

Essentials – The Work of Christ

Luke 24:1-49

(Expanded Sermon Notes)



Who would have thought that something so common, so regular, so normal would be the thing that helped them to see the gravity and the reality of the situation? There had already been several moments where they were presented with evidence that was big, grand, and truly miraculous. But those experiences didn't convince them. Instead, their doubt was most significantly moved towards belief by a piece of fish. **A piece of fish?!?** Something ordinary, normal, and insignificant. I wonder what Jesus was thinking at that moment. The empty tomb with its stone door rolled away, the angels, the women's testimony, Peter's confirmation of the empty tomb, the disciples from the road to Emmaus, heck, he was in front of them and invited them to touch him... and, they still weren't convinced!

What?!? How?!? Why?!?

So, he asks them for a piece of fish eats it, and then this simple, ordinary, everyday act begins to transform their doubting hearts and minds. It would be really easy to pull the rug out from under the disciples. Too easy, in fact. I can treat them like fools by thinking; if I was there, the tomb would have been enough, the angels, the testimony from friends, or the very presence of Jesus... any one of those would have been enough evidence. Yet, if I am truly honest, I am just as skeptical of grandiose miracles, and it is the repeated evidence through ordinary things that changes my heart. What hung in the balance for them and continues to hang in the balance for us is a truth that could change everything. It is the truth that **if Jesus has risen, hope (real, lasting, and powerful) is a valid reality.**

EFCA Article #5:

We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation.

1. Resurrection – Really?

- a. Our Statement thus far has affirmed truths about the human condition and truths about God that, when viewed together, present an obvious problem. On the one hand, we have declared that human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under his wrath (Article 3). We all stand in need of the restoration of our corrupt nature, reconciliation with our estranged Creator, and rescue from the condemnation which our rebellion against God's rule richly deserves. Yet we have also declared the gracious purpose of God from eternity to redeem a people for himself, allowing them to share in his own triune love (Article 1). That purpose was first glimpsed in God's pledge in the Garden of Eden that from the seed of Eve would come one who would crush the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15); it was revealed more clearly in God's promise to bless Abraham, and through him to bring blessing to the world (Gen. 12:1-3). The Old Testament story of Israel left little ground for hope, however, for Israel herself had rebelled against God and was in need of a Savior. In the light of our sinful condition, how is this purpose to be accomplished? Many would simply echo the words of the German poet and skeptic Heinrich Heine, which he spoke as he lay on his deathbed: "God will forgive me. That's his job." Isn't forgiveness God's duty, his obligation? Can't God simply forgive freely? But the Bible affirms that God is holy and just, which means that he cannot tolerate evil and must condemn all iniquity—"Acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent—the Lord detests them both" (Prov. 17:15). Because of his very nature, God's role as Judge of all the earth demands the execution of justice. Evil must be seen to be evil, or cosmic justice will have no meaning; and without such a recognition even our human dignity as responsible moral agents will be undermined. Mere forgiveness of sinful human beings apart from the exercise of the judgment due their sin would be in contradiction to God's character. The resolution of this theological dilemma, and the core of the gospel, is found in the work of Jesus Christ. Especially in the death of Christ on the cross, God's righteousness is revealed—a righteous hatred of sin and a righteous commitment to his covenant promise to bring blessing to the world. There God's wrath is poured out and his love is demonstrated, and he shows himself to be just even while justifying sinners (cf. Rom. 3:25-26).¹
- b. Doubt is not the enemy of faith. → Deconstruction does not mean that the house is coming down!
 - i. Doubt was Luke's motivation for writing his Gospel account! → Theophilus was struggling with his faith, and Luke set out to write down all the things he researched.
 1. **"Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, ² just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, ³ it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught."** (Luke 1:1-4)
 2. Luke compiled the evidence for Theophilus to weigh, consider, and ultimately to give him confidence not only in the account but ultimately in the validity of Jesus and his messianic claims.
 - ii. **Both doubt and deconstruction are important parts of a healthy and growing faith.**
 1. **Coming to Jesus** - At some point, there was a thread of doubt that grew in you that made you begin searching for something else.

a. ¹ EFCA. Evangelical Convictions, 2nd Edition (pp. 140-141). Free Church Publications. Kindle Edition.

