



Jesus!

Alive #6 | March 31, 2024 | 8:00, 9:30, 11:00 AM | Preached by Steve Howell

Opening

Good morning! I'm so glad you could join us this morning at TCC. Whether you came for yourself or for your family, it is my prayer that your time with us will be valuable.

One of the great things about being at church is that it gives you a chance to have deep, meaningful conversations that you might otherwise not have. In our worship and our messages, we talk about some of the big questions of life:

- Where did we come from?
- Why are we here?
- How should we treat others?
- Who should we love?

Those are the kinds of questions we should all ask and answer. And they are the kinds of questions that our culture often ignores...not intentionally, but practically. We face so many interruptions that many of us don't get around to deeper thinking. Or when we do, we get pulled away by ever-present distractions.

That struggle to focus happens in areas that are far less important than faith.

I was listening to a conversation with a person in the entertainment industry,¹ and she was describing a problem facing showrunners (i.e. the people responsible for creating TV shows). They are being told that their work is “not second screen enough.” In other words, the viewer is *expected* to be on their phone half the time that they're watching -- engaged with social media or texting or playing a game. Therefore, the content can't be as complicated as it might otherwise be, because then they won't understand it. With only half an eye or half an ear on the show, a show that is too complicated -- that isn't “*second screen enough*” -- will lose viewers.

When there is too much distraction, you can't focus on what matters...in television or in the big questions of life.

That's why it is so good that you are here. You know that at least once this week, you'll have a chance to focus on the spiritual issues that really matter. You can put your phone

¹ [The Impact of Short Attention Spans on Film & TV #hollywood #podcast #therestisentertainment | Instagram](#)



away and have an hour to engage the word of God, to discuss issues of eternal importance, and to do it with others who are trying to understand also.



Today we will have a distraction-free time to focus on the idea of **resurrection**. It has been the focus of our sermon series all this month; we have been listening to stories of resurrection in Scripture and learning from them. Each story gives us a chance to explore **God's character, priorities, and goals** in resurrection... because those ideas can **inform** and **transform** our daily lives.

We've seen people resurrected in the Old Testament and the New Testament, we've seen dead people raised to life, and we've seen living people promised a future in which they *will* rise to life.

But we've saved the preeminent story of resurrection for you here, this morning: **Jesus!** It is the Easter story of triumph that is widely known and that has been shared from the beginning:



"I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said."
(1 Corinthians 15:3–4, NLT)

While of critical importance, the details of that Easter morning story took a little while to piece together. In the opening hours after Jesus' empty tomb was discovered, a lot of people (Mary, Peter, John, and others) were trying to figure out exactly what happened.

And that brings us to today's story.

Today we will be looking at **Luke 24:13-32**, going on a journey, on the road to Emmaus. It's a story that helps put everything about that morning into context. It will help us see the importance of resurrection, and it will share truth that redefines what matters to us.



What They Knew (Luke 24:13-24)

Turn to Luke 24:13 and let's hit the road:

"That same day two of Jesus' followers were walking to the village of Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem. As they walked along they were talking about everything that had happened.

As they talked and discussed these things, Jesus himself suddenly came and began walking with them. But God kept them from recognizing him.

He asked them, "What are you discussing so intently as you walk along?"

They stopped short, sadness written across their faces. Then one of them, Cleopas, replied, "You must be the only person in Jerusalem who hasn't heard about all the things that have happened there the last few days."

“What things?” Jesus asked.

“The things that happened to Jesus, the man from Nazareth,” they said. “He was a prophet who did powerful miracles, and he was a mighty teacher in the eyes of God and all the people. But our leading priests and other religious leaders handed him over to be condemned to death, and they crucified him. We had hoped he was the Messiah who had come to rescue Israel. This all happened three days ago.

“Then some women from our group of his followers were at his tomb early this morning, and they came back with an amazing report. They said his body was missing, and they had seen angels who told them Jesus is alive! Some of our men ran out to see, and sure enough, his body was gone, just as the women had said.”” (Luke 24:13–24, NLT)

A Long Walk after a Long Weekend



Two guys, taking a long walk after a long weekend. We don't know a lot about these guys, but this is a walk to remember!

They are followers of Jesus – one named Cleopas, the other unnamed. These two are not part of the Twelve disciples who were closest to Jesus, but they are part of His followers, nonetheless. After an eventful Passover weekend, they are heading back to the village of Emmaus. The reason for their trip is not mentioned, but it is secondary to the conversation they hold while they walk.

They are doing what we all do after facing a big event: talking and talking and talking some more! They are trying to wrap their heads around what they knew, reviewing the details of the weekend, and speculating about what the details mean.

“So they said the tomb was just...empty?”

