

“He Is Not Here, But Has Risen”: Three Barrier-Breaking Effects of the Lord’s Resurrection (Part 3)

Introduction

The Text

¹ But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. ² And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. ⁵ And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead?” ⁶ He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷ that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.” ⁸ And they remembered his words, ⁹ and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰ Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, ¹¹ but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. ¹² But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened. (Luke 24:1–12)

Three Barrier-Breaking Effects

A. In these twelve verses, as I’ve said before, I see here outlined for us what I would call three barrier-breaking effects of Jesus’ resurrection.

1. Effect #1 we looked at a few weeks ago now: The Marginalized Are Embraced.
 - a. Here we considered the fact that women, who were notoriously oppressed and undervalued in ancient society, were given the dignity by God of being the first witnesses of and testifiers to the resurrection of Jesus. There’s a barrier broken in the gospel.
2. Effect #2, which was last week now: is that The Skeptical Are Convinced.
 - a. So last time we considered the fact that neither these women nor the apostles thought the resurrection reasonable at first. They were skeptical, doubtful about it all. But they were convinced. Not by closing their eyes, plugging their ears, and simply taking a “leap of faith.” They came around because of the unmistakable evidence. There too is a barrier broken in the gospel.
3. And now this morning we come to the third and final effect I wanted to bring out here. And it’s that The Guilty Are Forgiven.
 - a. There’s a barrier that’s been built up between us and God because of our sin. And in Jesus, because of his death and resurrection, that barrier is coming down!

- B. So there's this social/cultural barrier, then there's this rational/intellectual barrier, and now this morning we come to consider the moral/ethical barrier. But, you know, the bottom line is: Jesus is breaking through them all!

True and Good

- A. Before we really get going with this third effect, I'd love to connect it to last week's. Here's what I want you to see as we transition . . .
1. Christianity and the gospel isn't just true. It's also good. It doesn't just accord with the facts of history and things. It also accords with our hearts. In other words: it meets us in the place of our deepest needs and desires.
- B. The idea of guilt and shame, that's huge for human beings.
1. Why do we always feel the need to argue about who's right or wrong;
 2. or why are we always trying to prove we're a good person;
 3. when we do something notable, why do we feel the need tell other people about it?
- C. I think at bottom, beneath all this, we argue and try to prove we're right, we trumpet the good we've done so people will think we're good and things, because deep in our hearts, if we're honest, we're not so sure. We're afraid we're not right. We know we're broken. We do feel guilty and a bit ashamed about who we are and what we've done.
1. We long to be counted right and made clean and yet we don't really know how, so we settle for this superficial image and positive self-talk and things.
 - a. But Jesus can actually deal with it. He can actually make us right, make us good!
- D. You see, again, the gospel, it's not just true news it's also good news. It doesn't just stay in the realm of the head and our thinking. It gets deep in our hearts and touches us there in the place of our feeling and longing.

Effect #3: The Guilty Are Forgiven

Why Peter?

- A. Now, the first thing I need to show you is where I'm even getting this in our text. I'm drawing this out from last verse there, [v. 12](#), where we read that ["Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened."](#)
- B. So Peter hears the news that the tomb is empty, and sets off running to see for himself. And he comes away marveling at it all.
1. And I think it's significant that Luke singles out Peter's response for us in particular at this point.

- C. You see, we know from other tellings of the story that Peter wasn't the only one who took off in a dash to the tomb. Of course he wasn't. Wouldn't you want to go?
1. So John, in his gospel tells us that both he and Peter went off racing, and he goes out of his way mention, of course, that it was in fact he who beat Peter to the tomb. John got there first.
 - a. But John isn't mentioned in v. 12 is he. Only Peter.
 2. And later, even within Luke's gospel, when the two on the road to Emmaus are discussing with the risen yet some disguised Jesus all that's happened to this point, they mention that after the women's testimony: "Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see" (Luke 24:24). Did you catch it? It's plural in the English but especially in the Greek, even the verb is in its plural form. It wasn't just Peter who went, but "some" of the disciples.
 - a. So again, why is it only Peter whom Luke decides to focus on back in v. 12, if even he is aware that there were more who went? Why emphasize Peter in particular?
- D. Well, if you've been following along in Luke's gospel to this point, isn't it a bit obvious? You see Peter above all the rest (save Judas) has fallen the furthest to this point.
1. Oh sure, in the madness of the capture and crucifixion, the others fell away and were scattered just as Jesus said.
 2. But none wandered quite so far as Peter did. You remember the denials. "I swear, I don't know him!"
- E. We'll take a closer look at those a bit later. But for now, hear this: I think Peter is highlighted in particular here because Luke is setting us up for what's to come.
1. He's accenting for us the fact that Jesus isn't done with him. He's in hot pursuit of him. Peter thinks he's running towards Jesus, but, as we'll see, it's Jesus who's running after him. He's going to forgive and restore. He's going to break through that barrier of guilt and bring him back to himself, to God.
 - a. Those who fall the hardest are the ones Jesus goes after the hardest. The places of our greatest guilt and shame are the places he's going to press in with even greater grace and love.
- F. So that's where I'm getting this. The Guilty Are Forgiven! And you know it's not just for Peter. It's for you. It's for me.