2. **Following Jesus** – We don't have everything buttoned up in nice little theological boxes. We grow, and we are sharpened when we say, "I don't know, let me investigate or research that some more."
 - a. The Bereans in Acts 17:11 → "They examined to see if these things were so..."
 - b. They doubted Paul's teaching at first; this led them to search the Scriptures, and then to believe in Jesus!
3. **In our general lives:** This is a principle that we are not threatened by in our general lives.
 - a. The scientific method is hinged on doubt... that is what drives research!
 - b. Doubt leads to refinement in tech, manufacturing, and agriculture.
 - i. Why? → Because doubt makes us look closer.
- c. **Doubt and deconstruction does not have to be lonely.**
 - i. **Too often, we can feel or we think that we should feel as if doubt or deconstruction is a lonely thing.**
 1. The reality that for anyone who is growing, doubt is a natural part of that process.
 2. Without doubt, we are proclaiming that there is nothing more to explore, search, or seek out. → I.e., We are saying **that the eternal God is actually exhaustible.**
 - ii. Sometimes we want to be on an island all on our own.
 1. I.e., we want to be misunderstood or to simply remain isolated.
 2. **These are unhealthy social responses, and they are not representative of what doubt and deconstruction truly is.**
 - iii. **"Doubt is not always a sign that a man is wrong. It may be a sign that he is thinking."** – Oswald Chambers²
 1. **Luke's account of the resurrection is a brilliant picture of this truth, and to help us see that, Luke steeps it deeply in irony.** ³
 - a. We found the stone.. but not Jesus. (v.2)
 - b. Peter sees the empty tomb... still doesn't believe. (v.12)
 - c. They walk with him and don't recognize him. (v.16)
 - d. They touch him and don't believe him... so he eats a snack in front of them! (v. 40)
 2. Paul said, if Jesus did not raise from the dead, the Christian faith is "useless" and "futile" (1 Cor 15:14, 17), robbed of any true significance. But we will see that Jesus was indeed raised, and the Christian truths we believe are proved right.⁴
 - a. The disciples doubt is the vehicle that eventually helps them to see Jesus clearly. → **Healthy doubt and deconstruction looks for truth.**
- d. **We need to look no further than the disciples.**
 - i. **V. 11 – "An idle tale, and they did not believe them."**
 1. The disciples represent humanity's normal reaction to the resurrection tidings. This is a major motif in all four of the Gospel accounts (Matt 28:17; John 20:25, 27). **Doubt and disbelief are the regular human responses to such news.** ⁵
 2. Why? → Because it just doesn't seem possible.
 - a. Even Peter (v.12) → Amazed (**thaumazō**) but not convinced.⁶

² Oswald Chambers, *The Westminster Collection of Christian Quotations* (2001), 79.

³ Grant R. Osborne, *Luke: Verse by Verse*, (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 566.

⁴ Grant R. Osborne, *Luke: Verse by Verse*, (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 557.

⁵ Grant R. Osborne, *Luke: Verse by Verse*, (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 563.

⁶ Grant R. Osborne, *Luke: Verse by Verse*, (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 564.

ii. **V. 16 – “Their eyes were kept from recognizing him.”**

1. There is heavy irony in this scene, as the One who is asking for news is himself the news they are sharing.⁷
 - a. They are distraught, grieving, and probably fearful for their lives and families.
 - b. Perhaps Luke wants us to gather, as Ford suggests, ‘that we cannot see the risen Christ, although he be walking with us, unless he wills to disclose himself’.⁸
2. **Their statement that “it is the third day since all this took place” is supremely ironic.**⁹
 - a. **Jesus had told them that on the third day he would rise!** Cf. 9:22; 13:32; 18:33

iii. **V. 37 – “They were frightened...”**

1. The disciples “still did not believe it,” but their disbelief is mingled with “joy and amazement.” They are incredulous, **midway between doubt and joyous belief.**¹⁰
2. **They are on their way to belief. How? → Evidence.**

2. Resurrection – Validity?

a. **Healthy doubt and deconstruction drive us to pursue evidence.**

- i. First century historians give us evidence that this event actually happened.
 1. **“Now, there was about this time, Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works--a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.”**¹¹

ii. **Resurrection question: Did Jesus really die?**

1. This was a common question on the validity of the resurrection in the 300’s. Athanasius, who was a pastor a church leader in Alexandria, had this to say in answering that question.
 - a. **“If, then, there were no works, they would do well to disbelieve what does not appear; but if the works cry out and show it clearly, why do they choose to deny the life so patently of the resurrection? ... For even a blind person, if he does not see the sun but feels the warmth coming from it, knows that the sun is above the earth.”**¹²
 - b. This is what he means, if Jesus was not resurrected, how do you explain all of the works he performed after the resurrection? → The Romans only slightly

⁷ Grant R. Osborne, *Luke: Verse by Verse*, (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 566.

⁸ Leon Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 3, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 356.

⁹ Grant R. Osborne, *Luke: Verse by Verse*, (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 567–568.

¹⁰ Grant R. Osborne, *Luke: Verse by Verse*, (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 574.

¹¹ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 20, Chapter 9, Paragraph 1

¹² Athanasius of Alexandria. *On the Incarnation*. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011), 83.

hurt him? It wasn't really him on the cross? He had a body double? Mass hysteria?

