

He is risen! He is risen, indeed! That is a wonderful proclamation that we get to make on this day, and we have the benefit of history to help us accept that most glorious of truths: Jesus is no longer in the grave. He has risen. But it wasn't that easy for Jesus' disciples on the first Easter.

For them, Jesus was the person in whom they had placed all their hope and trust, even though he would say confusing statements about how the Son of Man must fulfill all that was written about him, and how he would be handed over, shamefully treated, killed, and rise again on the third day. The disciples never fully understood. And so, when Jesus was ultimately betrayed, arrested, tried, crucified, and placed in a grave, all was lost. They had a broken heart and a broken hope, and they would spend the day after his death, the Sabbath, in mourning and grief.

But on the third day, everything changed. The unwavering Jesus, the one whom remained completely dedicated to the mission the Father sent him to accomplish, was no longer in his tomb. In the last chapter of his Gospel, Luke wants his readers to know that all of this came about because Jesus stuck to the plan.

**[Luke 24:5b-7] “the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? <sup>6</sup> He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, <sup>7</sup> that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.”**

**[Luke 24:26] <sup>26</sup> Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”**

**[Luke 24:44] <sup>44</sup> Then he said to them, “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.”**

Before the beginning of time, the Father had laid out a plan for the salvation of man, and Jesus did not deviate from it. He lived a perfectly obedient life, one pleasing to the Father, died the death we deserved, and rose again in defeat of sin and death. Because of that, Jesus' unwavering life echoes through eternity. And as he gathers with his disciples for the first time, he is going to show them what his unwavering life, death, and new life means for them, and for us.

**The unwavering life brings unending peace.** After three days of turmoil and the concerning announcement that Jesus is not in his grave, the disciples gathered to compare notes. They are about to be greeted with a proclamation that is at the heart of the Gospel.

**[Luke 24:36] <sup>36</sup> As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, “Peace to you!”**

Jesus suddenly appears in their midst. He doesn't say “I'm back” or “Did you miss me?” He announces peace has come. **Where the Son dwells, peace reigns.** But this is not the peace as the world knows it or in the way you and I may initially think of it. While Jesus clearly wants to calm their fears in this moment, the peace he announces goes beyond the absence of conflict. It is

a peace that things have been reset the way God intended them to be. It is a peace that exists because Jesus is present. It is a peace that impacts our past, present, and future.

**Settles our past:** The forgiveness Jesus asked for from the Father as he hung on the cross has been made possible. We all have done things we are not proud of. Some of you came here this morning burdened with a past you are ashamed of, and you are trying to make up for it. The truth is you cannot. The good news is you don't have to. Jesus has accomplished what you cannot. He lived the unwavering life we were supposed to live but could not, and the offer he makes is that if you will trust in him as your Savior, you get credit for his life. God declares you forgiven and righteous, which means, as Paul says in Romans 5, you now have peace with God through Jesus.

**Empowers our present:** The peace given by Jesus is available to us today. By all accounts, anxiety is on the rise. We are a stressed out, fearful, and worried people, especially our youth, and that's not the way God wants us to live. And while many need the care of a medical professional, we have also been given a power greater than ourselves to guide our lives, particularly as we encounter difficulty, fear, and worry.

You may have heard about a disastrous record recently set in Major League Baseball. Chris Davis of the Baltimore Orioles went hitless in 54 consecutive at-bats. He finally got his first this past week. And while he endured frustration, and the ire of Orioles fans, he remained poised and at peace. What got him through was a decision he made one night in his early playing days to follow Christ and place him at the center of his life. **"Since that night, I have seen God move in ways I could have never imagined. It wasn't an instant overnight change, but slowly through time He led me by the hand. I still have struggles, but I know that my sins are forgiven and that God can overcome anything I am going through that may seem daunting."** Now, we may not feel too bad about a multi-millionaire professional athlete on a bad streak, but it is an example of the peace of God reigning in times of difficulty. **He who lived the unwavering life and overcame the grave can overcome whatever is troubling you today.**

**Guarantees our future:** If Jesus was raised from the dead, that means there is life after death. Eternity is a long time, and you don't have to worry if you know Jesus. I have a friend who has been dealing with a chronic condition for a lot of years. While discussing his most recent year of health he said, "I win either way." This is a man at peace because he knows that the power that raised Jesus from the dead will do the very same thing for him one day. Jesus' unwavering life made eternal life attainable for all of us who believe in him.

**The unwavering life brings undeniable truth.** The disciples are about to have a Bible study with the book's risen author and the one who referred to himself as the Truth.

**[Luke 24:37-46] <sup>37</sup> But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. <sup>38</sup> And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? <sup>39</sup> See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." <sup>40</sup> And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. <sup>41</sup> And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" <sup>42</sup> They gave him a piece of broiled fish, <sup>43</sup> and he took it and ate before them. <sup>44</sup> Then he said to them, "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.”<sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,<sup>46</sup> and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead.**

The disciples experienced anything but peace in the few moments after Jesus arrived. We are told they were frightened and thought he was a spirit. But they were wrong, and it was time for an education. Actually, it was time for a revelation.

