

Luke 24:1–12 | “The Empty Tomb is Full of Significance”

*Preached on April 5, 2026 by Pastor Matt Brown*

You can turn in your Bibles to Luke 24, and we will be looking at verses 1–12 today. *[pauseee]*

For Easter this year, I want to proclaim the resurrection from one of the Gospel accounts.

*[pause]*

We need regular reminders of it, and one of the reasons is because over time we become so familiar with things that we lose our wonder over them. *[pausee]*

Think with me about how we lose our wonder with the world around us...

Every single day, we are used to living in this world, yet do you ever really consider how amazing it is that we are on a spinning globe in space, which circles the sun every year? *[pausee]*

Also, think about the fact that if Earth was closer or farther away from the sun, we would eventually either burn up or freeze to death. *[pause]*

Oh, how little we stand in wonder at something so amazing when you really dwell upon it! *[pauseee]*

Consider also our bodies...

Have you ever thought about the fact that our bodies can heal themselves? *[pause]*

If we get cut, a scab forms, and then the skin will eventually go back to normal.

That’s really amazing, if you think about it! *[pauseee]*

When we get sick, our body does various things to fight it off.

It’s like we have our own little army inside of us to do battle against sickness. *[pauseee]*

These are amazing things that we have become so familiar with that we lose our wonder over them.

Well, I feel like for us who have been Christians for a long time, the resurrection of Jesus is something that we have become so familiar with that we have lost some of the wonder of it. *[pause]*

We get so used to the story that we forget its power. *[pauseee]*

Maybe you’re sitting here today and you’re thinking, “Nope, not me!” *[pause]*

That’s great!

I’m happy for you—may this morning be another beneficial reminder of the resurrection.

But for those who have maybe lost some amazement over the fact that Christ arose, may this be a time of renewed awe at the miracle. *[pauseeee]*

Before I get to the passage for today, I need to give some context...

Luke's gospel account is obviously all about Jesus. *[pause]*

He tells about His miraculous birth, which was foretold by an angel. *[pause]*

You hear about His ministry of preaching, teaching, and miracle-working.

And amidst all of that, at various times, Jesus predicted that He would be killed and then rise again. *[pause]*

The disciples didn't seem to quite grasp that point, yet we find that He *did* get killed—He was crucified on a cross. *[pause]*

After His death, Joseph of Arimathea buries His body in a tomb cut in stone, and then right before our text for this morning, in Luke 23, we are told...

“The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments.”<sup>1</sup> *[pauseeee]*

That brings us to our passage this morning, so let's READ what happens. *[READ 1–12]*

The women, who had seen the body of Jesus laid in the tomb, return with spices to show honor and care for the body of Jesus.

But little do they realize that all of that work of preparing and bringing the spices was unnecessary! *[pauseee]*

They first see that the stone is rolled away, and they decide to investigate further by going into the tomb, but are unable to find the body of Jesus. *[pause]*

We are told that they were “perplexed” by this—I'm sure they were! *[pauseee]*

All of sudden, two angels appear in dazzling apparel, and say, “Why do you seek the living among the dead?” *[pause]*

By saying this, it was actually a mild rebuke.

They are essentially saying, “You should have believed that Jesus would rise, and if you did, you wouldn't be looking in a tomb.” *[pauseee]*

They then proclaim the truth that has resounded throughout history, “He is not here, but has risen.” *[pause]*

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 23:55–56.

What a glorious truth—Jesus wasn't in that tomb because He arose! *[pause]*

If Jesus was merely another person like us, He would forever be in that tomb, but He wasn't. *[pauseeee]*

The angels explain how Jesus predicted this, and the women are led to make that connection finally in their hearts and minds.

And in response to all of this, the women naturally go and tell the disciples, but the men don't believe them.

They considered it an "idle tale," but Peter isn't satisfied with completely writing them off, as he runs to see for himself. *[pause]*

He sees the linen cloths lying there and goes home "marveling," and that's the end of this section. *[pauseeeee]*

*Evaluating this passage, here are three realities that this passage pushes us to see...first...*

### **I. The resurrection of Jesus can be perplexing at first.**

Our natural, human tendency when we see or hear something that sounds unbelievable is to be perplexed by it at first. *[pause]*

Haven't you ever heard something that you found hard to believe? *[pause]*

They say that there's something called "triple point" where water can actually boil and freeze at the same time.

Now that's perplexing! *[pauseeee]*

Also, a day on Venus is longer than a year on Venus. *[pause]*

The planet rotates so slowly that it circles the sun before making a complete rotation.

