

3 Days that Changed the World Sunday – A Miracle of *Life* – Luke 24:1-49

Been studying the life of Christ in the book of Luke this year

This morning is the last message in mini-series – 3 Days that Changed the World
2 weeks ago the day was Thursday and the perversion of justice that led to the cross
Last week it was Friday and his unthinkable death on that cross

Today it's Sunday (Resurrection Sunday) and the Miracle of Life from **Lk 24**

Read Lk 23:55-24:12; 24:36-43

Nov 2001 issue of Sports Illustrated – covered the comeback by Arizona Diamondbacks at the end of the World Series to beat the NY Yankees . . .

Ran a little side article titled – “The Top Ten Comebacks of All Time”

Among other things –

1948 victory of Harry Truman over Thomas Dewey for President, when all the polls had him losing by a huge margin

Recovery of humanity in 14th century, after the Black Plague wiped out 25 million people in Europe

#1 named by the editors of SI for the greatest comeback of all time . . .

“Jesus Christ, AD 30. Stuns Romans; defies critics by resurrection from the grave.”

Even SI gets it; Truly, the miracle of Christ's resurrection was an unbelievable comeback

A miracle of life that God used it to change the world, one life at a time

My desire this morning is that you let him change yours

Genuine, lasting change always begins with the facts . . .

The facts of *life*

Not talking about the birds and the bees

Talking about the facts surrounding the miracle of Christ's resurrection life

If you don't know the facts, you can't appreciate the miracle or apply it to your life

Get it out on the table – one minute Jesus was dead; the next he was alive

Like how one little boy put it when mom asked him if he knew what Easter was about

He said – “Ya, Jesus died;” Then what happened? “He got up”

That's it; That's what Easter is all about – *he got up*

It was a miracle that rocked the world, literally

Matt says *there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it* (Mt 28:2)

When the women came and looked inside the tomb, he asked . . .

Why do you seek the living among the dead? (Lk 24:5b)

Probably thought – “Is this a trick question? We're *not* seeking the living among the dead; we're seeking the *dead* among the dead. Last time we checked, he was dead.”

The next thing the angels said, rocked *their* world

And it continues to rock our world – *He is not here, but has risen* (6)

So let's get this straight – he died, laid in a tomb for 3 days, then rose again

Paul captures this as good as any in **1 Cor 15:3-7** –

I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of

whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

So you have his death; His burial; An earthquake; An empty tomb

An explanation by angels

Hundreds of people who saw him and interacted with him

Possibly even thousands because Paul doesn't include women in his list

All according to plan, as foretold in the Scriptures

And recorded in the NT by people like Luke who stood for and *died* for what they wrote

Said this before, and will say it again, because it's a very compelling argument for the truth of these facts

Many people have been willing to die for something they believed to be true

But nobody is willing to die for something they know to be false

And because the apostolic writers of the NT were eye witnesses of these events, they were in a position to *know* if they were true or false

And if they were false, if they made all this up, they never would have been willing to die for it

But because they were/did, the only logical conclusion is that the facts of life are true

As you can imagine, there were a variety of **reactions** to that miracle of life – still are

The reactions to *life* (seven of them)

Some of them good; Some of them bad; Some that could go either way

Point is – your reaction to *his* life, makes all the difference in yours

The difference between life and death

Life – if you believe and embrace him; Death – if you don't

Reaction #1 is found in v11 . . .

Reaction #1 – Some find it hard to believe (v11)

That might be what you think – this is a tall-tale; fictional account for weak people

If so, the wisest course of action is to do what Peter did – see for yourself

As in check the evidence; Do so with a sense of urgency (*he ran to the tomb*)

For Peter, the evidence was a very *empty* tomb

For you, it's a very *full* Bible

For Peter, it was the changed lives of the women who had seen for themselves

For you, it's the changed lives of those who believe

If you find it hard to believe – check the evidence

Reaction #2 – Some are confused (v12,22)

They were amazed, but dazed; They didn't understand

Some of you are like that

You're kind of amazed at the resurrection of Christ when you think about it

You're pretty sure something is up – Easter is such a big deal and all

But you're not quite sure what to do with the things you see and hear

If that's you – keep coming; keep learning; open your Bible

But don't expect to have it all figured out – God always requires step of faith to believe

