

**Intro:** Good morning everyone, my name is Mark, and I'm one of the pastors at North Shore Alliance Church. I'm delighted that you are here to celebrate with us. Now that might strike some of you as an oxymoron, celebrating and church, but, the truth is that as followers of Jesus Christ, we have a lot to celebrate.

I want to begin by saying that I believe that Jesus' death on the cross is **the** central event in all of human history. But while the cross remains central, on this day we remember that Jesus is no longer hanging on it; on this day we remember that His tomb is empty. The cross was not the final word in the Jesus-story, the resurrection is.<sup>1</sup>

It's an uncommon word isn't it, resurrection; it's not a part of our everyday language. It's a shame really, because it is one of the most powerful words in the world.

**illus:** As many of you know, I have an 8 year son, Luke. And as strange as it sounds, one of my favourite moments with him takes place every time I walk him to school. It's not so much the walking that I love, it's the talking that happens along the way.

I grew up in a home with my mom and a dad, and two brothers: one older and one younger. Four men, one woman: our house reeked of testosterone, and other things. To be honest, it wasn't until I was married that I began to appreciate the vast differences between males and females. And now as a parent, I can see the differences between my daughter and my son. Take communication for instance.

When we are sitting around the dinner table, we put boundaries around how much our daughter is allowed to talk, otherwise, she would never get around to putting food in her mouth. But Luke...you ask Him an open-ended question and you'll get a 5-word-answer; you have to work hard for every scrap of information he gives you. But...I've discovered that if you do something with Luke (playing, walking, or driving somewhere), it's amazing how much he will open up.

On Tuesday, the two of us were walking to school in the morning and on the way he said to me, "*Dad...when is Easter?*" And I told him that on Friday we would celebrate Good Friday, and on Sunday we would celebrate Resurrection Sunday. My answer didn't really compute, and so he asked again, "*But when is Easter?*" And so I explained that the whole weekend is the Easter celebration, with Resurrection Sunday being the grand finale.

And then Luke asked, "*Dad...what's resurrection?*" I said, "*Luke, resurrection is one of the most important words in the Bible; in fact, it's one of the most important words in the entire world. Resurrection happens when something dead is brought back to life.*"

Instantly Luke responded, "*Whoaaa...that's impossible...that's impossible for us...only God can do resurrection, right Dad?*" "*That's right son...only God can do resurrection.*" A few thousand years ago, on a Sunday, God did resurrection, and the world has not been the same since.

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<sup>1</sup> Darrell Bock, *NIV Application Commentary: Luke*, 605.

Jesus was dead on Friday. He died. But on Sunday, God brought Him back to life. Only God can do resurrection. Did you notice that I'm using the present tense? *God can do resurrection.* You might be here this morning and you feel like a dead man or dead woman walking. If that is the case, then you've come to the right celebration... Resurrection Sunday is all about shaking off the slumber of death; Jesus wants to give you life.

This morning I want to invite you to turn with me to Luke 24:13-35; you can find our text on page **1642** in the Blue Bibles in front of you, or you can follow along with me on the screen as I read. We're going to be taking a look at a conversation that took place on the way to a town called Emmaus. It was the day Jesus rose from the dead, His tomb was empty, but the disciples were in disarray. Two disciples left Jerusalem in a daze; they didn't know what to think: their Master had been crucified, but His tomb was empty...*where was Jesus? Was He still dead, or was He alive?*

Let's pick up the account in vs. 13:

*“ 13 Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. 15 As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; 16 but they were kept from recognizing him. 17 He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?” They stood still, their faces downcast.*

*18 One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?” 19 “What things?” he asked.*

*“About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. 20 The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; 21 but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place.*

*22 In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning 23 but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. 24 Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.”*

*25 He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.*

*28 As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. 29 But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them.*

*30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. 32 They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”*

*33 They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together 34 and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." 35 Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread."*

The disciples began their conversation in confusion, disappointment, and despair, but it ended in understanding, joy, and hope. What made the difference? Resurrection...Jesus had died, but He'd been brought back to life.

