



Westminster
Presbyterian Church
NACOGDOCHES, TEXAS

Trust Jesus

Luke 24:1-8

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'" Then they remembered his words.

When I was a youth we had an associate pastor who loved to play the guitar in church, and every Easter and the Sundays which followed Easter until Pentecost he would close our worship by pulling out his guitar and leading us in a hymn. I believe the name of the hymn was, "Every Morning is Easter Morning." We sang it every Sunday throughout the Easter season. And it is not a bad hymn for the church to sing.

I remember the words, "Every morning is Easter morning from now on. Every day is resurrection day; the past is over and gone." I have to tell the truth, I never did like singing that song, which of course said something more about me than about the contemporary style of our associate pastor; because these words ring true. We worship on Sunday, because this is resurrection day. Easter cannot be confined to the first Sunday following the first full moon of spring. But every Sunday is Easter, and every Sunday is a reminder of new life in Christ.

The ramifications of this new life are mind boggling. Easter means that every day is a new start. The past is over and gone and the current moment and the

future is full of possibilities to live for God's glory, and this truth has made a huge difference in my life and in God's world.

I know I am mortal. I know I am limited. I know that I disappoint myself, others and my Lord. There is a great distance between who I am and who I should be. But every day offers the opportunity to serve God. We can live every day in the presence of Jesus Christ, and I know in my soul that since I received Jesus as my lord and savior it has made all the difference in who I am and given me hope in a dark world filled with rebellion and violence.

I know that when I awake in the morning, I will be dogged by the same old problems – as you are. Some wake up with aching joints, backs and muscles. Some will wake up with the same debt they had the day before. Some will wake up with the same illness they had when they went to bed. Some will wake up loving more than they can imagine a child who has rejected them and their values. Some, after many years of marriage, will wake up to an empty house.

The story of the resurrection does not change your situation. And though I may not see the light at the end of the tunnel, I know there is a light there somewhere because of two wonderful statements I can proclaim with certainty about our living Lord: one, God is sovereign, and two, Jesus tells the truth.

Sometimes the disciples did not listen to Jesus when he spoke, or they simply did not believe him. In the resurrection story I read this morning from Luke, we are told about two men dressed in clothes that gleamed like lightning. I assume their very presence lit up the dark tomb so the women could see it was empty. And these two men said, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! **Remember how he told you:** 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day rise from the dead.'"

It is almost as though this was new news. The women and the disciples saw the horrors of the cross. They were convinced Jesus was dead. But you wonder if they ever they ever listened to what Jesus said about the third day.

For example, following Peter's bold statement, "You are the Christ," Jesus began to explain that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands

of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed **and on the third day be raised to life.** Jesus told his disciples he would be raised, but did they listen? And if they listened it seems they did not believe him.

Following that amazing experience on the mountain when Jesus was transfigured before three of the disciples, Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and **on the third day he will be raised to life.**” Once again the disciples were told about the resurrection, but either they did not listen, or just maybe they did not believe.

And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, “He took the twelve disciples aside and said to them, ‘We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. **On the third day he will be raised to life!’**”

Over and over again Jesus speaks about the third day, and the disciples still hid in an upper room. I wonder why they were not camped out at the tomb on Saturday night to see the wondrous event. Boy, they missed something extraordinary!

Jesus told his followers that he would rise on the third day, so why were they not there to see it? Once again, either they did not listen to Jesus’ teaching about the third day, or they did not believe him.

Remember what those two men in the tomb said to the women, “He is not here; he has risen! **Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee.**”

One of the wonderful truths we learn from Jesus’ teaching about the third day is that Jesus keeps his word. Do you believe that?

Do you know that a promise kept is one of the great experiences in human life? I'm grateful for the legacy of having parents who told me the truth. As I grew up, my mother and father both meant what they said and said what they meant. With my father, what you see was what you got. He believed in a firm handshake

and taught me that your handshake should be as good as your word. You shouldn't need a document to prove you're telling the truth. If you shake on it, you're going to tell the truth. That's a good legacy.

As you know, I am an avid reader of great theological works. One of my favorite theologians is Dr. Seuss. No, really there is some good theology in his writings. One of his great characters was Horton the elephant. I love that guy. Remember that flaky duck mother who left her egg with Horton and said, "Would you watch this egg please?" Then she left and never came back. Horton stayed with that egg until it hatched. He was a wonderful mother. Remember Horton's great line? "I meant what I said, and I said what I meant. An elephant is faithful 100 percent." That is the wonderful thing about Jesus, "He means what he says, and he says what he means, our Lord is faithful 100 percent."

The source of all truth telling is God himself. He is the supreme truth teller. There is not an incident in all of Scripture that even hints at God not telling the truth—none at all. In fact John, in his great letter, 1 John, described God as light in whom there is no darkness.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is a truth teller. In the Sermon on the Mount, he gave some advice on truth telling. By the first century, the Jews were fascinated with discovering a means to discern whether someone was telling the truth. They had all kinds of tests. They had the famous Nazarite vow, where you guarantee to tell the truth by taking a vow and shaving your head. Everybody was concerned with proving they were telling the truth.

