

## We Had Hoped

### How the Resurrection Reverses Disappointed Expectations

#### Luke Series #61

Luke 23:50-24:35

David Sunday

April 20, 2014

---

Let's read Luke 23:50-24:35 together:

*<sup>50</sup> Now there was a man named Joseph, from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man, <sup>51</sup> who had not consented to their decision and action; and he was looking for the kingdom of God. <sup>52</sup> This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. <sup>53</sup> Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud and laid him in a tomb cut in stone, where no one had ever yet been laid. <sup>54</sup> It was the day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning. <sup>55</sup> The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid. <sup>56</sup> Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.*

***24** But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. <sup>2</sup> And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, <sup>3</sup> but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. <sup>4</sup> While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. <sup>5</sup> And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? <sup>6</sup> He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, <sup>7</sup> that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." <sup>8</sup> And they remembered his words, <sup>9</sup> and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. <sup>10</sup> Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, <sup>11</sup> but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. <sup>12</sup> But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.*

*<sup>13</sup> That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, <sup>14</sup> and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. <sup>15</sup> While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. <sup>16</sup> But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. <sup>17</sup> And he said to them,*

*“What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?” And they stood still, looking sad. <sup>18</sup> Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?” <sup>19</sup> And he said to them, “What things?” And they said to him, “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,<sup>20</sup> and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. <sup>21</sup> But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. <sup>22</sup> Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, <sup>23</sup> and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. <sup>24</sup> Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.”<sup>25</sup> And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup> Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”<sup>27</sup> And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*

*<sup>28</sup> So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, <sup>29</sup> but they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.” So he went in to stay with them. <sup>30</sup> When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. <sup>31</sup> And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. <sup>32</sup> They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” <sup>33</sup> And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, <sup>34</sup> saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!” <sup>35</sup> Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.*

This is a great day of celebration for Christians around the world. Alleluia, Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! The great news is that we as Christians celebrate this gospel every Sunday. We learn about Christ—His death and resurrection for us. The truth that we proclaim is dynamite. It has the power to turn your world upside down and inside out for the better forever.

Yet you might have doubts about the resurrection. If you do, take heart. You’re in pretty good company. It was also that way on the first Easter Sunday. Our text is from Luke’s Gospel written by a doctor and historian. We learn in Luke 1:3 that he wrote his account for a man named Theophilus because he wanted Theophilus to know for certain that what he had heard about Jesus was the truth. He wanted to erase doubts in Theophilus’ mind and give him assurance.

As we come to the end of Luke's Gospel, it's interesting to note how he teaches Theophilus about the resurrection of Jesus. Luke emphasizes the fact that everyone doubted at first. No one was expecting the resurrection of Jesus. It came as a shocking surprise to everyone—even His closest followers.

Our reading began in that brief period of time after Jesus' death and before His resurrection. We saw how a man named Joseph of Arimathea ensured Jesus would have a proper burial. We saw some women who had followed Jesus and prepared spices and ointments for His burial.

Where are all the other disciples? The other Gospels tell us they were hiding. Their hopes and dreams were shattered. Think about all they had gone through emotionally. First, they left everything in order to follow Jesus. Then they thought He was going to bring a physical kingdom in which they would reign with Him. Then they watched Him die a cruel death—crucified on a cross. Their emotions have been ripped up and down. Now they are hiding behind closed doors with fears flooding their hearts. The government has crucified their Leader and they are wondering who will be next.

Here is the point: no one is expecting a resurrection or saying, "I can't wait for Easter Sunday morning. Isn't it going to be thrilling when we see Jesus risen from the dead?" No one is preparing for the world to be turned upside down or for the next day to be the first day of the new creation. In their minds, it's over. Death is final and irreversible. No one gets pummeled, scourged, pierced with a spear, buried in a tomb and then rises from the dead. They were not expecting it.

Look at Luke 24:1. When the women woke early that next morning at dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. They were not thinking, "Let's hope we don't need to use these spices. Maybe He'll be alive." They were thinking, "We're going to prepare His body for the long process of decomposition." When they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, their response was to be "*perplexed*" (verse four) at what they didn't find in the tomb. They didn't find the body of the Lord Jesus.

