



A week to live
“He is not here”
Easter Sunday, April 16, 2017
Courage Church, Detroit, MI.

He is risen.

Happy Easter Courage Church.

I want to just throw a couple things out there before we dive into this, next week is going to be a very special week... I am still going to teach, in fact we are starting a brand new series on the book of Ephesians but we also are going to have our friends from “Love Detroit” with us, Love Detroit is a two week long mission trip here in Detroit that starts in a couple of weeks, and they are going to partner with Courage Church leading up to our May 11 launch of Kids Club and adopt-a-block, and they will also be with us for that event...

they are going to be here next Sunday and will take a few minutes to tell about what they are doing... and we have some exciting announcements for some things coming up, so it is just going to be a great day, you won't want to miss it... and lastly, Thursday evening April 27th right here, we are having a very important team night right here... if you are a volunteer in any capacity, or want to be involved in one of the many things happening at Courage Church, or you just want to hear more about what is coming up, come join us! we will celebrate many of the great things that have already taken place, as well as look ahead. There WILL BE dinner! Lasagna, and other things.

and really lastly, if you took a picture in the photo booth today, come back next week and we will have it printed for you.

Now, today is Resurrection Sunday! So lets take a look at the Resurrection, because it really is the turning point for all of history.

Jesus, that previous Friday, was murdered. He was crucified for sins that He did not commit, literally in the place of you, and in the place of me, and in the place of all of the people who were putting Him there. He was

mocked, He was beaten, tortured... He was betrayed by one of His closest friends, and HE WAS DENIED by Peter, who was arguably His closest friend... not once, but THREE TIMES...

They arrest Him, they give Him an expedited trial, and in a matter of hours He is hanging on a cross to die.

After He dies, a man named Joseph of Arimathea goes to Pilate and requests His body for burial and Pilate grants that request... they wrap Jesus' body in linen, and roll a huge stone over the tomb... and that is where we will pick up.

Mark 16:1-8

“When the Sabbath was past, *Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome* bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. And they were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?” And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. And he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; **He is not here**. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples *and Peter* that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.” And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

The title of this morning's message is “He is not here”

Let's Pray

At Courage Church, we are all about Resurrection. When Dawn and I accepted this role, as lead pastors of Courage Church, before we even moved here we sent Dawn on an airplane to look for potential houses... and we always thought in the back of our minds, and even had several conversations about it, that when we got a house, it was probably going to need some resurrection...

from the very beginning we had the sense that what Detroit needs is people who can see what once *was*... and they can see that OUT OF THIS... THERE CAN BE SOMETHING EVEN BETTER.

There is this passage in the Old Testament book of Ezekiel (37) called the Valley of Dry Bones, Dawn taught on it last summer if you want to go back and watch it on our app or website... but Ezekiel gets this prophecy and it is really weird... he is taken to this valley and there are all of these dry bones in this valley, and the prophet asks “can these bones live again?”

And then he is told: SPEAK TO THESE BONES...

PROPHECY TO THESE DRY BONES that you are going to LIVE AGAIN. And they do! And what the prophet says is that these bones represent the house of Israel... who had gotten to this place where they are just saying: We have no Hope. All hope is lost. But what God says to these people who are without hope is this: I will put MY SPIRIT WITHIN YOU... and you will live (Ezekiel 37:14)

Do you ever feel that way? Like Israel felt? Like hope is gone?

What this ancient prophecy tells us is that even all the way back then: God is in the business of RESURRECTION.

Not in leaving dead things dead, but in calling out to them just like He did to Lazarus, to COME FORTH... BECAUSE GOD IS NOT FINISHED WITH YOU YET!

Detroit needs is people who can call out to dead bones, to prophecy over the things that everyone else thinks is a lost cause, and they can speak LIFE into those things.

Our friends the Williams are doing that in their house they bought on Webb street up there North of Boston Edison. This house is massive, and everybody who walked into it saw it, took one look, and realized “this is just way to much work” but they walked into it and they said “THIS COULD BE HOME.”

So now they are tearing it all down, with the help of their kids and others, and piece by piece are rebuilding the entire thing. They are teaching their kids about RESURRECTION.

Dawn and I have been doing the same thing with our house... piece by piece, room by room our Southwest Detroit home is being completely redone.

Because sometimes we can't just be content to look at the things that *are*, and say "this is how they are."