**On The Road To Emmaus:** Luke begins his account with a few details: two of Jesus' disciples left Jerusalem on route to a town called Emmaus. Emmaus was about 7 miles away; that's 11.2 kilometers for us metric types. If you were really cruising, you could walk it in about an hour forty-five; if you were taking it easy, it might be two hours or more.

I suspect the disciples were on the slower side. As they walked they went over the ground of all that had just happened in Jerusalem: Jesus betrayed by someone from inside their own circle, Jesus crucified, dead, and buried, and then this report from some of their women...

But their conversation was suddenly interrupted by an uninvited guest. They were talking about Jesus, Jesus shows up, but Luke tells us that "*they were kept from recognizing Him.*"<sup>2</sup> "What are you two talking about?," Jesus not-so-innocently asked. He knew they were talking about Him, but He kept His identity hidden.

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<sup>2</sup> Luke 24:16.

The question is: *Why all the secrecy? Why the subterfuge? What was going on beneath the surface?* Before I give you an answer, let me tell you a story.

**illus:** For a part of our honeymoon, my wife Naomi and I went to Disneyland. It was great to be away together, and great to be thousands of miles away from anyone who knew us. Don't get me wrong, I love people, and being with people is at the core of my calling as a pastor, but there are times when I crave anonymity.

On one of the days we had spent the morning at Disneyland but decided to walk back to the hotel and spend some time by the pool. Naomi and I were married in January, and at the time I was living in Calgary. Let me tell you, the idea of sitting by a pool in the middle of winter sounded like paradise.

As we sat by the pool, we got to talking with a guy who turned out to be a pastor from just outside of Atlanta. He asked where we were living and I told him I lived in Calgary. "*Calgary?*," he said, "*...I've heard of that place...Y'all have the Stampede up there in Calgary don't ya?*" I admitted that we did, and he went on to ask, "*What's it like up there in Calgary? Is it all barren wilderness?*" I smiled to myself, but with typical Canadian politeness, I explained to him that we didn't live in igloos...Calgary was a thriving city of 1 million people. "*A million people!*," he exclaimed...he couldn't believe it.

Some time later, we were making my way back to the hotel room and as we approached the elevator, a group of three or four very exuberant Jr. High girls got in ahead of us. At the time, I was a Jr.

High pastor in Calgary, but I was really enjoying my vacation from students, and so I decided to wait for the next elevator. But when they saw us standing there they held the door and insisted that we join them.

On the way up, I asked the girls where they were from and they replied, “*Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.*” What a small world. They lived about three hours north of me, and their city was the arch rival of my city. People from Edmonton typically **think** their city is better than Calgary, while people from Calgary **know** their city is better. They didn’t know who I was, or where I was from, and so I couldn’t resist having a little fun. I said to them, “*Edmonton...I’ve heard of that place. What’s it like up there in Edmonton? Is it all barren wilderness?*”

And the girls replied, “*Oh yes...it’s awful...it’s freezing cold, there’s snow and ice everywhere, there’s nothing to do in Edmonton.*” “*Wow,*” I said, “*it sounds like a really terrible place.*,” and they sadly agreed that it was. Then they asked me where I was from, and I smiled and said, “*I’m from Calgary.*”

Jesus was walking along the way with these two disciples, but God kept them from recognizing Him. And unlike my little story, Jesus wasn’t messing with them; He was giving them a chance to process all that had happened in Jerusalem, a chance to process what was happening within them.

