

Jesus Came

by Thaddeus Barnum

The sermon emphasizes the significance of Jesus' resurrection and its power to transform lives, and encourages listeners to experience this power through faith and the Holy Spirit.

Duration: 28:06

Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:16

Topics: "Jesus"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by discussing the concept of resurrection and the hope it brings. They emphasize that Jesus came to earth as a Samaritan and showed compassion towards the broken and dead. The speaker then shares a personal experience of investing in a group of seven individuals and being criticized for not equally loving the other 23. They reflect on the importance of being filled with the Holy Spirit and being witnesses for Christ, highlighting the power of the gospel to bring faith and transformation. The sermon concludes with a testimony of the resurrection of Jesus and the profound impact it has on believers.

Transcript

Almighty God, Almighty Father, we come in humility before you and ask by the grace of your Holy Spirit that you'd open your word to our hearts. Without you we cannot see, without you we cannot hear, without you our hearts are dull. Come attend that your Son, our Savior, might be honored here in our midst.

O Lord Jesus, stand again in the midst of your church, and let us behold your face. To the honor of your name we pray, amen. I bid you good morning.

I would like to focus this morning on these words from the Gospel of John in chapter 20, and so if you've got your Bible, would you open up to that place? If you've forgotten your Bible, steal one from the person next to you, it's permitted on Sundays, and or there's one in the pew that's provided. John 20. I want to do this morning what is often done at times like this.

I want to bear testimony of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, because that's in essence what this entire story is about. It isn't just talking about the doctrine of Easter, it's about seeing our Savior risen and experiencing this new power. I want to bring in particular to your attention two words, two words of this text, two words used three times actually in the body of our text, but you'll find it in verse 19.

Two words that upset the world and turned it upside down. Two words the mind cannot conceive, no philosophy can compare, no scientific breakthrough will ever be able to replicate. These two words change the story, and here they are.

Verse 19, Jesus came. Jesus came. Oh praise be the Lord, Jesus came.

These are impossible words. They were eyewitnesses of his death. They were eyewitnesses of his burial.

Jesus came. Jesus came, and they beheld him. Now you might say, but yes, it's true that during the course of his ministry he raised people from the dead.

The young man from Nain, Lazarus, Jairus' daughter, no doubt many others. Yes, but these were raised to live and to die again. You heard him say, I am the resurrection and the life.

He who believes in me shall live even if he dies. Yes, but this is him coming into their midst. Jesus came.

Jesus stood, and Jesus said, I come to bear testimony in the church today. He's alive. All the remnants of the Pentecostal church are still with us, you can hear it.

My dear friends, what's happening in this text is so essential, because what our Lord is doing is showing us that in fact the beholding, the eyewitness of his resurrection given to his apostles in this account is essential to us. But Jesus does more than simply appear before them physically, literally appear bodily before them. He gives us his first word, and his first word is peace.

Be with you. If you know the prophets, if you know the prophets well, you will know that that word is the word we've been longing to hear. Why? Listen to Isaiah the prophet, Isaiah 40.

Some of you know these words, you've sung these words. Comfort, comfort my people says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and cry to her.

Her warfare is ended. Her sins are pardoned. Peace to you.

It's over. Peace to you. It's done.

Peace to you. Our warfare is done. Our sins have been forgiven.

The cross has been for us. Everything, everything. And now the Lord turns and says to us, receive the Holy Spirit and breathes upon them.

We have not had that breath since the days of the Garden of Eden when our Lord took us from that perfect dust of the ground and breathed into the nostrils and gave us life. That breath is back. He's done his work.

The cross is sufficient. His work is finished. He's alive from the dead, and he's allowing us not only to be eyewitnesses, he's allowing us to experience the power of his resurrection.

Easter is meant to be experienced. Easter is real. Jesus is alive, but we have a problem.

Thomas is going to raise the problem for us. Unless I see, I won't believe. And so he gives us this proposition.

Now praise be the Lord. It says it's in verse 24, when Jesus came he was not there. And again you'll find a little later on in your text.

There in verse 26, and so eight days later with the disciples gathered and with Thomas there, Jesus came to Thomas. Jesus came. And he invited him to see and to touch.

Praise be the Lord, Thomas. He believed this miraculous Easter power came into him, and he made his confession, my Lord and my God. And we the observers praise the Lord for this news.

But, oh but, the Lord corrects Thomas. This is the good news for you and for me. Oh boy, the Lord corrects Thomas.

He says very clearly in verse 29, have you believed because you've seen me? Is this belief predicated on seeing me physically? Is that the story? Because our Lord says this, blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. And this is where you and I come in. This is the, this is the news that allows us to say our Lord is showing us that seeing, real seeing, isn't physical seeing.

