

## I. Sermon: The Mystery Guest

- A. My talk today is part three in a series: **Mysteries of the Resurrection**
- B. Welcome to Pathway. We're doing things a little bit out of order today, because today is awesome. Over the course of all our services this weekend, we will get to witness women and men and students get baptized.
- C. That's 50+ members of our own Pathway Family going public with their faith, being brave, going public, and saying to you and me and everybody, when it comes to Jesus, count me in.
- D. And not just to us! They're also declaring that to God and angels and demons and the devil and to the whole wide world... I am His and He is mine, and I'm not ashamed of the gospel.
- E. So the song time is a little shorter and message is a little earlier than normal to make room for that incredible and triumphant moment. So let's welcome all the families and friends who join us today as witnesses.
- F. My talk today is part three in a series.
  1. Series: Mysteries of the Resurrection
  2. Title: **The Mystery Guest**

## II. The Story

- A. So, the story begins on the worst day in history. It was Friday when Jesus was crucified. The disciples were devastated. Their dreams were crushed. They didn't understand.
- B. They retreated behind closed doors and tried to make sense of this "colossal failure."
- C. On the third day, on Sunday, something strange happened. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of Jesus, Joanna, and Salome went to the tomb. They were going to finish the burial process for Jesus.
- D. But that depressing scene turned into the greatest mystery of history. The tomb became a crime scene.
  1. Mystery one: the mystery of the missing stone. Who moved the stone? Who chased away the elite Roman guard that was stationed there? Who broke the seal of the mighty Roman Empire placed across that stone?
  2. Mystery two: the mystery of the missing body. Where is Jesus? Who peeled off 70 pounds of sticky grave clothes and laid them neatly on the limestone slab? Who removed the shroud from his head and folded it so neatly? Where did he go?
- E. The women ran back to tell the disciples. Peter and John ran to the tomb to check it out for themselves. Jesus is gone! Where did they put his body?
- F. The core disciples race back to their place in Jerusalem, desperate to process what's going on.
- G. Meanwhile angels appear to the women and say he is raised from the dead. They race back to tell the others.
- H. Then Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene, and she races back to tell the others.
- I. Then this happens:
  1. *"That same day two of Jesus' followers were walking to the village of Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem. As they walked along they were talking about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things, Jesus himself suddenly came and began walking with them. But God kept them from recognizing him. He asked them, "What are you discussing so intently as you walk along?" They stopped short, sadness written across their faces."* (Luke 24:13-17)

## III. The Mystery Guest

- A. This happens on a late Sunday afternoon. The camera focuses on two men, Cleopas and an unnamed companion. They are walking away from Jerusalem.
- B. Don't miss the weight of this moment. They aren't just taking a hike; they are retreating.
- C. They are leaving the scene of their greatest trauma. Jesus is dead. They're going home. As far as they are concerned, the Jesus chapter of their story is finished.
- D. They are crushed. It says "they had sadness written across their faces." The language implies a heavy, gloomy, downcast state. They are suffering from profound cognitive dissonance. They believed Jesus was the Redeemer; his brutal death proved (in their minds) that He wasn't. Their world has collapsed.
- E. Jesus let them down. God let them down. Dreams dashed. Hopes crushed. Hearts broken. Forget it; I'm going home.
- F. Into this heartbreak steps a Stranger. A Mystery Guest. He asks what they are talking about. And this sets up one of the most ironic exchanges in the entire Bible.

## IV. The Layers of Irony (The Narrative Tension)

- A. *"Then one of them, Cleopas, replied, "You must be the only person in Jerusalem who hasn't heard about all the things that have happened there the last few days." "What things?" Jesus asked. "The things that happened to Jesus, the man from Nazareth," they said. "He was a prophet who did powerful miracles, and he was a mighty teacher in the eyes of God and all the people."* (Luke 24:18-19)
- B. Don't miss the brilliant double irony written into this scene.
  1. Irony A: Cleopas stops. He looks at this Stranger with total disbelief. "How can you be so clueless? Have you been living behind a rock? (!)"
    - a) "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"
    - b) They are asking the Main Character of history if He has read the news. They are lecturing the Victim on the details of the crime. They think the Stranger is clueless about current events.
    - c) So like annoyed parents talking to a toddler, they tell the story of Jesus... to... the clueless guy... who actually is Jesus!
      - (1) *"But our leading priests and other religious leaders handed him over to be condemned to death, and they crucified him. We had hoped he was the Messiah who had come to rescue Israel. This all happened three days ago."* (Luke 24:20-21)
    - d) I think we have the three saddest words in any language right here: We had hoped...
      - (1) We had hoped... to be rich by now, married by now, healed by now, have kids by now, to be retired by now, to win a game by now, to have an offer by now, to run a business by now.
      - (2) The Bible is so real. We had hoped... but our hopes were crushed.

