

*Introduction:* Pg. \_\_\_\_ (Welcome our Teams, NEXT, next Sunday). On Sundays, we have been journeying together through the story of Jesus as it is recorded by one of his closest followers, a man named John. If this is your first time with us, you could not have picked a better time to join us because we have hit the epicenter of Jesus' story, the story of the Bible as a whole, and if this is true, the turning point of all of human history. So please read along with him, in your Bible or on the Screen.

*Read 19:38-20:31 (Ask Kara to Add to PPT)*

Story:

- So many storylines...
  - The death of Jesus, this polarizing figure who some wanted to make Jesus an earthly King, some believed to be God's long-promised King, and some, clearly, who not only wanted to kill him, but actually succeeded in doing so.
  - This is followed by his burial in the nearby tomb of a wealthy man named Joseph of Arimathea.
  - But then... three days later, Mary Magdalene, another follower and friend of Jesus, went to the tomb — only to find the tomb empty. That sparked an unplanned footrace between Peter & John (John with humility says, Hey, I'm faster than him) Ha!
- And when they see the empty tomb, we get the idea that they believe something amazing has happened, that Jesus in fact rose from the dead but this was not the case with Mary.
  - She thought someone purposefully removed his body, adding misery to misery. As she is there crying, two angels show up and ask her why she's crying and as soon as she turns around, she hears the voice of a man who she believed to be the gardener asking her the same question: "Why are you crying?", which on the surface seems like a cold question: Who is curious why anyone would be crying in front of a tomb?
  - In desperation... "if you have taken him somewhere, just tell me, I'll take care of him..."
  - And with one powerful and profoundly personal word, Jesus says: "Mary." And her life *and* this world would ever be the same.
- The Romans and the Jews thought they had stopped him, but Jesus had one final miracle the world had never seen, raising himself by his own power.

**"Unstoppable"**  
**19:38-20:31**

Easter is not the only Sunday we should be hearing about the resurrection. If Jesus is raised it is the moment on which all other moments turn, and we should be reflecting on it, all the time. If Jesus was stopped, we can look for another Savior, but if he is unstoppable, we should all jump on board and

**The Point: Join the Unstoppable mission of our Unstoppable God.**

**I. Hand over your doubts and trust the unstoppable Christ.**

The crisis of faith confronts every person when they hear the news of Jesus' resurrection. We all must ask ourselves: "Could this be true?" Did Jesus die and remain dead? OR did Jesus die and prove himself to be *deathproof*?

- This is hard for anyone to believe, and we see this in a man named Thomas, one of twelve men handpicked by Jesus to follow him.
- BUT while Jesus appeared to the his disciples the first time, Thomas was out in the lobby buying more popcorn and missed the pivotal scene of the entire movie.

- The ten who were gathered told him the unbelievable news, and while we might expect Thomas to break out in jubilant celebration (hugs, high fives, arms raised in victory) or even to burst into tears: “It’s true, It’s true. Just like he said. Death could not defeat him. He is alive.” That was not his reaction at all.
- He throws down *the strongest demands*: “Show me that it is true, or I will *never* believe.” Thomas is the prototypical empiricist. He wants evidence.
- He doubts the resurrection of Jesus. Doubt is a real companion for so many. After all, this is no small assertion. Dead people do not come back to life!

So how would Jesus respond to the doubts of Thomas. Rather than rebuking him (I told you, but you didn’t listen!), rather than shaming him (Hey, look around Thomas, you see your other friends here, *they* believe!), Jesus goes to Thomas. He meets him in his doubt, and Jesus still does this today!

We all have these “no way” moments. We all have doubt, whether it is toward others or even toward ourselves. If you find yourself in the place of Thomas, let me offer some considerations that might move some of you to say: “This is much more plausible than I thought.” And perhaps, some would even say: “This is legit; it really adds up. Why would I continue in my doubt? I believe!”