They are "*frightened*" (verse five) by what they do find—two men standing by them in dazzling apparel. They fall to the ground in shock and amazement. The other gospels tell us these men were angels. The women are perplexed and frightened but not expecting a resurrection from the dead. Then they go tell the apostles what the angels told them.

By the way, it is a strong evidence of the authenticity of the Biblical Gospels that women are the first eyewitness of the resurrection. Back in the first century, the testimony of a woman

was not even admissible in a court of law. One of the early historians—Josephus—says, “Because of the levity of their gender, they are not allowed to testify.”

Our elder Justin Taylor just wrote a new book—The Final Week of Jesus—in which he comments on the importance of Scripture including the eyewitness testimony of these women.

1. It is a theological reminder that the Kingdom of the Messiah turns the system of this world on its head. Jesus radically affirms the full dignity of women and the vital value of their witness.
2. It is a powerful apologetic reminder of the historical accuracy of the resurrection accounts. If these were just cleverly devised myths, women would never have been presented as the first proclaimers and eyewitnesses of the risen Christ.

Notice how the apostles respond to the eyewitness testimony of these women in Luke 24:11. You don’t see them breaking into applause or celebration when these women tell them the tomb is empty and tell them of the men who proclaimed, “*He is not here*” (verse six). No, Luke tells us “...*but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them...*” (verse 11). The word used for ‘idle tale’ is the word from which we get our English word ‘delirious’. When these women came to them, the apostles thought, “These women are out of their minds—delirious. This is nonsense.” I think it is also revealing that the very first people to reject the gospel of the risen Christ were His own apostles. They did not believe at first.

Thankfully, Luke shows us a different response in Luke 24:12. One of the disciples decides to investigate the evidence. “*But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.*” Peter hasn’t fully believed in the resurrection yet, but he is showing us where to take our doubts. He is thinking it over and looking at the evidence. His world is being turned upside down and he is astonished at what he sees. He is a good model for us when we are doubting. It’s not enough to stay passively stuck in your doubts. You need to dig, pursue and do what Peter did—investigate the evidence.

The Christian faith is based on historically verifiable data. Think about how public all of this was. It wasn’t private revelation done in a corner but rather a public event. If Luke wanted to fabricate an account, he wouldn’t have told us about the eyewitness testimony of women or about the doubts the apostles had. That’s not very flattering to them.

Look at the evidence. How else can we account for the remarkable transformation that occurs in these same apostles and the growth of the Christian church around the world? How can we explain the apostles’ willingness to risk their lives and die as martyrs for the sake of the risen Christ?

The burden of proof is not only on people who believe the resurrection, it also rests on those who disbelieve the resurrection. How can we account for all that takes place here? These apostles would not have given their lives if someone had stolen the body of the Lord Jesus. They had seen Him with their own eyes, touched Him, eaten with Him and experienced Him in His risen glory. If these disciples were hallucinating, then anyone could have gone to the tomb and easily revealed a rotting corpse.

Here is the point: there is abundant evidence for those who are willing to examine it. Do as Peter did. Run to where you can find the evidence—read the Scriptures, read good books that give credible and compelling arguments based on the evidence of the resurrection. Talk to people who believe in the risen Christ and ask them how this belief has transformed their lives. See for yourself if these things are true. Don't just say it's an idle tale without grappling with the facts.

There is one more encounter I want to draw your attention to that begins in Luke 24:13. It concerns two people who had followed Jesus. Now it is Easter Sunday afternoon. These men are walking away from Jerusalem on the road to Emmaus. Verse 17 tells us their faces are downcast and sad. The risen Jesus comes and starts talking with them but they don't realize Who He is yet. Jesus asks them what they are talking about. You have to laugh when you read their response. They look at the risen Christ, don't realize Who He is and say to Him, "*Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?*" (verse 18). If anyone knew what had just happened in Jerusalem, it was Jesus. They don't realize Who He is.

