

“Hey Wait, weren’t you... dead?” I love that line. Yes! He was dead and then he came back to life! This exact event is why 2 billion people across the globe are gathering in communities across the globe to celebrate Jesus. He WAS dead... and then he showed up. In the flesh.

It was the day that changed everything. Seriously, the most pivotal event in world history. There is not a close second place or a parallel in another religion. It’s the resurrection without competition. Why? Because in the resurrection, the biggest enemy in history went down!

Jesus had a lot of enemies. Herod. Pilate. Crowds. Pharisees. Sin. But this was the biggie. Death itself...

This is what Easter is about. It is the day death died! This enemy that seemed insurmountable was suddenly NBD – that’s how the young people text NO Big Deal. When Jesus was walking the planet he raised three people from the dead. Two kids and his buddy Lazarus. He told people that he would rise from the dead too... but they thought it was a riddle or a parable... and Jesus was just straight talking. No, seriously – people will kill me despite doing nothing wrong. I will die and three days later raise from the dead. And then it happened. And he proved his life by appearing over and over for forty days.

Now death is something that everyone will face. Last I heard, the death rate was hovering around 100%.

Graph?

You are a clever thief charged with treason against the king and sentenced to death. But the king is in a good mood and allows you to choose your way to die. What do you choose?

Old Age. Yeah! Me too...

Joking aside, for some of us, death is a very close reality. Maybe someone you love died this year. I know I officiated or attended a dozen funerals in 2022. For others – especially young people – death is very far away. Last thing on your mind. But for those of us with beating hearts and brainwaves... death is the final enemy.

Now the truth is, I am not afraid of death. Not afraid of dying tomorrow. Death just does not scare me anymore. Now dying, that’s a little scary. You know... the process is just sometimes long and difficult. I don’t like the decline. So I am thinking at 85 I am still shoveling and mowing the lawn so I just keel over from a heart attack and boom! It’s done. But death. Not afraid. Not even a little. Because I know that death is an enemy that has been beaten. By Jesus -2000 years ago with appearances to prove it. Historians have recorded nine of those appearances. And today, we focus on one called the “Road to Emmaus.”

Jesus died on a Friday. This is Sunday. On Sunday morning, some women went to the tomb, found it empty and started telling people they saw Jesus. So this buzz is going through the Jesus community... two disciples are walking on the 7 mile journey to Emmaus.

¹³ Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles^[a] from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; ¹⁶ but they were kept from recognizing him.

So, we can't get through a service without a **MAP**. And here it is. Jerusalem, downhill for seven miles to the river valley in a city called Emmaus, which means "Hot Springs" or to be "Hot". Imagine what it would be like to be them... Jesus was dead, tomb was empty, women say he is risen, they might be going to Emmaus because they don't want to be crucified next... but I imagine little furrows on their brow, when suddenly, a stranger appears. We don't know how Jesus appeared to them, just that they didn't know it's Jesus. If I was Jesus, I would show up as someone famous, like Iron Man or just huge like Charles Barkley... but that might raise some suspicions... He was probably cloaked and hooded like Obi Wan.

¹⁷ He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" I love that Jesus is just messing with them. "Hey guys, Whatcha talkin bout?" He knows what they are talking about! And he just enters with them into their confusion. Now, don't you love that about Jesus? I find it is still true today. That Jesus loves to engage people in the midst of confusion and bring spiritual clarity. If you are spiritually confused, you are not the only one and Jesus loves to walk in with you right there.

Check out this story from....

I love that he was on a journey from confusion toward truth... (comments from video) And in our culture – that seems to think that up is down, good is evil, wrong is right, false is true and power is everything... we need some spiritual clarity in the midst of confusion. Maybe you are there right now. Maybe you are asking about why there is so much pain in this world when God is good? Maybe about whether there is a meaningful plot to this seeming chaos. Maybe about death and what comes after.

They stood still, their faces downcast. ¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

¹⁹ "What things?" he asked.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. ²⁰ The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; ²¹ but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.