### The Case for the Resurrection

1. **Alternative theories** against the resurrection **lack strength**.
  - I don’t have time to explain and poke holes in the swoon theory (which argues Jesus didn’t really die, okay real quick: Romans were professional killers. They didn’t miss. There’s one thought for free). You also have the stolen body, the hallucination, the spiritual resurrection, and the impersonation theories. For more on all of this, I’d recommend *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* by Gary Habermas and Michael Licona.
2. **No one expected this!**
  - People in the 1<sup>st</sup> century thought resurrection was impossible.
  - These people did not need modern science to believe dead people stay dead.
  - [[Sure, Jews believed they would resurrect at the end of history but no one believed that someone would be raised in the middle of history.]]
3. **The Empty Tomb and abundant witness of the early church**
  - No one could find his body. The Romans and the Jews would have been highly motivated to prove he did not rise, but that did not happen.
  - Not only this, the Bible records that Jesus appeared to over 500 people, “most of whom are still alive” (in other words - go ask them). AND...
  - The Bible highlights Women as the first witnesses to the resurrection. If this were a fictitious tale they wanted people to actually believe, they honestly were not doing a very good job, because women were not regarded as credible witnesses in a court of law in the 1<sup>st</sup> century (thankfully, this is not true today).
4. **Growth and Expansion of the Early Church**
  - How do you explain the sudden transformation of a group tucked away in hiding, to a group boldly saying, “Hey, kill us if you want, we now belong to the unstoppable God, so if death couldn’t stop him, we’re confident it can’t stop us!” (P) .
5. **The Death of the Disciples**
  - There were 10-12 other Messianic movements around the time of Christ. All of the followers either “gave up the movement or found themselves a new messiah” with the death of their leader (N.T. Wright).
  - But not the disciples of Jesus. Why would they spend their entire lives testifying to the veracity of the resurrection and then die a martyr’s death if they knew it to be false?

### 3 More Thoughts for YOU:

- **Give it a fair shake.** Seems rationale, right. Most people who deny resurrection have never studied the gospel accounts.
- If you say, "I could never become a person of faith." I would say that you already are. **We all have a faith system.** Even the renowned atheist Richard Dawkins has to say, and I quote: **"I cannot know for certain, but I think God is improbable, and I live my life on the assumption that he is not there."**
- **The resurrection completes the story of our world. "Even if you do not believe the resurrection is true, you should want it to be true." - Tim Keller**
  - I don't have time to tell you everything the resurrection means for us...
    - Because of Jesus, Death takes the L. Life wins, and we can all have massive and transformative hope beyond this life.
    - New power to live for God (Ephesians 1:15-23).
    - Not one ounce of our work, when we do it for God, is in vain...
    - All brokenness healed. No more tears, sorrow, sickness - cancer, abuse. No sighs of frustration - just wonder and joy and celebration. That's what's up.
    - When we see someone at the end of their life, perhaps suffering from sickness, we might hear someone say: "They are just a shadow of their former self." But (as N.T. Wright points out) with the resurrection it is the exact opposite: "We are now just a shadow of our future selves. There is a real, glorious, astonishing you that we will be your resurrection body."
    - How's all that for starters?? But I do want to tell you that the resurrection does mean our entry into

It is my prayer, that you will examine the evidence, accept the testimony of credible witnesses, and be able to say with Thomas in verse 28: "My Lord & my God!"

- This is the strongest confession of anyone in the gospel. Jesus you are Lord (over all things, King, you call the shots) and you are God (doesn't get any higher or better than that), but you are MY Lord & MY God.
- Faith is intensely personal. Faith says: "I believe in you. I receive what you've done for me in your death and resurrection. I'm all in with you."
- This is why John wrote his gospel... (20:30-31). He wants to press us out of the myth of neutrality and help us find all the reasons to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

T: Have you handed over your doubt and put your trust in the unstoppable Christ? If you have, you get to

## II. Join the unstoppable mission of Jesus.

- This news is so good, that Jesus says, "now, you take this news to the world...."
- Look at 20:21 again.
- If you are in Christ, **you have been [We are] sent by Christ** to accomplish his mission.
  - Just as Jesus was sent with a mission, he now sends everyone who follows him with the mission of pointing people to him.
  - We gotta Selah on that. Pause. SLOWWW DOWN... Jesus is the one who send us. Let that soak in... Jesus. Sends Us?! We have been sent. By Jesus. Us?!
    - When we talk about repping Christ in your neighborhood and workplace, we are not trying to get you to do something new. We're just reminding you of what you've already been sent by Jesus to do.
    - This should give us all the *confidence* we need for the greatest assignment and adventure under the sun.