“Yeah! Cleared out...and the Roman guards were gone, too”

“Well, who actually saw it? It was early, right? Maybe they got the wrong place.”

“No...it was Mary. She knew where it was. And she doesn't make stuff up, either. Why would she lie about it? Plus, Peter ran over and saw it himself.”

“OK, but...why? Why would it be empty? Do you think they're right? That he...that Jesus...is...is...alive?”

There is a lot to discuss! So much has happened in the past few days, and all of it brings a mash-up of emotions. That was already the case, but the news from this morning just threw all of it into more confusion...and mixed it with sadness and a dash of hope. These guys have a seven-mile walk, so they have a few hours to discuss. And they're going to need every minute of it!

A Chance to Explain

But then a stranger interrupts. You and I get to know right away who it is:



*“As they talked and discussed these things, **Jesus himself** suddenly came and began walking with them.” (Luke 24:15, NLT)*

But Cleopas and his friend don't know it's Him. Despite knowing and following Jesus, their eyes are kept from recognizing Him (how? Not sure...but God definitely has a hand in it). All they know is that this “stranger” shows up and inserts himself in the conversation. Plus, he acts like he doesn't know what's going on...



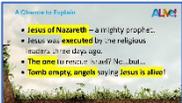
“Hey guys, mind if I join in? Heard you saying something about an empty tomb. Who are you talking about?” (wink,wink)

“Seriously?” Cleopas says, stopping in his tracks. “You must be the only person in Jerusalem who hasn't heard about all the things that have happened there the last few days.”

“Oh, yeah? Something happened? Tell me about it.”

I don't know how Jesus kept a straight face, but He did. The guys didn't know that their new travelling companion had a bit of inside information, so the disciples give Him a rundown of what they know.

They tell the basics. Here are the facts they know from the weekend:



- They are talking about **Jesus of Nazareth** – a mighty prophet.
- Jesus was **executed** by the religious leaders three days ago.
- They had thought he **might be the one** to rescue/restore Israel. (Not so much now that he's dead, but...)
- His **tomb was reported empty** this morning, and others claimed to have seen **angels** who said Jesus was not dead, but **alive!**

That's what they know.

It is good to have your facts correct! Information is important. But it's even better to know what that information means.

- Ex: It's good to have **weather data**. It's better to have an accurate forecast based on that data.
- Ex: It's good to know **who's texting** you. It's better to know why.
- Ex: It's good to know exactly what your **wife** says. It's better to understand what she means (impossible, but better).

For the guys going to Emmaus, it was good that they had some facts. And they had those immediate facts right. But it would be better if they understood why those facts were important.



What They Should Have Known (Luke 24:25-27)

Cleopas and his friend were so distracted by the details and chaos of the weekend that they missed the “why” – they missed the bigger story and what it meant. It’s like the “second screen” example we talked about earlier. They were so focused on the weekend in front of their faces that they missed the bigger story of history.

There *is* a bigger story, and they needed to know more.

After patiently listening to their facts, Jesus takes the time to make sure they know *what they should have known* – to understand the bigger picture.



“Then Jesus said to them, “You foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures. Wasn’t it clearly predicted that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his glory?” Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” (Luke 24:25–27, NLT)

Jesus’ Investment

Jesus takes the stage here and goes from uninformed stranger to authoritative teacher...even to the point of criticizing their knowledge.



“You foolish/senseless/mindless men!” (v. 25)

Ouch! Why so harsh, Jesus? If I was on the receiving end of that, I might have been upset...but remember two things. Jesus might be stern, but...

1. **Stern isn’t untrue.** These guys had missed some important information along the way, information that was readily available from the Scriptures if they had only taken more time to look and understand.

By the way, I fear that Jesus could that to many of us. “You fools! You can name the entire starting lineup for the Royals in 2015, but you can’t tell me the books of the Old Testament.” You might love Jesus, but you’re paying more attention to your hobbies and your work than you are to knowing Him.

The criticism is true here. They missed what the prophets had spoken.

Jesus might be stern, but also...

2. **Stern isn’t unloving.** Sometimes honest criticism is the most loving thing you can give. It shows that you care enough to help someone improve. Whether it is a tip about raising kids, or living a healthy lifestyle, or driving safely, when you love someone, you try to help them get better.

It may not be fun; it may not feel “nice.” But it is loving...and a wise person listens.



“A fool despises his father’s instruction, but whoever heeds reproof is prudent.”
(Proverbs 15:5, ESV)

Jesus gives these “fools” a chance to “heed reproof.” He honestly points out their failures of knowledge and understanding...but He doesn’t stop there. He takes the time to explain and help them understand.



