

“Courage Rises”

(Resurrection: Week #6)

Luke 24: 36- 53 (NIV)

³⁶While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”

³⁷They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. ³⁸He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? ³⁹Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.”

⁴⁰When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet.

⁴¹And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” ⁴²They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³and he took it and ate it in their presence.

⁴⁴He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”

⁴⁵Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

⁵⁰When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. ⁵¹While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. ⁵²Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. ⁵³And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.



Reflection on the Word:

1. Why is “Peace be with you” an important and appropriate greeting?
2. What does it mean to not believe because of joy and amazement?
3. Why is it important that Jesus opened their minds? What about their hearts?
4. Why was Jesus taken up to heaven?
5. Why did the disciples return to the temple in Jerusalem?

Family Time or Small Group (Better Together) Discussion:

- 1) Evangelism ... what is it?
- 2) Evangelism ... how do you do it?
- 3) Evangelism ... is it being done today?
- 4) What role does courage play in believing the Gospel?
- 5) What role does courage play in telling the Gospel?
- 6) How can I pray for you?

Series Progression (from "In Christ" based on 2 Corinthians 5: 17- 21 by Rev. Amanda Webber):

Memorial Day weekend marks the unofficial start of summer! A welcome relief to the dreary, rainy days of winter here in the tidewater area. One of the benefits of living in this beautiful area is the beach. I love to go to the beach. I love to go lay on the warm sand, watching the kids play in the surf and watching the birds try to steal my food! The smell of the salt water breeze has an immediately relaxing effect for me. And, as the sun sets the sweet little crabs scurry across the dunes. But if you ever go to the beach with me, you'll notice that I don't go into the water. I love the ocean, but I also have tremendous respect for the power of the ocean.

Besides sharks, one of the things that scares me are riptides. A riptide is a strong reverse ocean current that pulls the water away from the beach. If you get caught in one, it is possible that you can quickly be pulled out to sea, this is especially true for someone like myself who is not a strong swimmer and panics easily in the water. This is true despite my growing up in a beach town and knowing what to do in case you get caught in a riptide.

Anybody know what you are supposed to do if you are caught in a riptide? Yep, swim parallel to the beach and try not to fight it by swimming against the current. If you try to fight it instinctually by trying to swim against it, you will wear yourself out, which puts you at a high risk for drowning. But if you yield to it, and try to swim tangentially to the riptide, you can probably swim out of it and survive. I think there is a lesson here in a riptide for us about the resurrection. Over the past several weeks in worship we have been focusing on the resurrection, specifically signs of resurrection and new life that is taking place all around us. Signs of hope, breaking through the barriers of this world. Signs that help us remember God is with us right here and right now making all things new. Each week we keep coming back to one simple truth that is foundational to our faith. The power of God in Jesus Christ to make all things new...the power of God to transform hearts and lives...and not just other people's hearts and lives, but our own hearts and lives.

The resurrection of Jesus is the point in history when God acted mightily, in response to our need for redemption. In the resurrection of Jesus, the tables have been forever turned on the powers of sin and death as the kingdom of God is breaking in to overcome the powers and principalities of this world! One of my devotionals from this week put it like this: "The whole of Jesus' life and ministry can, therefore, be summed up as the invasion of the Kingdom of God into this world. The kingdom of God is the rule and reign of God. Apart from Christ the world is oriented towards the assertion of self...that orientation leads only to death...but in the life, teaching, and ministry of Jesus we see another path set forth which leads not to death but to life." (Page 37, Thirty Questions by Timothy C. Tennent)

As Christians we believe that the power of transformation is grounded in the resurrection of Jesus, the son of God, who was sent to give us life. And as great as the power of God is, we need to be reminded of God's power again and again because we struggle. We struggle on a daily basis because as people we are prone to choosing paths that bring us death. We touched on this last week: how all too often we believe that we have a grip on the sin in our life. Yet more often than not, the things we are convinced of being control of, especially our sin, is actually an illusion.

There are forces in the world that work to convince us that we have the power to overcome sin in our lives and ultimately the evil in the world. When we buy into this illusion we struggle. It is like trying to swim against the riptide, we think we are swimming towards the shore when instead we are exerting energy and not making progress. There is no movement only the expenditure of energy. Until we are worn out! This is true in our lives when we choose paths that lead to death instead of making choices that give us life. In order for us to overcome the power of sin and death in our lives we need to ground ourselves in the power of the resurrection. This means that we need to not only have faith in Jesus, but that our post-Jesus life looks different from our pre-Jesus life. John Wesley thought of it as a disposition that reflected a changed heart. A heart that seeks reconciliation with God and a heart that seeks reconciliation with our neighbor. A heart that seeks to be one with God and to follow God's will. One of the ways we follow God's will in our lives is by restoring and repairing those relationships in our life that have been broken and damaged by sin.

