

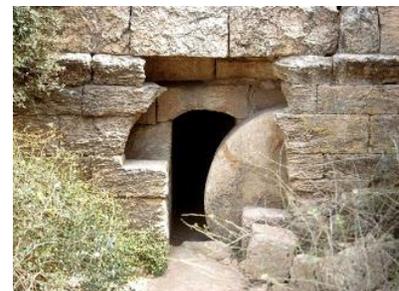
God's Son Saves the World
March-April Sermon Series
Kenwood Baptist Church
Pastor David Palmer
(Easter Sunday) April 4, 2021

TEXT: Luke 24:1-16



Good morning, Beloved. It is a joy to see many of you face to face, eye to eye. Some of you I have not seen in person in almost a year. It is beautiful and powerful to gather together on this Easter Sunday. This morning we stand on sacred ground. We stand in a holy place. We stand at the juncture of God's saving purpose for the world that is made known to us. Luke is the only non-Jewish writer in the New Testament. He came to discover the truth of these things. His Gospel is structured and written through the eyes of people who had encountered Jesus and seen Him in a powerful and beautiful way. Luke 24 unfolds before us on Easter Sunday with news of Jesus' resurrection. It's news that was startling to those who first heard it. It is news that brings coherence and meaning to our lives and not only to our lives, but to all the world. I want to invite you to journey with me and follow me as Luke tells us how Jesus is made known on that first Easter morning.

In the first scene of our passage, on the first day of the week, that is, Sunday, early dawn, a group of women came to the tomb where Jesus had been buried. They came not to a funeral home; they came to a rock-hewn tomb. Rock cut tombs were restricted in ancient Israel to upper class families. Rock cut tombs were used for about a hundred years. I want you to have this in mind, because it makes details in our passage clear. In rock hewn tombs, it was typical for these tombs to be cut out for family burials to take



place in a single tomb over many generations. These rock hewn tombs were cut with an open area and two chambers. The outer chamber is where the body would be laid and then mourned. The deceased would be covered with aromatic spices shortly after death. The second inner chamber where the body would be taken and placed in niches is called *kokhim* in Hebrew. They were cut shafts, radiating out from the outer chamber. A large stone would be rolled back to seal the tomb. Typically, about a year later, the stone would be rolled back and a secondary burial would take place. After the body had decomposed and only the bones remained, the bones would be collected and gathered together and placed inside small limestone boxes called ossuaries. These boxes would then be set in niches carved into the walls. The rock hewn tomb to which these women come on Easter morning held a surprise. The tomb of Jesus had been sealed by order of the Roman government and it was guarded by soldiers, the other Gospel writers tell us. The final anointing of the body of Jesus had not yet taken place. The tomb was sealed, and when they arrived, the stone had been rolled back. They went inside, and to their astonishment they did not find the body of Jesus. Many thoughts filled their minds. Had there been vandalism or theft? Was the body of their Lord stolen? What happened between Friday and Sunday morning? Luke tells us, based probably on interviews with them, that they were at a loss at that moment. They were perplexed about what might have taken place. Then suddenly two men in dazzling clothing appeared, and just their appearance was overwhelming. The women were frightened and bowed down in a posture of worship, and these men, the other Gospel writers tell us, were angels. They asked the women in Luke 24:5-7:

“Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how He told you, while He was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.”

The angels speak the first of three statements in our passage of *divine necessity*. There is something going on in this text that gives us a clue to Easter, and it’s articulated here for the first time. The angels remind the women of Jesus’ word while He was with them – that He *must be delivered, handed over into the hands of sinful men, that He will be crucified and then on the third day be raised*. This is the first divine necessity. The events of Easter must take place.

The women go as they are told. We are given their names later in our text: Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James, and the other women with them. They went without prompting to tell the apostles what they had seen. Notice that people who encounter the risen Jesus don’t need to be told to tell other people. It’s unnatural to keep that hidden or to yourself. They go to the apostles, and they tell them the tomb was empty. “We did not see the body of Jesus.” After they told them everything they had experienced, the apostles did not believe them. They did not believe them, probably for the very same reason you would not have believed them. Dead people don’t usually rise. Their words seemed like an idle tale, but

Peter wanted to verify it for himself, so he rushed to the tomb. Luke is accurate even in the small detail that Peter would have had to stoop down to enter this rock hewn tomb. When he looked inside the empty chamber, he, like the women, saw no body, but only the grave clothes. He returned home, marveling at what had happened. The first scene of our passage takes place at the tomb.

