

Like a Caveman with a Firecracker: Day 1 of the New Creation

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.” (Luke 24:1–7)

Like a Caveman with a Firecracker?

- A. The title of this message is “Like a Caveman with a Firecracker.” It’s an image I referred to in passing at the close of last week’s service. And I wanted to bring it out again at the front of my sermon here.
 - 1. The idea is simply this: imagine if we could take a modern invention and technology like a firecracker and go back in time and put it in the hands of a caveman. When he’d hold the thing he’d have no idea what it was. He’d be banging it on a rock or trying to take a bite out of it, gnawing on it like a bone or something, and he’d probably end up discarding it altogether.
 - a. He has no idea that what’s there in his hands, what seems so dull and disappointing, could under the right circumstances explode and fill the night sky with light and color.
- B. And for me that’s this image of Joseph of Arimathea, as we saw last time, holding the corpse of our Lord, preparing him for burial.
 - 1. The whole thing would seem so disappointing—we had hoped he was the one, but alas, he’s dead.
 - a. But like a caveman with a firecracker, he has no idea what he’s holding in his hands, the raw power of it all, and what Jesus is about to do—how in a few short days he’s going to explode out and up with life and rip through the thick darkness of this world with an unextinguishable light.
- C. This is the great gospel reality that’s wrapped up there in that first little word in our text: “But . . .” (v. 1).

1. Grammatically speaking, this is what you'd call an adversative. It represents a shift in the narrative. Something's about to change.
 - a. There are some big adversatives in the Bible (cf. [Eph. 2:4](#)), and this is one of the biggest. These are times where we think things are going one way and then along comes God in grace and he turns the whole thing around unexpectedly, miraculously.
- D. Like Gandalf thrusting his staff down into the stone of that bridge there before that hellish creature that had been pursuing his company: "You shall not pass." This has gone far enough. God intervenes and everything changes.
 1. Joseph lays Jesus into the tomb on Friday. And, unbeknownst to him, the fuse has been lit.
 2. And here on Sunday morning the body of Jesus is about to blow. God flips the script. In an instant he turns sorrow to joy. Jesus is not dead. He's alive forevermore. New creation life reverberates out from this central point!
- E. I've got two main headings for us to consider this morning: (1) The Last Week; and (2) The First Day.

(1) The Last Week

Revisiting and Unraveling the First Creation

- A. This is going to be a message about the new creation that Jesus initiates in his resurrection. But in order to set the stage for that, we have to go back and consider the first creation momentarily. You remember, [Gen. 1-2](#), it's presented to us as having taken place in the course of a seven-day week.
 1. On day 1, God speaks into the void, as it were, and there's light.
 2. And from there, he carves out the various realms of the heavens and the earth, the land and the sea, and then he fills these realms with luminaries (e.g. sun, moon, stars) and plants and animals.
 3. And he sets man and woman at the top of it really, made in his image, given the privilege of knowing him and partnering with him ruling and reigning on the earth and spreading his glory and goodness abroad. And God sees that it is very good.
 4. And then on day 7, what would be by our reckoning a Saturday, God rests.
 - a. Many have understood this to be a sort of royal repose, where God as King, settles in upon his throne, and simply enjoys what he has accomplished. It's what for his people became known as the Sabbath. He wanted them to enter into the same sort of thing with him.
- B. But sin brings all of this to the point of unraveling.
 1. So if we had intimacy with God, well that's hard to come by now, as we're thrust out from the garden.