I love that Jesus does this! Especially since these followers weren’t the varsity kids! They weren’t the A-list disciples; they were just background characters. Yet Jesus...on the afternoon of his resurrection...spends hours with these “nobodies” to help them know Him and understand Him!

(If you ever feel like you aren’t important enough to matter to Jesus, remember the road to Emmaus. He cares about everyone, even you! He has high expectations for you!)

God’s Long-Term Plan



The disciples take the time to listen and learn. They listen as Jesus goes back and walks through God’s revelation from the past.

Jesus pulls example after example from history...explaining it all. But his explanation was not just an intellectual exercise; it was a spiritual gift. The information was transformational, like what Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 2. This knowledge isn’t human wisdom; it is spiritual.



“Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.” (1 Corinthians 2:12–13, ESV)



Jesus imparts this spiritual truth by sharing from the God-breathed Scriptures. He went down through a list of passages and statements in the Law and the Prophets, pointing out all the ways in which they pointed to the **suffering** of the Messiah and the subsequent **glory** of the Messiah.

I can imagine Him quoting passages like:

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”
(Genesis 3:15, NIV)

Or...

“Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our

transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:4–5, NIV)

Each verse builds upon the others. And the information is powerful, not just academic. Later, the disciples would talk about this experience and say, *“Didn’t our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?”* (Luke 24:32, NLT)

Jesus helped them figure out God’s plan, that:



- Every person has **sinned and created separation from God** (Rom 3:23)
- Those sins against God, the Ultimate Good in the universe, have earned us the **punishment of death** – the ultimate consequence. (Rom 6:23)
- God demonstrates His love by having **Jesus die on the cross** to pay the price of our sins. (Rom 5:8)
- If we **believe and confess** that Jesus is Lord, resurrected from the dead in victory over that sin and death, we are **saved**. (Rom 10:9)
- There is now **no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Rom 8:1)

There is nuance and detail throughout the verses Jesus shared...but this is the plan that God had from the beginning. It started with a living man (Adam) whose sin caused death; it ended with a dead man (Jesus) whose resurrection (dead, yet alive again!) caused sin to die so we could live!



***Do They Know Now?* (Luke 24:28-32)**

That truth presented by Jesus on the road to Emmaus had an effect.

“By this time they were nearing Emmaus and the end of their journey. Jesus acted as if he were going on, but they begged him, “Stay the night with us, since it is getting late.” So he went home with them. As they sat down to eat, he took the bread and blessed it. Then he broke it and gave it to them. Suddenly, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And at that moment he disappeared! They said to each other, “Didn’t our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?””
(Luke 24:28–32, NLT)

Intuition



Even if they couldn’t articulate it, the disciples knew something was up as this guy taught them! They felt it in their hearts as He proclaimed God’s overall plan of salvation, and their enthusiasm to keep him around was palpable.

“Stay the night!” they begged him. They wanted to hear and learn more.

(If you know Jesus, you know that you want more of Him!)

Recognition



But, then, Jesus made Himself known. They sat down to eat, and Jesus took bread and blessed it, giving some to the disciples.

Side Note: What does that picture remind you of? It should remind us of communion, the ceremony we do weekly to remember Jesus!

And in that moment, they recognized Him (their eyes were opened), and then he disappeared (since the resurrected, glorified body of Jesus can operate using different rules).

What was that split second like?



I've watched videos where people meet celebrities or sports stars in unexpected places (a Starbucks, or a TV interview). The moment when it dawns on them who they are talking to is so fun to watch. It's almost in slow motion as you see the light come on in their eyes!

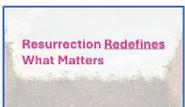
Was it like that for these disciples?

"Thanks for the bread, Jesus.... Wait. What?! JESUS!!!!"

I can only imagine what Jesus was doing right before he disappeared. Giving a smile? A wink? Who knows. But on a day when they started off knowing that Jesus was dead...then hearing rumors that he was alive...then getting a master class in theology...to end with a realization that Jesus had been with you for hours would have been a huge shock!

They had no doubts now. Instead, they had confidence that Jesus was and is alive.

Their whole world would be different! And that's the point.



Resurrection Redefines What Matters

Resurrection redefines what matters.

On this Easter Sunday, we have been talking about an encounter with the Risen Jesus. He was dead, yet he lives!

And that changes everything!

For the disciples, it rearranged their priorities and understanding. They had...

- **Redefined emotions.** Sadness was transformed to joy!
- **Redefined knowledge.** An incomplete picture of God's plan was made full!
- **Redefined faith.** Doubt was turned into confidence!
- **Redefined future.** The Messiah's suffering had brought healing!