- (3) We had hoped that Jesus was the Messiah... to them that meant the Powerful Warrior King who would cast off the yoke of Rome and make everybody prosperous... BUT his life was cut short and he died.
- (4) We had hoped... but dreams don't always come true.
- e) I'm trying to imagine the look on Jesus' face. He's fighting to keep a straight face. Stroking his beard. Listening intently. Oh, really? Wow! How did I miss all that. That's so depressing!
- f) But then they say... not so fast sir. It doesn't end there; there's more:
- (1) *"Then some women from our group of his followers were at his tomb early this morning, and they came back with an amazing report. They said his body was missing, and they had seen angels who told them Jesus is alive! Some of our men ran out to see, and sure enough, his body was gone, just as the women had said."* (Luke 24:22-24)
- g) "Wow, really?" says the Stranger.
- h) "Yes, really!" say the men.
- i) Do you see the irony here? There's another one. It's actually an irony wrapped in an irony with an irony layered on top.
- (1) If you don't know what irony is, it's when you get the opposite of what you expect to get, and it's kind of funny.
- (2) You don't expect people to be explaining all about Jesus, literally to Jesus, so that's kind of funny.
- (3) But the irony within that is that when they explain to Jesus about Jesus they actually accuse him of being clueless!
- (a) I wonder if up in heaven these two men are still getting teased about this golden moment of comedy.
- (4) But here comes the deepest irony layered on top. Just who's the clueless one?
2. *"Then Jesus said to them, 'You foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures. Wasn't it clearly predicted that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his glory?' Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."* (Luke 24:25-27)
- C. This is the pivot point. The Stranger takes over. He is about to prove that their "tragedy" was actually a "strategy" written in heaven to redeem the world.
1. And here's the kicker: You should have known, he says. It's been there for you all along.
- V. Why Believe?
- A. Jesus essentially gives an apologetics seminar on the road.
1. Why should we believe the Resurrection is true history and not a fairy tale?
- B. The Argument from Prophetic Coherence (The "Divine Necessity")
1. The Stranger asks, "Wasn't it clearly predicted that the Messiah would have to suffer...?" He had to, it was a necessity, to accomplish his purpose.
2. Critics argue the Resurrection was a later invention to fix the embarrassment of the Cross. Jesus argues the opposite: The Cross was the plan all along... and so was the resurrection.
- a) And now, he proves it. He proves it by taking the first part of the Bible, which is called the Old Testament, and showing all those places where the Old Testament prophet's prophesied of Jesus, and specifically that he would die and rise again.
3. The powerful part is that the Old Testament books were all written somewhere between 500 years and 1,500 years before Christ! And the stories they tell go back even farther than that!
- a) Dateless Past: Genesis says the seed of the woman would be injured to crush the the head of the devil.
- b) 2000 bc: Isaac said, Father, we have the wood and the fire, but where is the sacrifice? Abraham said, God will provide the sacrifice. And when he was about to slay his son, he saw a ram caught in a thicket of thorns, and sacrificed that instead. Jesus said, "Father Abraham rejoiced to see my day."
- c) 1650 bc: Exodus says the Passover Lamb would be sacrificed to forgive and save the lives of his people... (Jesus was crucified during Passover week).
- d) 1600 bc: Numbers said that all those who were bitten by sin and in the throes of death... if they just looked at the sin bearer nailed high on a wooden pole would live. Look and live. Jesus said, that was me. You should have known.
- e) 1000 bc: The king describes a scene of violence and death and says, "they have pierced my hands and my feet... they gamble to see who will keep my clothes..." and that is just what happened to Jesus. But...
- f) 1000 bc: he also predicts God would not leave him in the place of death or allow his person to see the decay that happens in the grave. I will rise again. You should have known.
- g) 800 bc: Isaiah 53 predicted, he was pierced for our sins, he was crushed for our rebellion, he took our sins, and he was laid in a rich man's tomb.
- h) 750 bc: Jonah was in the belly of the whale for 3 days and came back from it, and Jesus said, that foreshadowed me.
4. The Stranger asked: *Wasn't it clearly predicted that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his glory?* Suffering first. There's his death. Entering his glory after. There's his resurrection.
5. It is the only logical conclusion to the Old Testament. You should have known.
- a) But I have just given you 8 of these arcs of proof.
- b) Would you like to see them all in one go? Here it is...
- (1) 63,779 connections**
- c) And the fact that these books were written without any coordination or Internet or AI, on 3 continents, by over 40 authors who mostly didn't know each other, over the span of 1,600 years, and yet with one voice tell one story of one message of one Savior and one Eternal Love, and one way of salvation... all I can say is... you and I and everybody should have known.
- VI. Part 4: The Fire and the Feast (The Breakthrough)
- A. So Jesus goes on and now their heads are spinning.
- B. They arrive at their destination, a small town called Emmaus.

