

Luke 24
Encountering Jesus

Why are we here today?

Because it's Easter, right?

But let's look at the bigger picture and ask, "Why will most of us be here next week, and why were we here last week, the week before that and before that, etc.?"

Are we here because of the life and testimony of a friend, colleague, or a family member?

Has that person been engaged with the faith, church, Jesus for years been thinking, "It may not be historically true or true for everyone, but it works for me."

PROBABLY NOT. People don't stick with something with such huge life implications if they aren't convinced that it is true. People have been sticking with Jesus for 2000 years because it is grounded in historical truth.

Take for example a man you may have heard of...

<http://ccdelco.com/article/21-reasons-why-i-believe-in-god-francis-collins/>

Dr. Francis Collins – human genome project – map the complete set of DNA.. At age of 27 in NC, as a medical student, he kept meeting Christians who talked of their faith. He grew up agnostic and later He became an atheist. He later admitted that, in his case, it was less "I don't know," than, "I don't want to know." He was a young man, the world had many temptations to offer, and it was inconvenient to need to be accountable to any higher spiritual authority. He was willfully blind. His story is told in his book, The Language of God.

A few years into the medical program, as he started to work with patients, and he began to gain a respect for the religious faith of many of the people he would treat. He was puzzled that these people weren't expressing anger at God for their illness. He wrote, "If faith is a psychological crutch, then it must be a very powerful one. If it were nothing more than a veneer of cultural tradition (i.e. something people do in the Bible Belt), then why were these people not shaking their fists at God and demanding that their friends and family stop all this talk about a loving powerful God. They are dying, and God is not answering their prayer, yet they still have faith."

This was so unnerving to him. Then one afternoon he encountered one patient, an elderly woman with severe chronic pain, who shared her strong Christian beliefs with him, then asked what he believed. He realized he didn't really know; he had never seriously investigated the evidence either way. This was the opposite of what a real scientist should do. He writes, "Faced with my willful blindness and my arrogance I began a journey and decided to see what could be seen and discover what could be discovered."

Mr. Collins began to fully research the logical basis for faith. He started studying the major religions of the world but found their sacred texts too confusing. Finally, he asked a neighbor, a Methodist minister, whether faith made any reasonable sense. The minister handed him a copy of the book Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis. Reading the book, Mr. Collins was stunned by the author's logic, and especially his assertion of a Moral Law set deep within the hearts of people in all places at all times.

Finally, Mr. Collins realized that what he had learned in his investigation left his atheism in tatters. Even agnosticism now "loomed like the great cop-out it often is" (The Language of God). Based on his discoveries he became a follower of Christ throughout his life.

Perhaps you are here today to “discover what can be discovered.”

We invite such investigation here at Highlands. You don't have to be a convinced believer to join us on Sundays or in other activities. We have found it helpful to approach this journey here with a great deal of intellectual and spiritual honesty as you set out on a path of discovery.

Those who are here today and who continue to return week after week do so because the message of Christ is grounded in something that truly happened – The Resurrection. Scripture invites us to “check it out”.

Two thousand years after the first Resurrection Day people don't come back week after week because the message of Jesus is a sort of a feel-good story, like the dog that found its way back home months after the horrible fires in California last year. That was moving for about 5 minutes, then we move on.

People in 2019 are engaged with Jesus because the story of his resurrection is more than just a story. It's a TRUE story with profound implications. People haven't been following Jesus, often at the cost of their own lives or sacrifices in their lifestyle, simply because of “faith in faith” or faith in some myth.

The bible cautions us against following something that isn't true. Paul, who was a Jesus hater before he became a Jesus follower, says in 1 Cor 15 that if the resurrection isn't true then we of all people are to be most pitied. If there is no resurrection, then we are deceived and we might as well just 'eat, drink, and be merry' for tomorrow we die.

As Tim Keller, PCA pastor in NYC has said (along with many others over the years): “If the resurrection is true then we can believe everything that Jesus says. If it's not true, then we don't need to believe anything he says.” i.e. **We can put all our Easter eggs into the one basket of The Resurrection of Christ. It's all or nothing.**

So, I don't know where you're coming from today – convinced believer, skeptic, confirmed doubter who got dragged here on Easter – but I want all of us to be honest with ourselves and ask, “If I say I'm a believer, am I blindly believing?” Or “If I say I'm an unbeliever, am I willfully blind to the real issues and truth claims of Jesus?”

Let's look at a resurrection passage that lays out some of the claims of Christ. Luke 24- two sections: the first is an account of the resurrection morning. The second is a resurrection encounter of Jesus with two of his followers.

The Resurrection

1 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. **2** And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, **3** but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

4 While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing; **5** and as *the women* were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, *the men* said to them, “Why do you seek the living One among the dead? **6** He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, **7** saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.” **8** And they remembered His words, **9** and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.

10 Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the *mother* of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles. **11** But these words appeared to them

as nonsense, and they would not believe them. 12 But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he *saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home, marveling at what had happened.

What lead disciples to believe? Evidence!

Christianity is a CONTENT faith, not a “faith in faith” sort of faith. “It doesn’t matter what you believe in, just believe” doesn’t cut it when it comes to Jesus.