2. And if we had good relation between man and woman, well that's gone now too. Adam and Eve splinter off and their hearts harden against one another. And they family they engender is broken and messy like all of ours are now in one way or another.
 3. And God says that now even the natural world will work against us, so there will be thorns and environmental hardship.
 - a. We could see earthquakes and fires and this sort of thing as just par for the course—or perhaps I should say par for the curse. It's a fallen and cursed world we live in.
- C. And here's what I want you to understand, the last week of Jesus' life is all of this unraveling taken to its logical and ultimate end. All the brokenness, all the mess, all the curse—it's taken to the extreme with Jesus here as he bears in himself our sin. It's almost as if the last week of Jesus' life—what we've often referred to as Holy Week—is meant to represent for him the ultimate undoing and unraveling of what God did in the first creation week.
1. So Jesus is not just thrust out from Eden and God's presence, he is utterly forsaken by his Father and made to drink down the full fury of his wrath against our sin.
 2. So Jesus does not just experience a little turbulence in his human relationships, he is utterly betrayed, denied, abandoned, even murdered—by his own people, by his friends.
 3. So Jesus didn't just experience thorns coming up in the fields, he wore the thorns pressed in like a crown around his brow. And the land is shaking all around, rocks are splitting. And light that marked day 1 of creation, well that light, as he's hanging there on the cross, goes dark. The sun's light literally goes out for him.
 4. He takes all of this in himself, cries out: "It is finished," and then rests as it were on the Sabbath, but he's not on a throne at this point, is he? No, he's in the grave.
- D. In Jesus' last week on this earth, then, we see the natural trajectory of our sin—where this train is headed. Jesus experiences the full unraveling of the first creation. He's utterly destroyed there on the cross.
1. It's as if he here has thrown his own body and soul on the tracks in an effort to turn things around for us—in an effort to ready this broken fallen corrupting creation for something new . . . for a new creation that's going to erupt forth from him.
- E. So I mean just pause for a moment. Are you still on that train, heading for the cliff, the full unraveling? Oh yeah you know the gospel, you know about the cross, but you got this, you don't need Jesus, you'll be fine.
1. Listen, this is where you're headed without Christ. God's judgment. Torn up relationships. Outer darkness. Jesus took it for you, but you've got to turn and take him into your heart by faith. Do you want to go the other way? Do you want to try something new? Repent and believe!

(2) The First Day

The First (and Eighth) Day

- A. So Jesus is in the grave on the Sabbath, the seventh day of his last week there in Jerusalem. But a new week is coming.
1. And we read this: “¹ But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they [the women from Luke 23:55ff.] 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” (vv. 1-2). Instead they found two angels who announced to them, v. 6: “He is not here, but has risen.”
- B. There is so much we could do with this idea of the first day of the week, or in the OT what was often referred to as the 8th day (in a 7 day week, the 8th day is the first day of a new week). But the idea, simply put, is of this movement from creation (day 1) to new creation (day 8, or day 1 again).
1. Why was a newborn Jewish male circumcised on the 8th day (Gen. 17:12)?
 2. Why would some of the feasts have a special celebration commanded by God on the 8th day (cf. Lev. 23:36-39; Num. 29:35)?
 - a. Well, again, it’s a picture of going from creation to new creation.
- C. Jesus himself is described, after all, as our circumcision, by virtue of his death and resurrection—the flesh is cut off and something new in the Spirit has arrived (Col. 2:11-12).
1. So Paul says explicitly in 2 Cor. 5:17: “[I]f anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”
- D. That’s what’s going on here in Luke 24 . . .
1. Why the first day of the week, the day after the Sabbath, the eighth day?
 2. Why at early dawn, just as the sun is beginning to peak out up over the horizon?
 - a. Well, it’s pointing us to the fact that Jesus’ resurrection is the beginning of the new creation, he is “the firstborn from the dead” (Col. 1:18; cf. Rev. 1:5), “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor. 15:20), the pioneer, as it were, of God’s new creation.
- E. In other words: a new creation week has begun. What was lost in Adam is being regained and fully realized in Jesus.
1. So 1 Cor. 15:21-22: “²¹ For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.” And later in v. 49: “Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.”
 2. You wonder why Luke’s genealogy traces Jesus’ lineage, not just back to Abraham as Matthew did, but all the way back to Adam, the father of all humanity (Luke 3:38).

- a. Well it is precisely for this reason: he is wanting us to see that Jesus is God's response to what went off in Adam. Jesus is the beginning of a new creation, the headwaters of a new humanity.
 - i. And the resurrection was the erupting point. On the first day of the week at early dawn, the firecracker fires off! There's color in the sky! "He is not here, but has risen" (v. 6). And, in him, all we who've been dead in our sin can rise too!

What Is New?

- A. But now all I want to do with the rest of our time together is ask, so what is new? What is new for you and I because of the resurrection of Jesus? I've got five aspects to this for us to consider . . .

