

## Witnesses to Resurrection: Surprised by Easter

Luke 24:1-12 || Pastor Paul Hahn || Easter Sunday 2021

*To CARE for one another in truth and in love,  
To GROW together as followers of Jesus,  
To SERVE those God has placed in our path.  
– CG Mission Statement*

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**Icebreaker:** Tell about the last time you were truly surprised.

**Worship:** [Galatians 2:20-21](#) (*Remain a few moments in worship with this passage. What is God's invitation to you?*)

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**Sermon Summary for [Luke 24:1-12](#)** (*Read the passage aloud before reading the sermon summary.*)

Luke is clear that we are to be witnesses of Christ's resurrection. But we cannot share what we do not have. Before we can witness to the wonder of Easter, we must first experience the surprising grace found there. But how can Christ's resurrection surprise us when we're already so familiar with it? Wonder can't be packaged; it can't be worked up or faked. As Eugene Peterson said, it requires a sense of being there, of engagement. Yet because Easter is so massive, so powerful, and so at the center of all that is alive in the world, there is still much to surprise us. So if we engage Easter afresh – with open minds and hearts – we can indeed be surprised again.

The Surprising Literature of Easter Morning // So much about how the Gospels spoke of Easter is surprising: their silence in referencing biblical expectations or Old Testament prophecy, the absence of theological development on the ramifications of the resurrection, their surprisingly simple description of Jesus after He rose of from the dead, as well as the surprising presence of women in these stories (whose standing in society at that time would not have helped to reinforce the legitimacy of the account). Why are all of these surprises significant? Because this is where Easter really started! A great and triumphant reality is being displayed without concern to tidy up the narrative or tie everything up theologically. They lack the air of well thought out, contrived or stylized fabrication. Instead, the four accounts offer differing experiences of the same event – with much crossover, although their attention is drawn to different details and with different emphasis. These are the puzzled, overwhelmed accounts of those who have experienced something staggering and surprising and which they haven't yet fully come to terms with.

The Surprising Meetings of Easter Morning // The first witnesses to the resurrection are in the same place we are: dependent on testimony from above and circumstantial evidence. No one saw Jesus rise. And no one's first experience of the risen Christ was direct or firsthand. Then or now. God knew that future readers of the Gospel accounts would be dependent on testimony of others (along with strong circumstantial evidence) in order to believe the resurrection. It can be hard to believe – particularly the more we are removed from the event. And it's therefore wondrous that the first witnesses had the same experience we do. Even the disciples saw the first accounts as "an idle tale, and they did not believe them" (Luke 24:11). But God has given us His word from above – filled with eyewitnesses of all types, powerful circumstantial evidence, and encounters with the risen Lord by crowds and by His closest friends. We must take to heart Jesus's words to Thomas, "*Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed*" ([John 20:29](#)).

The Surprising Privilege of Easter Morning // Easter is a gift from God far more than it is a test of our faith. The faith itself to embrace Easter is a gift – one we are encouraged to cry out for if we do not yet possess it. But it is also a gift and a challenge we are to put to use by sharing and living the Good News of resurrection. Christ plants seeds of resurrection through us... just as He did with the first witnesses of the empty tomb. This is the surprise: our lives are to be expressions of resurrection that Jesus will beautifully use as we are alive together with Him. To celebrate Easter is to receive an invitation to live as though Jesus is among us, making everything new.

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**Discussion Questions** (You will not be able to discuss all the questions. Pick the ones you like. Some are personal perspective and application questions for life-transforming discussions.)

#### **Surprising Literature of Easter in Luke's Account**

- Why is it surprising that there is an absence of theology in Luke's account of the resurrection?
  - How does this help us to grasp the reality of Christ's resurrection?
- Talk about the importance of the stone rolled away, the empty tomb and the presence of angels.
  - What does the mention of these things mean?
- Does anything surprise you in this passage? Why?

#### **Surprising Meetings of Easter**

- What did the women who went to the tomb forget? Why do you think the two angels had to remind them?
  - How are you like the women who went to the tomb?
  - What does it mean that the first people to hear about Jesus' resurrection were women?
- Compare the response of the women to the Good News, versus the apostles' response.
  - Why do you think Peter's response was different? How are you like Peter?
  - What about this passage doesn't make sense if the apostles and the women were trying to make up a story about Jesus rising from the dead?

#### **Surprising Privilege of Easter**

- What privilege did the women receive and what did they do with it?
  - What privilege does Easter give to each of us? Do you feel that the risen Christ may be asking you to respond to Him in a certain way? What might that be?
- How does Jesus's death and resurrection give us hope for the future and hope for right now?
  - How does it give hope to our broken world and our broken lives?

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**Prayer** For an Easter Week Prayer Guide to use personally, with your group, or family click [HERE](#).

#### **Engage & Experience: Generous Hospitality**

We are recommending *The Art of Neighboring* ([site](#) | [book](#)). It challenges us to get to know the eight households closest to our own. This alone would make a huge difference in our neighborhoods and is a wonderful way to practice generous hospitality. Let's all begin by asking:

1. On a scale of 1-10, how connected are the people in your current neighborhood or apartment complex? Describe the dynamic among your neighbors.
2. How many of your neighbors' names can you list right now?
3. Has Covid given you more or less opportunities to interact with your neighbors?
4. Share one small step that you could take to get to know a neighbor over the next week.

Some suggestions:

- [Order the book](#) for your CG, holding one another accountable to put its principles into actions.
- Make a list of the 8 households that are closest to your own, commit to learning their names.
- Add Neighboring videos and discussion ([link to both](#)) to your regular weekly sermon discussion.
- Step away from sermon discussions to read & discuss the book, working together to put it into action.