- **So the opportunity for us - ev-er-ree-day: is to LIVE SENT.**
  - Wherever you are... you are sent. We don't punch in and out of the missional time clock. We're always on. But what does this look like?
  - It looks like normal, ev-er-ree-day life. We get to bring others in on what Jesus has done in two primary ways... by how we live and what we say.
    - Display/Declare
    - Show/Share
    - Lives/Lips
    - Words/Deeds
  - There is always an opportunity to live for Christ and point others to him.
  - **Framework for LIVING SENT... It is as simple as...**
    - **1) What we do... & Why we do it...**
      - Serve Medford: Working at the Club and Chevalier. Putting on kids camps. Distributing food and clothes to families in need. Cleaning parks. Hosting a fun night for Medford families... Jesus served us. Jesus is infinitely generous to us!
    - **2) What we see... & Why we see it that way...**
      - Dallas. Crooked politicians. - We long for justice and truth because God is a God of Justice and Truth.
      - People sick and struggling. - God made a better world and the better forever world is coming.
      - A Big Papi blast in the 9<sup>th</sup> at Fenway Park, because we have this inherent thirst for victory and celebration. "Dirty Water" on repeat forever in the Kingdom of Jesus. There is nothing dull or mundane or monotonous with Christ, just an unending celebration.
        - Listen to the words of G.K. Chesterton when he talk about this in his book *Orthodoxy*: "**we need [a] life of practical romance; the combination of something that is strange with something that is secure. We need so to view the world as to combine the idea of wonder and an idea of welcome. We need to be happy in this wonderland without once being merely comfortable.**"
        - And Chesterton says: this is the "achievement" of Christianity. The achievement of Christ.
        - Someone is going through a rocky time? You need security. God offers that. He's the Rock.
        - You need something more in life? Dissatisfied and discontent with the same old, same old. God will blow your mind! He offers a true land of wonder, beyond any championship or promotion or birth of a child or any of God's good gifts we celebrate in this life.
      - Here's the point: There is not a theme or experience under the sun where we can't get to the cross & resurrection.

Is there any greater privilege than knowing and *experiencing* God? No. Then could there be any greater joy than helping someone else get to know him? Ngh-ngh...

T: Now, look at what we take with us! He does not send us out empty-handed...

**We are SENT with his peace & forgiveness.**

- Peace/Shalom

- To his friends who would have felt great shame in denying him and abandoning him in the moments of his crucifixion, Jesus says: "Peace be with you."
- We are now ambassadors of his peace.
- Forgiveness (explain how we give forgiveness - according to the confession of my Lord and my God. Cf. Matthew 16)
  - Speak to people: If you have confessed Christ as Lord and you are living a life consistent (not perfect) but consistent with that confession (in other words, it really shows that Jesus is supreme in your life), I'm ready to say: you're a Christian.
  - This is why we have church membership.
    - Expound?
    -

*Conclusion:*

### **We are SENT in his Power.**

Spirit!! Power

- Have you ever been given a task without the resources to Get. It. Done. I was just talking to a friend a couple of weeks ago who all of their supervisors left, and basically left them all of their work that they had never done before with little to no instruction.
- Jesus doesn't operate like that. He gives us unlimited power.
- In most of our work, there is a lot of frustration. A lot of failure and setback. We're often not sure how's going to ultimately turnout. Companies close. Empires fall. But not this one...
- This sentiment was captured in the earliest days after the death and resurrection of Jesus. His closest followers were under arrest and threats of death, when a man on the opposing side stepped up and said these words:
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**"If their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God." (Acts 5:38-39)**

We are part of God's unstoppable mission. We belong to the Unstoppable God. Let's pray.