Aspect #1: New Record

- A. Here I'm talking about your record before God. All of us have sinned and fallen short of his glory, without exception. All of us are guilty and deserving of God's wrath. We know it, but we have different ways of dealing with it.
- B. I wonder, how do you deal with your guilt? I've mentioned before, I think, that there can really be a whole spectrum of responses, strategies for dealing with, all of them reductions, none of them going far enough to actually deal thoroughly with the matter.
 - 1. Denial – "I didn't do it." Just flat out deny it.
 - 2. Excuse – "Here's why I did it and why it's not my fault. I was tired, I was hungry, I was stressed out from something that happened earlier in the day. It's not that big of a deal."
 - 3. Blame – "You made me do it. I wouldn't have to be a jerk if you wouldn't step on my toes. I'm only hurting you because you've already been hurting me."
 - 4. Repay – "Okay, I did it, but I'll pay you back. I'll make it right." Here we're finally taking ownership but we think we can atone for it ourselves, we can make things right in our own strength.
 - 5. Pledge – This is similar to the last but instead of looking back we're looking to the future now. "Okay, I did it but I won't do it again. I'll get better, I promise."
 - 6. Quit – When everything else fails, and you still have that gnawing sense of guilt and shame and you can't fix it, you want to give up. "I can't get this right. I can't forget what I've done. I can't be good enough. I quit."
 - a. For some this might look like sliding into deeper sin: "If I can't beat it, I might as well try to enjoy it, give myself to it."
 - b. For others this might look like sliding towards depression, despair, and even self-harm and suicide. "If I can't beat it, I don't want to live, I don't deserve to live. Look at me. I've been telling myself for so long I'm a good person. Well, the verdict is in . . . and I think I'm a disaster."
- C. I don't know where you might be running lately on that spectrum, but the Scriptures tell us what we should be doing with our guilt—come to Jesus. His death and resurrection is the only way out of this.

1. As Paul says in [Rom 4:25](#): “[Jesus] was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.”

a. What that means is it’s not just that I get a clean slate before God, but I get a full slate—Jesus’ slate.

i. He doesn’t just give me a restart at the cross and I’ve got try again, like my kids on our Nintendo or something. You failed in your last attempt so you hit the button and start again. No! He gives me his righteousness. He gives me his score, he’s already beat the game, and that’s credited to me.

(1) He’s not just delivered up for my trespasses. He’s raised for my justification. We are right with God now and forever because of Jesus. Your standing with God is now as secure as Christ’s resurrected body. Meaning, it’s incorruptible, it’s unimpeachable. Not because you’re awesome, you know you’re not. But he is.

D. So you got guilt? Is it keeping you up at night? Stop with all these superficial strategies (they never get you far enough) and come to Jesus. Let him give you a new record, his.

Aspect #2: New Heart

A. I think I’ve told you that my family now has all these chickens we’re raising in our backyard. It’s pretty fun.

1. But one of the things you realize is that, when you buy these things as chicks, it’s almost impossible to tell whether you have hen or a rooster. And, of course, we couldn’t keep a rooster, not in our neighborhood. So you buy the chicks well aware that you’re probably going to have some roosters in there. And though you might have suspicions along the way, the only way you can truly tell is when they first crow.

2. And, one morning, a few months into this adventure, Megan and I were lying in bed, it’s like 5:00am and suddenly we hear it: Cock-a-doodle-doo! Megan rushes to the window, trying to figure out who it is and she’s like: “No, not Tow Truck!” You can guess who named that one. But there Tow Truck is crowing at the sun or whatever.

3. And here’s what’s so interesting, Megan said that, as she watched him there, it looked like even he was surprised at what was happening. The crow was just coming out of him. In other words it was in his nature. God had wired him for this and it was just coming out.

B. And here’s the point: the Bible says that in Adam our nature has gotten all screwed up. We’re now sinful by nature. The core of who we are, just like this rooster, it comes out.

1. And so Jesus, because he loves us and wants to make us new, he isn’t just going to give us a new record, he’s going to give us a new heart, a new nature, so that we love God and love righteousness.

a. That’s a big part of the gospel and the resurrection of Christ. We don’t just get credited with Christ’s righteousness so now we can go on living in sin, no. We get

new life, new power in him as well so we can start to grow more in righteousness practically and personally ourselves.