A point where you trust him, even though you can't put it all together

If you're confused this morning – keep listening/coming/learning

Take that step of faith to believe

Reaction #3 – Some are slow to believe (v25)

Read v25-27 – they were slow to believe because they didn’t know the Scriptures

And what they did know they didn’t understand

Jesus *rebuked* them for it, as in – *O foolish ones* (25)

Little hint here – you don’t want to be on the receiving end of God’s rebuke, discipline, punishment for being slow to believe

Just like ignorance of the law is no excuse to break it . . .

Ignorance of God’s truth is no excuse for being slow to accept it

If a lack of knowledge/understanding is your problem

If that’s why you’ve been slow to believe; I apologize ahead of time

By time you walk out of here this morning you’ll know enough to be without excuse when it comes to embracing his miracle of life for yourself

Don’t be slow to believe – if you’re not careful, you’ll be left behind, with no excuses

Reaction #4 – Some are fired up (v32)

Read v32-35 – they were so fired up they *left that same hour* (33), which was probably at night (29) with all its dangers, and traveled 7 miles back to Jerusalem

But none of that mattered because *their hearts burned*

They had to tell somebody; And the more they heard, the more passionate they became

Had an interesting conversation with someone recently, who doesn’t come to our church

He asked me if I would do something to throttle you guys back

Help you channel your enthusiasm “appropriately” about all God is doing among us

Apparently you’re talking about our church and what God’s doing, everywhere you go

He asked – “Will you do something about that?”

I couldn’t believe it; I think God gives me these questions to test my self-control

I was very gracious, and just said . . .

NO – I would *never* do anything to diminish your passion; I love your passion

Fact is – I couldn’t diminish it, even if I wanted to

You can’t constrain someone who’s fired up about God’s miracle of life in Christ

That’s why Peter and John, when told by the religious leaders a few months later to stop speaking or teaching in the name of Jesus . . .

Responded – *we cannot [help] but speak of what we have seen and heard* (Act 4:20)

We’re so fired up, we *can’t* be quiet

If that’s you – I don’t care what anybody thinks; Let your fire burn bright

Reaction #5 – Some are scared (v38a)

Read v36-38a – they were scared; scared of the risen Jesus who stood in front of them

You may not be scared of seeing Jesus face to face – though you probably should be

What’s more likely is that you’re scared of the *truth* about him, and what it might mean for you – you’re scared of the implications of his risen life, for *yours*

You’re scared that if you *do* believe – he might require something of you that you’re unwilling to give, like your whole life; and you’re right

A life with Christ is all about living (and dying if necessary), in a way that pleases him

It all about glorifying him with *all* of your time, talent, treasure, thoughts, effort

It’s all about doing everything you can to influence others for Christ and his kingdom

Here’s the kicker – when you believe and give your life to Christ . . .

He changes your heart – so that whatever he asks of you, it’s your greatest joy to give it
If you’re scared of what he’ll require – trust him; he loves you; He’ll change your heart

Reaction #6 – Some are skeptical (v38b,41)

These guys are first cousins with those who find it hard to believe

38 – *Why do doubts arise in your hearts?*

41 – *They still disbelieved for joy and were marveling*

It was too good to be true; They were thrilled that Jesus was back and all . . .

But they were skeptical because it didn’t make sense

Some of you are like that – last time you checked, dead men don’t walk/talk

Things like this don’t just happen – period; done; case closed; end of discussion

Because you’re predisposed to being skeptical – you search for *flaws* instead of *facts*

Most of the time you don’t really *want* to know the truth, you just like to be skeptical

And you’re a little bit smug in it

So you look for reasons it *couldn’t* be true, instead of reasons it could be true

Faith in Christ doesn’t mean you have to leave your brain at the door

But it does require that you leave your pride at the door

Will you set aside your skepticism just for a minute, and consider this miracle of life?

