

## “Living Again!”

Scripture: Luke 24:1-12

Graphics: empty tomb from the inside

Big Truth: Feeling alive is born in us when we focus on the resurrection of Jesus and what that resurrection means in our own lives. It gives us hope, and hope is what launches us into every day with missional confidence and holy contentment. We come alive as followers of Jesus when we focus on life instead of death. We come alive again when we remember the WHOLE story of Jesus. Picture yourself coming out of the grave like Jesus, not just when He returns, but every morning!

Focus Phrase: God is the God of radical transformation from dying to living again!

### 1. Introduction

- A. Throughout modern history, erroneous reports of people’s untimely deaths have popped up with exasperating regularity online. Famous people like movie stars, U.S. Presidents, world leaders, and sports stars, have all been the topic of rumors of their demise. Even Roman Catholic Pope John Paul II was once reported to have died...until he appeared on TV from the Vatican, which satisfied some people. In February 2015, a website named Cronica MX published an article with tragic news of the death of basketball legend Michael Jordan. He’s still alive, of course.
- B. In 1969, before the internet, there was a doozy. A rumor began to fly around the world: “Paul is dead.” Many people were convinced that rock star Paul McCartney of the Beatles had died in 1966 and been replaced by a look-alike.
  - i. Music fans reportedly played a song from *The White Album* backwards and heard the message, “Turn me on, dead man.” They listened to the song “Strawberry Fields Forever” and thought they heard John Lennon say, “I buried Paul.” Fans were pointing to album covers that had Paul pictured barefoot and saying he was obviously a corpse.
  - ii. The Beatles’ press office issued statements denying the rumor, saying that it was (accent) “a load of old rubbish.” Paul was still very much alive, not killed in a car accident after having an argument with his band mates.
  - iii. So, is Paul dead? Not according to the Beatles’ press office. And not according to Paul McCartney himself. In an interview, McCartney himself said to the BBC, “If the conclusion you reach is that I’m dead, then you’re wrong, because I’m alive and living in Scotland.”
- C. On the first Good Friday, almost 2000 years ago, all the people around and following Jesus of Nazareth, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a safe distance from the Roman cross on which He hung, and **watched Jesus die** (Luke 23:44-49).
- D. Joseph of Arimathea, who was referred to as a righteous man, took the dead body of Jesus off that cross, wrapped it in a linen cloth and laid it in a rock-

hewn tomb. The women saw the tomb. They saw Jesus laid IN it. So, when they went home that Friday evening, they prepared spices and ointments to put on the body (23:50-56)...that was the Jewish custom.

- E. Was Jesus dead? Yes, he was! No doubt about it! A resounding YES! Not just rumors of death on the fan-boards...but actually dead.
- F. And when he was placed in a tomb, he was dead. Historically, the church has always considered any belief to the contrary to be heresy. Jesus hadn't fainted on the cross. He hadn't swooned...not in a state of suspended animation.
- G. Jesus was dead. Jesus didn't have a pulse. No brain activity. Nothing. He was SO dead that the soldiers who were about to break his legs to hasten a death by suffocation, decided not to waste their time and energy on a dead guy.
- H. And remember, the people of Jesus' day lived with death. These were rough times. They knew what "dead" looked like. They weren't fooled. His death was not just a silly rumor or some kind of plot. This was not fake news. Jesus was emphatically dead, wrapped in a linen cloth and laid in a tomb.
- I. A massive stone was rolled over the entrance to the tomb, effectively sealing it. So, even if there were a strong, alive man inside, that stone was going nowhere. But it's a moot point. Jesus was dead. //
- J. But THEN...THEN we read THIS in Luke 24, verse 1...

