

MESSENGERS / WITNESS 3 – PART I

Happy Easter! I want to be honest and put all my cards on the table this morning.

- 1) I became a follower of Christ at 16 – and for most of my early life in Christ – I struggled with Easter. Everyone acted like it was a big deal, the best day of the year, the day that affects, shapes, and gives meaning to our life. The day that promises in the resurrected Jesus – there is life! Yet, I struggled because – while I believed Jesus had done something to give me eternity with Him I truly struggled to find satisfying, soul filling life in Jesus. I'm not talking about experiences that feel good. I'm talking about deep satisfying joy that is not based on whether things are pleasant or comfortable, or hard and painful. I got tiny tastes every once in a while, but they were very few and far between and honestly – I will show you my cards so to speak: My soul was restless. I said I was a follower of Christ who knew real life – but I spent most of my time, looking for a more satisfying life in every one and every place but Jesus.
- 2) I think there are many of you in here this morning that identify with what I just said. You are a Christ follower, but if you showed me your cards, you find little satisfying, soul filling life in Jesus. You have moments. Maybe it has been a while – a long while. You, like I was, are restless - and more than you would like to admit, you look for life, a more satisfying life in every one and every place but Jesus. You wonder – is there more? This is a safe place today.

One more time – if I can put my cards on the table this morning, and tell you where we are headed ...

- 3) Because this Easter – I believe there are people in here with various struggles and joys with the reality of Easter.
- Some of you call yourself Christians, but very little in your life is affected by Jesus & if you showed me your cards today, you would admit, very little of your life reflects the life of Jesus. Easter is more about family, than Jesus. You are here, some of you with hope, that this might be the year things change & others of you are here because a neighbor or family member asked & you were kind enough to say yes. You have little hope much will change & really, you have little use for the church. That's ok. I'm still glad you are here & I hope you feel welcomed & I pray change comes!
 - Some of you identify yourself as Christians, Christ followers – and if we could see your life – more of it than you realize is identified with Christ. You struggle, you openly admit you struggle, but your life is changing & it is consumed by the life of Jesus more than it ever has & but you long for more of His life for you and for others!
 - Some of you don't identify yourself as Christians. Easter is just another day and you don't believe much of what we will celebrate today. Maybe you are curious, maybe there is something that has sparked a question or two. Again, I'm glad you're here and I pray your questions get addressed today and your curiosity grows and I'm going to be real bold - again here are my cards - I'm praying, hoping you encounter the life of Jesus & you are never the same.

To continue the poker imagery – I want to go all in on this hope today –

The soul-satisfying life of more that we desire – is only in the resurrected life of Jesus. Some people think Jesus is like a high stakes poker game. It is a gamble you don't know if you win till death. Today – I hope and pray you see – that is not true. There is something that has already happened that changes everything – **the resurrection**. It makes Jesus and this life – and the life we long for – not a gamble. We are going to ask 2 questions today as we unpack this hope.

01. Did the resurrection really happen? 02. If the resurrection happened – Is there life in it for me?

01. Did the resurrection happen?

LUKE 24:1-12 (ESV) 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. This is not what they had expected to find. They expected to find the body of Jesus. They had returned to the tomb to finish the burial of Jesus that was hurried on Friday because of sunset on Sabbath. Had to finish work and get home. They came to beg soldiers to roll back the stone to finish the burial. (Matt: the Jewish leaders begged Pilate for a guard.) Instead of soldiers, a guarded tomb, & Jesus' body: they find no soldiers & an open & empty tomb & **no 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, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? - 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 what had happened.

At first, none of Jesus' followers believed he had risen from the dead.

Ladies came not believing – and left not sure, but not believers – just sad and being made fun of. (John 20:1-2, 11a)

Peter and the disciples – laugh at the ladies – and even Peter is marveled but not believing. (all the accounts say he believed later.)

Did the RESURRECTION Happen. A lot of people – do not believe in the resurrection. Even more a lot of religious people do not believe. Some have spent their entire academic life trying to disprove it. Why? It would change

everything for them. What about for you? **What would it change?** Whether you don't believe or you do – see the evidence. 8

Top 5 scholarly theories against the resurrection:

- **Body Was Stolen by Jewish Leaders** -Mary thought this had happened. She is asking the angels she thinks are gardeners: **JN 20:13 (ESV)** They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." If this happened, when the cause began to grow, and it grew fast and large, the leaders could have ended everything by bringing out his body.
- **Body Was Stolen by Disciples** -The disciples were accused of stealing the body. **MATT 28:13, 15 (ESV)** Tell people his disciples came by night and stole him. So these scared men who fled Jesus' arrest like cockroaches caught out in the dark by a light –they all the sudden went all Seal Team 6 – took out a Rom guard, rolled back the stone and stole the body of Jesus.
- **Wrong Tomb** –Not kidding. I have made wrong turns, but really. Most anit-resurrection schools reject this – not many tombs near Golgatha were soldiers would have been in mass guarding a tomb. *Again easy to refute – bring out the body!*
- **Hallucinations** -That in their grief they believed they saw Jesus. For sure science has some proof of a person or 2 seeing incredible things that are not there in deep grief. But the bible has over 500 people seeing Jesus alive and there is written proof I will get to a minute outside the bible that speaks of mass sightings. *Mass hallucinations – don't happen.*
- **Swoon Theory** –This says, Jesus in his beaten condition passed out. They thought he was dead and buried him. This happens all through history. Excavated soldiers from Civil War were found with the inside of their caskets full of scratch marks and their hair pulled out from being buried alive. *(Walking Dead stuff!)* It happens. But with Jesus. His savagely beat, whipped body, pierced by nails and a spear - survives & doesn't die after he awakes by infection in that day? And then he walks 7 miles in Luke 24 and then he convinces his followers he has conquered death – with that body. *Picture of Jesus*
"It is impossible that a being who had escaped half-dead out of the tomb, who crept about weak and ill, wanting medical treatment, who required bandaging, strengthening, and indulgence, and who still at last most likely succumbed to His sufferings, could have given to the disciples the impression that he was a Conqueror over death and the grave, the Prince of Life." - Friedrich Strauss

For you – and I to believe Jesus actually resurrected from the dead - is not a high stakes bet – like poker. We don't have to cross our fingers and hope we're right. Here's some of the evidence.

Evidence for the resurrection: (First more proof Jesus exists outside the bible than to prove you are alive.)

- **Evidence in the Bible** –OT prophecies. There are more than 35 separate accounts written 500-1800 years before Jesus died that detail the Messiah would come to Israel, be arrested, be beaten, be crucified, die, and rise again. (Is 53 – detail). Jesus told his disciples in detail this would happen over and over. When the disciples taught about this resurrection – they didn't say have faith – they said, there are hundreds of brothers and sisters still alive who witnessed this – talk to them. **I CORINTHIANS 15:3-6 (ESV)** 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive. *The historical evidence*
- **Evidence Outside the Bible** –Roman historians Tacitus & Pliny the Younger and Jewish historian Josephus (not believers) all recorded the life of Jesus & Josephus records hundreds swore to him that Jesus had resurrected after his death. And, he gave corroborating evidence like the disciples courageous lives amidst - persecution. *Historical circumst. evidence*
- **His Family Believed** –His mother and siblings – even half brother were believers. *If My brother told me I'm God, he's in a room somewhere forever!* Jesus' family disowned him at the beginning – and later after his death followed and led. Why?
- **Day of Worship Moved from Saturday to Sunday** -After 1500 years of corporate worship on Saturday, these Jewish followers of Jesus moved their day of worship to Sunday. Why? You don't change things in the church for no reason.
- **Transformation of the Disciples** –They went from fear struck men and women who were hiding out - to men and women who openly walked the streets publicly speaking of Jesus. This group of hundreds – was all persecuted, beaten, and many killed. Of the original 12 apostles – only two were not martyred. Judas took his own life – guilt for Jesus' betrayal and John was exiled but not killed. The rest were all brutally killed. For what – for a hidden body, a half dead teacher? 18

There is overwhelming evidence that Jesus did raise from the dead. And, I think that is vital. Life altering. But the bigger question is- How does the resurrection affect our life? Again, if we could see each other's cards – I think many of us **DO** believe Jesus rose from the dead, and this is encouraging. But trying to find soul-satisfying life in the RESURRECTION feels like an all in gamble.

02. If the resurrection happened – Is there life in it for me?

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, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the

dead? What a question. *They weren't seeking the living were they?* But what they were seeking even in their grief was some hope, – what's next, some sense of purpose, some kind of life. And they were met with this question – **Why do you seek life – among death?**

*We are a restless culture. We have more free time than ever as a culture – and we spend more of our time and money on entertainment than any generation ever has. We are the most entertained generation the world has ever known – 600 or 700 channels and nothing on – that really satisfies our soul. Oh, I love me some Blue Bloods and March Madness – but after while, I'm itching for something different – restless. Had a friend tell me the other day – I watch documentaries – not that drama fluff. I said, “Well– good, you are informed and not entertained like the rest of us small minded folk.” Interesting note for us – we are also the most informed culture ever. The average American sees, hears, or reads more information in one year than Americans consumed in their life-time 100 years ago. Think about it – we have access to all the information in the world in your pocket or coat right now and yet we are the most restless culture ever. Why – Why are we so restless? Gallop did a study of its 2017 polls and made this observation – in general, this is the most dissatisfied our country as individuals have been that they can tell thru the history of their polls. They do a lot of polls that ask for customer/constituent satisfaction with various products, people, institutions, and life. And, the numbers say: we are more dissatisfied than ever – even though we have more entertainment and information at our disposal than ever. We are restless because we are not satisfied with our life – with life. We want a more satisfying life and we look for it everywhere. **Where are you seeking life for your soul?***

God is saying here in Luke the reason we are so dissatisfied is we are looking for life – among death?