The resurrection of Jesus changed everything. The fact of His resurrection redefined what mattered. And it still does today!

*My God died on the cross!
But he lives!²*

How does resurrection redefine what matters for us? Listen to these words of truth:



“Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God’s anger, just like everyone else.

*But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he **raised Christ from the dead**. (It is only by God’s grace that you have been saved!) For he **raised us from the dead** along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus.*

God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.” (Ephesians 2:1–10, NLT)

Resurrection changes our nature. Resurrection gives us life. Resurrection gives us a future.

Closing



Fewer and fewer people today trust that Jesus’ resurrection was a literal, historical event. Surveys show that most people don’t think He rose in a bodily resurrection, nor do they think resurrection is the future of the Christian.

The 20th-century German novelist Franz Kafka embodies that viewpoint. He was fond of saying, *“The meaning of life is that it ends.”* But how wrong he was!³

If you take anything away from this sermon or this series, it is that *“The meaning of the end is that there is life!”* Resurrection is our reality!

² “My God” by Audio Adrenaline (1992)

³ [Why You’re Still Not Teaching Enough About Jesus’ Resurrection - Lifeway Research](#)

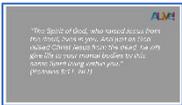
Maybe you never considered “resurrection” to be that important. But resurrection redefines what matters. It changes everything! It is our future. It is our hope. It moves the fulcrum on which our spiritual world pivots.

After this sermon and this series, I hope you believe that.

Resurrection happened. Jesus spent hours *explaining* it with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus on the day that he *experienced* it. His followers encountered a Jesus who was alive – walking, eating, talking, feeling.

And if it happened to Him, He promises that it will happen for us.

“The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.” (Romans 8:11, NLT)



Do you believe it?

If not, I challenge you to study it. Read a book like “Person of Interest” by J Warner Wallace, or the “The Case for Christ” by Lee Strobel. Or just take the word of the guy who was dead, yet now lives: “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25).



But once you believe it, let that truth change you. Let it change your priorities, your habits, your actions, and your hope.

Resurrection redefines what matters.

Prayer

Invitation

As we come to our time of invitation, we want to invite you to think about resurrection through our songs. But we also want to invite you to connect with this church and allow us to walk beside you through your challenges, your celebrations, and your decisions.

In your bulletin is a connection card. I want to invite you to fill it out - let us know who was here today, but also share anything we can be praying for. You can drop them in the baskets by the doors (by the offering boxes on the wall)

Our leadership will go over those and pray for you. And we would love to follow up if you need to talk about anything – an upcoming surgery, a challenge at work...or a decision to follow Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

PRAYER REQUESTS:

Notes

What They Knew (Luke 24:13-24)

A Long Walk after a Long Weekend

A Chance to Explain

What They Should Have Known (Luke 24:25-27)

Jesus' Investment (Proverbs 15:5)

God's Long-Term Plan (1 Cor 2:12-13; Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 53:4-5)

Salvation Plan - Romans 3:23; 6:23; 5:8; 10:9; 8:1

Do They Know Now? (Luke 24:28-32)

Intuition

Recognition

Resurrection Redefines What Matters

Ephesians 2:1-10; Romans 8:11; John 11:25

Discussion Questions

Use the following questions based on today's sermon as a starting point for spiritual discussions with your family or a small group of Christian friends this week.

Fellowship—Relationship with a Purpose

- If you wanted to discuss the “big issues” of life, who are the people you’d get together with? Whose answer would you trust most? Why?
- Growth—Thinking About Spiritual Matters
- Read Luke 24:1-12. What events happened prior to today’s passage?
- Read Luke 24:13-24. Describe the mood and the tone of the conversation the disciples were having before Jesus arrived.
- Do you think the disciples were more focused on Jesus’ death or on the possibility of Jesus’ life? Which would have been your focus? Why?
- How does Jesus respond to their uncertainty? See Luke 24:25-27. Why is his stern response true? How is his stern response loving?
- How much time does Jesus spend explaining Scripture to these two men? Are you surprised that this is how He spent the afternoon on Easter Sunday? Explain your answer.
- Why is it important to place the events of Easter weekend (death, burial, resurrection) in the context of God’s overall salvation plan? How did Jesus’ suffering lead to his glory (Luke 24:26)?
- Do you believe the resurrection of Jesus is historical fact? How would you respond to someone who doubts it?
- In what ways does resurrection redefine what matters in your life? How does it impact your emotions? Your knowledge? Your faith? Your future? Read Ephesians 2:1-10 for additional thoughts.

Prayer – Taking Your Thoughts to God

- Praise God for the resurrection! Thank Him for securing victory over death and sin.
- Pray for two people in your life who need to know the power of resurrection.