They then proceed in Luke 24:19-24 to share the simple facts of the gospel with Jesus. They tell Jesus about His powerful life and preaching, His unjust crucifixion and His now empty tomb. They know His tomb is empty but cannot make sense of it all yet. They are not ready to believe Jesus could actually be alive and risen from the dead. They are still shattered, dismayed, disappointed and downcast. If Jesus has not risen from the dead, we should feel the same way those disciples did.

Look at what they say to Jesus. "*But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel*" (verse 21). "We had hoped that He would deliver us from the oppressive, tyrannical Roman government and set us free, bringing us peace and prosperity. Now He is dead." Or so they think.

There comes a point in everyone's life when hopes are shattered. Disappointments multiply and disillusionment starts to grip your soul. That is where these disciples are on this first Easter morning: "*...we had hoped...*" Now their expectations for Jesus are disappointed. They are downcast until they realize He is risen.

I remember the second night my wife was in the hospital a little more than four years ago. We knew she was very sick. The doctor had told us the day before to go to the emergency room because he suspected she had cancer. That day she had a CT scan and on Saturday night they gave us the results which we did not know how to read and probably should have waited for a doctor to come. But we read it and knew enough to realize it was very serious.

I have to say that night we were devastated. I remember Kate and I sobbing as we reflected together on all the things we had hoped for our life together. At that moment, our hope seemed shattered.

But there was a truth from God's Word that came in at that moment and started to strengthen our hearts. We had been thinking about these words throughout that month. God says to His people, "*I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul*" (Jeremiah 32:40-41). That promise helped us believe that God had not turned away from us even when the things we had hoped for seemed to be failing.

However, it was not the promise alone. There was proof to these promises that gave us assurance God would never fail us. That proof was a historical event—a down payment on God's determination to never turn away from doing us good. That event was the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Friends, I want to tell you that the resurrection changes everything. That was certainly our experience as Kate was facing stage four cancer. For us, knowing and believing in the resurrection changed everything. We had just been learning a song in church during the weeks leading up to her diagnosis. On the first Sunday after Kate returned to church from the hospital, we sang the song My Soul Finds Rest in God Alone. The last verse of that song changed everything for us.

Find rest, my soul, in God alone amid the world's temptations  
When evil seeks to take a hold I'll cling to my salvation...  
Though life is but a fleeting breath, a sigh too brief to measure  
My King has crushed the curse of death and I am His forever

(My Soul Finds Rest in God Alone by Aaron Keyes)

Oh, that truth gave us such hope. We realized that because Jesus is risen from the dead, nothing can destroy our hope—not cancer, not even death itself.

You might think, "It's easy for him to say there is hope. His wife survived. She's alive today." But I can tell you the hope that sustained us through cancer is the same hope sustaining

people in our church who are not looking at a good prognosis. It is the same hope sustaining people who, in recent months and years, have had to suffer the painful loss of those dear to them.

I wish you could have seen what I saw last Sunday when I looked out at our congregation at the end of the second service. We were singing, “I will rise when He calls my name” (from I Will Rise by Chris Tomlin, 2008). I saw Steve with his mother and brother. This song gave Steve hope as we sang it the morning his dear wife—Tina—went to be with Jesus in heaven. Steve was singing with hope and assurance. The resurrection changes everything.

Then I looked at the other end of the row and saw Ross and Jan with his sister and brother-in-law standing arm in arm with their hands raised in victory. Ross and Jan are both facing terminal cancer—preparing with hope to be with Christ. They know they belong to the One Who has conquered death—the One Who has promised to not simply compensate us for our losses. It is better than that. We belong to the One Who promised to restore us to the life we forfeited through sin here on earth. They know Jesus Christ has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. That is the confidence the resurrection brings to believers.

When you know you belong to Jesus—the Resurrection and the Life—you have a hope that conquers fear and triumphs over death itself. You belong to the One Who is raised from the dead and know you too will rise from the dead to live with Him in His Kingdom of grace and glory forevermore. This is “solid ground, firm through the fiercest drought and storm” (In Christ Alone by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend).