Our Guilt

- A. I want to try to help us enter into the story in perhaps a bit of a tangential way, but stick with me and I think you'll see what I'm up to.

1. It's never fun or pleasant to think about our sin and consequent guilt, but it's important. And we don't see our need for the gospel, nor do we stand in awe of God's grace, without it. So that's what I want to do up front here.
- B. And I don't think there's a better way to consider our own sin and things than to examine ourselves through the spiritual MRI of the Ten Commandments.
1. You go to the doctors, and they do a scan, and a lot of times you don't even want to know, right? Did they find a tumor in there? Is the cancer back? I thought it was in remission.
 - a. Well, the Ten Commandments are really like that for the soul. It exposes things, things that are off, spiritual tumors, places we're in sin and we're guilty before God.
- C. So let's just reflect on the Ten Commandments for a moment together. Let be a diagnostic for you. Be honest. Open your heart up. Ask God to show you what's off inside. If he shows some cancer, it's not to kill you, it's to heal you.
1. So the first commandment comes in: *"You shall have no other gods before me"* (Exod. 20:3).
 - a. And with this we're already undone, are we not? God created us for loving relationship with himself and we have all wandered. So Jesus tells us we ought to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength, but, if we're honest, we, at least at times, love so many other things more.
 - i. We have other *"gods"* before YHWH. We look to other things to satisfy and fill us. We put our hope and our trust not in God but in our jobs or in our significant others or in our bank accounts.
 2. In this we not only break the first commandment, we break the second as well. *"⁴You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or serve them . . ."* (Exod. 20:4–5). It's idolatry. Lifting up as god for us that which the only true God created.
 - a. What do you think above all else will save you, satisfy you, make you happy? What are you living for? Where do you run when things get hard? Where do you place your hope and trust? Follow your emotional life. What makes you anxious? What gives you peace? What makes you depressed? What cause you to leap for joy?
 - i. As you trace some of these things out you will find your functional god, for good or for bad.
 3. What about the third: *"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain . . ."* (Exod. 20:7).
 - a. You say, "Whew, I've got this one down. I don't use God's name as a curse word when I'm frustrated or whatever. Mama had me knock that off when I was like ten."

- b. But, hold on, there's so much more to this. I wonder if you realize that if you call yourself a "Christian" you are taking God's name upon you, as it were. Therefore, because his name is upon you, how you live among the people of this city is giving them a sense, for or for bad, of who God is and what he is like.
 - i. Are you living in line with the quality and character of God? Or do you leave people with a bad taste in their mouth? "If that's what Jesus is like, I don't want anything to do with it." Don't you have some of those stories? People who have so sorely misrepresented God to you that you had a hard time even coming around to him again?

(1) This is why when Paul is rebuking the Jews for their empty religion he says: "[The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you](#)" (Rom. 2:24).

- 4. What about the fourth commandment: "[Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy](#)" (Exod. 20:8).
 - a. It's debatable how exactly this one applies to us today, but it at least would serve to remind us we need to be setting apart time to worship God both in private and in public with other believers.
 - b. Can I just say that I think COVID has made this one particularly challenging lately and each one has to search their own heart honestly.
 - i. But consider it: have you begun to gather with the saints again in worship, or are you still separated and on your own?
 - ii. And if you are staying home, is it honestly because of legitimate concern for the virus given your unique situation, or is it because, if you're honest, it's easier doing church in your pajamas, if you even tune in at all? Is worship at the center of your life? Or do you just touch and go with it, and frankly it's easier if other Christians aren't involved, they were always a bit annoying anyways.
 - c. Regardless of whether we feel ready to come in person or not, every disciple's heart ought to long, like so many of the Psalms talk about, to be in the congregation of the saints, the place or worship with God's people. Is that you?
- D. Now, these latter six, I'll have to rifle through a bit quicker, but they shift more horizontal now and deal more with our relationship with others . . .
 - 1. So the fifth: "[Honor your father and your mother . . .](#)" (Exod. 20:12).
 - a. How is your relationship with your parents? Oh sure, they may have wounded you in some way. But have you hardened your heart? Or is there still love there? Are you able to pray for them, honor them?