## 2. Scripture

### A. READ Luke 24:1-12

- B. When they woke up that Sunday morning, the women STILL believed, *without a doubt*, that the Lord was dead. All the evidence pointed to the fact that he was still dead.
- C. Those same women, who watched the very dead Jesus be sealed into that tomb, then grabbed the spices that'd been sitting on the counter all day Saturday, waiting to be used, and they walked TO the tomb, planning to anoint the dead body of Jesus.
- D. The women had no hope of seeing Jesus alive again. They were resigned to this new reality of their Lord being gone, forever. They were looking death, not life.
- E. But when they arrived to anoint the body, they found the massive stone - that they had seen rolled into its place - now rolled away from the tomb entrance. When they ran inside, they were unable to find Jesus' body. They were stunned and confused. (vv. 1-4).
- F. Yet, remember, that their belief at that point was still that Jesus was dead. It didn't occur to them that he might be alive. Could he?

- G. The women were like the people around the world who assumed that Paul McCartney was dead when he appeared on the album cover of Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band with a patch on his shoulder with the letters O.P.D., which were said to mean, "Officially Pronounced Dead."
- H. Was Jesus O.P.D.? Most — okay, everyone — assumed he was. It seemed like a logical assumption.
- I. But the tomb was EMPTY! AND, two men in dazzling clothes suddenly appeared before them. The women were terrified and they bowed their heads, while the men said, "**Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.**" (vv. 4-5).
- J. Was Jesus dead? For sure, he was dead. But, now? According to the two men, "He is not here, but has risen." Clearly, Jesus was living again.
- K. They went on to say, "Remember what he said...that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again?"
- L. Then the women remembered! They began to see how both death AND resurrection went together AND were part of the plan that Jesus had laid out for them while he was alive.
- M. So the women ran back to tell the 11 disciples everything that the two men in white had told them.
- i. It's here that we need to take note of the fact that the first witnesses to the resurrection were women...and we know their names, which indicates that those women were and became prominent and trustworthy leaders in the early church, along with the 11 disciples. There's a very good chance that had it not been for the women...none of the men would know what was happening. I guess it's been like that ever since!
  - ii. Unfortunately, their friends didn't believe them. "...an idle tale..." they thought, and most of the men gave their words no credence whatsoever.
  - iii. Only Peter ran to the tomb to see for himself. "Could it be??" Then he went back home, "...amazed at what had happened" (v. 12), that is, that Jesus' body was no longer in the tomb.
- N. The rumors of Jesus' death were not rumors. They were surely true!
- O. And YET, the rumors of Jesus being alive again were also not rumors. That was true, as well! Praise God!

### 3. Application

- A. Both of those things can be true at the same time! Why? Here's the Resurrection Good News church: **God is the God of radical turnarounds!** It happened on that first Easter morning. And it can happen in every part of your life too!

- B. When you and I find ourselves in a place of moving from **living to dying**, for whatever reasons and in whatever circumstances, **God can and will radically turn that around from dying to living again!**
- C. And I'm not just talking about the ultimate promise that Jesus gives us in John 3:16 that says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." That's an AWESOME promise!
- D. But there's MORE! What is it in your life right now that needs a radical turnaround? Because, the God who can raise people from the dead is ALSO the God who can transform any circumstance in your life - any attitude or habit or struggle - into something that has you living again!
- E. Jesus said in John 10:10, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." Radical transformation. Living again!
- F. Over the past two years, we've been tempted to - forced to - go into the tomb and, at times, accept the fact that life seemed like it had so very little life left in it. The reports and experiences of death and isolation and disease and fear have been exhausting...and some for very good reasons. Now we watch the newsfeed of the struggles and injustices in Ukraine and in other places and it's as maddening as it is exhausting.
- G. Maybe for you, it's a struggle with depression or anger or not knowing what God's next step is for you. Maybe you feel stuck, or hurt, or have allowed sin to pull you away from God's presence in your life.
- H. Listen: we STILL have a God of radical transformation. We have a Savior, Jesus, who defies all rumors of His demise and stood at the door to the empty tomb and says, "Ta-Da! I'm alive again!"
- I. And He wants to bring HIS resurrection power into every part of your life!
- J. One way to do that is to allow Jesus to **focus your attention on the living instead of the dying.**
- i. I remember having to sometimes gently grab our daughter Abby's little face and look her in the eyes to get her to listen to me. Jesus does that some thing to focus you on the places of life in your life.
  - ii. The women that came to the tomb that morning were focusing on the dead. We can't blame them. Jesus was dead. But we also know that they would soon find out that Jesus was alive.
  - iii. Jesus invited them, and is inviting you, to start from where you are and focus on the living and not the dying. Focus on the places where God is doing radical transformation in your life.

