

Better Than Jesus
John 20; Acts 1,2

"Summit, this is what we're all about here. We are a church that wants to see the gospel multiply deep into our lives, and to see the gospel multiply wide throughout the world. When you came in today you received a **booklet** and a **commitment card** - these sum up what Pastor J.D. mentioned in the video.

In the next few weeks, we're going to dive into *how* God plans to use us in his mission. So use these resources to begin praying how God will have you take your next steps to be on mission...Because a church that isn't on mission is just a bunch of disobedient Christians hanging out."

If you are one of our honored guests with us this w/e, you maybe thinking you didn't pick a good weekend to be here, this seems like insider talk or a family. This is THE perfect weekend to be here because you are going to get to see over the next 4 weeks exactly what we are about.

Last week, we looked at God's great love for us demonstrated on the cross. For you, and for me, the cross serves as a sweet reminder and empowering moment of God taking the place that we deserved.

But the cross is only sweet because we know of the resurrection. For those first disciples, this was a low time. There was something radically different about them from

the time of Good Friday when Jesus was crucified to when the early church began to spread and multiply.

It started that first Sunday morning, the first Easter morning, when in a somber state, they essentially go to a funeral. The women go to Jesus' body just as the first light was coming.

How could this happen? Wasn't Jesus the Rescuer? The King God had promised? Then God sent an earthquake and an angel from heaven. The huge stone rolled away, and the angel wait.

Jesus' friends walked quietly along the hilly path, through the olive groves, until they reached the tomb. They peered through the opening into the dark tomb. Jesus' body was gone!

A shining man was there, with clothes made from lightning. "Don't be a scared," the angel said. "This is a tomb and tombs are for dead people. Jesus isn't dead anymore! He's alive!"

Mary sees who she thinks is a gardener but realizes it was Jesus. Hope lept in her heart. Mary fell to the ground. Sudden tears filled her eyes and great sobs shook her whole body, and all she wanted in that moment was to cling to Jesus and never let him go.

Jesus said, "You'll be able to hold on to me later, Mary, but don't hold me now, I'm going to ascend to the father and then you'll always be close to me."

You see, Jesus had to let go of Mary's hand because he was going to ascend and return in her heart.

Mary, the first multiplier, runs to tell the others. Some begin to see him and others doubt but then Jesus appears to them, eating with them, reminding them that all scripture, the whole story, pointed to the fact that he would come, take their place, and rise again.

After those 40 days, Jesus rose up into the bright air, higher and higher. They shaded their eyes and watched him go, until a cloud hid Jesus and they couldn't see him anymore but something Jesus said stuck in their minds: "Even though you won't be able to see me anymore, I will never leave you. No! Not ever! I will be with you. Always and forever!"

Days later, while the followers were praying, a strong wind filled the little room, whistling through the walls, rustling the straw on the floor. And there – on everyone's heads, shining in the gloom – were flickering flames. Fire that didn't hurt or burn; inside, in their hearts, they felt a strange heat melting away the coldness of doubt and hardness of pride. Jesus had to go away but now he was closer than he had ever been – inside their hearts. This time nothing could ever separate them. Jesus would always be with them. Loving them. Telling them, "Make your home in me, as I make my home in you"

Then the apostles did what was natural, they unlocked the door and surged into the streets – as if they had never been afraid before.

Peter spoke with a loud voice so everyone could hear, "Jesus died for you! He loves you. God made him alive again. He has rescued you! Stop running away from God! Run to him instead! And Peter told them the whole story – God's story of love, his never stopping, never giving up, un-breaking, always and forever love. How Jesus had come. And all that had happened.

This was God's plan. And nothing in all the world would ever be able to stop it.¹

Let's pray.

{pray}

I love to tell that story to my kids. I'm grateful for Sally-Lloyd Jones writing the JSB. If you don't have a copy, get it, our family loves it.

