

The Original Resurrection

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[0 : 0 0] All right. Thank you, Ellen. Good morning, everybody. How y'all doing? I'm Jesse, like Ellen said, one of the pastors here. And if you are new to us, you came on a great Sunday, not just because it's Easter, but we're actually going to kick off a three-part series on the resurrection, which is good news for you and me, because I'm not trying to squeeze in all the truth about the resurrection into one sermon. So guess what? Easter miracle. My sermon's not that long. Everyone's like, yay, or maybe not. Anyways. All right, cool. So I would just say, man, if you're with us, you're new, you're visiting, checking out Christianity, I would say, I would really invite you, man, come back the next couple of weeks because the truths of the resurrection and what they mean for us, man, they are so powerful and so good. And so I just want to encourage you, man, come and stay with us for the rest of this series. So we're going to kick it off by starting with the original resurrection. And we're going to look at John verse 20, verses 1 to 23.

It's a long passage, so let's just jump right into it. It says this, Now on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early while it was still dark and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, they have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him. So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. Probably what would happen with, if I was, I would be the disciple that got outran, you know, anybody else would get there before me. And stooping to look in, he saw the linen clothes lying there, but he did not go in. And then Simon Peter came following him and went into the tomb. He saw the linen clothes lying there and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus's head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in, and he saw and believed. For as yet, they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes. But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept, she stooped to look into the tomb, and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, woman, why are you weeping? She said to them, they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him. Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. And Jesus said to her, woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking? Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus said to her, Mary. She turned and said to him in Aramaic,

Rabboni, which means teacher. Jesus said to her, do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father, but go to my brothers and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God. Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, I have seen the Lord, and that he had said these things to her. On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, peace be with you. And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them. If you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld. This is God's word. So what I love about this passage, and you actually read this in a lot of the gospel accounts of the resurrection, the disciples have a chance as the narrators to kind of make themselves look good, but they do anything but that in this narrative. You read about them, one is like, hey, I got outran. The guy that's writing this is like, I tried to run with Peter, but he was faster than me. I kind of huffed and puffed my way there. And then they're freaking out. They're afraid. They're scared. All this stuff. We see Mary falling apart, right? And the disciples after Jesus's death, they're not courageous. They're like, they're hidden away like some doomsday bunker extremist, like freaked out for their lives. They think the end is coming.

Now, you wouldn't have expected this because of the last three years having spent time with Jesus. They saw all the power that Jesus had and what he was capable of doing, the miracles he performed, right? And then it's not that Jesus was hiding the fact that he had to die and rise again. He said it to them on several occasions, like, hey, this is what's happening. I'm going to Jerusalem. I'm going to be handed over. They're going to kill me, but they're going to raise, you know, I'm going to be raised on the third day. But all of that didn't seem to matter. Like Jesus died, and then nothing happened. And between the cross and them seeing him again, they are pitiful, lacking faith, scared. Now, you and I can read this and say, like, man, if I was there, I would have set him straight.

I would have told him what's up. Not really. We would have been just like them. Because when things are going bad in our lives, we often lose heart, right? We often get scared and sad. And without Jesus' resurrection, there is good reason to be sad and scared. Now, let's stop and let's, I want us to consider Mary and the disciples, right? They both, on separate accounts, and why she reacted the way she reacted to Jesus' death. And it's good to know that Mary, this Mary, when Jesus encountered her for the first time, she was a demon-possessed gal. She was unmarried. She had this very bad reputation.

[6 : 06] They would have considered her a woman of ill repute in that day. But then Jesus shows up, and before, society would have looked at her with scorn and actually looked at her with disgust. She would have been at the bottom of the social strata, barely even recognized as human. But then Jesus interposes himself. He steps into her life, right? Casts out her demons, sets her free from them, calls her to join his community of disciples and follow him. And what he's doing, he is both, he is both saving her and delivering her, but he's giving her dignity. He is restoring value to her.