- i. These are all theories that had been and continue proposed.
- ii. Athanasius facing the idea that Jesus really didn't die on the cross, contends, even a person who has never seen the sun with their eyes, knows that the sun exists because of the evidence. All of the other proposals are so absurd, that the only conclusion is that the resurrection as the Bible accounts was valid.

iii. **Resurrection question: Why would the disciple die for a lie?** *-The original disciples believed that Jesus was risen from the dead despite their having every predisposition to the contrary.* Think of the situation the disciples faced after Jesus' crucifixion:

1. Their leader was dead. And Jews had no belief in a dying, much less rising, Messiah. The Messiah was supposed to throw off Israel's enemies (= Rome) and re-establish a Davidic reign— not suffer the ignominious death of criminal.
2. According to Jewish law, Jesus' execution as a criminal showed him out to be a heretic, a man literally under the curse of God (Deut. 21.23). The catastrophe of the crucifixion for the disciples was not simply that their Master was gone, but that the crucifixion showed, in effect, that the Pharisees had been right all along, that for three years they had been following a heretic, a man accursed by God!
3. Jewish beliefs about the afterlife precluded anyone's rising from the dead to glory and immortality before the general resurrection at the end of the world. All the disciples could do was to preserve their Master's tomb as a shrine where his bones could reside until that day when all of Israel's righteous dead would be raised by God to glory.
 - a. Despite all this, the original disciples believed in and were willing to go to their deaths for the fact of Jesus' resurrection. **Luke Johnson, a New Testament scholar from Emory University, muses, "some sort of powerful, transformative experience is required to generate the sort of movement earliest Christianity was" N. T. Wright, an eminent British scholar, concludes, "that is why, as a historian, I cannot explain the rise of early Christianity unless Jesus rose again, leaving an empty tomb behind him."**¹³

iv. The resurrected Jesus graciously gave plenty of evidence.

1. I.e., He did not make them come and pursue him; instead, he pursued them!
2. **Over and over again, God pursues them to prove the resurrection.**
 - a. And empty tomb and angels – v.3
 - b. A confirmed empty tomb for Peter - v.12
 - c. Revealing himself on the road to Emmaus via bread – v.30
 - d. Touch me... and he eats a piece of fish. – vv. 39, 43

v. **God never asks us to operate on "blind faith."**

1. That is just a cute maxim or saying we use in Christian circles to express the idea of remarkable faith.
2. God is faithful to over and over again demonstrate his presence and power. (Rom. 1:19)
 - a. Creation testifies of a creator.
 - i. **Whatever begins to exist has a cause of its beginning.**
 - ii. **The universe began to exist.**

¹³ William Lane Craig, The Resurrection of Jesus, via <https://www.reasonablefaith.org/writings/popular-writings/jesus-of-nazareth/the-resurrection-of-jesus>

- iii. **Therefore, the universe has a cause of its beginning.**
 - b. Philosophy reflects an agent of truth.
 - i. **Even the presence of this “senseless evil” points to the reality that objective moral values exist. And, if there are objective moral values, then God exists. In this way, the existence of evil points to the existence of God.**
 - c. Changed lives declare that there is something or someone powerful enough to change them.
- 3. **Faith is a forward looking trust, based on God’s past provision.**
- b. **The power of the resurrection demonstrated.**
 - i. **V. 12 – Peter marveled at the empty tomb.**
 - 1. The women testified and the men still didn’t believe them.
 - 2. They were utterly skeptical. Even when women they knew well told them of their experiences, they refused to believe. **Clearly irrefutable evidence was needed to convince these sceptics.**¹⁴
 - a. The irrefutable evidence would come later with some fish.
 - ii. **V. 27, 30 – The Scriptures and a meal.**
 - 1. Jesus appeals to them in a way that makes sense to their searching and hurting hearts.
 - a. Walks and talks → Opens Scripture → Eats with them.
 - 2. The response summarizes the events of the cross (vv. 19–21) and empty tomb (vv. 22–24), **indicating that the hopes and dreams of the disciples have been crushed.**
 - a. **They were thinking of messianic liberation, a political victory over Rome and the enemies of God’s people.**
 - 3. **It will take them the entire forty days of appearances to come to any kind of full realization of what God has done in sending Jesus to die and be raised.**¹⁵
 - a. He is patient with us as we search for and test out the evidence that prompts our faith.
 - iii. **V. 39 – “Touch me and see...”**
 - 1. The disciples have been filled with grief at the destruction of their dreams, but then reports began to filter in that gave them a glimmer of hope they were too crestfallen to accept at first. But disbelief and doubt slowly turned to perplexity and then hope. Still, everything was secondhand. Suddenly, Jesus is with them, but they are still too shocked and afraid to fully accept the reality..¹⁶
- c. **The power of the resurrection in our lives.**
 - i. Jesus is still in the business of changing lives.
 - 1. The evidence that convinced me was the fruit of changed lives.
 - a. I saw people following Jesus and those who weren’t.
 - b. Those who were, their lives were dramatically different.
 - i. **They had peace, contentment, perspective, generosity, and grace.**
 - ii. Their doubt is confronted with evidence, and as the evidence is sorted it begins to draw the picture that if it is true, nothing will ever be the same again.