Cleopas and... unnamed. It may be his buddy or his wife. We just know it was 2, but for the sake of argument, we will pick a unisex name... Bobby. Cleopas and Bobby. Can you feel the depression? The broken dreams? The utter loss. This wasn't just a friend they lost... it was hope and their whole paradigm for life. And their messiah was killed AND humiliated.

And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. ²² In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning ²³ but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. ²⁴ Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."

The guys went to check it out and they confirmed that the 2000 lb stone had been rolled away, the graveclothes were there – like a cocoon that a body was zapped out of. The guards were gone... and the tomb was empty. But the women had seen angels and JESUS! They were convinced!

²⁵ He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

Did you ever wonder... what did disguised Jesus say about himself, but in the third person on that 7 mile journey? What were the moments of the Bible he unpacked and... What made their hearts burn? I think Jesus explained how all small-s stories lead to his Big -S Story. THE Story!

So Imagine I am Jesus...

Do you remember when God made his three promises to Abraham? I’ll give you a people as numerous as the stars in the sky, A land for the people to live in, and you will be a blessing to the whole world. Well, you got the people in Egypt, the land when Joshua came into Israel, but we have never been a blessing to the whole world. Well, that starts today.

And you remember when Moses led the people out of Egypt? Well, Jesus went to Egypt and came out too? But just like Moses led the people out of slavery and into freedom, so Jesus came to lead people out of spiritual/emotional slavery and into freedom!

And the last plague God sent on Egypt through Pharaoh, every firstborn in Egypt died as the angel of death floated over the houses? But the Israelites slaughtered a Passover lamb so that their families would be protected from the angel of death. Did you notice that John called Jesus the lamb of God? And that he was slaughtered on Passover? At the exact time as the Passover lamb? He is the lamb!

And do you remember how they built a tent called the tabernacle in the desert so God could live with them – in a pillar of cloud and fire? He moved into the neighborhood and lived in our tents! Jesus came and tabernacled with us... in one of our bodies! He moved into the neighborhood.

And do you remember the sacrifices commanded in the book of Leviticus to pay for sin? I WAS...er... Jesus WAS that sacrifice fulfilled!

And remember the time that the Israelites were being bitten in the wilderness and Moses made a statue of a snake on a stick? And God said “look here and you will be healed!” Well, there was no power in that statue, just in the faith of looking at the raised snake. In the same way, the son of Man was raised up on a stick for your healing.

Joshua crossed the Jordan at Bethany to start a new kingdom. Jesus was baptized at the Jordan to usher in a new kingdom.

David was a blue collar leader from Bethlehem who defeated the giant Philistine who threatened death. Jesus was a blue collar leader from Bethlehem who beat the giant of death in a most unlikely way.

Isaiah said the messiah would be born of a virgin and called Emmanuel. Micah said he’d be born in Bethlehem. Jesus was born of a virgin in Bethlehem and called Emmanuel.

Zechariah said Messiah would ride in **on a donkey**, Jesus rode in on a donkey

David said Messiah would be **betrayed** by a friend. Jesus was betrayed by his disciple Judas.

Isaiah described the unlikely, graphic death of the messiah being **beaten beyond recognition** and brutally killed as a payment for our sins. Jesus was beaten beyond recognition and was killed as a payment for sins!

Ezekiel had a vision of a **valley of dry bones** coming to life, symbolizing the resurrection of the dead for God's purposes. Jesus was the first to rise from the dead from the valley of dry bones.

Now, lets go all the way back to that time in the garden of Eden, when God said to Eve – That sneaky little serpent – he will bite the heel of your offspring, but the offspring will crush his head?" Jesus was **crushing the serpent** when he died on that cross.

And along with that curse in the garden came the cursing of the ground, that it would bear not only good plants, but thorns and thistles – truly evidence daily of the curse. And what did Jesus wear on his head when he died? **A crown of thorns**. He took the curse, even became the curse for us so that in him, we might have life!