In the second scene, two disciples are on the road to Emmaus. Luke tells us that very day, that Easter Sunday, two of the disciples were going for a walk, and they were walking to a village named Emmaus. Emmaus comes from the Hebrew *hamma*, which means hot springs. Hot springs are an amazing feature of the earth. They are like God's built-in jacuzzis. The water is good for the skin, it's refreshing, it's really remarkable. Emmaus was named for its hot springs. The text tells us that it was 60 stadia from Jerusalem. A stadia is 200 meters. It's where we get the English word stadium. Sixty stadia is a little over 7 miles away, a 2½ hour walk. They are walking on Easter Sunday, and what is remarkable in our passage is that Jesus Himself drew up alongside them while they were walking. And he asked them: "What are you talking about?" They stopped walking. They appeared gloomy, sad, and depressed. Finally one of them, Cleopas, which is the short form of *Cleopatros*, "Glory to the Father," spoke. You may be familiar with the feminine form of this name, *Cleopatra*. The masculine form is *Cleopatros*. Cleopas looked at Jesus, without knowing Whom he was talking to, and even insulted Him in Luke 24:18:

"Are You the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

And Jesus looked at them and said, "What things?" They told Him in Luke 24:19:

"Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a Man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people."

Summarizing Jesus' public ministry in a single breathtaking phrase – mighty in word, mighty in deed, they continued in Luke 24:20:

". . .and how our chief priests and rulers delivered Him up to be condemned to death, and crucified Him."

The priest accused Him of blasphemy. The rulers accused Him of treason and crucified Him. The only people who could be crucified in the first century were those convicted of capital crimes against the state. Jesus was convicted, and they continued in Luke 24:21:

"But we had hoped that He was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened."

We had hoped that He was the Promised Messiah, the One who would bring that great second exodus of redemption of Israel and freedom and liberty and bring in the Kingdom of God. We thought He was the one. It's three days since this happened. It was even worse from their perspective. Some women in our company were at the tomb this morning. They came back saying they had visions of angels that said He was alive. Some of our own rushed to the tomb and found it just as the women had said. They didn't see Him.

Jesus replies to them in Luke 24:25-26:

"O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory?"

Beloved, this is the second statement of *divine necessity*. The good news of Easter hangs on this divine necessity. I wonder how Jesus spoke this. Do you think He whispered this? Do you think he thundered it? I think he whispered it. Wasn't it necessary for the Messiah to suffer and then enter into His glory? Isn't there something critical and vital and life-giving about the gospel? A gospel that's only about Jesus' resurrection doesn't have forgiveness of sins. And a gospel that's only about Jesus' suffering and doesn't have His resurrection does not offer new life.

They kept walking and finally reached Emmaus. Jesus, though they did not know Him yet, acted as if He was just going to continue on. "Why don't You stay here with us?" And so He went in and stayed with them. And as they sat down to eat, in the midst of their meal, Jesus took the bread and He blessed it and He broke it and He gave it to them. When they saw this, His taking the bread and blessing it and breaking it and the giving of it to them, they said: "We've seen this before. We saw this days ago." And their eyes were opened, and they saw it. They said, "He's alive!" But before they could ask Him any questions, He disappeared. They were left speaking to each other, asking in Luke 24:32:

"Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked to us on the road, while He opened to us the Scriptures?"

It's the same thing John Wesley later experienced. John Wesley had come to evangelize the early American colonists. In the midst of his travels and ministry, he attended a meeting where the preface of Martin Luther's commentary on Romans was read publicly. And when John Wesley heard the gospel explained, he describes that his heart, though he was already in Christian service, "strangely warmed." He began to preach and proclaim Christ with power.