The followers of Jesus went from this scared, doubting, eclectic group of people to something that was brand new – a bold, faith filled, unified group that literally turned the

¹ Paraphrased and (in parts) directly quoted from the Jesus Story Book Bible by Sally-Lloyd Jones

world upside down. They went from 120 to over 2 billion today.

I want us to see that multiplication begins with meeting the risen Jesus.

Let's look at what they looked like; Acts 2:42-47

Acts is the spring time of the church; here we get to see what they were all about, and I believe that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever; and there is nothing in his word that makes me think what God did then, he doesn't want to do today.

[Acts 2:42] *"And they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."*

Did you catch that? I've heard a lot of people say that church is boring, I thought that before I met the risen Jesus but the early church was a group of people committed to learning, hanging out, eating, and praying.

- **"apostles teaching"** – word of God
 - this is similar to what we do and why we want you to be engaged in the **sermon**, listening to podcasts. It's why we want to read the **Bible** together as a church. [Bible reading plan slide?]
 - We aren't unified on what Pastor JD says but what God says. **"We don't gather to hear a**

man speak eloquently; we gather to hear the Bible proclaimed and preached exegetically."

- It's why when people come and ask me questions, they play the "stump the pastor game"; What do you think Pastor Todd?" I usually respond with it doesn't matter what Todd thinks, what does God say.
- It's why we tell you need to be in a small group. We believe in not only the church gathered on the weekends but the church scattered throughout the week.
 - There's always something competing with your time. Make being with the body first.
- **"fellowship & breaking of bread"** – this refers to communion, to sharing of meals.
 - Today we call this "living life" or "doing life" together. The Bible calls this fellowship. They remembered the Gospel together. They were intentional to be together and share meals.
 - What's my favorite commandment in the Bible? That's easy... eat. The one thing I never miss is a meal. I have at least 21 meals a week. Ashley and I actually try and calendar that out to make sure that we are having meals with those who have already been changed by the Gospel.
 - We eat every single day, let's do it with people.

- **“Prayer”** – no wonder God was doing amazing things. His people prayed. Every great revival was started and sustained with the people of God committed to prayer.
 - Boiler room, prayer team, family prayer time

So the disciples devoted themselves to these things and lets see what happens...

[2:43] And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. [44] And all who believed were together and had all things in common.

- Now, I don't know what these signs and wonders were but I know it created awe. People paid attention.
- What I do know is that it was a diverse group of people, actually scripture says from “every nation”.
 - This was a group of diverse ethnicities, different classes, all coming together.
 - And people paid attention to that.
- I don't have to tell you we lived in a divided place. It is more apparent now than ever before. White, black. Young, old. Rich, poor. Republican, Democrat. TarHeels, Blue Devils, the WolfPack, the Eagles; East Coast/West Coast; North/South
- One of the reasons, my wife, Ashley, and I love our neighborhood is that it's about as diverse as it gets. Here's a pic our backyard [SHOW PIC OF KIDS]. You know what 3 letter word unites all these kids – FUN!

They don't care what ethnicity they are, how much their parents make, what political party they are a part of, they just want to have fun. And this number of kids, keeps growing in my backyard.

- One of the greatest testimonies that the resurrection is real is that Jesus brings us together. We don't cease to be those things, where we come from, what color our skin is but we have a new primary identifying marker.
 - Rev 5 – it points out the every tribe, tongue, people, and nation, they didn't cease to exist but the celebrated something else

Let me ask it this way, math students, what's the opposite of multiplication? Division. **“Unity always leads to multiplication. Division always leads to death.”**

- - They were together and had all things in common. We can't be together when we are a part and we can't have all things in common if we don't come together.

[2:45] “And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.”

- Some say “see, the Bible promotes communism and socialism.” With all due respect, that's not what the Bible says. **Communism and Socialism say “what's yours is mine.”** The Church says “what's mine is

yours". Also, I've learned something that every great husband should say to his wife

- Look, what does it say, they sold their possessions and belongings but they still met in homes.
 - They were strategic and generous with one another
 - My kids – all we are is bigger versions of two year olds?
- The world looked in and saw this generosity and said, "you know what, that's what life should be like" Why do we like stories of peoples generosity? Because deep down we know it's better to give than receive
- Maybe for you in this Multiply season, as you think about your money, time, and resources, you, like this early church, start with the posture that says "what's mine is yours"
- And maybe, just maybe, the world will see us as a place that is generous and takes care of one another.