C. This is what Paul goes on to really argue for in [Rom. 6-8](#).

1. So [Rom. 6:2-4](#): “¹What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”
2. And later in [Rom. 7:4](#), I love this: “Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.”
3. And later still in [Rom 8:11](#): “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.”

- a. In other words, Jesus’ resurrection is the key to what the Scriptures call our regeneration. Because he dies for my sin and rises up to life again I can now in him be dead to sin and born again. New nature. New heart. The Spirit of Christ inside of me.

D. It’s as if the firecracker doesn’t just go off somewhere out there in the sky, it also goes off in here, in my heart. It changes me from the inside out.

1. I was reading an article where a once skeptic is describing how Jesus got ahold of her and saved her and she says: “It was a furious encounter with a living substance that was coming at me through all things at once. . . . One reason for the . . . wordlessness of the experience is that you cannot observe fire really closely without becoming part of it.”

- a. In other words, she’s saying: “I can’t explain my testimony all that well, how it happened, because it’s like as Jesus came near he lit my whole being on fire, he set off fireworks on the inside, I was consumed. I was changed.”

E. So listen, if you’re thinking you can grab ahold of that first piece without this second piece, you’re terribly mistaken. Jesus gives you a new record positionally, so he can come in and transform you practically.

1. Are you still going to sin? Yeah. But now it’s sin against your essential nature more than it is sinning along the grain of it. And you’ll feel that. Sin used to feel like running your fingers over the strings of a guitar. It just seemed nice. Now it feels like running your nails down a chalkboard. You know it’s wrong at a deeper level. It feels off. The Spirit will convict you and change you.

- a. Christ didn’t just die and rise out there historically for you. He’s bringing that death and resurrection life to bear personally for you right now.

Aspect #3: New Community

- A. In the New Testament, Jesus is not just called the “the firstborn from the dead” (Col. 1:18; cf. Rev. 1:5) or “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor. 15:20) as we’ve already seen. He’s also called the “firstborn among many brothers”—Rom. 8:29: “For those whom he [God] foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he [Jesus] might be the firstborn among many brothers.”
1. What I mean to bring out here is simply this: Jesus’ resurrection and our being raised to new life in him, leads to a new community—“many brothers [and sisters]”—a family in Christ.
 - a. Relationships get healed because of him. Discord dissolves. There’s a strange and peculiar unity between people that at one point or another used to be at enmity.
- B. I mean consider what we just read and who it was written to. Paul, a Jew by ethnicity, is writing to Gentile Christians in Rome of all places.
1. Remember, the Messiah, at the time of the story we’re reading back in Luke 24, he was supposed to get rid of Rome, blast the pagans, reclaim the land and things for the Jews.
 - a. But no! Now, we see that Jesus himself was blasted, crushed, for all of our iniquity—Jew and Gentile, it’s all the same—and when he rises from the dead, he’s making a way for a new community to form around him and his grace—a new family, “many brothers,” right?
- C. Listen to how Jesus himself talks about this in John 10:14-18: “¹⁴ I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷ For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”
1. He’s talking about going after the Gentiles here and how his resurrection plays into that. All the division, all the spite, all the brokenness relationally, it can be repaired in him.
- D. And that’s what the church is. Every tribe, tongue, people, nation. They’re all invited. There’s neither Jew nor Gentile at the deepest level here. There’s just sinners saved by grace—people made in God’s image being renewed in that image through Christ. Humanity and human relations are being restored.
- E. So listen, I don’t know how you’re doing with the church community lately.
1. Some you may be pulling away because church people are hard. They’re sinners like you and they sin against you. It’s easier on your own. Just you and Jesus.
 2. Others of you maybe come and engage this new community in Christ, but you’re still just hanging with the folks who are like you—those who look like you, think like you, talk like you, are in the same life stage as you, or whatever, and you’re threatened or put off by those who are different.

- a. But this reality of a new community in the resurrection should push on us a bit. God has so much more for you. The diversity of the body of Christ, while challenging, no doubt, is what adds to the richness and the beauty of it. So press in, get to know folks who seem different to you. There's blessing there, I'm sure of it.