Resurrection changed everything for Jesus’ disciples. It changes everything for those who believe in Jesus today. It can change everything for you, too. It is not easy to believe, for this resurrection is the greatest surprise the world has ever known. It’s far easier to set your hopes on the fleeting riches and pleasures of this world and wallow in your disappointments.

I want to ask where have you found yourself saying with downcast eyes, “But I had hoped.” Could it be in your marriage? Years ago it started with great dreams of living happily ever after but now years of disappointment have smothered that joy. You look and say, “I had hoped.” Or maybe you had hoped to find the love of your life by now—the partner with whom you could share all your days but you are finding yourself sadly alone. Or maybe you look at your financial situation, vocation or station in life and say, “I had hoped that by now things would be different.”

Or perhaps you had hoped better things for your own morality. Did you think of yourself as a good person yet in your more sober moments you survey the landscape of ruined relationships, hidden addictions, broken promises, lies and secrets so shameful that you feel you would die if anyone discovered them? Had you hoped to become a better person than the one

you are? If you are honest, you would have to say, "I've failed to become the person I'd hoped to be."

It gets even more troubling when you think about standing before God with all your sins and failures. Thinking about your morality leads you to think about your mortality and wonder if there are more miles logged in the rearview mirror than those that lie before you. Life seems to be going so fast as you get older. Maybe you are thinking, "I had hoped for more out of life."

Where can you go with your broken dreams, gnawing disappointments, shattered hopes, shame and your darkest fear? Where can you go in the face of death—that great devourer—who swallows up all living things, whose appetite is insatiable and taste unrefined. Death—that ruthless monster—devours young and old, men and women, good and bad. You cannot bribe, bargain, plead with or charm him. No amount of wealth, power, wisdom or beauty can hold death at bay. No one is humble enough, good enough, high enough or low enough to be overlooked or excused from death—that king of terrors—who frightens everyone and is himself frightened by no one.

Where can you go in the face of death? You go to the One in Whom death met its match. Go to Jesus—the only Man Who has ever said, "*No one takes [My life] from me...*" (John 10:18). His statement has been proven to be true. Go to Jesus Who stood up to death and gave Himself as a ransom for sinners. Death opened its mouth to swallow Him up, thinking this would be his most delicious morsel. Jesus became death's poison, ruin and destruction. The death of Jesus becomes the death of death because Jesus is the resurrection of life. He cannot be held by death. Go to the One Who could not be forced to stay in the grave. Death could not digest the bleeding Lamb of God but had to give up its victim. It had to release Jesus from its vice grip.

Death is trembling right now. I think death is very afraid of that day when Jesus will return, the trumpet will sound and Christ the Conqueror will say, "Give up, death! Give up My people who belong to me, just as you gave Me up. They are members of My body and are part of Me. We are one and we are alive forevermore."

And we will rise. We will rise when He calls our name.

Soar we now where Christ has led, Alleluia!  
Following our exalted Head, Alleluia!  
Made like Him, like Him we rise, Alleluia!  
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies, Alleluia!

(Christ the Lord is Risen Today by Charles Wesley, 1708)

Where do you go when your hopes are fading and life is failing? You go to the risen Christ. When you see Jesus risen from the dead and put your faith and trust in Him, here is what God is saying to you: "Your sins can be freely and fully forgiven. There's no condemnation

against you at all. When Jesus died on that cross and said, 'It is finished,' He paid your debt in full. I raised Him from the dead and have declared, 'Payment accepted. Here's the receipt. All debts are forgiven for those who trust in My Son.'"

When you see Jesus—the risen Christ—God is saying to you, "Your disappointments can be redeemed." The afflictions you are suffering right now in this sin-sick, groaning world will one day seem light and momentary compared to the glory you are going to enjoy in the new creation. You'll look back on those disappointments and realize they were really God's appointments to prepare for you a never-ending, invincible joy.