Those on the way to Emmaus talked with each other. Just like the women who came to the tomb, they rushed to tell the apostles what they had seen. The disciples on the road to Emmaus decided then and there they were going to go back to Jerusalem. It takes about 2½ hours to walk to Emmaus, but I think it took less for them to go back to Jerusalem, don't you? It was

already evening, and they went back to Jerusalem and they found the eleven gathered. They burst in and they said: "The Lord is risen!" They told them what happened to them on the road. They said: "It was in that moment just like in the Upper Room. He took the bread, He broke it, He blessed it, and He gave it to us." And as they were talking about these things, all of a sudden, as we see in the passage, Jesus himself stood in their midst. There He was. There He stood among them, and He declared a word that only He can speak. He said: "Peace. Peace to you." They were startled, they were frightened. Like you, like me, they must have thought dead people don't rise. It must be a dream, it must be a vision. They thought they were seeing a spirit, and Jesus said: "Why do doubts arise within you? Look at Me." He invited them to look at Him and see, and He said in Luke 24:39:

"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."

The Gospel writers indicate to us that the scars are still there in His hands and feet. Aren't you glad? Aren't you glad that the suffering could still be seen? He showed them His hands and His feet. They still were astonished and marveling. Jesus finally had to say to them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" And they gave Him some grilled fish, and He ate it.

Easter is about a bodily resurrection, but the resurrection of Jesus is not self-interpreting. It is not an event that God invites you and me to imagine what it means. The third time in our passage Jesus speaks of *divine necessity* and says in Luke 24:44:

"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."

We read in Luke 24:45-47:

"Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem."

The necessity of His suffering and death, and His resurrection launches the gospel that includes repentance and forgiveness for all nations, and this is why Easter reverberates good news today.

I love to study God's Word. I know that many of you do as well. Many of you have been in Bible study for years. And this is one you wouldn't want to miss. It's the Bible study on the resurrection of Jesus. He says: "Let Me just the open the text." He says: "Everything about Me in Moses and the prophets and the Psalms had to be fulfilled." Suffering and death. If you have a gospel with only suffering, it leads to depression and discouragement. Some of us are looking out at the world and see only things that make us lament and suffer. We need suffering that

leads to glory. Some of us are afraid of suffering and hard things and want to keep things light on the surface. We only want the good news of the gospel. But Jesus had to suffer and be raised. He walked them through the Scriptures. I imagine He showed them dozens of passages. I want to touch on just one from each of the major sections of scripture.

Jesus interpreted the Bible about Himself. He walked the disciples through its meaning. And we can see this from the passages that He talked about and the passages that they then talked about of how He led them through the Scriptures. The first passage I want to take us to is the Law of Moses in Exodus 12. In Exodus 12, the Lord said to Moses and Aaron to command the people to take a lamb for the household, a lamb without blemish. Then they would keep the lamb until the fourteenth day, and the lamb would be slaughtered on that day. They were to take blood from the Passover lamb that was slain and put that blood over the doorpost of their homes. Then, when God was passing over the land, when He saw the blood of the Passover lamb, His judgment would pass over. Beloved, there is no forgiveness without the shedding of blood. If you come to God without the blood of the Lamb over the top of you, God's judgment will fall on you; it will fall on me. God says in Exodus 12:13:

"The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt."

Jesus celebrated the meaning of His imminent death by celebrating the Passover. He interpreted His death in the context of the Passover meal. When John the Baptist saw Him coming at the beginning of His ministry, he said: "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." The meaning of Easter is lost if it is separated from the Passover. This, in fact, was the first big discussion in church history outside the New Testament. It was about the calendar. I know that none of you woke up this morning agonizing over the *Quartodeciman* controversy. Why do we celebrate Easter on April 4? Why are we gathered this morning? We are gathered on April 4 because the sun passed from the southern hemisphere into the northern hemisphere on March 28. Did you notice the last few weeks that it seems to be getting warmer? The north pole tipped towards the sun, and many of us are starting to think about summer plans. It's the spring equinox. The first full moon after the spring equinox happened on March 28. And the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox is April 4. The early church wrestled with when to celebrate Easter. One group said: "It's obvious. You celebrate it the Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox." The other group said: "That's too hard to keep track of. We want to celebrate it on the 14th of Nissan. We want to celebrate it on the night of the Passover, because that's the occasion in the Gospels." The church had an argument about it. One group said: "We don't want to lose the connection with Jesus as the Passover Lamb." Orthodox Christians celebrate Easter on a different day from

Western Christians because they stay tied to the calendar. I don't know which side I would have voted for. The decision has been made long ago. The group that argued for the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox had another motivation because that was a big holiday in the Roman world, and they wanted to claim that space for Jesus who is risen from the dead.