Aspect #4: New Purpose

- A. We all are on mission for something. But a lot of times it's just superficial at the end of the day. And it doesn't feel fulfilling.
 - 1. Maybe we're living to impress our boss or to make money or to raise good Christian kids or to get good grades or whatever.
 - a. A lot of this isn't inherently bad, it's just not a purpose worthy of all your life. It's not big enough. And you feel that. You were made for more.
- B. And one of the things Jesus gives us as new creations in him, through his resurrection, is a new and grander reason for being.
 - 1. He connects us back to God and God's mission, that which in many ways was given to Adam and Eve back at the beginning—to rule and reign with him on the earth and spread his glory and goodness abroad.
 - a. Now, of course, this mission has redemptive and new creation overtones, but it's the same idea. We live and move and have our being in him and do all that we do for him. And we want to partner with him in bringing in God's new creation. And so we make disciples and see people renewed in him as well. We're not living for ourselves anymore, we're living for God and for others.
- C. Paul connects our purpose explicitly to the resurrection of Christ in [1 Cor. 15](#). There he's talking to guys who claim there is no resurrection and he says: "Listen, if there is no resurrection, then everything we're doing is stupid." He says in particular: "[If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied](#)" (v. 19).
 - 1. Now, why does he say that? Well, I'll tell you why. Because, according to Paul, Christians should be living such crazy, self-sacrificing, others-centered lives—so much so that their lives can only be made sense of in light of the resurrection. That's how much purpose and passion we get from it.
 - a. The only way we'd be living the way that we are is if our hope was not in this world but in the world to come, in the resurrection!
- D. He goes on later and continues to riff on this idea with regard to his own ministry: "[30 Why are we in danger every hour? 31 . . . I die every day! 32 What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die'](#)" (vv. 30–32).

1. In other words, if the dead aren't raised it's the heathens that have it right. They're the wise ones, living for their appetites and getting what they can now at the expense of everyone else.
2. But if we're right, if the resurrection of Christ is the real deal, and ours is coming in him, well then there is no wiser way to live your life than to spend it for the sake of the gospel in love for God and others.

a. We have so much to live and die for!

- i. That's why he concludes down in v. 58: "Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."

E. So I wonder about you? How much of what you are doing now can only be made sense of in light of the resurrection? Is it obvious that your hope is settled in the world to come and the glory that awaits you there? Some of us are feeling so aimless and frustrated, not living into our calling.

1. Because of the resurrection, the early church in Acts, these guys went from huddling in the corner behind closed doors to preaching boldly in the streets, they had purpose, they were caught up in something so much bigger than themselves.

a. You got any of that?! That's what the resurrection of Jesus gives us!

Aspect #5: New Destiny

A. You know so much of our lives are spent trying to secure ourselves, set us up for a good future.

1. We go to college so we can get a good job. We get a job so we can get a good paycheck. We get a good paycheck so we could get a good house and retirement and things. We get insurance squared away, we map our lives out and make sure we're secure going forward.

B. And, again, all of this can be fine in its place, but, in his resurrection, Jesus offers us so much more. He offers eternal security—a new destiny that's marked not merely by a good retirement on the beach or something but by glory and joy in the presence of the God who made all the beaches of the world with a snap of his finger.

1. I don't think we can even conceive the pleasures that await us in the new heavens and new earth, but I think we can take everything beautiful and lovely about this life and amplify it a millionfold and we maybe getting somewhere near it.

a. And, again, what I want you to hear is that you're secure in that.

C. Listen to Paul in 2 Cor 4: " ¹⁴ [H]e who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. . . . ¹⁶ So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal" (vv. 14, 16-18).

1. This life, in some sense, really is like a slow spiral down the drain, right? We keep trying to keep stuff, secure stuff, but we're losing it, we're wasting away.
 - a. But again, in yet another amazing flip of the script, for those who trust Christ—because of his resurrection, because of Day 1, Day 8 new creation—they will find it's all been gain in the end.
- D. So listen to me, sometimes we come to church like Joseph with the corpse of Christ, like a cavemen with a firecracker. We think God's dead, he's not doing anything, he's not active in my life.
 1. But, amazingly, what we learn in this text is just when you think God's done, he's just about to begin. Things are going to explode. New creation is coming!