And in this little exchange we see what Jesus is really on about, what He’s really after. If Jesus were an impatient and demanding teacher, He would have appeared out of nowhere, slapped these two disciple upside the head and said something like, “*Hello...morons...get with*

*the program! How many times did I tell you about my betrayal, crucifixion, and resurrection? Do you see what I’m working with here Father?! Stop your useless moping, I’m alive, not dead, chop, chop, it’s time to get busy.*

Jesus isn’t demanding and impatient with us, not where faith is concerned. He asks them questions, gets them talking, gets them thinking about all that has transpired. Their morning began with some of the women telling them a story about an empty tomb and an angelic messenger, but Luke 24:11 tells us that the disciples didn’t believe them because it sounded like nonsense. *We watched Him die! How could Jesus be alive?*

But a number of the disciples had enough sense to run down to the tomb to check things out; they found the tomb empty and wandered away wondering what was going on. And now, a number of hours later, these disciples are processing: *we had hoped that Jesus would be the one to redeem our people. But now He’s dead...or is He? Our women saw the empty tomb; they also encountered angels who said He was alive.*

When Jesus appeared on the road, He didn’t immediately clear up the confusion. He could have revealed His identity, but for the next two hours He kept it quiet. Jesus didn’t rush their faith, and He doesn’t rush ours. Why? Because our faith is so important to God. 1 Peter 1:7 says that our faith is “*of greater worth than gold;*” Hebrews 11:6 says that “*without faith it is impossible to please God*”.

Friends, in every season of our lives, in every situation and relationship, Jesus is constantly seeking to cultivate within us a deeper measure of faith. And when I use this word “faith,” what I

mean is that He wants to deepen our implicit trust in Him: faith that He exists, that He knows what He's doing, that He's working out His purposes for our good and the good of this world, that He's trustworthy, that He is worth following. This is what Jesus was doing on the Emmaus Road; this is what Jesus is doing on every road we travel down.

**Building A Solid Foundation:** but Jesus does more than wait and listen; He built a solid foundation that would serve them on that day, and every day for the rest of their lives...a foundation built upon the Scriptures.

Jesus chides them gently, *“How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.”*

Did you know that in the Old Testament, there are four dozen different prophecies that described the Messiah who would come to redeem the world? Not one or two generic descriptors, but 48 very specific details. Details like: to whom He would be born (a virgin), where He would be born (Bethlehem), where He would spend time growing up (Egypt and Nazareth). There were also details about His work: He would release captives, give sight to the blind, and heal the deaf.

And then there are all kinds of details surrounding the betrayal, suffering, and death of the Messiah. A mathematician by the name of Peter Stoner once calculated the probability of a single person fulfilling all 48 prophecies. According to his calculations, there is one chance in a trillion<sup>12.3</sup> And Jesus fulfilled them all...every **i** dotted, every **t** crossed.

The men on the road to Emmaus didn't understand why Jesus had to die. They couldn't reconcile His dying with their being saved. They were hoping for a display of power, but what they saw in the cross was glaring weakness.

Joel Green writes, “Rejected by people...**[and]**...raised up by God,” both were a part of God's divine purpose.<sup>4</sup> The death of Jesus was not the end...for Him or for faith. But **His resurrection was the beginning of the end for death.** In His suffering and death, Jesus dealt with our sin, with suffering and death. He did more than take these things upon Himself, He took them into Himself so that sin, suffering, and death could be judged in the present and destroyed in the future.

As they walked, Jesus explained the Scriptures; they listened, and what's more they began to understand. And before they knew it, they arrived at Emmaus. They still didn't know who they were talking with, but they knew enough to want their *guest* to stick around for a meal and some more conversation, and so they invited Him in.

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<sup>3</sup> Peter W. Stoner, *Science Speaks*, 109. (c.f. Lee Strobel, *The Case For Christ*, 183.)

<sup>4</sup> Joel B. Green, *NICNT: The Gospel of Luke*, 849.

**Resurrection Living:** But the interesting thing is, when dinner began, Jesus, their “guest,” assumed the role of host. He took the bread, blessed it, broke it, gave it to the two disciples, and the moment He did, something clicked and they recognized Jesus...and moments later, He vanished from sight. *Jesus is alive!*

Did they sit there in stunned silence? Did they weep for joy? Did they stand up and do the happy dance? *It was Him...it was Him the whole time...somehow we knew it...our hearts were burning as He revealed the Scriptures.*

It wasn't His teaching that clued them in, it was what He did with the bread. Jesus **took** the bread, **blessed** it, **broke** it, and **gave** it to them, and instantly they knew who He was. It's an interesting pattern don't you think? It's even more interesting when you realize that this same pattern was repeated by Jesus in 4 other settings. We read this same pattern in:

- Mt 4:19/Luke 9:16-17 (*The Feeding of the 5000*)
- Mt 15:36 (*The Feeding of the 4000*)
- Mt 26:26/Luke 22:19 (*The Last Supper*)
- Lk 24:30 (*Our Emmaus Account*)
- 1 Cor 11:23-24 (*Paul's Instructions To the Church At Corinth*)

In every instance Jesus follows the same pattern: He **takes** bread, **blesses** it (or gives thanks), **breaks** it, and then **gives** it to those gathered. He **takes**, **blesses**, **breaks**, and then **gives**.

But there is something unique about our Emmaus account; what happens to the bread, mirrors what happens in these two disciples, and in the life of every disciple since. This Emmaus encounter, gives us a pattern for resurrection living. And it was Eugene Peterson who first helped me to see how all this works<sup>5</sup>:

**Jesus takes** what we bring to Him... He took those disciples' confusion, doubt, and sadness. He takes our aspirations, hopes, and dreams, but He also takes our disappointments, rejections, and failures. He takes our work, our play, our interests, our passions, our families, and our friendships. He takes our strengths and our weaknesses, our hunger and our thirsts, our woundedness and our pain. In other words, when we come to Him, **Jesus takes us**, all of us. And He doesn't take us begrudgingly: *Oh, do I have to?* It's not like getting picked last in gym class...He takes you, all of you, with great joy.

Then **Jesus blesses** us, giving thank for what we bring. Too often we think about God in the opposite light, as a Scrooge, always critical and never satisfied. None of us brings too little when we bring ourselves to Jesus. He doesn't rush our faith, He doesn't expect us to be further ahead, He meets us where we are.

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<sup>5</sup> Eugene Peterson, *Living The Resurrection: The Risen Christ In Everyday Life*, 80-85.

And then **Jesus breaks** us. Peterson writes, “All too often we come...with our best manners and a pose of impenetrable self-sufficiency...polished and poised performers in the game of life. But Jesus is after what [lies] within...We’re not permitted to remain self-sufficient. We are taken into the crucifixion”.<sup>6</sup>

C.S. Lewis once wrote, that nothing will be resurrected that has not first died. As Ruth Barton points out, every year the Easter week invites us to practice the sacred rhythm of death, burial, and resurrection.<sup>7</sup> Death leads to life.

The death of pride and self-sufficiency makes way for a new life that we receive as a gift from God and share with others. Our desire for control must be put to death if we want to experience a life lived by God’s grace, in God’s power, aligned with God’s purposes.

And after **taking**, and **blessing**, and **breaking** us, Jesus is ready to **give**. He gives us what we need most: Himself, *resurrection*, His life, His character, His desires, His strength. And in the process, He gives back to us what we first brought to Him: He gives us back our lives. But what we receive is different from what we first brought: we’ve been reborn, remade, transformed.

“Whoaaa...that’s impossible for us...only God can do resurrection, right Dad?” “That’s right son...only God can do resurrection.”

The cross remains central to human history, but Jesus is no longer hanging on it. The cross was not the end of Jesus story, it was followed by a resurrection that is still playing itself out in millions of Christians all over the world. We were lost but now we are found, we were blind but now we see, we were dead but because Jesus and His death and resurrection, we’ve been brought from death into His life.

- **Congregational Story:** And I’d like to invite someone from our church, Debby Stenson, to come and share how Jesus is remaking and renewing her these days.

- **Worship: invite worship team and kids into place**

**Benediction:**

*“Death has been swallowed up in victory...thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”* 1 Cor. 15:54, 57-58

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<sup>6</sup> Peterson, *Living The Resurrection*, 84.

<sup>7</sup> Ruth Haley Barton, *Practicing The Most Sacred Rhythm Of All*, <http://www.thetransformingcenter.org/blog/ereflections/holy-week-practicing-the-most-sacred-rhythm-of-all/>