God says, all our work to satisfy our soul on our own eventually leads to disappointment and death of some type. *(Finding satisfaction for our soul a part from Jesus resurrected life is sin. The wages of sin = death.)*

WHERE ARE YOU SEEKING LIFE FOR YOUR SOUL?

- We look for life that will satisfy our soul in relationships. *For a while yes – then all disappoint, restless, another.*
- We look for life that will satisfy our soul in meaningful work. *For a while the dream lives- it ends, Restless.*
- We look for life that will satisfy our soul in helping others thru wisdom or service. *Momentary- then restless.*
- We look for life that will satisfy our soul in risk *(Some of it is moral, we just risk our body in adventure and it feels good, till we need more – restless. Other risks are immoral – sin, they feel good too (cards down), but these risks eventually end up leaving us restless.*

One day 20+ years ago – Brandon (youth guy in Tx invites me to speak at ski trip. I come – first day out for BM on snow board – and I take them high up to the back trails. Beautiful, amazing – but not so safe for newbies. It is so steep, they have to go up a pommel ride, they have to crawl, they have to booty scoot down a double Black diamond. Fun. But it was not so smart on my part. Sometime – our actions affect others in ways we can't imagine.

When you seek life among death, you take others with you. Dad, mom, friend - Who is following?

Things can change this morning – they can! You can find life among the living – and point others to His life!
The witness of these angels from God was this? “Why do you seek the living among the dead?”

The soul-satisfying life of more that we desire – is only in the resurrected life of Jesus. *He is saying – - You can't go any place else to find life, you don't need to go any place else – come to me!*

How do we know soul-satisfying life in the resurrected life of Jesus?

1. Confess there is no life for your soul in any other place.

ROMANS 6:23 (ESV) For the wages of sin is death

Success, health, life being good & pleasant, best relationship ever – all these things don't satisfy our soul. They scratch an itch for a min. – then the leave us wanting. What is awful – some churches sell this, or tell you this the life you can have in Jesus. This is seeking life among death. The life Jesus offers for your soul is more. It satisfies in times when life is pleasant & times when life is hard and painful – because what satisfies is Jesus – not the circumstances you are in.

2. Rest your soul on the person and work of Jesus (his life, death, and resurrection).

- **The death of Jesus saves you from the guilt and shame of your sin – pursuing life in death.**

1 PETER 3:18 (NLT) Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners ...

Holy Jesus – who lived the life we should have lived, suffered & died for our sin- for sinners like you and me. When we rest our soul on Jesus and his work – we get our sin removed from us. And all the guilt and shame that rest on us – is removed when we rest our soul on Jesus. How?

That is why all the success, all the relationships, all the other things in this life cannot satisfy your soul. Some of us are restless because of the guilt and shame we carry. This is removed in Christ.

• **The resurrection of Jesus saves you to Jesus and His life.**

PETER 3:18 (NLT) Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners ... to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit.

When Jesus rose from the dead – he proved God was greater than sin and death that – which lives in you and I because of our sin. That is why we seek life among death – it is in us. But thru Christ’s resurrection – we get the very life of Jesus in us that has conquered death and sin. ***This is why the resurrection is so important!***

We get his perfect life that satisfies our soul – even in the midst of pain and hurt.

Have you rested your soul on Jesus? Trust, faith Jesus and his work – sit, rest on him!

Not have you been to church, not do you call yourself a Christian. Is there any sign of his life in you or is there just seeking death among life. He says – he is life, he rose from the dead. What does your life say?

Come to him: **MATTHEW 11:28 (NLT)** Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.”

Pray: - I confess I have looked for life among death. - You died for my sin, guilt, and shame in my place and You rose to give me your life. - I trust my soul to you Jesus and your work.

Christ follower – Be encouraged! Jesus rose from the dead – He has saved you from your sin – but he has also saved you to Him? Do you want more of his life? It is only in the resurrected Jesus who is in you!

JOHN 7:37-39 (ESV) 37 On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ ” 39 Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive. You have the living water of life in you in the life of Christ, but if you keep going to every place but Christ for life – you will always be restless – *wanting the more you were made for*. You are functionally seeking life among death.

If you were in a plane crash high in the desert mountains – and you found a stream in a cave. You would plant yourself there – because it would be life for you and anyone else who survived. In the desert, with no water for life – this would be your life. You wouldn’t go far – it is life. You wouldn’t drink sand or try rocks or anything else for life. If you did – you would not be satisfied and you would come back to the stream in the cave.

Friend – Christ follower – the river of living water is in you in Christ by the resurrection. Stop seeking the living among dead things. Come to Christ – and turn from the things you have made life to satisfy.

Pray with me – Christ I believe, help my unbelief. Show me now you are life.

Seek other believers to help you learn to drink from Christ alone who is life.