

## **unburied**

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#### I. Text

Luke 24:1-6

At the crack of dawn on Sunday, the women came to the tomb carrying the burial spices they had prepared. They found the entrance stone rolled back from the tomb, so they walked in. But once inside, they couldn't find the body of the Master Jesus. They were puzzled, wondering what to make of this. Then, out of nowhere it seemed, two men, light cascading over them, stood there. The women were awestruck and bowed down in worship. The men said, "Why are you looking for the Living One in a cemetery? He is not here, but raised up.

And as they were afraid and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen!

#### II. The Flip

It is Easter morning! It is one of the three most important days in the history of mankind. The first the day He was born. The second the day He died. The third the day He separated Himself from every other person who has ever claimed to be a savior, a messiah, or from God. Even if church, religion, God isn't your thing you probably know the story. At least in this country it is hard to escape the information. Can you ignore it . . . yes? Escape it? No. On the third day, after His gruesome and undeserved crucifixion, Jesus is resurrected and walks back onto the scene! However, this morning I have read to you the immediate aftermath of the event. I want to focus on that for a few minutes because I believe it reveals an incredible flip that we must see.

Jesus' closest friends and followers are still mourning what they have witnessed. They are still battling grief and the shock of His death. Their friend, their savior, the king, the miracle worker, the life changer, the One who held all their hopes, dreams, and belief has been taken from them. They long to show and pay their respects and so they make their way to His borrowed tomb. Upon arrival they find the stone is rolled away and His body is gone. They fear that the government has stepped in and desecrated this gentle man even further by stealing His body. They step into the tomb and instead of Jesus they find two other individuals that on retrospect we know were angels. The angels address them with a question that contains the flip! "Why do you seek the living among the dead?"

This question reveals that Jesus is no longer dead. This question slaps them awake and forces them to realize something is up! This question shakes them from their stupor to an understanding that Jesus was indeed who He said He was. And as much as this question

revealed to them about that moment this question also reveals the incredible difference between us and Jesus.

They were so caught up with and focused on death that they missed the life. Jesus is equally caught up with death but so that He can bring life.

Let me say it like this . . . they went to enhance burial (apply spices to cover the smell - isn't that what we do? We try to make death/destruction/sin more acceptable.). They didn't go to stop death. They didn't go to change death. They went to sweeten it! We specialize in making burial more comfortable and palatable.

Jesus specializes in undoing burial. Jesus unburies! And therein lies the flip!

**We look for living among the dead. Jesus looks for the dead among the living.**

We ignore those around us that are dying and gravitate to those who are alive. We look for the charismatic, the up and coming, the "have it all together" folks, the life of the party people. However, Scripture makes it abundantly clear that God and Jesus are looking for the dead among the living! That was and continues to be their focus.

I could take you into the Old Testament and show you that God was constantly on the lookout for the dead among the living . . .

This is revealed in David's declarations in Psalm 34! God is close to those who are broken hearted and crushed in spirit! God drawn closest to those in pain and those demolished by life. We see God's heart in the story of Jonah. Jonah wanted to bury! Kill them all God. God wanted to unbury and bring life.

In the New Testament, we are confronted with the fact that Jesus is on a search and rescue mission! He even begins His public ministry with the declaration that "I am here to bring good news to those who are poor, bring sight to the blind, heal the brokenhearted, and set the captive free."

In Mark 2:17 Jesus informs us that He is here to unbury when He says, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners!"

The story that Jesus tells about the Prodigal Son shows us the difference. The crowd the younger son ran with abandons him when he is dying. The older son has no mercy on his brother. He is dead to me. Leave him dead. Move on to those who are alive. But the Father runs to the son who was buried in sin, decay and death! He is looking for the dead among the living.

Then Jesus moves beyond words and proves it over and over again with actions.

Lazarus! The widow's son. Zacchaeus. The Woman at the Well. The woman with the issue of blood. The 10 lepers. The woman caught in adultery is targeted by the religious leaders for burial. Jesus steps in and finds the dead among the living. He literally journeyed through the region seeking out those that were dead and brought life!

Jesus specializes in unburying people. We want to bury! **We throw on! He throws off!**

Easter is worth celebrating because it gives us hope that not only do we have a dying savior but a resurrecting savior who can find the dead and bring life. He focuses on those who are buried in debt, covered in sadness, overcome by sickness, heaped on by hopelessness and not only does He find us but He has the ability to unbury us. He not only brings us into eternal life out there somewhere in the future but uncovers life more abundant right now.

Why do we want so desperately for you to meet Jesus? Is it because it unearths eternal life, relationship with the Father? Yes! But that is only the beginning. We want you to meet the Jesus of Easter because it uncovers the grace, joy, peace, hope, potential and the dreams that are in you. All of that is buried and dead when you do not have Jesus.

The truth is that the fact that Jesus was unburied is a great story. It is great for Him. However, what makes it great for us and worth celebrating is that **Jesus being unburied verifies His ability to unbury you.**

This is what I know. We are all the same. Life covers us up. Divorce lays rubble over us. Sickness and depression layer on us. Grief grips us. Debt overtakes. Fear smothers. Brokenness buries. I also know this . . . more times than not the people you run into on a regular basis want to bury you at worst or cover up your death, decay and destruction to make it comfortable at best. That is why the news I am sharing today is so good! Jesus wants to and can unbury you. He exited a tomb so that you could enter life!

On January 28, 1945, as World War II was grinding to a close, 121 elite Army Rangers liberated over 500 POWs, mostly Americans, from a Japanese prisoner of war camp in the Philippines.

The prisoners, many of whom were survivors of the infamous Bataan death march, were in awful condition, physically and emotionally. Before the Rangers arrived, the primary Japanese guard unit had left the camp because of Japan's massive retreat from the Philippines. The new situation was precarious. Japanese troops were still around and in the camp, but they kept their distance from the prisoners. The prisoners didn't quite know what to make of their new freedom—if freedom was in fact what it was. And then, without warning, the American Rangers swept into the camp in furious force.

But one of the most interesting facets of the story was the reaction of many of the prisoners. They were so defeated, diseased, and familiar with deceit that many needed to be convinced they were actually free. Was it a trick? A trap? Was this real? One prisoner, Captain Bert Bank, struggling with blindness caused by a vitamin deficiency, couldn't clearly make out his would-be rescuers. He refused to budge. Finally, a soldier walked up to him, tugged his arm, and said, "What's wrong with you? Don't you want to be free?" Bank, from Alabama, recognized the familiar southern accent of his questioner. A smile formed on his lips, and he willingly and thankfully began his journey to freedom.

We are here today because so many of us are buried in defeat, disease, and deceit. Some of you have been buried so long that you have a difficult time accepting hope or help. However, Jesus has marched into our camp with power and force and if you will listen closely you can hear the familiar sound of His voice calling you to life. Jesus is looking for those of you who are buried today.

He is looking for the dead among the living. Are you dead? I know you are walking around, breathing, going through life but you know that inside you are dead. Life has buried you! Will you let Jesus unbury you today?