Seeing, real seeing, is heart seeing. It's soul seeing. And you'll find that testimony at the end of this gospel text read to you.

For John says, I've written this to you. I've penned this gospel for you so that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you might have life in his name. In other words, what John is saying is, is that it doesn't take the physical seeing.

Just read the book. And by the grace of the Lord, this mystery begins to happen, and faith comes. And we behold him, though we cannot see him in the flesh, we behold him.

And that's exactly how Peter said it. First Peter chapter 1, that's exactly how he said it. The proof of your faith, even though for a little while, if necessary, you've been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith being more precious than gold, which is perishable even though tested by fire, may be found to result in glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

And though you have not seen him, you love him. And though you do not see him now, but believe in him, you rejoice with unspeakable joy, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls. Faith comes by hearing, hearing by the Word of Christ, always has been, always will be.

Thomas, dear Thomas, go see, but blessed are those who see, because real seeing is of the heart to the soul. And so the Lord would give us the power and the unction to be able to have the faith of the Apostles. For as long as I live, I shall never understand second Peter and chapter 1. As Peter opens his last letter, his last words, he says this to the Saints, second Peter 1, Simon Peter, a servant and Apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours.

Did you get that? Do you understand what Peter is saying? Peter's resume is stunning. He was there at the Jordan. He was there the three and a half years.

He saw him die. He saw him raised. He witnessed Pentecost.

He beheld our Savior on the Mount of Transfiguration, and he records it here, second Peter 1, verses 16 and following. He beheld, he beheld his majesty. He beheld his majesty and his glory.

This is the story of John on the island of Patmos. He beheld, he beheld the Lord in his glory. The testimony of the Apostles, Acts 10 41, says this, they ate and drank with the risen Lord.

Man, that is resume, if I've ever heard resume. There's no way I can have a faith of equal standing with the great Apostle Peter. Oh yes we can, because our Lord is still doing it.

Thanks be to God. I'm gonna tell you he even cheated in the Old Testament. There we've got Job in the Old Testament.

What's he say? Chapter 19, verse 25. What's he say? And as for me, I know my Redeemer lives. Who told you that? Job snuck to the back of the book, I think.

You see, he's been doing this ever since. Praise be to God that all they had to do, Acts 1 8, is be filled with the Holy Spirit to be his witnesses, to go from Judea to Samaria to Ephesus to Corinth to Galatia to Rome to the outermost parts of the world. And every time they heralded this gospel, faith came.

The Lord moved. Please turn me down, I'd love that. The Lord began to establish the witness, powerful.

People came alive. Easter came alive, and now a group of people would stand up and say, as for me, guess what? Jesus came. Jesus came.

Jesus came to me. Oh, the Lord be praised. He did it in that century.

He did it in the second century, in the third, and the fourth, and the fifth. He's done it right down the corridor of time. Praise be the Lord.

Praise be the Lord. It's arrived here in the 21st century that there's a people all across this world today who can rise up and say, and Jesus came. Jesus came.

Jesus came to me. In the poverty of the third world, there's a testimony. Jesus came.

Today, in the slums and overcrowding of India, praise be to God, there's a group of people now rising up, or isn't there, has been, who can say, Jesus came. Jesus came. Praise God, and Easter Day, last Sunday, as Christians gathered in a park in Pakistan to celebrate and to worship, as a bomber came to destroy that moment, the Christians can rise up and say, Easter is real.

Easter is real. This is not some dead, empty religion. This is not just something that Christians hold.

This is not something that just we, as a people, sort of believe. No, no, no, no. This is a witness and a testimony that the Lord does when he moves upon a people.

He opens the eyes of our heart. He opens the eyes of faith, and we see, and we believe, and in believing, we have life in his name, and we can testify with the Christians down the corridor of time. Jesus Christ, he died.

He was crucified. He's alive. He's risen from the dead.

I have beheld him with my eyes, my real eyes. I have seen him. Easter is meant to be filled inside of the people of God.

Easter joy, eyewitnesses experienced. Praise be the Lord. I was blessed when I was in college to have witnesses around me, and the Lord kindly opened my eyes that I could see, that I could say with my fellow Christians, Jesus came.

Jesus came. Jesus came to me, and I was put in the midst of Christians where I could grow, and I went back. I went back to New England.

I went back to my pastor. I went back to my to my church, and I was planning to be ordained. I went back to my bishop, and I was like, okay, okay.

I'm so sorry. I've been in church all my life. I didn't understand.

I got it. Okay. It's not just Christ has died.

Christ is risen. Christ will come again. No, I see.