¹⁴ Leon Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 3, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 354.

¹⁵ Grant R. Osborne, *Luke: Verse by Verse*, (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 567.

¹⁶ Grant R. Osborne, *Luke: Verse by Verse*, (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 573–574.

1. It seemed to the little group that all this was just too good to be true. They *disbelieved for joy*. So Jesus dispelled their unbelief by calling for some food which he proceeded to eat.¹⁷
2. **Or, more importantly, nothing has to be the same again because deliverance has come!**

3. Resurrection – Reconciled.

- a. The greatest testimony of the validity of the resurrection is the power of changed lives. This reality has been true from the earliest days of Christianity to now.
 - i. **"For the Resurrection is not an event in past history, but it is a living reality that transforms our lives today. Christ is risen, and we too can rise with Him, if we choose to do so. The Resurrection is the source of our joy, the source of our hope, the source of our strength. For in the Resurrection we see that death has been conquered, that sin has been defeated, that life has triumphed over darkness. And so, let us embrace the hope and promise of the Resurrection, and let us live our lives in the light of its truth."** – Gregory of Nyssa (ca. 380 AD)¹⁸
 - ii. Christians lived different lives than their Roman counterparts:
 1. **"Jesus's death and resurrection did not solidify the society in which they took place, but within three short centuries they transformed it from the inside, overthrowing many of its most ardently held and fiercely defended values."** – Christopher Watkin¹⁹
- b. The first offering of deliverance is ... **peace**. (v.36)
 - i. **As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace to you!"**
 - ii. **Jesus' promise of "peace" is messianic and is the counter to their fear of the next verse.** There is double meaning in this. On one level it is the customary shalom of greeting. **On the deeper level it fulfills Isaiah 9:6; 52:7, and means that God's messianic peace was now theirs to experience.**²⁰
 - iii. **Isa. 9:2,6 –**
 1. **The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. ... For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**
 2. Prince of Peace – The prince of Shalom → The one who will make us whole.
- c. Vv. 48-49 – "You are witnesses of these things... clothed with power from on high."
 - i. The second offer of deliverance comes some days or weeks later, after they have had more time to process the reality of the resurrection.
 1. The Spirit's power originating in heaven will envelop them, characteristic of the presence of the Spirit (1:17, 35; 4:14; 5:17; 9:1). As the Spirit was essential to Jesus' ministry, so now he is God's gift to the church so they may continue that ministry. So

¹⁷ Leon Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 3, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 360.

¹⁸ Gregory of Nyssa. "On the Resurrection." In Saint Gregory of Nyssa: Ascetical Works, edited by Virginia Woods Callahan. The Fathers of the Church 58. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1967.

¹⁹ Watkin, Christopher. *Biblical Critical Theory: How the Bible's Unfolding Story Makes Sense of Modern Life and Culture*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 454.

²⁰ Grant R. Osborne, *Luke: Verse by Verse*, (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 573–574.

the witness theme is connected to the idea of anointing or empowering for office.

The last act of Jesus' ministry is inextricably linked with the first act of the new age.²¹

- ii. **It is the offer that you and I do not have to do this thing alone. → God is in our corner.**
 - 1. This runs counter to almost every other worldview or religion.
 - 2. Christianity is the only religion that doesn't say, clean yourself up, make yourself presentable, do enough good to outweigh the bad, or do enough justice so you can forget the shame of being an oppressor.
 - 3. Christianity says:
 - a. Only God is just.
 - b. You can't clean yourself up, only God can restore you.
 - c. You can't make yourself presentable, so God sent his to be presentable on your behalf.
 - d. You can't earn God's love through good works, we respond in good works out of gratitude because God first loved us.
 - e. Your love on your terms is always preferential, but God will fill you with his Spirit and help you to love with his love that is unconditional
- d. **Jesus doesn't offer this peace in parallel to Jewish religious practices or Roman religion.**
 - i. Jesus doesn't offer you a new perspective or option that is equal or parallel to any other that is out there.
 - 1. He offers you the way of peace, because he is the one who brings peace. After all, who else in history has come back from a Roman cross?
 - ii. He offers this peace and new life to all who believe in him.
 - 1. **If Jesus has risen, then the greatest news is true... nothing has to be the same.**

²¹ Grant R. Osborne, *Luke: Verse by Verse*, (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 578–579.