[2:46] And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, [47] praising God and having favor with all people. And the Lord added to their number day by day literally "everyday" those who were being saved.

Now, if you are like me, you can get cynical. "Yeah, that sounds nice, but that isn't today." But we serve the same god and his plan is still being fulfilled.

Something new happened, what was it for them and what is it for us.

3 Factors of a Multiplying Church

1. A New Agenda

- Could talk about how you covered **college football** for so long and how you saw how just about every coach/team had the same agenda: to win football games. They practiced for it, they prepared for it, they trained for it, watched film for it, talked about it, schemed for it...day-in and day-out year round, everything they did was to prepare them for their one agenda: to win football games.
- In the same way, someone who has understood the resurrection and purpose of the church has one agenda: to see the gospel go forth to the ends of the earth so that disciples are made. It should be what we talk about, study for, pray for, hope for, prepare for, GO for...
- Breaking through hearts of stone is the Lord's work but God does it through his local church. It's why the apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:6, "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow."
- Pastor JD doesn't grow the church, I don't grow the church, God grows the church.

- There isn't a doctor of resurrection, only God can bring people from death to life.
- That being said, this is our mission, to preach the good news in Jerusalem, AND in Judea, AND in Samaria, AND to the ends of the earth. That's the mission. There are a lot of good things to do but our primary mission is to multiply followers of Jesus here in our cities, in cities across our nation, and in all nations.
- "If a church is not on mission, it has to reason for existing" – Pastor JD Greear
- Notice that when we are about other agendas, we aren't alone.
 - Acts 1:6, right in the beginning, the apostles ask, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom of Israel?" Who are you voting for: Trump or Hillary?
 - Jesus turns this question around and says THIS is your job.
 - We tend to worry about so many agendas except THE agenda that God gave – making disciples.
- The resurrection multiplied the church through a new agenda – making disciples at home, in their immediate part of the world, and to the ends of the earth.
- "A church is either filled with missionaries or mission-fields."

2. A new body

- God has chosen us, the body of Christ, to multiply his church. Now, he can do whatever he wants, he spoke the universe into being, he calms the seas, he miraculously heals the sick, but in his providence he most often relies on his church.
- Pastor JD described this as the paint over the invisible man. We have to understand that **Our faithfulness to the mission produces God's effectiveness of the mission.** "To say you believe in Jesus w/o being part of the Body of Christ is an oxymoron. Belief always leads to a new body."
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- Paul woke up thinking, "who can be added to the kingdom today?"
- What are we thinking about? What am I thinking about?
 - American Dream?
 - Climbing the ladder of success?
 - What if you spend all your time climbing a ladder of success and finding it was leaning up against the wrong wall?²
- As we multiply, we are a new body that says, "We want to do what we do finance, school teaching, medical field, child care for the glory of God and do it somewhere strategic for the mission of God?"