She is being elevated from her situation. That is what is happening. And so when she's referring to Jesus as Lord and Rabbi, that's more than her just having good Southern manners, right? That's not what's happening. What she is doing, she is remembering and trying to hide back under Jesus's position of authority over her as Rabbi. See, it's important to know in those days, contextually, like in Rabbi students, they enjoyed their Rabbi's esteem and social clout. And who they were as a Rabbi, and their reputation was imputed to his, this, anybody, any Rabbi's disciples. And that's what's going on. And that's what's going on with Mary here. So we see Mary's dignity and restoration was actually her being tied to Jesus and being with him, being counted among his disciples and the entourage that followed him around. She was under his tutelage, accepted by him, claimed by him. But here's the thing, Jesus had to be alive. And with Jesus dead, Mary had every reason to weep. Every reason to weep. Without him, she is back where she started, before Jesus. At the bottom of the heap, the bottom of the social strata, a nobody, and even worse than a nobody, looked at with scorn and disgust by all those around her. But the same goes for Jesus's disciples. They're hiding out scared. Now, why would they be hiding out scared? Well, I mean, if you think about it, in the glory days of Jesus's ministry, man, his population was high amongst the majority, right? People dug him. People were following him around. The crowds were like, hey, where's Jesus at? Let's go find him. And even when Jesus tried to like, and the disciples tried to get away from them for some time, they were like, they would figure out. They had some like GPS radar to figure out where he was all the time. And they loved his teaching, and they loved the miracles, and they were amazed at the things he said. They were like, there is nobody like this. There is no teacher like this. And all that Jesus was enjoying in those moments at that time, and that was transferred to the disciples as well. They were looked on with that same esteem, being one of his. But then the death of Jesus happened. And those same crowds that were cheering him on and saying he was amazing, and we think about the week before the cross, they are welcoming him. The crowds are welcoming him as he rides into Jerusalem on a donkey, and they're saying and agreeing with Jesus coming in on a donkey, because that's what kings did. And they're saying, this is the king we've been waiting for. He is finally taking his place. And then in a week's time, that same crowd that were cheering him and welcoming him as king turned on him and were shouting, crucify, crucify. Jesus went from hero to hated, and they didn't even have Twitter mobs back then. It happened like that.

And his disciples knew. They treated him like that. We're next. Their rabbi, this Messiah figure, they had put all their hope in. He is now gone. They're not under his protection anymore. He's been killed by the mob. And guess what? They're probably going to come after us, his disciples, next. I mean, that's tough. That's a tough reality to live in, both Mary and the disciples when we think about it.

But then we see the resurrection changes all of that. It does more than just restore what was lost. It's not just like, hey, Jesus is back. Sweet. We can get back to how things were. Hey, it's even better because you know what? He's back. He's risen from the dead. It's not like now, if you think about like, okay, if your rabbi is the one that, you know, you're walking around as a disciple and you're feeling good about yourself because your rabbi is like, my rabbi is a better teacher than that.

Like, man, if you're Jesus's disciples now, you can just say like, oh yeah, did your rabbi rise from the dead? Ours did. But that's the game changer of the resurrection. It's unprecedented. And Jesus's resurrection changed everything for his disciples. You see this in Mary's response to seeing Jesus.

[11 : 03] She doesn't want to let him go at first. Totally understandable, right? For her and her situation. But then her clinging fear, like Jesus, please don't ever leave me again, suddenly changes, right?

Jesus says, man, go tell the disciples. And she's like, no, can we just have like maybe 30 more minutes here? I'm a little anxious about, you know, not seeing you ever again. But she runs. She runs from Jesus. She becomes the first evangelist. Jesus bestows on her that honor. She is the first lady to preach the good news of the resurrection to anybody. In a world that looked down on women and mistreated women and saw women as nothing, God elevates. God goes beyond. So she runs and she does that. Why? Because if Jesus has come back from the dead, this is what's dawning on her. You know what? If he can overcome death, I'm never going to lose him again. There's nothing left to separate us at all. Death was the only thing that could have done that. Jesus overcame that. And so she could leave him to tell her friends, he's alive. He is alive. And then you see the same radical change in the disciples. We find them in this chapter, freaked out, hiding away. But in the book of Acts, we see that change. Jesus ascends to heaven and sends them out. We see them fearlessly proclaiming, proclaiming, I can get that word. I can get that. Jesus is Lord and Savior in the face of persecution and death. And that change doesn't happen without the resurrection. If the resurrection isn't true, they don't change that way. But here's the thing, Jesus' resurrection, man, what it does, it gives us true peace because it has conquered our greatest fear. Isn't it interesting what Jesus' first words to his disciples when he shows up? Now remember, they're in like locked door room, and then Jesus appears, right? He could have said like, surprise, gotcha. He doesn't. What does he say?