Jesus began by proving he had really been resurrected. He showed them his body and his wounds and allowed them to touch him. Then he asked for food and ate it in their presence. This was no spirit. This was a raised Messiah. God had done a miraculous work.

We are told “they still disbelieved for joy”, which I think is a wonderful phrase. They were simply overwhelmed by the reality that seemed so unlikely. It’s like when you watch those renovation shows, where they bring a dead house back to life, and they do a big reveal to the home owners. They always respond in one of two ways: 1) They use the Lord’s name in vain and run around saying “Oh my God”, or they walk through and repeat the refrain “This is unbelievable.” It’s a way of saying “I know this is real, and it’s better than I could have ever imagined.” **The disciples believed Jesus was raised from the dead, and they couldn’t believe it!**

I want to take a moment to talk about the significance of the resurrection. If it didn’t happen, our faith is worthless, because we’d be worshipping a dead savior. But Jesus was resurrected. If you are searching for the truth or are skeptical about the events recorded in the Bible, I want you to know the resurrection is a historical event, validated by fifteen separate appearances of the resurrected Jesus, documented both in and out of the Bible, and commonly known throughout the Roman Empire.

That’s vital because, as I search for truth, I’m going with the guy who was raised from the dead. Jesus’ resurrection confirms not only the words he spoke when on earth, but the words spoken about him before and after he came. Jesus showed his disciples how the entire Old Testament pointed to him and this moment. **Jesus thought this book was the truth, and so should we.**

I want to encourage you if you feel like you don’t know much about God or struggle with times of doubt. The disciples were with Jesus every day but were still slow to believe to understand. But there is no condemnation for them, only compassion, and ultimately revelation. Jesus opened their minds to what the Scriptures said, and he will do the same for you. His unwavering life confirms the truth and enables us to know it. All we need is a genuine desire to know.

**The unwavering life brings unquestionable purpose.** (Confidentially, I wanted to say “incomparable”, but that would have messed up my prefixes.) Jesus was given his purpose by his Father, and he now passes that purpose on to us.

**[Luke 24:47-49]<sup>47</sup> and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.<sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things.**

**49 And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”**

If you are a guest with us today, I want you to know we are pretty passionate about this idea of purpose, that God made each of us to do something unique. But this purpose here is universal, for all believers for all time. That our lives, in word and deed, would proclaim the good news of the Gospel and encourage those whom we encounter to turn from their old way of life and turn towards God to receive forgiveness and salvation made possible through the cross and empty tomb. What appeared stopped dead in its tracks as Jesus hung from the cross is now very much alive. Jesus’ unwavering life, sacrificial death, and miraculous resurrection was the start of a movement intended not just to change the world, but to change all of eternity.

**God’s plan has not been thwarted. The disciples are not abandoned, but commissioned. In a world where many do not know their place, identity, or purpose, the resurrection means that disciples can know that God is at work, that Jesus is alive in glory, and that death is not the end. A life of purpose and unending relationship with God is possible. In short, resurrection means that humans can have their proper place with God. Jesus is at God’s side, and he is among them. All that is needed is to believe what God has promised. -Darrell Bock**

The unwavering life not only defines who we are in Christ, it defines what we have been created, and recreated, to do. **If you are his follower, you have become part of that movement.** You are invited to join those who have proclaimed the good news of the resurrection, starting with the two angels at the empty tomb, given to a group of women who became the first evangelists, and passed down from one generation to the next, all the way to Dallas, TX in 2019. You are now a carrier of that same message of peace Jesus announced when he first entered this room. If you are looking to join a cause, there is none greater than the cause of Christ.

**The unwavering life brings unconstrainable joy.** It is here that Christmas and Easter collide. The story that began with an angelic announcement of “good news of great joy” to shepherds in a field is realized here by those who follow the Good Shepherd.

**[Luke 24:50-53] 50 And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. 51 While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. 52 And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, 53 and were continually in the temple blessing God.”**

The last time Jesus left (for the grave), his followers were left wallowing in grief and sorrow. This time, though, Jesus’ departing is followed by worship and joy. The unwavering life was complete. He accomplished all the Father sent him to do. His disciples now know who he is, they know who they are in him and, because of the resurrection, everything has changed.

This was not a temporary moment of euphoria. This was a new state of being for followers of the risen Jesus. And it would not end, even as circumstances became difficult. If you were to keep turning the pages into your New Testament, you’d find stories of believers who rejoiced because they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name of Jesus, you’d find them singing and

praying while sitting in prison, rejoiced in their sufferings because it ultimately produced hope, and you'd find them writing things like we should consider it all joy when we suffer trials.

How could this possibly be? Because they know something: **If the resurrection happened, anything is possible.** And if their God overcame the grave, he could overcome anything. And since he is alive, he will be with them always. **Wouldn't you like to live that way?** I don't know what this next week will look like for you, but it could include some hardships. Regardless of what happens, you know what else will still be true? That Jesus is risen, and he is alive in you and with you. And as you delight in him and he delights in you, joy will abound.

Our family had a conversation yesterday about what that Saturday must have been like for the disciples. One said it was easily the worst Saturday in history. But Sunday came. It came for the disciples, and it came for us. **Because Jesus lived an unwavering life, the grave could not hold him.** And we are the beneficiaries of a life of peace, truth, purpose, and joy.