

# Resurrection Responsibility

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John 21:15-19

Sermon Series:  
God's Big Story

***Our Resurrection Responsibility is to be on a mission of loving and serving God out in the world.***

The orchestra and choirs are gone; the extra folding chairs up front and the lilies are gone. Yet, Easter is still with us. It's the season we call Eastertide. The celebration continues! Here's what we need to know this morning: If the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is real, then you and I have a Resurrection Responsibility (Dale Bruner). Our Resurrection Responsibility is to be on a mission of loving and serving God out in the world.

Let's take care of this right away. Some of us fully and freely believe in God raising Jesus from the dead. Others need some proof that the Resurrection is real. Here are four arguments for the Resurrection. Reason One, there was the Empty Tomb. If there was a dead body, Herod and the chief priests would have definitely displayed it publicly in order to silence the mounting evidence in favor of the resurrection.

Reason Two, there were Eyewitnesses. The first eyewitnesses, women, were considered just a little above kids and cattle in 1<sup>st</sup>-century Palestinian patriarchal society. Mary, Joanna, Salome and Mary Magdalene's testimonies? None of their testimonies would have been heard or allowed in a Jerusalem court of law. It was not advantageous for the early church to highlight their eye-

witness accounts, UNLESS what they saw on Easter morning was true. Also, there were hundreds of other eyewitnesses. Paul reports that "more than 500 brothers and sisters," all at the same time, saw the Risen Jesus! (1Corinthians 15). PLUS, just 15-20 years after Easter, when Paul wrote his first letter to Corinth, most of these 500 eyewitnesses were still alive to talk about and corroborate the truth!

Reason Three, the self-sacrifice of those eyewitnesses. As 16th century physicist, philosopher, theologian Blaise Pascal put it, "I believe those eyewitnesses who got their throats cut (for following Christ)." This kind of self-sacrifice (Paul being imprisoned and beaten countless times; Stephen stoned to death; James put to death by the sword; early Christians set on fire in Emperor Nero's courtyard) ALL these costly self-sacrifices would not have happened for the purpose of supporting a hoax or ruse (Tim Keller).

Reason Four, the Explosion of the Jesus revolution. Up to that time in world history, the Christian view of resurrection was absolutely, positively unheard of. Up to this point, NO group of Jews ever worshipped a human being as God. What led them to do it in 33AD? Hundreds of Jews (who staunchly believed only and solely in a single, transcendent God) began wor-

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shipping this man-God, Jesus, literally overnight.

Proof of the Resurrection? Look at the Empty Tomb. Listen to the eyewitnesses. Consider the self-sacrificial COST of the first Christians. Understand the overnight revolution of the Jesus Movement, still 2,000 years later and 2.4 billion of us! Is the Resurrection real? Without it, there'd be no gospel, no letters in the "Christian" Scriptures; there would be no Christian faith, no Church, no worship. If the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is real, then we have a Resurrection Responsibility. Our Resurrection Responsibility is for us to be on a mission of loving and serving God out in the world.

Today's encounter between Jesus and Peter shows us the resurrection AND points to our mission. Here's the story from John's eyewitness vantage point: It is days after the Empty Tomb. The disciples—7 of them—are back doing what they know best—fishing—but they haven't caught a one. It is the break of day and Jesus shows up on the beach, by the Lake of Galilee. From the shore, about 200 cubits out (notice the details John gives as an eyewitness)...about 200 cubits (or 132 yards) out, Jesus gives orders to cast their nets. Sure enough, their catch is huge (a net full of large fish, some 153 big fish—more exacting details). John recognizes Jesus first, then Peter, who, with abandon, swims and splashes his way to Jesus! Jesus is there, by a charcoal fire, frying up some fish

and breaking bread. He invites his friends to "Come and Eat!"

This is a redemptive moment for Peter, isn't it, as only the Risen Christ can offer. Grace upon grace—a gift that Peter doesn't deserve. Earlier in Scripture, Peter boasted that he had more love for Jesus than all the other disciples combined (Matthew 16:16). Yet, when it mattered most, it was Peter, around that charcoal fire, in Caiaphas's courtyard, during Jesus' arrest and torture, who failed Jesus three times. But here, around this charcoal fire, Peter receives grace from the God of second, and third, from the God of many chances!

