

Resurrection Sunday: What does it mean?

**Luke 24:1-12**

\*Note this is not a word-for-word manuscript of the message video, but an outline summarizing the main content of the message.

• **WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

- He is risen! He is not here, the tomb is empty.
  - What does it mean?
- My wife and I were reading the latest news updates about the Coronavirus a few days ago and we learned that the State of New York alone has now reached a greater number of cases than any other *nation* so far in the world.
  - There were pictures of makeshift morgues being setup throughout the city to prepare for what's to come.
  - People in other parts of the world are being turned away from hospitals, because they're overwhelmed by the sick.
  - People in some places are dying alone in their homes.
  - Emily turned to me and said, with an expression of numbness, "What does it mean?"
- What does it mean? It's a common question, it's a human question, it's a natural question to all the chaos of life.
  - Why is this happening? How did we get here? What do we do?
  - You can turn to any page in the book of history and any chapter in a person's life and find instances of heartache, pain, and loss that cause us to ask questions like this.
  - And it's a question to which, in this life at least, we'll never have a complete answer.
- It's a question Jesus' followers were surely asking as they watched him carried away and falsely accused, as he hung there dying on a torture cross, as they laid their friend, the Messiah's lifeless, mutilated body in a tomb.
  - *Why? What does it mean?*

• **THEN, THE RESURRECTION**

- And then, three days later, something happened that caused them to ask this question in a *completely* different way: **read Luke 24:1-12**
  - *What does this mean?*
- Jesus, shockingly, amazingly appeared to His disciples: first to the women at the tomb, then to the others, walking through the walls of their locked-up homes to greet them.
- On a series of occasions He appeared to them, spoke with them, taught them, cooked with them and broke bread with them, let them touch the scars—He proved to them *He was truly alive*, never to die again!
  - *What does this mean?*

• **A NEW LENS TO SEE THROUGH**

- We can ask that question about a number of things today, like my wife and I did when we saw the news this week.
  - But today, I want us to pose that question in a different direction, for this moment in history. While we hold in our perspective the pain of this time, I want us to look out above it, and remember today the Resurrection of Jesus and ask, what does *this* mean?
  - In other words, *how does the Resurrection of Jesus make a different possible meaning for this circumstance?*
    - Ever since that moment in history, when Jesus changed everything by rising from the dead—we have a new lens through which to see everything.
- What does the Resurrection mean for this time?

• **FOR TODAY**

- While we can never fully plumb the breathtaking depths of God's redemption, here is what we can be reminded that the Resurrection means for these times in which we live...

- Just this: *The Resurrection of Jesus means that Death has a timeline, but Life does not. And it means that nothing will ever separate us from the Love of God.*
- When Jesus rose from the dead, it was a sign and a foretaste that the New Creation was coming and had already begun.
- Jesus' victory over death assures us that there *will* come a Day when every cause and source of pain, and sorrow, and wickedness will itself be destroyed—it will cease. Evil and death will die, while Life, and Glory, and Love, and Joy will go on forever. The New Creation is coming.
- And the way to be on the *right side* of that equation, when that Day comes, is simply to stand on the side of the one who makes it possible: you've got to surrender your life to Jesus, receive His saving grace, and follow Him—He's the only one who came from heaven to earth—God-incarnate—and the only one who rose from the dead never to die again.
- What does this mean? **Revelation 21:1-5** *"Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!"*
  - N.T. Wright said, *"The Resurrection was not a redescription or redefinition of death. It was death's reversal."*
  - Tim Keller, paraphrasing a line from the Lord of the Rings, said, *"Everything sad is going to come untrue and it will somehow be greater for having once been broken and lost."*
- What does it mean? **Romans 8:35-39** says, *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*
- And so we can stand firm, we can cling to real hope, we can endure the immense struggles of this world with the strength of God's Love, we can walk through situations of darkness with the courage and faith that comes from knowing Jesus Christ is alive.
  - The early Christians lived through massive pandemics that swept through the Roman Empire in the second century. While many people fled the cities and abandoned the dying in the streets, Christians stayed.
- Lyman Stone, a researcher and cultural analyst, recently wrote about this: *"During plague periods in the Roman Empire, Christians made a name for themselves. Historians have suggested that the terrible Antonine Plague of the 2nd century, which might have killed off a quarter of the Roman Empire, led to the spread of Christianity, as Christians cared for the sick...[Later] the Plague of Cyprian...triggered the explosive growth of Christianity...bishop Dionysius described how Christians, "Heedless of danger ... took charge of the sick, attending to their every need." Nor was it just Christians who noted this reaction of Christians to the plague...the church historian Pontianus recounts how Christians ensured that "good was done to all men, not merely to the household of faith." The sociologist and religious demographer Rodney Stark claims that death rates in cities with Christian communities may have been just half that of other cities."*
- These Christians had answered the question, "What does this mean?" in their day, and they came up with the answer, "It means we hold fast to the Living Hope of God and we love a dying world with the power of Jesus Christ"! All of this, and so much more, is what the Resurrection of Jesus means—and it means *everything* for this moment in which we're living.
  - So, go ahead and keep asking, "What does this mean?" but ask that question *while you're looking at the cross. He is Alive!*