² adapted from this quote

<http://www.azquotes.com/quote/856466>

- We had over 130 people Thursday night doing just that.
- A man in our church George is leveraging and expanding his business to a major city in South Asia as a way to expand the Gospel.
- Stay at home moms having play dates with Syrian and Afghan refugees
- College students spending a semester studying abroad with some church planters, sharing Gospel on college campuses
- Retirees, giving the first fruits of retirement
- Taking that transfer to another city to be with a church plant
- Serving on your HOA, with the homeless, serving our prison campus, really being pro-life and working with our pregnancy centers, fostering a child
- You plant, you plow, you water, God gives the increase
- It isn't just that what the new body does but who the new body is
- Notice in Acts [2:5] "In Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.." heard Peter's sermon that God promised a rescuer, his name was Jesus, and God planned to sacrifice him as our substitute and that he would rise again and ascended into heaven sending the Holy Spirit and [Acts 2:41] "about three thousand were added to their number that day."
- This new body was made up of people from every nation. People from every tribe, every tongue, every nation. It was a new diverse body of believers. It was made of up of people of different socio-economic classes, different ethnicities, different political affiliations yet united around the one who came to save.
 - It's why as we multiply as a church we ask that God would multiply our diversity too.
 - It isn't that we cease to be who God made us but we have a new identity that is greater than our ethnic, cultural, political, and national identity
 - We are strangers in here, this isn't our home, our citizenship is in heaven, and we work to reflect the coming kingdom.
 - What is your identity? Who do you have most in common with?
 - For me, and I have not arrived, but I find that even though we come from different ethnicities, different cultures, different backgrounds, and different interests; Pastor Chuck Reed and I have more in common than many people in my family or people I grew up with.
 - "This doesn't mean we lose our personalities, but that we have something in common that's so much greater than our personalities. For

instance, you'll never find Chuck at Bass Pro Shop or willingly going river fishing in a canoe. Likewise, I promise you don't want me up here yelling "worthy/glory!" while the band is playing. We are incredibly different, yet our identity is in Christ and it unifies us."

- Why? Because we are brothers in the one that saved us and he grafted us together, in himself, by His spirit.
- We are just seeking multi-cultural worship services but multi-cultural relationships together; not celebrating our diversity but celebrating the one that brought us together.
- Maybe your first step is being at the church planter interest meeting. Get to know a church planter like Cam Triggs, for some of you it might be Mike McKee. Put your "yes" on the table and let God put in on the map and with a new eternal family
- The resurrection and the Holy Spirit multiplies a new body

Lastly..

3. A New Power

- No one can deny that all four gospels show something dramatically changed with these first followers of Jesus. They go from a doubting, jealous, fearful, petty, power seeking group to a group that was generous, had all things in common, leveraged their lives, and boldly preached the Gospel
 - Many will show this is one aspect we can know the resurrection was real. They had everything to lose in preaching it if it wasn't true.
- We have that same power. Scripture says that the same power that resurrected Jesus from the grave is the same power that is living within us.
- This power gives us a **living hope**.
 - The resurrection gives the power that Jesus' sacrifice was paid and, as pastor JD pointed out last week, he sits advocating for us.
 - In the resurrection story, as we read, Mary Magdalene tries to hold onto Jesus but he tells her "no", why? Because Jesus didn't need to hold her hand, he was coming into her heart.
 - We have access to this too. We have all the acceptance from the only eyes that really matter.
 - We have a living hope that is kept for us in heaven. We don't have to live in fear here. We have an eternal home, one with out sin, one without pain, one without injustice, one

with approval, one with unconditional love, and it's FOREVER!

- Hope is powerful. This hope is guaranteed because of the power of the resurrection. [Joni Erickson Tada?]

[Music begin]

- This power makes us **born again**.
 - This power turned Peter from a bumbling power hungry, big mouthed screw up into the rock of the early church.
 - He can do the same for you.
 - Our church is full of people like this... drug addicts who've discovered new freedom; husbands who were unfaithful to their spouse; kids that dropped out of school; executives that cheated on taxes, ex-convicts, prideful and arrogant rule followers. I was born a liar, a thief, a cheat, a whore, drunken, self-centered drug addict
 - We aren't good people needing to turn over a new leaf but we are dead people who have been made alive by a new power.
 - Did you walk in here today feeling defeated? Did you walking in feeling like there was no hope? Did you walk in overcome with worry of the future?

- The resurrection was God breathing new life into a dead body; The resurrection gave boldness to a cowardly Peter; The resurrection gave forgiveness to a murderous Paul.

- The resurrection gives new life to you. And..
- **"Your past is absolutely no match for God's power."**

The resurrection gives new power that multiplies a believer. The ascension shows us that the new agenda is secured. The Holy Spirit multiplies the new body to be a shining city that brings hope to a hurting world.