He says, peace be with you. He says, peace be with you. And there have never been truer words spoken. Because let's be honest, for all of us, there is no greater fear than that of death.

There is no greater fear. It is something that we all are going to face, right? Death and taxes, it's what everybody like us. We all have that in common. We're all going to face death. And we spend most of our life trying to ignore that fact. I know I do. I don't know about you. But imagine this.

Imagine living a life if death was not possible. What would that look like? It would kind of look like maybe the movie Groundhog Day, you know? It's just like, hey, I'm just going to, nothing I do is going to kill me.

[14 : 08] What would you and I have to be afraid of anymore? Seriously. We'd eat whatever we want. No consequence. I'd actually go skydiving, right? Without the parachute. If there's no death. Hey, if you and I understand that we couldn't die, we would totally change the way we live. That's the reality. If we really understood that, we'd be more bold. We'd be more daring. But along with that, I think along with that, we'd probably, if it was just that we didn't die and we didn't have to face death, we could easily become extremely selfish and hedonistic. I mean, if there's never any consequence coming, why not? But Jesus's victory over death isn't just freedom from death, which would be more like living a consequence-free existence. It's also freedom from sin. It's freedom from death, yes, but it's also freedom from sin. And we can't separate the two. Jesus's resurrection means the cross frees us. It has freed us from sin. And we can't ignore it. The cross and the resurrection, they're two things that are tied together. Without the cross, the resurrection means Jesus came back to life, but nothing changes for us. Conversely, without the resurrection, the cross really loses its power. At best, it's just this symbol of Jesus being a really nice guy and dying for it, showing us how we could be sacrificial and how we can live. But we need more than that. We just don't need that example. We need more than that. Jesus couldn't just die. Think about it. He couldn't just die a comfortable death and rise again. That was not in the cards for him. That's not God's plan.

The Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, no. It wasn't like, well, you just need to die, so it doesn't matter how you die. You know, maybe we'll make it really comfortable. You know, you can just pass sweetly in your sleep. No, asleep. No, he had to die a horrific death. He had to die on the cross.

He had to spill his blood. Every pint of his blood had to be out of his body because his death had a purpose, and that death was to atone for our sins, which shows us this. Which shows us this, the pain and the suffering and the penalty of Jesus's death, the horrific nature of it, the scandal of it, the excruciating part of it, it shows us sin's real consequences.

You know, we, you know that phrase, don't do the crime if you're not willing to do the time, right? I've seen my kids actually, like, weigh that up. They're like, let's see, if I do this, I know I'm going to get in trouble, but is it worth it? And I have to say, sometimes they say, yep, it's worth it, and they're willing to do the time. But when we sin, it's very different. It's not like, it's not like that, right? It's God's not like, I'm just going to put you on a timeout.

You know, I'm going to give you a few spankings on the bottom. It's different. We break God's law of righteousness. The penalty has to be paid, and you know what that payment is? It's death.

[17 : 26] Death. Every sin, the payment is death. There is no sliding scale on that. Rich men, poor men, king or beggar, all have to pay the same price of death for their sin. And that's one thing you and I can't afford to pay, no matter who we are. But the cross, it sets us free because Jesus died, so we don't have to pay the penalty we can't pay. We did the crime. He did the time. He paid sin's penalty. But that's not all. That's not all he did on the cross. He also broke sin's power. First Corinthians 15, 56 says, the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. And let's briefly look at that. What does that mean that the power of sin is the law? The law here is talking about God's righteous standard. It's not like talking about the law in America. No, it's talking about God's law,

God's moral law, his ethical law, his standard of righteousness. God's kingdom is a kingdom. It's a kingdom of righteous laws. But our sinful nature gives us a huge problem. Like, we are born with it. And our proclivity is to sin, not to be righteous. We were born that way. And so, it makes it impossible for you and I to live up to God's righteous standard. And so, the Bible says what is true, all have sin and fall short of the glory of God. We've fallen short of his righteousness.