Luke 24

v. 1-3 The faith of the church is not simply based on empty tomb. They did not make that leap automatically. “The tomb is empty so he must have risen from the dead?”. NO, the Faith of church rests on eye-witness accounts. The empty tomb was certainly a factor, but there are post resurrection appearances to real people in real time.

Early believers did not rely on faith in faith, but the words of those who saw, spoke and ate with, Jesus.

v. 4-9

- Encountered angels – confession of the angels – “he is risen” The first announcement is from the angels. Just as with his birth.

v. 10ff

seemed like idle tales (twaddle) only use of that word in the NT.

**Beware of chronological arrogance, i.e. the view that NT people were “naïve or superstitious.” They were skeptical about the account of a resurrection. They weren’t unsophisticated superstitious dullards who would believe anything.

Compare them with moderns who have horoscopes in newspaper.

EX: Washington Post editor’s wife, who practiced occult hexes – Sally Quinn, wife of WAPO editor Ben Bradley. They were the ultimate Washington “power couple” . She was the gatekeeper of Washington society and she was into a spirituality that involved putting hexes on those she disliked.

Quinn's memoir “Finding Magic: A Spiritual Memoir” is peppered with references to youthful affairs and the past indiscretions of named colleagues and friends. Most alarming, she confesses that, like her mother, she believes in the deadly power of hexes – and suggests that she has harmed people by using them.

No one who runs in the Sally Quinn, WAPO circles should think that the 1st Century disciples were unsophisticated superstitious bumpkins.

The disciples found the announcement to be incredible and went to inspect the tomb for themselves.

They wanted to discover what was to be discovered.

The passage then shifts to an encounter between Jesus and two of his followers.

v. 13ff – Emmaus road

13 And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place. 15 While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and began traveling with them. 16 But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him.

17 And He said to them, “What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?” And they stood still, looking sad. 18 One of them, named Cleopas, answered and said

to Him, "Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?"

19 And He said to them, "What things?" And they said to Him, "The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, 20 and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death and crucified Him. 21 But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened. 22 But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, 23 and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive. 24 Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see."

25 And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" 27 Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

28 And they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He were going farther. 29 But they urged Him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is *getting* toward evening, and the day is now nearly over." So He went in to stay with them. 30 When He had reclined *at the table* with them, He took the bread and blessed *it*, and breaking *it*, He *began* giving *it* to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight. 32 They said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?"

33 And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, 34 saying, "The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon." 35 They *began* to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread.

These Jesus followers were obviously despondent. They saw Jesus die along with all their hopes. Jesus comes along and asks questions.

They rebuke him (irony) and tell the story from a perspective of doubt. They'd heard reports about people hearing from angels, but they didn't really believe it. Their hope was gone.

Then they got the ultimate OT SURVEY from Christ telling them what the OT is about v. 13ff Jesus shows how it all relates to him.

**That may not have surprised those disciples as much as it may surprise many of us today. Sadly, too many today see the OT as an embarrassment that we must apologize for. Jesus saw it as a guide to understanding who he is and why he came.

The events of Good Friday to Resurrection Sunday were not a mistake. They were not unseen. They were necessary.

26 Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?"

The statement of Jesus begs the question, "WHY?"

TO ACCOMPLISH SALVATION FOR LOST REBELLIOUS PEOPLE.

Heidelberg puts it this way...as relates to Good Friday...

40. Q. Why was it necessary for Christ to humble Himself even unto death?

A. Because of the justice and truth of God, satisfaction for our sins could be made in no other way than by the death of the Son of God. [1] Gen. 2:17. [2] Rom. 8:3; Phil. 2:8; Heb. 2:9, 14, 15.

As it relates to today, Resurrection Sunday...here is what we want to know...

45. Q. How does Christ's resurrection benefit us?

A. First, by His resurrection He has overcome death, so that He could make us share in the righteousness which He had obtained for us by His death. Second, by His power we too are raised up to a new life. Third, Christ's resurrection is to us a sure pledge of our glorious resurrection.

[1] Rom. 4:25; I Cor. 15:16-20; I Pet. 1:3-5. [2] Rom. 6:5-11; Eph. 2:4-6; Col. 3:1-4. [3] Rom. 8:11; I Cor. 15:12-23; Phil. 3:20, 21.

Jesus appeared to those disciples who needed some good news. They appeared to be ready to abandon all hope and give up on Jesus, who they thought was the long-awaited deliverer and Messiah.

Don't raise your hand on this, but is there anyone here who has sometimes been so discouraged at the way life has turned out, that you were tempted to give up your Christian profession?

It may be true of someone who is here today. If it is, call on the living, resurrected Jesus to come to you and to undergird your faith and transform your discouragement; for he knows and cares for you, if you have trusted in him! And he will help you as we are confident that he helped these two disciples.

We'll close with this...

What a contrast are the opening verses in this passage and their glad affirmation in the latter part – v.6, 34 where they were the first to affirm what was to become for several centuries, the call to worship for Christians on Easter Morning.

The leader would say: "He is risen!"

And the congregation would respond with: " is risen, indeed!"

And both the leader and the congregation would follow that response with:

"Hallelujah!"

https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/sally-quinns-hexes-marital-ultimatums-and-visceral-love-of-her-son/2017/09/08/94694dfe-882b-11e7-961d-2f373b3977ee_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.df3896ebd081#comments