Sometimes we have to look at how things are, and say "THIS IS HOW THINGS COULD BE." There IS A BETTER PLAN than this... There is a better plan than moldy walls and leaky roofs, and dark rooms...

There is a BETTER PLAN than a life on the streets, THAN a marriage on the rocks, THAN a child who won't come home.

There is a better plan than the addiction that has hold of you, than the walls that you put up around your heart every time you enter into any type of relationship or community because LAST TIME, someone did this... or *this* person did THAT...

There is a better plan...

and it is called RESURRECTION.

You know, this story of these women at the tomb, it blows my mind every time I read it. Look again at the first four verses:

When the Sabbath was past, *Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome* bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large.

They go there in such faith, they don't even know how they are going to move the tomb... they just know "we need to anoint that body" - then they get there, and the stone had been moved FOR THEM.

Someone had gone *ahead* of them.

But just look for a moment at who it was that went to the tomb that day:

Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome

Throughout Jesus ministry, the bible describes Him as a man who went about doing good. He healed people, he fed people, he even rose people from the dead. He constantly did the miraculous and defied everything that people thought that they knew was possible.

But note this, and compare it to THIS MOMENT we just read... During His ministry, He invested specifically into 12 men. Think about this. He had 12 disciples... 12 men who witnessed the miracles, who saw him walk on water, who saw him calm storms... and he equipped them, and he taught them... and one thing that He told them over and over was that He was going to be crucified...

but that he was going to rise again on the third day. (Mark 8:31, Mark 10:34, Matthew 20:19, etc.)

here is one example, it is Mark 10:33-34, it is basically mirrored in Matthew 20:19, Jesus says this to His disciples:

"See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be *delivered* over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will *condemn* him to **death** and *deliver* him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and *kill him*. And **after three days he will rise.**"

Now...

Here we are... three days after the crucifixion... and who is at the tomb?

Mary, Mary, and Salom(e).

Three *women*.

Jesus poured himself out completely to 12 men, and told each of them that He was not only going to die but that he was going to rise on the third day, and on the third day, every single one of them, *stayed home*.

You would think that there would at least be some sense of “we didn’t believe He would die, even though He said that He would die... AND HE DIED! maybe we ought to go check out that tomb on Sunday and see if maybe everything that He was telling us WAS TRUE???”

Because everyone thought that hope had died. but they forgot about Sunday.

They forgot about “after three days he will rise”

They forgot about “destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19)

They forgot about RESURRECTION.

They thought it was over. They went back to being fishermen.

The only ones that showed up that day were then women...

and look what they find when they get there:

And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. And he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; **He is not here**. See the place where they laid him.

They find out Jesus IS ALIVE.

Now, let me show you something, if you are here today, and you are just skeptical about this whole “resurrection thing.” You say “its a myth” -- lots of people say that...

they say “well, I know that *historically* Jesus was a great man, who did many great things, and helped a lot of people... and of course He was killed, because He stood up to the empire that is Rome and called out the religious leaders and basically did all of the things that would get a guy killed, in a society that was built on how it *controlled* people... He lead a revolution... I believe all that...

I just can't buy into the whole “He is God thing... I can't buy into the whole “He raised from the dead three days later thing.”

just for a moment, think about this historically.

In that day, and we have COME A LONG WAY since that day... but in that day, women did not have the voices that they are able to have now. They were constantly minimized... in fact, once of the strongest arguments in the first few centuries made AGAINST the validity of Christianity was that the empty tomb idea rests on the testimony only of women. Which to many back then meant: ITS NOT VALID.

So people who weren't there just thought they were making it up.

But it is written like a *historically*... it is not written like some super Santa Claus myth... especially to that culture.

Why would the gospel writers, if they were trying to MAKE UP a compelling story that they knew was not true, WHY WOULD THEY WRITE IT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF WOMEN BEING THE ONLY ONES WHO SAW AN ANGEL IN THE TOMB WHERE JESUS' BODY WAS SUPPOSED BE,

women... who in their day, were already marginalized?

Why would Mark, if He was making it up, write it in such a way that IT WOULD NEVER BE BELIEVED by His *own* culture?

So obviously, Mark believed it. In fact, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all record this story, and the testimony of these women... SO THEY ALL BELIEVED IT.