He's alive, and they stared at me. One person said, I find you enthusiastic, and they put me in a section of the church, and they labeled me. Like a political party today, you're an American perhaps, and you vote on whatever extreme you vote on.

I was suddenly a part of a part of the church, and I was labeled. The label in my days was, oh, he's evangelical. I didn't know what to do with this.

I did hear that in East Africa, when the revival was going, that in fact they were called the balakole, the revived. The Lord began to stir, and the Lord began to move. The church didn't know what to do with it, and the people were called balakole, revived.

And suddenly, I found in my neighborhood, in our denomination, that there was a church with a mighty pastor, balakole, filled with revived. I even met Errolyn, who was a balakole. That's where we met.

That's where we started, and we began, and then at some point, I got in front of the bishop, and he looked at me, and he said, okay, you're gonna go to a seminary which isn't exactly like you. Now, I don't want to put a label on that seminary. That that just would be wrong, but the problem was, it was a brilliant seminary.

It was an academic seminary. It was a wonderful seminary. It just held the Bible as a common book.

It didn't hold the Bible as the Bible understands itself. 2nd all scripture is God-breathed. I was suddenly in an environment where I didn't know exactly how to conduct myself.

I was told that two like me had been before me and had messed things up for me because they came in as balakole, but they were arrogant. They had no humility in their soul. They spoiled the story, and so I was told that to bear witness uncompromisingly of the resurrection in seminary, I needed to be uncompromising, but wise, but humble as a witness first in character before I was a witness in word, and so I was now part of this section of the church that I didn't understand, and the bishop didn't.

He just wanted to, I guess, tear it apart inside of me. We went to our first clinicals all summer. Three months I was placed in the ER.

I was placed in the ICU on a surgical wing where I learned to be a chaplain in the midst of crisis, and every one of us passed. I was praising God, and the next year came and the bishop took me aside and said, you, you, do it again. Nobody else.

You, you, do it again, and I'm like, what? And he sent me to the state mental hospital where he put me on a low, a chronic ward where he wanted to make sure that my evangelical witness, my faith, my belief in Jesus Christ would change nobody. I would fix nobody. I'd be able to do nothing for anybody.

I would just have to be there. I didn't understand. I was so confused.

I grew up in a church that actually did say the words, Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again. I was part of a church which this church used to be part of also. We were all part of this denomination that we went across that way to the graveyard.

We went to the graveyard. We had words. We had words.

We knew what to do when somebody died. We said those those ancient words, and this is it, in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. It's there.

The Book of Common Prayer is just, it's full of the witness and the testimony that belongs to us as Christians, as Christians. We would come like we did here last year. We would sing Handel's, or we would listen to Handel's Messiah, and we would hear the words of resurrection.

Behold, I tell you a mystery. We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, for the trumpet will sound. The dead will be raised incorruptible.

Oh, the Lord be praised. He's given us hope. He's given us resurrection.

I'm a part of the church. I'm squeezed to an extreme. I didn't understand.

I didn't know what to do. I don't get it, because this is not the testimony of our Lord. Our Lord came among us as a Samaritan.

Did He not? He came among us and saw our dead, beaten, broken bodies on the side of the road. Did He not? And did He not do the most wonderful thing of all? Did He not come with compassion? Did He not pour resurrected power in us? Did He not die for us? Did He not rise for us? Did He not pay the cost of our salvation? So what happens, so that new life can come inside of us, and that we might be born again, alive in Christ, that Easter's real, always has been real. That's what I thought, and then suddenly that same passage, it became real for me.

I saw these two that passed by, the Levite and the Pharisee and the lawyer and the brilliant, who have it all in their mind, but Easter power hasn't come into their heart. They've got it in their mind, but the eyes do not yet see. The heart does not yet believe.

The ears still cannot hear. Something is plugged up inside of them. They've got it here, but they don't have it here.

And I went to the chronic ward that summer for three months, and I have to tell you, I was resentful. There was resentment in my heart for the bishop who did this to me, treating me like this. And I had resentment, and I didn't know what to do.

I can't help a very chronic ward, and I didn't know how to handle it, and so I finally, I've got to do something to pass. I'm desperate here. I've got to pass.

And so I found that of the 30 on the ward, 23 didn't like me. Some say that ratio is the same today. But there were seven.

But there were seven I could invest in. I could spend the summer and pour my life into. And so I went to my supervisor, to my weekly meeting, and I said, I am going to invest this summer in the seven.

I'm going to give myself to the seven. The supervisor looked at me so upset and so angry. How dare you leave the other 23 aside.

You are like the ones who passed by the body. What's plugged up inside of you that you will not love the 30 equally? And let this Christian faith bless these 30, all of them. Oh my Lord.