1. *"Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther. But they constrained Him, saying, 'Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.' And He went in to stay with them. Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them."* (Luke 24:28-30)
- C. Does this remind you of anything? This is a reenactment of the Last Supper. The Passover meal when Jesus instituted what we call Communion or the Lord's Supper or some call the Eucharist.
  1. The breaking of the bread symbolizes the breaking of his body.
  2. The pouring out of the wine symbolizes the pouring out of his blood.
- D. The one thing they couldn't understand was his death. And the one thing they finally realized was his death.
  1. It wasn't a failure, it was a triumph.
  2. It wasn't an accident, it was the plan all along.
  3. It wasn't deliverance by force, it was salvation by grace.
  4. It wasn't salvation by works, but but salvation by faith.
  5. It turns out, that for anybody really looking at the Bible, the Cross of Christ was...
    - a) Not a secret, but God's clear promise all along.
    - b) Not a mystery, but the prophecy of all the ages of history.
      - (1) And with that Cross came that glorious resurrection Sunday...
- E. They were so clueless and they should have known.
  1. And when they finally got it... when they understood all that... when they understood the breaking of his body and the shedding of his blood as the heart and soul of the plan of salvation... when they got that, God reached down from heaven, and lifted the veil that blinded their eyes and then.... In that moment of the breaking of bread:
- F. *"Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight."* (Luke 24:31)
  1. Snap.
  2. The sound of the crust breaking. The look of the hands holding it.
    - a) "And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him."
    - b) Mystery solved.
  3. Of all the things a person can know about Jesus—his teachings, his miracles, his power, his love—you'll never really get him, never see him, until you get the meaning of his death and resurrection.
    - a) They knew his miracles... they said so to Jesus.
    - b) They knew his teachings... they said so to Jesus.
      - (1) But you don't know God or Jesus the way he wants you to until you know him as the Savior who shed his blood, died for your sins, and rose again.
  4. Until then, the blinders stay on.
  5. Why?
  6. Because that Cross is your salvation. That Cross is your forgiveness, your heaven, your new life, your power, your glory, your destiny, your future, your everything.
  7. This is the Gospel, the good news. It is the whole Gospel. It is the only Gospel. It is the complete Gospel.
    - a) Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.  
I once was lost, but now am found, was blind but now I see.
    - b) And those disciples were blind, but now they see.
  8. And I love that he vanished from their sight.
    - a) First it teaches that the Resurrection body is a New Reality.
      - (1) It is physical enough to break bread, but spiritual enough to transcend space. In that body, of which you're going to get your own model, he has the powers of dematerialization, antigravity, and teleportation. It's all here in the Bible.
      - b) But the deeper reason he vanished is because they didn't need him anymore. It's the same thing when Mary Magdalene embraced him. He had to ask her to let go. When you have the Gospel, and when you have salvation, you have Jesus 24/7 even if he's not in the room with you anymore.
  9. *"And they said to one another, 'Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?'"* (Luke 24:32)
    - a) They went from ice cold to red hot. What made the difference?
    - b) A Savior who was crucified on purpose and risen in victory.
      - (1) It wasn't an accident. It wasn't a loss. It wasn't a failure. It wasn't the death of hope.
      - (2) It was a hope, a confidence, a beauty, a victory, a triumph, a love, a mercy, a promise, a grace, a comfort, a strength, a purpose, a glory, a protection, a mission, and a joy far beyond anything they ever imagined.
    - c) And their hearts burned within them, and I hope yours does too.
  10. *"So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, 'The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!'"* And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread." (Luke 24:33-35)
    - a) For them the Lord was known to them, became clear to them, in the breaking of bread.
      - (1) In other words when you understand what communion symbolizes, you finally know Jesus as he wants you to know him.
    - b) For us today it's the same thing with baptism. Jesus was baptized first. You're going to see what that looks like in just 3 minutes. He went back into death, was buried in the tomb, and came to life again.

- (1) And when you connect to that meaning, when you are plunged into him as the dying-buried-yet-living Savior, you will finally know Jesus as he wants you to know him.

VII. Salvation Prayer

- A. Lord Jesus,
- B. I admit that I am a sinner and I need a Savior.
- C. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins and rose from the dead.
- D. Right now, I choose to trust You as my Savior and receive You into my life.
- E. Forgive me, save me, and make me Your child forever.
- F. In Jesus' name, Amen.

VIII. Prayer

- A. Father,
- B. I pray right now for everyone in this room who walked in with a heavy heart, whispering "we had hoped." I pray that today, just like on the road to Emmaus, that hope would arise.
- C. And Lord, I pray for these men and women who are about to step into the waters of baptism. Let this day be precious and a breakthrough for them.
- D. And as they rise up, may they rise into the power of a Resurrection life—brand new, washed clean, and filled with a hope that cannot be shaken.
- E. Bless their families watching today. May the joy in this room spark the joy of heaven in every home... the joy of salvation.
- F. I pray In the strong, saving name of Jesus.
- G. Amen.