So there's a blessing involved, but I want you to see this morning that Jesus took His disciples to Exodus 12 to interpret the necessity of His death, that He would be the Passover Lamb slain so that God's judgment would pass over us and that redemption would come through Him. Surely Jesus took His disciples to Isaiah 52 and 53 in the prophets. This passage is quoted over and over again in the New Testament. Isaiah 52:7 is the Gospel of the Old Testament:

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."

The good news is the hope that God would bear His holy arm again in the eyes of all nations, and the ends of the earth would see the salvation of God. God would act again. We would not go out in haste, but God would go before us and be our rearguard. Tremendous Exodus imagery. How will this come about? It will come about through the figure of the Servant of the Lord: the Servant who was despised and rejected; the Servant who carries our sorrows and is afflicted; the Servant who is pierced for our transgressions; the Servant who is led as a Lamb to the slaughter and buried in a rich man's grave. Jesus fulfills the vocation and calling of the Servant in intricate detail. He was despised and rejected; He carried our sorrows and sin; He stood silent before His accusers; He was pierced on the cross and buried in a rich man's grave. The servant of the Lord suffered and died. And yet, we read in Isaiah 53:10:

"Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush Him; He has put Him to grief; when His soul makes an offering for guilt, He shall see His offspring; He shall prolong His days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in His hand."

How do you see your offspring? After you've been crucified and buried, how do you prolong your days? You have to be raised from the dead. The Servant dies and is raised, and we read in Isaiah 53:11:

"Out of the anguish of His soul He shall see and be satisfied; by His knowledge shall the Righteous One, My Servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and He shall bear their iniquities."

The suffering Servant achieves forgiveness and brings new life through His resurrection. He bore the sin of many and makes intercession for those who have transgressed.

What about the Psalms? There are more Psalms quoted in the New Testament than any other book. Friday night we heard Jesus speak Psalm 22:1:

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me?”

That’s His cry of anguish, anguish and affliction of the righteous from the cross. It was the fourth word of seven that Jesus spoke and proclaimed. Jesus announced the anguish of God’s wrath poured out against Him. But then He fulfilled all of Psalm 22. In Psalm 22:7-8, we read:

“All who see Me mock Me; they make mouths at Me; they wag their heads; ‘He trusts in the LORD; let Him deliver Him; let Him rescue Him, for He delights in Him!’”

Then, in Psalm 22:14-18, He says:

“I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; it is melted within My breast; My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue sticks to My jaws; you lay Me in the dust of death. . . a company of evildoers encircles Me; they have pierced My hands and feet—I can count all My bones—they stare and gloat over Me; they divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.”

The Gospel writers described Jesus on the cross in exactly these terms. Psalm 22 leads then to a prayer of rescue in Psalm 22:19-21:

“But You, O LORD, do not be far off! O You My help, come quickly to My aid! Deliver My soul from the sword . . . Save Me. . . .”

The righteous Sufferer, His prayer for deliverance, rescue, and salvation is answered as the Sufferer of Psalm 22 lives again. Psalm 22:26-27 tells us:

“The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek Him shall praise the LORD! May your hearts live forever! All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before You.”

It was *necessary*, Beloved, for the Messiah to suffer and it was necessary for Him to be raised from the dead. We learn the trustworthiness of Jesus’ own teaching, but we learn the meaning of Easter.

Let me apply this great *divine necessity* to us this morning.

First, it means that ***Jesus’ death and resurrection reveals the coherence and meaning of the entire Bible and of our own lives.*** One of the most devastating things that can happen to a person is when they lose sense that their life has meaning or purpose, when it seems random and unpredictable, when it strikes them that there is no one running the universe, there’s no one who cares for them and they wander and drift and find themselves in places of hopelessness and despair. In Jesus’ teaching to us of the divine necessity, the absolute

coherence of His death, His resurrection means that there is coherence and meaning to your life. If any voice speaks to you from within or from without that there is no meaning, no purpose, and you are in despair, I want to tell you the good news on Easter Sunday: Jesus' death and resurrection produces meaning, produces coherence, banishes hopelessness. There is room to acknowledge and lament the pain and suffering in the world and that Jesus, the Messiah, has experienced the worst of it and has lead us through on the other side in newness of life. Jesus' death and resurrection reveals the coherence and meaning of the Bible and holds our lives together.