Restoring and reconciling relationships with our friends and family, relationships with our coworkers and neighbors. Even relationships with people who rub us the wrong way. One of the most important ways we reflect Christ is in our relationships with others. Jesus demonstrated unconditional love of all people in all situations, even with people who challenged him and disagreed with him. Engaging in healthy, reconciled relationships allow us to experience the fullness of salvation in the here and now. When we are reconciled with God and with each other we experience the peace of Christ in all of the areas of our life. I recognize how challenging it can be to accept that our sins are washed away by the blood of Christ. I also acknowledge forgiving others as we have been forgiven is a difficult task that takes time and can be painful, but it is important work in our spiritual journey. It is work we accomplish through practicing spiritual disciplines: attending worship, prayer, communion, baptism, and through relationships with each other lived out in small groups. Relationships built on trust where we encourage each other and hold each other accountable in our faith walk. It is why in our teaching we go back to the importance of faithful daily practice spiritual disciplines time and time again, because you need to be grounded in the Truth in order for your life to consistently reflect the Truth.

Today's scripture passage explains why this is so important telling us in verse twenty that "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us." You heard it before and have probably even seen the bumper sticker that says, "be the hands and feet of God." That's what that means, that we are a reflection of Christ here on Earth during this life. And if we are Christ's ambassadors, if God is making his appeal to the world through us and our actions, what are we ambassadors of? What do we represent? And are we an accurate representation of it?

Today's passage is also telling us something more: that reconciliation is an important element in our experience of new life. First and foremost, we are reconciled to God through Christ. The apostle Paul put it like this beginning in verse 18 "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation." In other words, our freedom from the sins that bind and control us is the result of forgiveness. God's forgiveness is realized through Jesus who freely gave his life so that we not only would have eternal life but that we would be able to live life fully in the present. God loves us so much that God wants the very best for us God wants us to live into our fullest potential. Not only for our peace, joy, and wellbeing but so that we serve as witnesses, as ambassadors of kingdom of God.

For us to be faithful ambassadors we need to accept and give forgiveness. Paul said in today's scripture that "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them." God was not counting our sins against us because of Christ. We are forgiven, and in being God's ambassadors to the world that means we need to model this to others. We need to forgive like God forgives.

If you think about it, riptides are kind of like sin and this world, aren't they? Looking out at the ocean, the water looks fun. The cool waves are inviting. You are just going to go for a dip to get cooled off. But if you have been taught about the dangers, if you don't know the signs to look for you could find yourself being dragged out to your doom.

Sin and the principalities of the world are like that. They look fun, inviting. You are just going to dip your toe in. It looks safe. Friends, neighbors, the guy in the newspaper, the lady on TV, the CEO, the politician, they all do it. But sin never wants just a toe, it wants all of us. It wants to drag us out to our death, and by the time we realize what is going on, just how much danger we are in, it is too late.

As disciples we do have the power to overcome sin in our lives, to realize that we are in trouble and not to fight it by ourselves but through and with Christ. We have the power because we are disciples of Jesus Christ, which means we know that through Jesus we can be made new and that we are called to share the power of the love and grace of Jesus with the world. And because of who God is and His great love for us, we are forgiven so that we may experience life. Life today, life tomorrow, and life forevermore. Amen.

Sermon Points:

Have you ever read something and wished ... wished that you had written it because it is just *so perfect*. Not just perfect but really and truly *so perfect*.

A few days ago, I was looking for a good quote to put at the end of the weekly *Sermon Notes* and there it was. *So perfect ... so perfect* that I couldn't just bury it at the end. This is a sermon series on the resurrection after all and from the end, comes our beginning. What is dead and buried rises again and what makes Christianity and our belief in Jesus Christ *so perfect* is that ... Christ is risen!

He has risen indeed!

Amen!!

Good, if you are with me on this, then you are going to hear something that I wished I had written because it *so perfect*.

“Christianity did not begin with a group of people trying to remember and follow Jesus' teaching even though he was dead. It began with the belief that God had vindicated Jesus as the Messiah by raising him from the dead. This is why one would be completely mistaken to think that Jesus was a good teacher whose followers eventually developed a myth about his being the Son of God. There would be no Christian movement today if his original followers had not been convinced that he had really risen from the dead.”

