# Luke 24: 33-49 April 15, 2018

*The Second Sunday of Easter: Rise Up!*

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 Last week we were challenged to wake up to the reality of the Resurrection and to see God alongside us in our everyday lives. We were challenged to see God’s grace and mercy anew in our lives. This week we are going to be challenged with the question what does God call us to do after we wake up. Let’s pray, *Dear heavenly Father, we thank you for waking us up this week. Thank you for giving us your word to study and build a foundation on. We come here today to learn more about you and your love for us. Help us hear what you have to say to us and help us to keep our eyes on you. Open our hearts and minds to hear what you have to say to us. May the words of my mouth and the mediations of all our hearts being pleasing and acceptable to you. Come Holy Spirit. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

 My sophomore year of college, five years ago, I took a January term class on Human Trafficking. Now a January term class is a three-week long class which you have every day for 3 or 4 hours, depending on what the class is and who the professor is. So, every day for 3 hours my class would meet and learn about human trafficking, the buying and selling of human beings. It was the most intense class I think I have ever taken in my life and every day my friends in the class and I would leave just completely heart-broken about this reality of the world we live in. Like I said last week it can be so easy to become numb to the pain and suffering. You can become so overwhelmed that you essentially become paralyzed because you just don’t know where to start.

I remember particularly one moment towards the end of class where I had an aha, awakening moment. That day in class we watched a documentary on human trafficking in Southeast Asia, Cambodia and Thailand to be exact. A part of this documentary revealed young girls that were being sold for three dollars. Three dollars, that is how much they were deemed to be worth. You cannot even buy a Starbucks coffee for three dollars. I was floored, and I remember thinking that someone needs to tell these girls that they are worth so much more than three dollars. Someone needs to tell them that they are priceless and valued more than all the gold or silver in the world in the eyes of God. And then God told me, “That’s what I want you to do.” This was the day in which I knew God was calling me to work with youth. It was the day when I decided that I wanted to study abroad in Thailand. I am going to pause this story right here for now. It was this day that my eyes were made open, but it is not enough for our eyes to be made open. You can’t just say, “I know” and not do anything about it. After you wake up, you must rise up. After you know, you must act. This is what the two disciples knew after their eyes were opened.

If you recall from last week, there were two disciples of Jesus (not of the Eleven) who were walking on the road to Emmaus. It was there that Christ met them and explained to them why the Messiah had to suffer and die using all the Scriptures. The two disciples did not know it was Jesus with them so they invited him to stay the night because his teaching was so engaging. Their eyes were finally opened when Jesus took bread, blessed it, and broke it. Jesus then disappeared and the two disciples were amazed at what just transpired. Let us now go back to Luke 24 continuing where we left off at verse 33, “*They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, ‘It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.’ Then the two told them what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread. While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.’ When he said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, ‘Do you have anything here to eat?’ They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence. He said to them, ‘This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms.’ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, ‘This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are my witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”*

You see what they did there. “They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem.” They walked back, ran back the seven miles to Jerusalem at night. Their eyes were opened and they knew that they had to tell the others. They could not just keep their information to themselves. It might have been a little reckless of them to travel back the seven miles to Jerusalem because thieves were known to attack along roads at night. However, the information they had was worth the risk. The awakening that they experienced was so overwhelming that they had to tell others about it. They were moved to action.

Then we have another scene of awakening depicted in Luke 24 where Jesus appears to the rest of his followers who are assembled together. There is disbelief again from the disciples thinking that Jesus is a ghost, followed by disbelief that what they are witnessing is really happening. It’s like if your favorite football team scores on a last second interception returned for a touchdown to win the game. It is so amazing that you can’t believe it. Jesus brings them back to reality again with his simple question for food before pointing them to the Scriptures. He opens up their minds again by going through the Law, Prophets, and Psalms so that they can see that all of Scripture points to him. Afterwards, he calls them to action. He explains this to them so they can explain it to others.

Listen to verses 46-49 again from the Voice translation, “*This is what the Scriptures said: that the promised Anointed One should suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, that in His name a radical change of thought and life should be preached, and that in His name the forgiveness of sins should be preached, beginning in Jerusalem and extending to all nations. You have witnessed the fulfillment of these things. So I am sending My Father’s promise to you. Stay in the city until you receive it – until power from heaven comes upon you.”* Commentator Darrel Bock describes this section of Luke 24 as “what remains to be accomplished.” There are five things to be accomplished by the disciples and then by us: 1) The disciples will be called to preach. The disciples were witnesses to Jesus’ ministry, death, resurrection, and then Jesus opened up their minds so they could comprehend the Scriptures. After all this, they could not just keep it to themselves. They were called to proclaim Christ. This calling is still ours today. As followers and disciples today we are called to proclaim Christ, to preach, to share the good news of the gospel! 2) Their message is a call to repentance, “radical change of thought and life.” We learned in our Lenten series that to repent is to turn around. The message of the gospel is a calling to turn the direction of one’s life. 3) What is offered is forgiveness. When people turn around and repent there is nothing in the way between them and God. God grants us forgiveness through the power of the blood of Christ that covers all our sins. The message that we preach needs to offer forgiveness. 4) The authority for it all resides in Jesus’ name. It is not through our own power that we preach this message, but through the power of the Risen Lord and Savior. 5) The message is for all nations. This gospel message of forgiveness is for all people. All kinds of people![[1]](#footnote-1) This is what Jesus told his disciples and this is what he continues to tell us.