2. The sixth: “You shall not murder” (Exod. 20:13).
 - a. “Finally,” you say, “Here’s one I know I’m not guilty of.”
 - b. Well, again, hold on. Jesus says, in the Sermon on the Mount, that though we may not murder literally, physically, we murder in our hearts every time we get angry and belittle a person or turn against them or away from them. The fruit of murder is born from the seed of anger.
 - i. So, do you have people on your proverbial “hit list”? People in your heart’s dungeon? People you’re fed up or done with?
 3. The seventh can be taken similarly: “You shall not commit adultery” (Exod. 20:14).
 - a. Again, many of us might look and say: “Ah, I’ve never physically done such a thing!”
 - b. But Jesus says in that same sermon, if you’ve looked upon another man or woman with lust in your heart, you might as well have. You see God doesn’t commend you for your external conformity. He wants your heart. All of this just flows out from that first commandment. And the fruit of adultery is born from the seed of lust.
 - i. So, good for you gentlemen, you haven’t actually slept with another woman, but are you on the internet in the late night? Are you turning with desire when that beautiful young coworker walks by?
 4. I could keep going, but I’ll stop here and just read the last three: “¹⁵ You shall not steal. ¹⁶ You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor [e.g. lie]. ¹⁷ You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s” (Exod. 20:15–17).
 - a. Doesn’t that last one just cover it all? I want something other than God and I’m willing to do whatever I’ve got to do to get it (murder, cheat, steal, lie, etc.). We’re back at the beginning again, aren’t we? We have another god and it all just spirals out from there.
- E. So the MRI’s been run, the docs got back the results, he calls you into his office, how’d you do? You got any tumors, any sin, any guilt? I do. Listen, we’re in big trouble.
1. James, seeing the interconnected nature of the moral law, says: “[W]hoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it” (James 2:10).
 2. Paul says similarly: all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them” (Gal. 3:10).
 3. And he concludes elsewhere: “²² [T]here is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” . . . and are justly deserving, not of God’s love, but of God’s wrath (Rom. 3:22–23).

- a. There's a barrier between us and the one for whom we've been created.

Peter's Guilt

- A. And this is where Peter would have been. Behind that barrier. Slumping in the shadows. Condemnation clouding his heart and mind.
 1. Just a few days prior, he was so confident in his ability to stand alongside Jesus come what may.
 2. But before even twenty-four hours had gone by, all of that had come unraveled and he was exposed for what he really is, the spiritual MRI came back and the results are plain: he's a coward, an idolater, a blasphemer, a liar . . . a sinner no different than anyone else.
- B. You remember how it played out, [Luke 22:54-62](#): “⁵⁴ [T]hey seized [Jesus] and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house, and Peter was following at a distance.⁵⁵ And when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them.⁵⁶ Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, 'This man also was with him.'⁵⁷ But he denied it, saying, 'Woman, I do not know him.'⁵⁸ And a little later someone else saw him and said, 'You also are one of them.' But Peter said, 'Man, I am not.'⁵⁹ And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, 'Certainly this man also was with him, for he too is a Galilean.'⁶⁰ But Peter said, 'Man, I do not know what you are talking about.' [Matthew tells us that he had denied the accusations previously with an oath, and here with this third one we're told he upped his game even further and 'began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know the man"' (Matt. 26:74)] And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed.⁶¹ And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, 'Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times.'⁶² And he went out and wept bitterly.”
 1. “How could I have been so stupid, so weak, so cruel? I've made a mess of everything. I deserve what's coming. How could God ever love me again?” Behind that barrier. Slumping in the shadows. Condemnation clouding his heart and mind.
 - a. Have you ever been there? Peter was there . . . Friday, Saturday, and then . . . Sunday comes.