Mic Drop

And Jesus could have done dozens more stories. They had over 2 hours. In fact, in preparing this, I found 65 pictures, prophecies and poems that point to the big story of Jesus. And just like adjusting the lens on a telescope where all the fuzzy stuff suddenly becomes totally clear... these disciples are like "WHAT?" How does that happen? Please, stay with us more... keep on preaching. Have dinner with us. Our hearts are burning on this stuff! And after breaking bread and giving thanks he appeared to them – alive! And then just poof! Disappeared...

³²They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

Friends, there are certain moments that your hearts are just burning within you. BURNING. Just like with _____ story guy. Here is the question that we all have to face. In those moment of life when you get clarity, will you respond to God with your "YES"? When he says he is on your team, will you join? Will you ask him for MORE? More revelation. More inspiration. More guidance. More self control.

And then you have to ask. Do I dare, do I DARE invite a holy God with resurrection power into my messy life, my messy home, my messy heart, messy thoughts? Or do I pretend that I can clean myself up without God's help and THEN invite him in?

I know not everybody is at the decision moment yet. Some of you are in the listening phase. Maybe you didn't even know that God spent 2000 years on the setup – with pictures and promises and prophecies that would all tie up in a nice little bow in Jesus. Maybe you never thought much about the idea that world history is split in two by this one life. Maybe it wasn't on your mind that scholars and athletes and CEOs and moms and kids from every nation on the planet have tested this God and found him to be both true and reliable. Maybe you need to keep asking your own questions. We want this church to be a safe place for you to explore, learn and ask. In fact, next week, we have no sermon, but an all text-in question-and-answer week called "question Mark." Come on out if you have questions. But move from

a passive participant to an active learner – eager to watch the you tube videos, read the books, listen to the evidence and make a decision that is going to be life-shaping and eternity-determining!

Maybe you have been down the dusty road of Emmaus for a while. Maybe this is a year where your dreams were shattered and you felt hopeless. Maybe you have been investigating and you are realizing – oh my – Jesus and his teachings and kingdom just make SENSE. Maybe you have been coming to Christ Community and you find yourself crying for some crazy unknown reason. Or your heart leaps out of your chest during a teaching. Or you just have this thing in your gut that says “that’s right! That’s true.” Maybe you just Guys. That is the Holy Spirit. He connects truth to emotion. He guides us. He convicts us. He prompts us. And the way to get more of that – is to say YES to what he is already giving you. YES to the idea that his death was real. And the answer to DEATH itself. That he traded his life to give you life. YES to his resurrection from the dead buying your resurrection. YES to following him now and forever.

Band comes in!

I always feel that resurrection day is the best day to say yes to our resurrection God. And I don’t want to make this too easy. We make way too many things in our culture easy! And when Jesus invited people to follow him, he asked people to go public with their faith. So we are going full on decision time today. Let’s stand together and I am going to have our teams light up the wristbands.

If you are someone who wants to say “YES” to Jesus today. I want you to hold the light up high when I say. Now this is not for people who have come to faith in Jesus and been faithful for years. It is for people who are saying YES today. OR maybe you said “YES” sometime this year, but you never had the chance to do something public about it. Make that moment now. You could be a kid. You could be an adult. You could be brand new to church or maybe you have been hanging around investigating or messing around the fringes for a long time. The key question is are you saying yes to Jesus today? Come on, hold them high – I see you and you...

Man, lets encourage these friends with their decision. And next, if you made that decision and raised your hand, come on down to the front and I am going to pray a special prayer with you and over you. Come down to the mosh pit. If you need to bring a parent or a support person... fabulous... bring them down. I am going to have the band play....

After verse 1... If you are up in the balcony or online and you want to be a part of this, it is not too late. Online people (instructions). If you are having remorse and just want to come to the front but you didn’t raise your hand... come on! I have some friends from my elders and staff... they will come down too and pray over your personal situation and give you a gift to celebrate your day. Seriously, it is Easter, the best day for a decision.

After verse 2 – Pray with people in the mosh pit

After verse 3 – Prayer team engages with individuals. Mark does a final celebration moment.