It sounds unbelievable, but it's true! *[pauseee]*

Well, when the women first saw that the body of Jesus was missing they were "perplexed." *[pause]*

When the male disciples heard about it, they thought that it was an "idle tale."

This is what happens when people first hear about the resurrection of Jesus. *[pauseeee]*

Really think about it—the Bible is saying that Jesus rose from the dead. *[pause]*

Don't just hear it and think nothing about it because you are so used to it, but really think about it. *[pause]*

This can be perplexing to many people who hear it for the first time because when we see or hear about someone dying, that's it, they're dead. *[pause]*

If you take God out of the picture, mankind has a batting average of zero when it comes to beating death. *[pauseeee]*

It's so *final* to us.

Every sight of a funeral home, every cemetery, and every chair that was once occupied, is a reminder of the finality of death. *[pause]*

To hear that someone rose from the dead sounds more absurd to people than if they were told that a pig flew. *[pauseeee]*

The disciples spent a couple years with Jesus, saw an empty tomb, and were *still* perplexed, so don't you think people today could be perplexed by it, too? *[pauseeee]*

Many don't even know what to think—what to believe. *[pause]*

Maybe there's someone here this morning who's in that exact spot...

You are perplexed, puzzled, and confused at how someone could be said to be resurrected from the dead.

It sounds unbelievable to you. *[pause]*

I get it—it's hard to grasp because it goes against everything that you are used to seeing around you when it comes to death. *[pauseeee]*

I would like to encourage you to be open to the truth.

Don't let your confusion lead you to hard-heartedness, but be open to what the Bible says. *[pauseeee]*

What we see in the example of the women in the tomb is that God doesn't want to leave us in bewilderment, He wants to guide us to belief.

And He uses this moment of confusion in the tomb to reveal the truth and lead them to belief. *[pause]*

Likewise, later in Luke 24, Jesus does the same with the rest of His disciples...

On the road to Emmaus, He doesn't reveal His identity to the two men until He explains the Scriptures, and then opens their eyes to see Him as He is: the resurrected Christ. *[pause]*

When He appears in the midst of all of His disciples, He gently leads them along in trust by showing His hands and side, and by explaining the Scriptures. *[pauseeee]*

The Lord could have left us with barely any evidence, with barely any revelation about what happened, and said, “You should just believe me.”

Yet God in His great grace doesn't want us to remain in confusion about the most important, eternal realities, but reveals the truth to us in order for us to believe. *[pauseee]*

So here are the Scriptures, here is God with us, as He promised, but will you look to His truth and see what He says? *[pause]*

Will you remain in bewilderment or move to belief? *[pause]*

God, work in hearts this morning! *[pauseeee]*

One of the main points found in this passage is that...

## II. The resurrection of Jesus truly happened!

Have your expectations ever been blown out of the water by something unexpected? *[pause]*

Maybe you start out your day and expect it to be a humdrum kind of day, but something happens, and it makes it unexpectedly amazing! *[pause]*

Well the women go to the tomb expecting to care for Jesus' dead body, and find instead that Jesus was alive.

Talk about having your expectations blown out of the water! *[pause]*

This is because God often works with the tool of the unexpected. *[pause]*

He loves to shock us with something that we weren't even looking for or anticipating. *[pauseeee]*

We go to God expecting judgment, but find grace. *[pause]*

We go through hardship expecting only turmoil, but find peace. *[pause]*

Though the resurrection of Jesus was definitely unexpected, it truly happened. *[pauseeee]*

Note the evidence for the resurrection in this passage...

First, you have the rolled away stone. *[pause]*

That was the first indication that *something* happened.

Now it didn't provide definitive proof yet, but it was one indicator. *[pauseee]*

Another piece of evidence that is huge is that the body was not in the tomb. *[pause]*

Something really did happen because the body was there before, but not anymore. *[pauseeee]*

Isn't it interesting that in this little section, Jesus isn't present in the story, and that's significant.

The story at the tomb is devoid of Christ because He got up and left it! *[pauseee]*

Another piece of evidence is the linen cloths laying in the tomb when Peter looks in. *[pause]*

To us, we are like, "OK? What's so important about that?" but to those of that day, it was a vital clue. *[pause]*

One commentator put it this way, "Since the linen cloths would be the only valuable thing to steal..."