Telling the truth was an issue among Jesus' disciples. So they asked Jesus, "How do we prove that someone is telling the truth?" Our Lord's answer was specific. In the Sermon on the Mount, he said, "I'll tell you how to know if someone is truthful. Let your 'Yes' be 'Yes' and your 'No,' 'No.' "End of discussion. What a letdown to the disciples. "You mean we don't have to shave our heads? We don't have to swear?" "No, just tell the truth."

Now in the most important single moment of all human history, the triumph of Jesus Christ over sin and death, is one more instance of Jesus telling the truth.

The angel put it in simple terms, "You're looking for Jesus of Nazareth? He's not here; he's alive. Now tell the disciples and Peter—don't forget Peter, because he is really down on himself. Tell Peter that Jesus will meet them in Galilee **as he promised.**" Before Jesus was arrested and crucified he promised he would rise and meet his disciples in Galilee.

“Tell the disciples that Jesus will meet them in Galilee as he promised. Let your yes be yes, and your no, no.” Jesus Christ has conquered death, as he said he would. It's that simple. **He kept his promise.**

It may be you are discouraged because people have told you lies. Jesus is the one who always tells you truth. He told the truth when he said he would conquer death.

When it dawned on the early disciples that Jesus keeps his promises, it must have been one of the most exciting parts of the Resurrection experience. That's what it was all about. In fact, that's how I interpret Luke's incident on the road to Emmaus. Luke tells us about two disciples who met Jesus on the road following the resurrection. They didn't know it was Jesus. The text says Jesus using the Old Testament showed them the promises, and taught them how all the promises are fulfilled in Christ. The promises had been kept and the hearts of these two disciples burned because they were hearing the truth about Jesus Christ.

Jesus made it clear to his disciples that he keeps his word, and they finally realize that all the promises Christ made are for real. I can bet my life on what Jesus says, because he is sovereign and tells the truth. And on resurrection day Jesus kept his promise to conquer death. And so on this third Sunday of the Easter season I want to reflect on some of our Lord's promises.

The first is what he said about God's care for us: Remember Jesus telling about the lost lamb? The shepherd left everything to search for the little fellow, and when he was found the shepherd rejoiced. Your Heavenly Father knows you, cares for you and has saved you so, “Seek first the kingdom.”

What a profound and deep insight Jesus gives us! What a promise he makes about what we're worth and how much we mean to him!

Think of the promises Jesus made concerning himself in the New Testament. One comes to my mind from chapter 8 of the Gospel of John. After the woman caught in adultery is thrown at Jesus' feet, our Lord saves her from a mob that would have stoned her. Remember the line he said to that mob? "He who is without sin, let him cast the first stone." From the oldest to the youngest, they walked away. He was left alone with the woman and asked her, "Woman, where are your accusers?" She said, "They're gone." Jesus said, "I don't accuse you either. Go and sin no more." The very next line, in chapter 8, verse 12, Jesus said to them, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

We can trust that Jesus is the light of the world, because Jesus said he was the light of the world, and if I follow him I will never walk in darkness. No matter what the world throws my way, I have the comfort of knowing that Jesus will be there.

Then he made a promise that we will live forever. That promise is at the close of the Nicodemus incident. Nicodemus came to him at night. They had a long discourse, and at the end of that discourse, our Lord gave Nicodemus a summary of what he wants us to know. John's gospel records it in chapter 3, verses 16 through 17, **"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."** That's God's will for your life. You can count on that promise. God offers us eternal life, abundant life now and eternal life in Christ's presence.

Think of our Lord's mandate to the disciples in John 20:21. The evening following the resurrection, in the upper room, we're told he met the disciples and said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." That's a promise in the form of a command. Jesus sends us into the world. We are commissioned by Jesus Christ to go into the world to serve. Remember this the next time you wonder if you should help a neighbor in need, or volunteer at Love INC, or work at the food pantry, or mentor a child or someone at Christian

Women's Job Corp, or come in contact with someone who needs to hear the good news of salvation. You are sent into the world by Christ, and that is a promise.

Even in his dying, our Lord made promises. Two of the most moving promises our Lord ever made are from the cross. One is, "Father forgive them; they know not what they do." The other promise is made to a thief. The most beautiful of all promises is made to a criminal: "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

When Jesus made this promise to a dying thief, was it a promise made by a dying Jesus trying to cheer up another dying man, or did Jesus keep that promise?

Our Lord made many promises. This is certainly the most moving of them all. Does he keep his promises? Is he as good as his word? Does he mean what he says, and does he say what he means 100 percent? That is the message of Easter. He is risen. He lives, as he said he would, and that is a promise you can bet your life on.