I was horrified. And so if you don't mind my presumption, I would like to read it as I wrote it in real mercy. The next few weeks I did exactly what my supervisor said.

Love the 30 equally. The only way to do this with integrity, I decided, was to leave my tool belt home. I wasn't there to fix anybody's problems, not anymore.

I made sure in the course of a week I spent time with each person. If they didn't want me around, I stayed at a distance. I had no agenda but simply to be with them.

I must say I missed my tool belt. There was suffering on this ward every day, unchanging. With tools, I could focus on solutions.

Without them, all that was left was to be with these people and their suffering today and again tomorrow with no hope they'd be better. No chance we could set goals, see improvement, and take steps forward. Not here.

Halfway through the summer, I wrote this in my journal. Each day, despair grows deeper. I don't know how to love when I can't help.

Is that wrong? All my life I've lived in a world where love and hope are inseparably bound. Who cares if something's broken? We fix it. We change the story.

We believe that with God all things are possible, but here it's different. The longer I stay, the more afraid I get. This could be me.

I could be suffering like any person here. The ward could be my home for the rest of my life. I try not to think about it, but when I do, it makes me want to run.

Instead, I force myself to stay. I ask what I have to ask. If I were any of these people today, how would I want to be treated, honored, loved? Lord Jesus Christ, show me how to love each person equally.

That simple prayer was answered quickly. Sam, he was not an aide. He'd been living at the hospital for 17 years with his condition worsening.

A doctor transferred him to our ward, and he was extraordinary. He knew exactly how to love everybody on the floor fully. Whether he was loved back or not, he didn't seem to care.

There was no question he favored the underdog. The moment somebody got hurt or cried or lost their temper, he ran to help them, but he cared for the bully as much as for those who have been bullied, and rarely did I see anyone care for him in return. One day I wrote about him in my journal.

He's the tissue guy. Two criers this morning, he got there first. Watched a young man throw his juice cup against the wall.

Sam cleaned it up and got him more juice. When I got in this morning, he was making beds with the aides. I love watching him care for loners.

He knows exactly what to do. Nurse slammed down the phone in anger. Sam saw it, ran to her, he grabbed her hand and told her she looked pretty today.

Guy shoved him hard. Sam didn't shove back. Instead, Sam apologized.

At the cafeteria, he bust everybody's dishes with no thanks, and every day, sometimes twice a day, he'd check up on me. You're better now, aren't you? I can tell, you know, he'd say, or you're right where you're supposed to be. Don't forget that.

It's all part of the plan, or maybe he just buzzed by, pat my shoulder, smile, and give me a thumbs-up sign. Sam, you're the best, I'd say. He'd shake his head and reply, no I'm not.

The sad part about Sam was his cough. It was loud and guttural. Often it came in spasms, and when it started, he couldn't stop it.

Those around him, of course, reacted. They'd yell at him, force him to leave the room, call him names. I know it hurt him, but I also could tell that the coughing scared him.

I went to the doctor, and I asked her about it, and she explained it was a side effect of the long-term use of the medication. She added there was no treatment for it, and he will most likely die from this, she said. It will continue to get worse, and his heart can only take so much.

You mean there's nothing that you can do? She shook her head, and that, for me, broke my heart. Of all the people I've met through the years, I've rarely seen someone like Sam. He knows how to love without being loved back.

He has no need for a tool belt. He's not out to fix anybody. He simply allows the kingdom of God to burst onto the floor in acts of mercy, and kindness, and love, and I, for the summer, got to be his student.

Guess who I love? He asked me one late afternoon. I think you love just about everybody, I remarked. Guess again, he pressed.

Who? Jesus, he exclaimed, with a big smile and bright, and guess what? He persisted. What? I said, pretending like he was bothering me. With that, he put his arm around my shoulder and gave me a gentle hug.

In almost a whisper, he told me everything I needed to know about him, and he loves me back. I got to be one of the people on the side of the road, beaten and bruised, for Sam to come and pick up, and let the resurrection power of Jesus Christ come into my life again. Resentment had plugged me up, and Sam dusted me off, and allowed that Easter power, that Easter joy to come back.

To let the words ring again, peace be unto you. Receive the Holy Spirit, allow him to breathe upon us, that we might repent of our sin, the pride and the arrogance that plugs us up, and to allow the Lord to show himself to us, strong and mighty, that we too might rise and be able to say, Jesus came, Jesus came, Jesus came to me, and allow these days to be days when the Holy Spirit picks us up and says, as the Father has sent the Son, so I'm sending you with Easter power, Easter joy, for our Lord is risen. Our Lord is risen indeed.

He wants us to be eyewitnesses. He wants us to experience the power of it today. In Jesus' name, amen.

Amen. Let's stand.

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