So how can we take action? How can we rise up? To answer this I am going to hit play on my story from the beginning of the message. I was awakened to the harsh reality of human trafficking and I decided I needed to do something. I needed to take action. First, I talked to others in the class and we decided to help start an International Justice Mission chapter on campus to raise awareness about the issue. I spent time learning about what others were doing to fight human trafficking. We planned events to raise awareness, called our state representatives, and wrote letters. We hosted a 27 hour Stand for Freedom event where we stood for 27 hours representing the 27 million people who still live in slavery. We connected with other volunteers and organizations around the Harrisburg and Carlisle area to post information on where people could find help if they were being trafficked. All of this I could help do because my eyes were open and I was willing to take a stand. I wasn’t specially trained to do any of this. I didn’t have to do any of this, but I knew that God was calling me to do something. I am not sharing this story to bring any attention to myself, but rather to get you thinking about what is God calling you to do and what actions can you take to do it.

As disciples, we are called to make more disciples. We are called to share the Gospel with those around us and share Christ’s love. So how can we rise up and do this? First, we can start where Jesus started: in the Scriptures. Before Jesus sent out the disciples he opened up their minds through the Scriptures. We too need to be people of the Word, committed to the Scriptures. As Jesus illumined the Scriptures to his disciples, the Holy Spirit will illumine the Scriptures to us. The Scriptures help renew our minds and spirits as we meditate over it. Romans 12: 1-2, “*Brothers and sisters, in light of all I have shared with you about God’s mercies, I urge you to offer your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice to God, a sacred offering that brings Him pleasure; this is your reasonable, essential worship. Do not allow this world to mold you in its image. Instead, be transformed from the inside out by renewing your mind. As a result, you will be able to discern what God wills and whatever God finds good, pleasing, and complete.”* The world will try to mold us into its likeness, but God’s word and the working of the Holy Spirit will work to transform us into the likeness of Christ. From the illuming of the Scriptures by the Holy Spirit, we will be able to discern what God is calling us to do and where He is calling us to go.

Second, we need to remember that we can rise up where we are. It is okay to start small. Jesus told his disciples to begin in Jerusalem before extending to all nations. You can start in your home, at work, with your friends (or a friend in a time of need), in your community. Parents, rise up by speaking about God in your home to your children. Share with them your faith journey and why you love God. Set an example by praying with them and opening your Bible. Ask them questions about what it is that they are learning in Sunday School or worship or on Wednesday evenings. Students of all ages, you can rise up by being kind to other kids at school. By helping others when they need help and standing up for students who may be getting bullied at school. You can rise up during your baseball, soccer, or softball games by showing good sportsmanship. You can rise up by telling other people about Jesus and his love for them. You can rise up by inviting others to come to church with you. It may be scary or uncomfortable, but if God calls you to it, then he will provide the courage to do it as well. All of us can rise up by sharing the love of Christ with all those we meet. By speaking kindly to and about other people. We can rise up by forgiving those who have wronged us like God has forgiven us. We can rise up by having more patience in the checkout line at the grocery store. We can rise up by not participating in negative rants on Social Media. By this we are taking place in the preaching of the “radical change in thought and life” that Jesus told his disciples about in Luke 24.

The final piece to rising up is to remember that we are not alone and we do not have to rise up in our own strength. We rise up in the power of the Holy Spirit given to us. We need to remember this as rise because Satan will do everything in his power to keep us from rising. He will twist our thoughts saying, “You can’t do that, you are not good enough to do it.” “Don’t let them know you are a Christian, what will they think of you?” Satan will try to keep us down by keeping us in a negative attitude when trials come and circumstances do not go our way. Satan may even use good circumstances to keep us from gathering together or spending time with God. In our own power and strength, we are no match for his mind games. However, in God’s power and strength we are more than overcomers. The same power that rose Jesus from the grave has been given to us. It is this power which helps us to rise even when it seems like the world is crashing down all around us. We need to remember that we too have been resurrected with Christ. The Apostle Paul writes in 2 Corinthians, “*Therefore, if anyone is united with the Anointed One, that person is a new creation. The old life is gone – and see – a new life has begun!”* We have been given new life through Christ. We have been given the Holy Spirit to empower us and guide us. Christ did not leave us alone. At the end of our scripture for today he tells his disciples, “*I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”* He has equipped us with everything we need to rise, the Scriptures & the Holy Spirit.

What is keeping you from rising? What is keeping you from proclaiming Christ in word and in deed? What is holding you back from being who God calls you to be and what God calls you to do? Whatever it is offer it up to God. Trust God to sustain you as you rise. Keep your eyes focused on Jesus. The author of Hebrews encourages us saying, “*Since we stand surrounded by all those who have gone before, an enormous cloud of witnesses, let us drop every extra weight, every sin that clings to us and slackens our pace, and let us run with endurance the long race set before us. Now stay focused on Jesus, who designed and perfected our faith. He endured the cross and ignored the shame of that death because he focused on the joy that was set before him; and now He is seated beside God on throne, a place of honor. Consider the life of the One who endured such personal attacks and hostility from sinners so that you will not grow weary or lose heart.”* In order to rise we need to keep our focus not on what is going on around us, but rather, keep our focus on the joy and hope we have through Jesus. The disciples focused on the joy of the Resurrection and it was this joy that compelled them to tell everyone. They rose up! They did not let the sting of Good Friday keep them down. These disciples were a part of changing the course of human history. Christianity spread so rapidly that the Romans did not know what to do with it. All because a rag tag band of believers experienced a radical change of thought and life. We too can make a difference in today’s world and culture. Today is our resurrection day. Young and old, we need to rise up and shine the light of Christ in a dark world.

*Lord, help us to rise up and shine your light in this dark world. Embolden us to share our faith and our love for you with others. As you continue to write the stories of our lives, reveal yourself to us so we can tell others of your faithfulness. We want the world to see the reality of Christ living in us. Give us the strength and courage to rise up, to be your people, no matter where we are. Thank you for giving us your word and your spirit to guide us. Thank you for giving us new life. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

1. Darrel Bock, “Luke,” *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)