Then of course, we have several appearances that followed that, where they all saw Jesus with their own eyes... testimonies that they spoke to Him again, that they learned from Him until the day that He ascended to Heaven...

like THE REAL KING OF THE WORLD *would* do.

and all that they saw, made complete in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, became something worth giving everything for.

Think about that... honestly.

Do you think that just because in your “intellectual reason” you can’t comprehend how it be possible for someone to rise from the dead, that it just can’t be true? Do you think you are any different than the disciples? This was TOTALLY beyond their comprehension. It was totally beyond reason.

THEY DIDN'T EVEN SHOW UP AT THE TOMB on the day He said he would rise. They didn't believe that He was GOD ANYMORE! until they saw him. and suddenly, everything change. And their entire lives became missional... “We have to tell the world about this... this God is NOT LIKE OTHER GOD'S!”

The Resurrection was why all of the disciples *besides one* died martyrs for gospel... and the other was exiled...

it is the reason that to this day people are still willing to lay down their lives to tell others about it.

Because carrying the news of HOPE to the world that thinks that it just has to stay broken forever... was worth their entire lives...

Christianity is the only religion who's GOD DID NOT STAY DEAD.

and there are MANY EYE WITNESS ACCOUNTS recorded of this fact.

Guys, the entire gospel is wrapped up in verses 5, 6, and 7.

You thought God was dead. You must have forgot that He is God.

HE IS NOT HERE.

Because just like He promised, He died in place of all of our sins, for the wages of sin is death. But just like He promised, He defeated death.

now watch this, this is crucial... verse 7:

But go, tell his disciples *and Peter* that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.”

The angel tells the women with as much grace as possible:

Go, tell the ones who ARE NOT HERE...

Go, tell the ones who witnessed every miracle and yet denied its power by missing the most important thing...

Go, tell those guys who Jesus promised that He would rise again, that even though they didn't show up to see it happen, IT HAPPENED.

Go tell them that I still chose them, and that I am going ahead and I will be waiting for them.

and then we have this:

and Peter.

Peter was one of the disciples. The angel could have just as easily left it at “go tell the disciples” but He didn't... He focused on Peter.

and I don't want to spend too much time on Peter because we spent so much time on Him last Easter... but you just can't talk about Easter without

talking about Peter and this is worth repeating even if one person in here never heard it...

Because no matter what you have done in this place, there is hope for you. There is redemption, and renewal for you... There is RESURRECTION for you..

because if there is anybody who you could say really screwed things up, it is Peter. If there is anybody who you could say:

THAT GUY HAD A DESTINY, AND HE TOTALLY BLEW IT... its Peter.

Peter is the disciple that walked on water with Jesus. He is the one who Jesus said would lead His church!!! He was a fisherman who was called to be a disciple after Jesus blew his mind with the craziest catch in fish history...

But He is also the disciple that found himself sitting around a charcoal fire after Jesus had been arrested, denying that He even knew Jesus.

So Peter sits around this charcoal fire, and He is trying to keep to himself, but that servant girl has to pry, "aren't you one of His disciples? No."

Then the group around the fire seems to gain up on Him... ARE YOU SURE?

No. not me.

then again, someone who said they were in the Garden when Jesus was arrested said to Him "I saw you with Him."

No. You are confused.

And then the rooster crowed. because like we say, no words of Jesus ever fall to the ground... and Jesus told Peter "Before the rooster crows, you will have denied me three times."

So if anything, in that moment when those women go and tell the disciples to come and meet Jesus, Peter would have most certainly ruled himself out. He blew it. He was even warned that he would blow it, and he still did it. He was supposed to lead the whole church, but he looked out for himself and denied His Lord.

But that angel tells the women “YOU GOT TO TELL PETER.” Specifically.

and when Jesus finally does see Peter after the resurrection, Peter is out fishing... again, because “why would Jesus ever take him back?” and of course, you know the story, Jesus calls Peter again, in the same way He did in the first place... by a miracle catch... and Peter when He realizes that it is Jesus standing at the sea shore and he experiences the same type of life changing miracle call, he jumps out of the boat and He swims to the shore, to find Jesus completely recreating the scene of the worst moment in his entire life... and there he is, by a charcoal fire.

And this is what Jesus does... as He is talking to Peter... He asks Peter, Do you love me?

and Peter tells Him that He loves Him... and Jesus asks Him again, and again... three times. and what we so easily miss when we talk about these moments is it is literally the definition of resurrection. Because for every time that Peter denied Jesus by a charcoal fire, 3 times... Jesus now is having Peter confess Jesus, and How much He loves Him, by a charcoal fire.