And since it also would be unlikely that anyone would strip the body before stealing it, their presence discredits any suspicion that tomb raiders broke in and stole the body."<sup>2</sup> *[pauseee]*

So many pieces of evidence point to the resurrection of Jesus, but these signs are not the *only* reason why we believe He was raised.

We also believe because the resurrection was a fulfillment of God's Word. *[pausee]*

Notice how the angels point the women to not just the fact that Jesus' body wasn't there, but they point them to Jesus' word being accomplished. *[pause]*

In verse 6 into verse 7, they say...

"Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." *[pause]*

This is exactly the kind of thing that Jesus does with the two on the road to Emmaus and the disciples all gathered together...

He connects His resurrection to the Scriptures. *[pause]*

You can try to explain away the empty tomb, and make up stories about it like the religious leaders did,<sup>3</sup> but you cannot argue with Scripture.

God's Word is true and is always and ever true. *[pause]*

You may *try* to speak against it, but you will always lose. *[pause]*

God's Word always comes true, and here it's shown that it was once again fulfilled *perfectly*. *[pausee]*

Jesus prophesied that he would be delivered over, crucified, and rise on the third day.

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<sup>2</sup> David E. Garland, *Luke, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 943.

<sup>3</sup> A reference to Matthew 28:11–15.

Talk about a *specific* prophecy! *[pause]*

It's not like He used generalities, but gave exact details...

He said who would kill him, how he would be killed, that he would be raised, and how many days after his death that it would happen. *[pause]*

He was not caught off guard by anything, but fully expected it. *[pauseeee]*

Jesus also mentioned that this “must” happen to Him.

This connects what happened to Him back to the Scriptures. *[pause]*

It shows that His death and resurrection are really a fulfillment of the Old Testament, for it pointed towards Him! *[pause]*

This was no random event or chance happening, rather, this was all according to the purpose and plan of God. *[pauseeee]*

The resurrection was a miracle of God accomplishing the plan of God, for the details of this passage manifest that this can only be a work of God. *[pauseee]*

The presence of the angels signifies this, as angels are often present when God is moving His purposes along in a big way. *[pause]*

God gave life where there was death—now that's a miracle! *[pause]*

Christianity is based on the supernatural work of God. *[pause]*

This is no man-made religion, where we thought of something to try to reach God.

This is no charade to try to trick people into believing a lie.

No, this passage reaffirms that God is real, He performs miracles, and one such miracle was the world-shaking, eternity-shaping, hope-inducing reality that Christ rose from the dead. *[pauseeee]*

Yes, the resurrection of Jesus can cause people to be perplexed at first, but we must show and point them to the fact that it truly did happen! *[pauseeeee]*

*So what should our response be?...*

### **III. The resurrection of Jesus should be believed and proclaimed.**

Monumental events evoke a response. *[pause]*

Imagine everyone looked up and saw a huge meteor shower stream across the sky. *[pause]*

There would certainly be a response from everyone who saw it, wouldn't there? *[pause]*

People would be shocked, their eyes big, and their mouths wide open.

They would say things like, “That was amazing!” or even just, “Wow!” *[pauseeee]*

But imagine there was one person who didn’t respond at all, but just acted like they saw a bird fly across the sky. *[pause]*

People would be like, “Did you miss it? Did you zone out? Is there something wrong with you?” *[pause]*

So also, the resurrection of Jesus ought to evoke a response from us!

How can we go on another day the same as before, knowing that this is what happened?! *[pauseeee]*

This is where Luke 24 is meant to lead us: to a response of belief and proclamation. *[pause]*

It’s not given here so that we say, “That’s a neat trick, that resurrection thing.” *[pause]*

It’s not given here so that we would go on with our lives, as if nothing happened.

It’s given here so that the resurrection of Jesus Christ would be believed and proclaimed. *[pauseeee]*

After the angels help the women connect the Scriptures with what happened, we are told, “and they remembered his words.” *[pause]*

That’s showing us that they believed.

They are prime examples of how each of us ought to respond to the revealed truth of the resurrection—we ought to believe! *[pauseeeee]*

Jesus’ death and resurrection are the fulfillment of the Word of God. *[pause]*

The angels not only proclaimed that He arose, but they proclaimed that the Scriptures had been fulfilled through it.

This is what the angels proclaim, and that’s what Jesus proclaimed later in the chapter to the disciples. *[pause]*

The truth is always connected back to the Word of God because the Word of God *is* the truth. *[pauseeee]*

Do you believe that the Scriptures prophesied Jesus’ death and resurrection, and that Jesus fulfilled them? *[pause]*

We are to believe, so ask God to help your unbelief.<sup>4</sup> *[pause]*

We may not have been there to see the empty tomb, but we can believe based on the Scriptures that we hold here today. *[pauseeee]*

After Thomas doubts that Jesus rose, Jesus reveals Himself to him and says, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”<sup>5</sup>  
*[pause]*

That’s us!