Jesus' Response

- A. He catches news that the tomb of Jesus is empty, and suddenly, it would seem there's a twitch of hope. Like an EKG that had been flatlined for days and then somehow, like a bolt out of the blue, there's a blip, and another, and another. Could it be?!
 1. He doesn't know what it means. He doesn't even believe it quite yet. But something begins to stir in his soul—like maybe because of Jesus his story isn't done quite yet. And he's running . . .

- B. Now, what we have in [v. 12](#) is really just an anticipation, it seems to me, of later encounters between Peter and Jesus, and it prepares us, as I've said, for the way Jesus is going to single Peter out in love.
1. I mentioned earlier that it might appear as if Peter is in pursuit of Jesus but what we come to find is that Jesus is now truly in pursuit of him.
 - a. Like that parable he told earlier of the good shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine sheep to go after the one—the wandering one, the wounded one, the one behind the barrier, the one paralyzed in shame, the one weeping in the dark.
 - i. Are you that one? Because that's the one Jesus is coming after here with a particular jealousy.
- C. I wonder if you realize it is hinted at in numerous places that, among the disciples, Jesus goes out of his way to prioritize appearing first to Peter, as if he knew there was a special need there and he wanted to address it straightaway.
1. So [Luke 24:34](#), when the two disciples from the Emmaus Road return to Jerusalem and find the eleven and the others, they're told: "[The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!](#)"
 2. Or [1 Cor 15:4-5](#), Paul makes the sequence of events plain when he writes: "⁴ [\[Christ\] was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,](#)⁵ and . . . [he appeared to Cephas \[Peter\], then to the twelve.](#)"
 3. Earlier, in [Mark 16:6-7](#), even one of the angels from the tomb singles out Peter in particular when he tells the women: "⁶ [Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him.](#) ⁷ [But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee.](#)" Now, why single out Peter here? Is it not because Peter, more than any of the others, would have been particularly inclined to say: "I'm cut off, I'm pushed out, I'm dropped from the team, I'm behind the barrier, It's over for me."
 - a. Now we get why Peter might feel this way. If you're Jesus, how are you feeling about Peter? I'll tell you how I'm feeling: "How could you? I don't even want to see you right now. When I needed you the most, you cut me the deepest. All you care about is yourself. Get away from me!"
 - b. But that's not what Jesus does. Not for Peter, not for you. Peter's the first of the apostles he appears to. He doesn't push Peter away in frustration, he runs Peter down in grace.
- D. Do you have some of that guilt? You feel like you've so blown it with God that you're out? In Jesus that barrier is broken. The guilty can be forgiven, again and again and again and again and again and again and again and again and again and again.
1. I'm not trying to be annoying here, I'm trying to be faithful to the Scriptures. Do you remember earlier when Peter had come to Jesus asking: "[Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?](#)" ([Matt. 18:21](#)). How does

respond? “Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times” (v. 22). In other words: ad infinitum, every time . . . again and again and again!

- a. And I think it’s amazing that this is Jesus specifically teaching Peter at this point about forgiveness because as we now see it’s not just what Peter is called to do for others, no it’s first what Jesus is going to do for him.
 - i. And he’s doing it right now. Right here in our text. The barrier is broken. The guilty is forgiven.

On What Basis?

- A. And, of course, we have to ask: on what basis? How? Why?
- B. For this we find a clue with what the angels said to the women back up in vv. 6-7 of our text, when they were scratching their heads wondering what in the world was going on: “⁶Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee,⁷ that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.”
 - 1. What I want you to consider here for a moment with me is that word “must.” Jesus and these angels didn’t say merely that he “would” die but that he “must” die.
 - a. It’s very similar to what the risen Christ will say to those two disciples again in Luke 24:25-26: “²⁵O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory”
- C. Why “necessary”? Why, in our text, “must”? What is that?! Well I’ll tell you what it is. It’s a particular offense and it’s a particular glory!

“Must”—A Particular Offense

- A. At first this idea is an offense. It’s a pushback on one of the more common misconceptions we are prone to have. We like to think that we’re not all that sinful; that all we need is a little self-help, a little boost here or there and we can get right with God, with others.
 - 1. In other words, we like to think that we can break through the barrier without the cross. That’s a bit much isn’t it? We’re not that bad are we? We can clean ourselves up.
- B. You remember, this is where Peter was at right?
 - 1. When Jesus first speaks of the cross to him earlier, he can’t even stomach the idea. He doesn’t say, “Ah yes, there is no other way we can be forgiven but through this. It must be so.” No! He says the opposite: “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you” (Matt. 16:22). “We don’t need a cross.”
 - 2. Or later when Jesus is washing the disciples’ feet, you remember Peter at first objects the idea: “Lord, do you wash my feet?” (John 13:6). The idea is somewhat subtly: “I don’t need

it. I should be serving you anyways, and I can, and I will.” And what does Jesus say to him: “What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.” (v. 7).