Love is the test here. Three times (to match Peter's three-time denials) Jesus asks Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Two kinds of love are used here. John uses AGAPE love in Jesus' first two questions to Peter; then John uses PHILIA love in Jesus' last question. Agape love is the same kind of "love" used for John 3:16: "God so Loved the world, that God gave His only Son...." Jesus challenges Peter with Agape Love: "Will you love me at all costs, Peter, no ifs, ands, or buts?" Then Jesus challenges Peter with Philia love (loyal friendship love): "Peter, will you lay down your life for someone in need?" These two loves are the highest forms of love toward God and each other. These two loves are not based on fluttery feelings or fleeting passions. Rather, these two loves are about (1) self-sacrifice for God, and (2) loving kindness towards friend, stranger, or neighbor.

***When we love God more, we find ourselves wanting to love God's people more.***

Jesus knows that Peter is not naturally capable of loving this way. Jesus knows that you and I, on our own, are not capable of loving this way. Last week, Pastor Pete explained our persistent propensity towards “disordered love”—towards our unhealthy self-loving and loving of things and people. Our disordered love creates sorry, sad distance from God. TRULY, our ability to love rests solely on God’s grace at work in us. Our ability to extend mercy to friend or stranger rests solely on God’s grace at work in us. When we love God more, we find ourselves wanting to love God’s people more.

“Feed my lambs.” “Tend my sheep.” “Feed my sheep.” John uses two different words for loving God (agape/philia), and here John uses two different words for serving God: feeding and tending. Feeding God’s lambs and sheep (notice both children AND adults need to be fed) means getting them to fertile pasture. It means finding a practical source of food and getting them there to eat. But tending to OR taking care of God’s lambs and sheep means more. It implies a shepherd’s complete guardianship for his sheep. In addition to feeding them, the shepherd tends to his sheep by protecting them from danger, healing them when hurt, and searching for them when lost—the “Total Care Package.”

There is a local mission in Fairfax called the Lamb Center, of all things—just 3.6 miles from here. It’s a community of local churches who care for their “guests”—which are the growing numbers of

homeless and poor in northern Virginia. The staff and volunteers of the Lamb Center FEED their guests AND TEND TO their guests. There is breakfast and lunch served six days out of the week, yes! But there is more: showers are provided; you can get a haircut and clothes washed. There’s access to telephones, computers, and fax machines for job and housing searches. Referrals to other agencies are made, and there’s emergency assistance for transportation and medicine. And more: The guests may attend weekly chapel services and daily Bible study. It’s the total care package—body and soul.

Pastor Pete sends us forth on Sundays like this: So, “Love God; Love God’s People. Serve God; Serve God’s People!” For Jesus, the greatest sign of Peter’s love, of our love, is to BE the Total Care Package for others! Our Resurrection Responsibility is to be the “total care package” on a mission of loving and serving God out in the world.

It is Missions Sunday. Wanda spoke powerfully about being transformed by short-term mission trips to Haiti. And, after our worship, we are all invited to the Great Hall to meet our International Missionaries. (Twenty of our 36 missionaries are here!) It is a rare opportunity to be with them, these lovers and servers of God’s people!

But loving Jesus and taking care of His sheep aren’t reserved just for those out on the short- or long-term mission field. Here’s the truth about our Scripture. By the Lake of Galilee, the Risen Jesus meets his fishermen-friends in the same place

***“Do you love me?”***

***“Will you love me at all costs?”***

***“Do you love me, by your loving kindness to friend or stranger?”***

He first called them. Jesus meets them again in the daily business and daily routines of their lives.

And STILL, 2,000 years later, the Risen Jesus meets us in our sleeping–eating–going to work–walking around lives. And He’s asking us the same question: “Do you love me?” “Will you love me at all costs?” “Do you love me, by your loving kindness to friend or stranger?” On your way to school, or shuttling your children around, or quiet moments on the Metro, or at your office, or standing in line at the store, are you and I saying “YES, I love you, Jesus!” And, as an Easter People are we saying “Yes”? –a conscious, willing choice “YES” to Feed His Lambs, to Take Care of His Sheep, to Feed His Sheep?

My Confession: This was what I did for Lent: In my daily prayers I prayed that I would try to extend mercy to one person a day whom God would place across my path–every day. There was the spontaneous game of basketball with a neighborhood boy, a caring conversation with an elderly man at the grocery; a woman at a loss in the post office; a man with car trouble –and there were some others. But not many. It wasn’t enough. God knows. I wasn’t open every day. In fact, there were some stretches of days where I kept my blinders on and my heart closed.

But I’m back at it, now in the season of Easter! In my daily prayers I am praying that I would extend mercy to at least one person a day whom God would place across my path. Will you join me?

The 40 days of Lent are over, and now is the Eastertide (36 more days and six Sundays left!). Jesus Christ has risen. He is alive and well, and we have a Resurrection Responsibility. Will you join me? Pray. Be open. That you and I would extend mercy to one person a day whom God will place across our paths every day.