He didn't just move on... He resurrected.

He called Him again in the same way as the first time...

and then He took something that symbolized the greatest failure a follower of Jesus could possibly of ever had, and He brought life into it. He called out to dead bones... and He breathed into them, and He brought them LIFE.

Go and tell the disciples, and PETER... That I am not FINISHED WITH THEM YET.

The Resurrection matters! It matters more than you can possibly imagine.

Listen... listen...

Dawn and I said this on Friday... when we talked about the cross:

It is okay to come into this place, and not be okay...

There are no perfect people here... I told you guys Friday, man, I brought a lot of brokenness to the foot of the cross that day...

It is so much easier to pretend like we are okay when really we are hurting... when really we are broken... and it can be easier to just mask that, but when we do THAT, we take away the power of the cross.

The cross means that you can go to Jesus broken... because he was broken FOR YOU.

But we think... that when we go into places like *this*, we are supposed to be okay before we walk through the doors. But truthfully, THIS IS THE BEST PLACE THAT YOU COULD POSSIBLY BE, WHEN YOU ARE NOT OKAY!!!

The bible says something so incredible in the book of Isaiah, Isaiah 57:15 (this is one of my favorite verses in the whole Bible, for so many reasons!) - we really try to live by this... knowing that this is the kind of God that we serve:

I dwell in the high and holy place,
and **also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit**,
to **revive** the spirit of the lowly,
and to **revive** the heart of the contrite.

There are two things that are SO significant to be about this verse...

1. Jesus does not visit people in their affliction... He doesn't just pass by occasionally a few weeks after we needed Him the most, to remind you that

He is still waiting somewhere in the distance for you to one day COME AROUND...

NO! HE LIVES THERE.

Just as much as He lives in a high and Holy place, He lives in the broken places.

When your heart is broken, He is there with you.

Even the most fragmented parts of our lives, and our relationships. It is in those moments that Jesus is dwelling right with us...

That is why, as Hebrews says, we can “**BOLDLY APPROACH THE THRONE OF GRACE with CONFIDENCE THAT WE WILL RECEIVE MERCY AND WE WILL RECEIVE GRACE WHEN WE NEED IT THE MOST!**” (Hebrew 4:16)

and it is okay to come to Jesus broken... in fact, it is probably the best time you could ever come to Him.

Here is why... 2 Corinthians 5:21 says that “He made Him who knew no sin to BE SIN on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him”

The cross was Jesus taking the weight of everything that we have ever done...

and here is what happens when you turn to Jesus in a low moment... in a hour of darkness... when you feel like there is no way that could possibly deserve His grace...

But when you know **WHAT** you are carrying in to a moment like that, and you **KNOW** how much you are hurting...

perhaps you will have a glimpse of how much He actually loves you... that He would take that thing you are feeling, on your behalf.

The cross says “come to Me, broken people”

The cross says “I LIVE WITH THE LOWLY IN SPIRIT...”

But RESURRECTION SAYS: I live there, but I live there for a purpose, and it is:

“to **revive** the spirit of the lowly,”

“to **revive** the heart of the contrite.”

To breathe new life into dead bones.

To resuscitate what we thought could never live again.

The RESURRECTION SAYS:

YOU DON'T HAVE TO STAY BROKEN.

You don't have to live your whole life addicted to drugs.

You don't have to live your entire life sleeping around from person to person constantly trying to find something that will fill you, but leaving every time feeling EVEN MORE EMPTY than the last time!

You don't have to carry your anger any further. You don't have to carry your pain any further.

Your week CAN GET BETTER.

You can lay it at the feet of that old rugged cross and know that it DIED THERE... BUT YOU DIDN'T.

Because the Resurrection says that when DEATH THOUGHT THAT IT HAD THE FINAL WORD... IT DIDN'T!

Because three days later, when those women arrived to anoint that body... these are the words that they heard:

HE IS NOT HERE.

Jesus rose from the dead, He overcame the grave and He is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

and wherever you find yourself today, Jesus will meet you *right there*.

But because of what He did, you don't have to stay there.

because today, the tomb is empty.

Today... He is living with the contrite... with the lowly... with the broken. reviving their hearts. Calling them back *into* LIFE... purposing you for a greater future than you could possibly imagine.