- a. We don’t get the “must”-ness of the cross. We don’t realize how deep the stains go. We think of them as on the surface, and we can get them off with a little effort.
- C. I have this hat, some of you have seen me wear it I’m sure, it’s a Patagonia hat. And I wore it back when we did a Half Dome trip with the church, and now it’s got these gnarly sweat stains it. And I’d wear it anyways. But one day I thought you know I’m going to wash this thing. I remember doing that as a kid, with the hats I’d wear for tennis and things. So I buy that little hat rack thing from Amazon and I put in the washer, fully expecting that the stains would lift and I’d have a good-as-new hat again. But the cycle runs through. I pull it out . . . and nothing’s changed. The stains are just as evident as they were before I washed.
- 1. And you know our souls are like that. The stains of sin go too deep. You can run your soul through cycle after cycle of legalism and self-effort, you can even mix in the bleach of asceticism and spiritual disciplines, turn up the water as hot as it will go, but it’s not coming out. You won’t get it out.
 - a. Like Peter, we may think we’ve got it under control at first, but in time we realize it’s hopeless. And whatever self-confidence we had at the first gives way to an even more substantial sense of condemnation and despair.
 - i. You’re not getting those stains out. You’re not getting through that wall. You’re not getting back to God, unless God comes back through to you. And that’s what the cross is all about.

“Must”—A Particulars Glory

- A. And here’s where we move from the particular offense of this “must” to the particular glory of it.
 - 1. The only reason Peter and you and I can be forgiven again and again and again for all our sin is because God put our sins on Jesus’ back and poured out his holy wrath upon him.
 - 2. The only reason Peter isn’t cursed by God for his flagrant lie and denial of Jesus is because the very curse he called down upon himself in the courtyard there outside the high priest’s house would, in a few hours’ time, instead come crashing down upon the very one he denied.
 - 3. Similarly, the only reason you and I are not cursed for our breaking of the law like Paul said we should be back in Gal. 3:10, is that Jesus was made a curse for us on that cross. As Paul goes on to write: “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree’” (Gal. 3:13).
 - a. It must be so or the guilty can’t be forgiven. And because it is so the guilty can be!
- B. He dies for our sins and he rises for our justification—as indisputable evidence that the check cleared, the payment was processed in heaven, his sacrifice is sufficient, our debts have been paid,

atonement has been made, the curse has been removed, the stains have been washed, the barrier has been broken . . . and we can come back into relationship with God through him!

- C. And, you know, Jesus was right. Peter had no clue how deeply he needed washing back in that upper room around the table of the Last Supper. But later he would understand.
 - 1. So Peter himself, no doubt reflecting on Jesus' own love for him, would later write: "¹⁸ Christ . . . suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit . . . ²¹ [And now, he says, we can] appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 3:18, 21).
- D. And if you're looking for an action step, I can do no better than what Peter again says elsewhere, when he's preaching to a crowd of his own countrymen. Listen to this: "¹⁸ [W]hat God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. ¹⁹ Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, ²⁰ that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:18–20).
 - 1. So dear brother, sister, let me plead with you: turn away from the cancer of sin and turn back to the Christ who can forgive and free you from it and refresh you in the deepest places of your heart.
 - a. The barrier is broken. The guilty are forgiven!

Conclusion

- A. The last thing I'd say, wrapping up this three-part mini-series as it were, we've seen Jesus in his death and resurrection breaking through the social/cultural barrier (The Marginalized Are Embraced), the rational/intellectual barrier (The Skeptical Are Convinced), and now the moral/ethical barrier (The Guilty Are Forgiven).
- B. But now the call on us is to go out into our city in the name of Jesus and take part in doing the same.
 - 1. Love those who are outsiders.
 - 2. Bring the truth of the gospel and rational evidence of the claims of Christianity to those who are skeptical.
 - 3. Lead people to the full forgiveness that's only found at the cross.
 - a. Be this kind of Christian. That's what our city needs. That's what Jesus is sending you out to do.