Your eternity hangs in the balance; I guarantee – you won’t be disappointed

Reaction #7 – Some refuse to believe (Mt 28:11-15)

These were the religious rulers – ones who bribed the guards to lie about the empty tomb

Tough nuts to crack – set in their ways; protective of their positions; bound to traditions

They’re the classic example of those who are perishing in 2 Cor 4:4

The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ

Some of you came in here this morning, refusing to believe because blinded to the truth

Not because you don’t have a choice, but because you’ve chosen a path of denial

Denying the miracle of Christ’s life and its implications for yours

You have a hard heart; You could care less about the truth

Consequently, spiritual blindness, courtesy of Satan, has set in

I feel helpless with those of you who refuse to believe

There’s nothing I can say to soften your heart

I fear for you – because you either face an eternity apart from God, blinded to the truth

Or, he will break your heart to get through to you

Summarize the reactions (**list**) – little moment of honesty; circle one that applies to you

Those are the facts of life and the reactions to life, finally . . .

The reasons for life

Read v44-47 – this is the pinnacle of the passage

2 reasons here for Christ dying and rising again . . .

(1) To offer us *forgiveness* – of our sins/sinfulness that separates us from God

(2) To urge us to *repent* – confess our sins to him, and commit to turn from them

In the Bible that repentance and forgiveness is called salvation

It only comes by believing that he has the *authority* to forgive

Trusting that he has the *power* to save

That's the *in his name* part (47) – it's only by believing and trusting the authority and power of Jesus Christ, that we can be forgiven and saved (Jn 14:6)

Put all that together . . .

Belief, Trust, and Repentance → Forgiveness, Salvation, and Life

Through the miracle of Christ's life, God will do a miracle in yours

But you must believe, trust, and repent

Etta Shiber writes in book "Paris Underground" about her experiences during WWII of smuggling downed Allied airmen to safety

They would be shot down, make their way to her village

Eventually smuggled back to safety so they could return to the battle

One of the ways they did it illustrates what Christ did for us

Their village sat on the dividing line between Nazi-occupied France and free France

In fact, the back wall of their cemetery *was* the dividing line

Whenever someone in village died, the airmen were included among the mourners

As they walked past the back wall of cemetery, they would slip out the gate to freedom

When Christ rose from the dead that first Easter morning . . .

He opened the gate on the backside of our cemetery

So that when we die, though we still go there, we're just passing through into his presence on the other side to the salvation and life that awaits

But it depends on your belief, trust, and repentance . . .

Just like they had to *believe* that the townspeople would deliver them

And entrust themselves to their care . . .

You have to do the same . . .

Believe – that Jesus died for your sin; rose again for your life

Trust him – to save you from the consequences of your sin; keep you unto eternal life

Repent of your sin – admitting to God that you're a sinner and need a Savior

Ready to turn from your sin and strive for holiness

The result is forgiveness, salvation, life (full and forever)

Invitation – If you want that this morning . . .

If you want to make today the day of your salvation

In just a few minutes, I want to *come forward and kneel* and let me lead you in a prayer

Do I really have to come forward to be saved? – No

But the commitments to Christ where I've seen most fruit in shortest amount of time . . .

Have come from those who are *broken* enough and *bold* enough to make it public

So broken they don't care what anyone thinks; So bold, only care what God thinks

God's not glorified in you if nobody knows he's there

And want to commit your life to Christ today . . .

Stand up right now, come down front, and kneel

If want someone to come with you, just ask them

Doesn't matter what anybody else is doing

Doesn't matter if you're the only one here this morning who God is speaking to

What matters is that *if* God is speaking to you, *you* respond

If you can't point to a time in your life when you made a conscious decision to believe, and trust, and repent of your sin – I can't think of a better day to do it

Come now – I'll wait just a minute and then pray with you as a group (*music*)

Prayer of salvation

I believe . . . I trust . . . I repent

Save me; Come into my life

I commit to live for you the rest of my life

Stand for worship

If you have a friend or loved one down front, come and join them

Stay down here or return to your seat

Either way – get a New Believer's packet

Close

Elders up front

Join us for our next series – Ready or not, here I come (Lk 15-21)

Life, death, and the return of Christ

Tradition in the church – He is risen; He is risen indeed

Bow our heads

If your heart burns within you