- Mark Mittelberg, from [The Questions Christians Hope No One Will Ask](#)

So, I read this and a light bulb went off.

WOW! A key part to understanding the resurrection is to understand how the followers of Jesus ... way back when ... were *affected* by it. “Affected” being a key word!

Affected ... what did they do?

What choices did they make?

How did they live?

And of course, the word “affected” implies a *past* behavior and then the taking on a *new* behavior. A new way of seeing life and the world. A new way of understanding the times and the culture ... dealing with the bad and the good and doing so without a sense of fear ... making sense of the role that Evil can play in our lives and our participation in such; but all the while believing that God delivers us from Evil and that there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Resurrection ... *what are the affects?*

Well, there is one more resurrection story found in the Bible that often gets overlooked and it is the *resurrection of courage*. The disciples of Jesus Christ ... way back when ... were affected by the resurrection of Jesus in that they changed and moved from timid, at times clueless, weak, and scared followers of Jesus to bold and courageous disciples who took on the world and believed that the message of the Jesus Christ was transformation and that no one should miss out on God’s grace.

You know their story ... and you know it by Sunday morning sermon snippets. But something amazing happens when you put these stories all together and you see the affect of the resurrection and the rise of what is needed in any age of time. Courage to share the Good News.

I went back to their stories ... and discovered a great message.

- Peter is called by Jesus and his initial response to Jesus is this. “Lord, go away from me for I am a sinful man.” (Luke 5: 8)
- Philip tells his friend Nathaniel that he has found the Messiah and Nathaniel shrugs it off and says, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46- 49)
- Peter declares his understanding of Jesus as Messiah yet rebuked Jesus when Jesus made it clear of his death for our sins and his rising again to give us life. (Matthew 16: 22)
- With most of Jesus’ teaching the disciples failed to understand. (countless passages see Mark 8- 10)
- Often the disciples preferred to argue as to who is the greatest disciple. (Luke 9: 46- 48, Luke 22: 24)
- When asked to keep watch by prayer, the disciples fell asleep as Jesus intensely prayed in the garden. (Matthew 26: 40)
- Peter draws a sword and cuts an ear off. (John 18: 10)
- Soon after, Peter will deny his following Jesus ... three times. (John 18: 15- 18, 25- 27)
- Judas will betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. (Matthew 26: 47- 50)
- When Jesus is arrested, they will all run away in fear. (Mark 14: 50 – 52)
- The disciples of Jesus will hide behind locked doors. (John 20: 19)
- They will refuse to believe the testimony of others ... other disciples including the women who went and discovered an empty tomb. (*Doubting Thomas: John 20: 24- 25, doubted the testimony of the women: Luke 24: 11*)

And I took all of these stories together and I thought ... *this isn’t perfect* ... it isn’t perfect by any means. Something is missing. It sounds like a dead end.

And then I felt almost crushed when I asked myself this question ... what are we writing as our story?

Do we try to send Jesus away when we don't like his hard teaching?

Do we question without giving his teaching a chance to shape us and our understanding?

Do we argue as to who is the greatest among us?

Do we draw swords?

Do we deny, betray, and remain silent when times are hard?

Do we refuse to hear the testimony of others?

Do we, like the disciples of 33 AD, need a resurrection of courage? Hear now their story of resurrection.

While they were still talking about the Emmaus Road and all the accounts of Jesus rising from the dead, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

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Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

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And when I read that last line of how they returned to Jerusalem with great joy ... the disciples went back to Jerusalem! THEY WENT BACK TO THE VERY COMMUNITY THAT JUST LESS THAN 2 MONTHS BEFORE SHOUTED TO HAVE JESUS CRUCIFIED.

They went back to very city in which Jesus was nailed to the cross by the Romans. Back into harm's way. What courage came upon them! Courage that rises with the power of the resurrection!

Friends, courage resurrected changes the world. Courage to tell the gospel, the good news that sin is defeated and death has lost its power and hold over us. Jesus died. Jesus rose ... and Jesus will come again! Courage to not keep this to yourself but to share it and to do so with joy!

Friends, don't let someone else write your story when you have a story to tell. Have courage and take courage ... believe in the transformation of the world and then give your life to it! Not just a part. Give your all and let it rise and give glory to the Risen One, Jesus Christ! Amen!!

Thought for the Week Ahead:

"Put your dreams on the altar. They will be resurrected into something even grander."

- Loren Cunningham