When you look at Jesus—the risen Christ—you will realize your death can be transformed into a gateway to joy. What seems on earth to be the defeat of all your hopes is going to be the greatest victory of them all. He Who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal body through His Spirit Who lives in you.

How do you get there? How do you see Him? How do you meet the risen Christ today? I believe you can meet and know Jesus today. Where do you find Him? You are probably not going to find Him at an empty tomb or have two men in dazzling apparel knock you down to the ground. He's probably not going to show up as you walk along the Fox River just like He did to the disciples on the Emmaus road.

Look at where Jesus and the angels took the disciples. Look at Luke 24:5-8:

*And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. 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." And they remembered his words.*

Do you see where the angels took them? To the Word of God, recorded for us in this Bible. Jesus did the same thing with the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Look at where Jesus took them. "*And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself*" (verse 27).

Jesus is alive and speaking today. He is revealing Himself to people and turning despair into hope. How is He doing this? He is speaking through His Word—the Bible. He is speaking right now to those who will listen. Whenever you hear the Word of God it is addressing you. The question is, is it arresting you? Are you listening? Are you feeling the conviction in your conscience that these things are true—that Jesus is really risen from the dead and His death has the power to bring you life?

Maybe you are not sure yet that you believe these things but at least you might hope these things are true. Do you ever feel that way? “Oh, I wish I could believe these things are true.”

What should you do if that is your situation? Go to the Word of God and read it. Where would you start? I would take Matthew, Mark, Luke or John—one of the four Gospels. Read it through. You don’t need a priest to help you. Just pray as you read, “God, please show me the truth. Help me know for certain Who Jesus is. Help me follow Him.”

If you are hearing Jesus speaking to you through His Word, I want to invite you to put your hope in Him. Romans 10:8-13 says this to those who put their hope in the Word of God.

*“The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, [to be declared right with God] and with the mouth one confesses and is saved [delivered from sin and all its consequences, delivered from death and given the promise of everlasting life]. For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.”*

When you put your faith and hope in Jesus, all those disappointments—one day—will be reversed. You will look at Jesus and say, “You did not let me down” and you’ll be totally satisfied in His presence.

*For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.*

God has riches He wants to bestow on you today. Sins forgiven, disappointments redeemed, death transformed into joy. How do you get those riches? You call on Him Who is with us right now, hearing those who call on His name.

*For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*

This is God’s promise. I am going to invite you to pray with me. For some, this might be the reaffirmation of faith in the risen Christ which you have known for a long time. Easter Sunday is a wonderful time to reaffirm that faith. For some of you, this might be the first time you confess Jesus as Lord and express your faith and hope in Him—the One Whom God raised from the dead. Wherever you are at, if the Lord is giving you faith to believe in Jesus, I’d like to invite you to pray quietly from your heart as I lead us.

Holy God, I come to You as a sinner. I bring You my broken dreams, disappointed hopes, fears and failures. I need You, God, even though I have often doubted and ignored You. I thank You for speaking to me through Your Word. I confess with my mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in my heart You raised Him from the dead. Thank You for Your power to make me born again

into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Teach me to follow Jesus all the days of my life and bring me to live with You in Your Kingdom forever. Amen.

If this is the first time you have prayed this prayer from the heart and have confessed Jesus is Lord, I would like to encourage you to tell someone you have put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I invite you to contact one of our pastors or elders so we can help you grow in your new-found faith.

Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. Glory to God. Alleluia, Christ is risen! He is risen indeed. Amen.

Heavenly Father, we thank You that no power in hell, no scheme of man can ever pluck us from Your hands till Jesus returns or calls us home. Here in the power of Christ we'll stand. Father, I pray that You "*...the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip [us] with everything good that [we] may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen*" (Hebrews 13:20-22).

---

## **New Covenant Bible Church**

[4N780 Randall Road, St. Charles, IL 60175](http://www.newcbc.org)

(630) 584-2611 ♦ [www.newcbc.org](http://www.newcbc.org)

*All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.*

Text provided by sermontranscribers.net ♦ [emily@sermontranscribers.net](mailto:emily@sermontranscribers.net)