And so, what the law does, the law stands against us as a witness against us of where we fall short. The law is not our friend. But in Jesus' death, the law loses its power to condemn you and me.

And not because God suddenly stops taking our sins seriously, but because all our sins were put on Jesus and paid for in his death. God's justice. He is a just God. His law proves that. There is penalties for every sin that we have. Those penalties, his law is satisfied in Christ's death on the cross for us. And so, what that does, it takes away the law's power to condemn us for our sin.

And this is why the cross is so central to the Christian faith. It always has been. It always will be. It does get more playtime than the resurrection. And that's true. But the other part of that, we have to realize, without the resurrection, without the resurrection, the cross is nothing.

[20 : 07] You might say, Jesse, those are some bold words. But I think the Bible says what I'm saying. Jesus had to rise from the dead to vindicate what the cross accomplished. 1 Corinthians 15, 12 to 19, the apostle Paul, this is in the Bible, he says this. Now, if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? So, there's a church, and people were a little bit confused. And they were saying, that resurrection from the dead, I don't get that. That's a little hard to believe. Seems a bit impossible. You know what?

We'll agree with the cross. We'll check out the resurrection from the dead. Paul's saying, wait, wait, wait, hold on a second. Here's why. If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain. Our message, the gospel, it's worthless. And our faith is in vain. Our faith is worthless. We are even found to be misinterpreting God because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise, if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are raised, now I know there's some logical things, just stick with me here. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised.

And if Christ has not been raised, our faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. And if in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. I mean, Paul's message, what he's saying is very clear.

The cross needs the resurrection and the resurrection needs the cross. You take one of those away and you're left with nothing. You take either of those away, you got nothing, no hope. Your faith is absolutely worthless. But the two together, let me say this, the two together follow the laws that God had set up in the Bible, right? The laws that govern us, the laws that govern what is true.

The Bible says every claim must be established by two or three witnesses. That makes sense. Look at 2 Corinthians 13.1. And this is a direct quote from the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy.

[22 : 22] Every charge must be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. So the cross is one witness that says, when Jesus said it is finished, he is testifying on his own account saying, I have done what I came to do. My blood has been shed. The atonement has been finished. I am done.

And then the resurrection steps in as another witness and shouts at the cross, yes and amen. What he has said is true. There's your second witness. Let everything be established.

The resurrection affirms the testimony of the cross. If Jesus is still dead, so are you and I. We are still in our sins. No hope after this life. Our faith would be futile. And we would be stuck in sadness and in fear like Mary and the disciples were. The resurrection, friends, isn't some optional part of our faith. It's not this thing like, eh, it's hard to believe. Let's just chuck it out. It's no big deal. No, no, no. Without Jesus' death, without Jesus, without the resurrection, sorry, Jesus' death is meaningless. But because he has risen, we know his death has set us free from sin's penalty and sin's power. And it's not only us who believe that agree with it. Look at Colossians 2, 12 to 15. Having been buried with him in baptism, cross and death, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful work of God who raised him from the dead, resurrection, and you who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses. By counseling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands, this he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame. Now these rulers and authorities are like rulers and authorities in heavenly places. He put them to open shame by triumphing over them in him. So it is the cross and

Jesus saying, it is finished. Look what I have accomplished. The resurrection saying yes and amen. And we, of course, his disciples also say yes and amen to that. But you know who else affirms this?

You know who else stands as testimony to these things being true? Well, first, it's the law. The law no longer stands against us because it cannot deny the cross and the resurrection. And you know who else cannot deny the cross and the resurrection and bears witness and says yes and amen to it, even though they don't like it? Satan's and demons. Our accusers, our tempters, our persecutors, they cannot deny the cross and the resurrection. They don't want it to be true, but they cannot deny that it has happened. They have no real power for those who are in Christ Jesus because of that.