Second, ***Jesus death and resurrection grants repentance and forgiveness.*** Some of us this morning long for change. Some of us want everything to stay the same. But we long for change wherever we see things out of order. We wonder how do wrongs get righted, how do things turn around. Jesus' death and resurrection grant this possibility. These two words, repentance and forgiveness, are so powerful. Repentance means that your life changes by just turning to Jesus. You don't have to fix yourself before coming to Him. You just have to turn away from self to Him. You turn away from a path you have lived on your own. Jesus says that when you turn toward Him, you will find forgiveness. Some of you this morning are unclear about what you will find if you turn toward Jesus. Jesus Himself tells us what you will find. You will find forgiveness. Each of us is acquainted with our own sins, our own transgressions, the things we have done and said that we wish we hadn't. We are also aware of the things we should have done that we didn't. And the gospel means turning to Jesus and finding forgiveness. When that happens, we experience new life. The fearful become filled with faith; the cowardly become courageous; the discouraged and dispirited find their hearts burning in them. The angry and embittered find themselves eager for reconciliation and peace. Jesus' death and resurrection gives coherence and meaning. Jesus' death and resurrection grants repentance and forgiveness.

Third, ***Jesus' death and resurrection makes us His witnesses to all nations.*** Luke ends his Gospel with Jesus' telling the disciples that "you are witnesses of these things." The good news of Easter is not just received, but it is shared. Just as the women at the tomb rushed to make known what they had seen; just as those on the road to Emmaus found the apostles to tell them what they had seen, so the apostles then shared what they had seen. They shared in the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised to them. Within a generation, Christian witness radiated out from Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria, and to open testimony in the capital of the empire of Rome. Within three centuries, the Roman emperor himself became a Christian. Astonishing! Within these early centuries, Christians translated the Bible into the languages they knew, as God's Word and the testimony of Jesus radiated out to the nations. We have ten thousand copies of these early translations. Churches were planted in Europe, in Africa, in Asia, proclaiming the good news that Jesus is risen from the dead, just as He said, and

that repentance and forgiveness is available to all who turn to Him. The gospel crosses with boundless freedom all cultural and ethnic and class barriers. And the gospel continues to do that today.

In the United States, according to a recent survey by the Barna group, 50% of Americans do not identify with Christianity. When Jesus told the apostles that they were witnesses, 99.99% of the people of the world did not associate with Christianity. And they talked about it anyway. It's exciting to share Christ with people who have never met Him. There's no Savior like this one, who suffered and died for us and is raised. Though many do not identify with Christianity in our country right now, there are churches which are growing rapidly, both in the United States and around the world. I think what's really declined in our country is nominal Christianity, or cultural Christianity. As people perceive that the cultural benefits of saying "I'm a Christian" seem to have faded, vibrant gospel-believing, committed to Jesus Christianity is actually on the rise, not just here but around the world.

Beloved, Easter is true. And whether you celebrate it on the 14th of Nissan or you celebrate as we are this morning on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox, the suffering of the Son of God atoned for your sins and mine. His resurrection from the dead gives new life to all who place their trust in Him. Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, Son of God, we praise You and magnify You. We thank You for the divine necessity of Your suffering and Your resurrection. We thank You, Lord, that You can be trusted and that Your Word can be trusted and that You made provision for our forgiveness and made provision for our new life. We thank You this morning for the possibility of change when we turn away from self and sin and lies and deception and trust You, that You renew and restore and remake us. We thank You, Lord, that You bring hope into us and that You banish despair. We thank You this morning, Lord Jesus, that Your gospel is for all nations, for all peoples, that it's not the possession of one people, or of one country, or one language, but that it's good news for all the earth. We thank You, Lord, that You invite us and You call us. You empower us to be witnesses of what You have done for us. We praise You, King of kings, and we sing to You now. You have freed us from our sins and given us new life in Your name.

Hallelujah! Amen.