- a. Maybe that's to grow you as a follower of Jesus - we're never done learning.
- b. Maybe God is working mightily in someone's life and He wants you to be part of that as a mentor or teacher.
- iv. And hear me when I say this isn't some kind of wishful thinking or self-help rubbish. **This is a radical acceptance that you can do nothing to change your heart and mind apart from a vibrant saving relationship with Jesus Christ.**
- v. When you look for the places of living in your world, it brings hope! That's where Jesus is at work! And hope never disappoints us because ultimate hope is what we get from KNOWING everlasting life is ours in Jesus!
- vi. Maybe you're here today and you need a radical transformation from dying to living in your life. Jesus wants to do that work in you. He wants to give you HOPE!
- vii. If you've never given your life to Jesus - so he can do the work of transforming death to life - then Easter Sunday is a perfect time to stop living for yourself (which is actually dying) and die to yourself (which is actually living for Christ)!
- viii. God is the God of radical transformation from dying to living again!
- ix. There's life all around you if you look...and lots of it is in this room this morning!
- K. The other way to be radically transformed is to **focus on the WHOLE story of the living Jesus** and then put that into practice in your life.
  - i. Jesus' ministry went from Bethlehem to Galilee to streets of Jerusalem and all the towns around the region. He taught and forgave and healed and performed miracles. It was after He had done all that ministry that he went to the cross and then to resurrection from the dead.
  - ii. The two men in dazzling clothes told the story of Jesus by the empty tomb, and the women remembered it and acted on it. Even though some of the story is painful, it holds together, and it gives us a pattern for understanding our own experiences of death and new life, as individuals and as a community.
  - iii. Jesus is calling you - your whole life, and every experience, good, bad, and everything else - to NEW LIFE. It's not over until Jesus is done! Your story, no matter how much you've done well or screwed up, is not complete.
  - iv. There's a great praise song from Elevation Worship called *My Testimony*. Part of the lyrics are: "Our God will finish what He started, If I'm not dead, You're not done, Greater things are still to come..."

- v. The whole story of Jesus...the whole story of the bible...has the mission of moving people from dying in sin and walking away from God, to living for Christ and following Him. From dying to living again!
- vi. Jesus is inviting you, right now, to enter into His story, completely, so that YOUR life can be radically transformed with and for Him.
- vii. Will you say yes?

**L. God is the God of radical transformation from dying to living again!**

**M. That's Easter HOPE!**

#### **4. Conclusion**

- A. The rumors of Paul McCartney's death seemed pretty lame after people found out he never actually died. They just felt foolish.
- B. The fact that there were multiple eye witness to the death of Jesus and then even MORE eye witnesses to the LIVING Jesus, makes the resurrection the most important event in the history of the universe.
- C. Because Jesus is alive and seated at the right hand of the throne of God, let's stop looking for death in this world and in our lives.
- D. Let's, instead, look for life, even in those places where we THINK we're dying!
- E. God is the God of radical transformation from dying to living again!
- F. As I pray in a minute, I want to invite everyone who can hear my voice to give their lives to Christ today. Maybe it'll be for the first time...that would be amazing. Maybe it'll be for the first time today, but the 7th time this week. If Jesus is life and wants to make us alive again, after all we've been through, then when we come to him and give our lives to him, he WILL make YOU alive again.
- G. Happy Easter! He is RISEN! He is RISEN INDEED!
- H. Glorious Resurrection Day!
- I. Jesus is not dead, because he is alive in us — now and always.
- J. PRAY! for salvation...