[25 : 14] All they can do is get us to doubt the effects of the cross, to doubt that it is true, and to doubt and forget that the resurrection has happened and that those things are yes and amen for us as well.

That's all they can do. And the cross and the resurrection means that our Lord, our rabbi, is alive and victorious. As his disciples, his glory and his victory is not only his, it is imputed to us as well. It is reckoned and credited to us as well who are in Christ Jesus.

Jesus. Everything that the law says is true about Christ Jesus and all that he accomplished. And all the principalities and powers in heavenly places, they have to say yes and amen to those things. And they have to look at us through Jesus Christ. And this is different. What this does for you and me, this totally changes how we then go and live. It changes how we live life, right?

It is a religion and it's what separates Christianity apart from every other religion and worldview that is out there. See, religion says do, but resurrection says done. Many different religions have their own versions of the afterlife, but they all carry this similar implication. After death comes judgment.

And that judgment is based on how you did, how you performed. Your life is weighed in the balance according to the good you've done and according to the bad you've done. And when you face that afterlife in any other religion, you're wondering, have I been good enough? Has my good outweighed my bad?

[27 : 01] And who is going to determine that? And think about it, man, that is a lot of pressure to perform in this life. That is a lot of pressure. And then when you mess up, when you screw up, when you do something bad, that even like puts more pressure on you. Oh no, I got to make this back up. I got to make this back up. It's enough to like, man, we should be walking around having panic attacks. Like if that's what we believe, that's what we should be doing as people. But the good news of the gospel is that you are freed from all of that. Jesus did it for you. He died your death. He paid your penalty. He rose again defeating your greatest enemy and your greatest fear. And he's alive. And that should change how we live.

We get to live free from shame and fear. Mary didn't just need her sins forgiven. She needed her rabbi alive. She needed her Lord alive. She needed her advocate still advocating for her. The one who vouched for her. The one who said, she belongs with me. She's one of mine. She has dignity. You don't get to say she is still what she was. That is the powerful message of the resurrection that we need to hear. We are not what we were. And we get to enjoy the reputation and respect and exaltation of our rabbi Lord Jesus Christ. We are what he says we are, not anybody else.

The disciples needed Jesus in that same way. Their fear of others needed to be addressed. And only seeing and touching the resurrected Jesus. Man, his body that was brutally massacred on the cross. They needed to see that it was him. They needed to know that it was him.

And only that could take that fear away. And it changed them. It changed them into bold, fearless guys and gals that spread the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ, regardless of the cross.

[29 : 29] And you know what? It was worth it for them. The resurrection had set them free. As the band comes up, I want us to consider how we respond to this. And if you're here and you're not yet a Christian, man, it's so glad that you are here checking out Christianity. And again, man, come back the next couple of weeks. The resurrection is, it's an amazing thing. And we are just uncovering, we're scratching the surface on this. There's so much more to it.

He lived a life I couldn't live. He died a death I couldn't die. And he rose from the grave. And friends, if that's you, I invite you today, man, put your faith in Jesus Christ. Acknowledge that. Acknowledge that, hey, I'm a sinner. I need your help, Jesus. Be my Lord and Savior. It's as simple as saying something like that. That's all it takes to be saved. You don't have any other hoops to jump through. And I want to encourage you to do that today. And if that's you and that's how you responded, man, we would love to meet you. There's going to be some of us up here afterwards.

What I like to do before we take communion together, I like to let the Holy Spirit come and invite him and ask you to invite him to examine your heart. Examine your heart.

But what I want to do is give us just 30 seconds, just shut our eyes, focus and say, man, Holy Spirit, speak to me right now. Examine my heart. Show me where I need to make some corrections. Help me stir, stir my faith maybe where it's weak. So let's do that right now.

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May it give us greater security in what you, Jesus, have done. You are the way to the Father.

You have satisfied all that needs to be satisfied. Work in our hearts and continue to work in our hearts. Amen.