you will have been raised from the dead!
5. Only a living Savior can give life to a dead sinner who is hell-bound and without hope and bring that one to heaven! “Hallelujah, He is risen and He is at work!” May He do His work among us today!