We have not seen, yet we believe, and the reason we can believe is because God reveals Himself to us through His Word, He opens our eyes to see the truth, and we respond in faith. *[pauseeee]*

Are you like the women at the tomb, believing? *[pause]*

Or maybe you are like the disciples, who think it’s an “idle tale” at first. *[pause]*

Many in our world view the resurrection as an “idle tale”—they think it’s ‘nonsense’ or some made up ‘fairy tale,’ but that’s not true!

The disciples thought that at first, but they didn’t stay there. *[pause]*

Peter didn’t go home in the “idle tale” phase and live out the rest of his life like that, but he ran to the tomb to see for himself.

So also, may you run, seeking the truth! *[pause]*

Run your fingers through the pages of the Bible, see what it says. *[pause]*

Run to God. *[pause]*

Run to the truth, but do not run home in the “idle tale” state and remain there. *[pauseeee]*

The tomb is empty, and our hearts can be filled with faith because of it! *[pauseeeee]*

Not only do the disciples believe the resurrection, but they proclaim it, and this shows us that once we believe, we are called to proclaim! *[pause]*

How can we keep silent after believing that Christ beat death?

Talk about a miraculous story that ought to be heralded from the rooftops! *[pauseeee]*

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<sup>4</sup> An allusion to Mark 9:24.

<sup>5</sup> John 20:29.

At the end of Luke 24, Jesus opens their minds to the Scriptures, and tells them, “that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”<sup>6</sup> *[pause]*

This is what the disciples do in the book of Acts...

Peter preaches in Acts 2 saying, “this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.”<sup>7</sup> *[pause]*

A couple chapters later in Acts 4, we find that the Jewish religious leaders were upset that Peter and John were “teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.”<sup>8</sup> *[pause]*

This was their primary message: that Jesus died and rose again, and now, not only can we receive forgiveness in His name...

But we can be resurrected from the dead someday, due to our faith in the resurrected Christ. *[pauseeee]*

*All of this leads us to this main point...*

**Christ arose! Will you believe it and proclaim it?**

“There is a...story about a town suffering a serious drought. *[pause]*

It was in farm country and the crops were being ruined. *[pause]*

The local preacher decided to hold a prayer meeting to ask God to send rain, [so] he asked all those who believed in God’s power to do so to join him at four o’clock in the church. *[pause]*

When the hour came, the church was almost filled, but when the preacher got up and looked around, he said...

“This meeting is called off. We don’t have the faith to pray. I don’t see a single umbrella here.”<sup>9</sup> *[pauseeee]*

That’s what I’m seeking to get you to do: to *really* have faith that Jesus rose from the dead, and not just go through the motions. *[pause]*

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<sup>6</sup> Luke 24:47.

<sup>7</sup> Acts 2:23–24.

<sup>8</sup> Acts 4:2.

<sup>9</sup> Bruce Larson and Lloyd J. Ogilvie, *Luke*, vol. 26, *The Preacher’s Commentary Series* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1983), 344.

To once again stand in wonder at the resurrection. *[pauseeee]*

The angels announced, “He is not here, but has risen.”

That is the message that we are to believe and proclaim, but *do you?* *[pause]*

Do you really and truly trust that that’s true? *[pause]*

I’m not asking if you can just repeat it because you have always heard it, but do you believe that Jesus rose from the dead in history? *[pauseee]*

Not only did Jesus’ death and resurrection happen in history, but it’s a history-changing moment. *[pause]*

In the face of death, all our human power and ingenuity lay ineffective, as we feel our utter need and weakness.

But now, in light of Christ’s death and resurrection, death is no longer as fearful as it once was. *[pause]*

The fact that the tomb is empty changes *everything!* *[pauseee]*

It shows that He is truly the promised Messiah and Son of God.

It certifies that His work of redemption was accepted by God the Father—those who trust in Him are forgiven and made right with God! *[pause]*

It also gives us hope because we have been promised to be raised up by God just as Christ was raised up.

So no wonder it radically changed the lives of the disciples as they boldly proclaimed these things to the world. *[pauseee]*

Will you believe and proclaim that He is not here, but has risen? *[pause]*

The *empty* tomb is *full* of significance!