

## Bringing What's Dead Back to life

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Luke 23:45-24:8

Today, we are finishing up our series, “Breakthrough.” I hope this series has renewed your hope for a miracle in your life. Some of us really need breakthroughs. Whether in the area of finances, in health, in relationships, in our careers, or what-have-you. Let me ask you, did you recently experience a breakthrough? I want you to think, reflect, ponder on anything that God has done in your life which you would consider a breakthrough. It may be as little as being able to pay a medical bill or as big as buying a big house. And I want you to share that with me, in fact, with everyone in the church. Share with us the blessing God has given you in the past five or six weeks that we may be blessed as well.

So, next week, we’re going to have a Breakthrough Celebration. The Bible says, *“Our God, we thank you for being so near to us! Everyone celebrates your wonderful deeds.”* (Psalm 75:1 CEV) We’re going to hear your testimonies. We’re going to rejoice with you. You can share as many as you want. I’ll give the floor to you. You can invite your friends and loved ones that they, too, might hear the wonderful deeds of God. And, if you feel that you haven’t experienced a breakthrough yet, there’s one more week. Pray this week for God’s breakthrough.

And I want to start this celebration by asking my wife to share a breakthrough. (Call Bel).

Folks, God is always at work. He wants to perform a miracle in your life. You just need to be sensitive to him. Position yourself to receive a miracle.

Now, in this message I’m going to share with you, I want you to understand that we serve a mighty God. He is mighty to save, Amen? In fact, he brings dead things back to life, even today.

My question is, Is there something dead in your life you are asking God to bring back to life? Maybe it's your marriage, or your job, or a relationship, or maybe your doctor has given you a grim prognosis about your condition.

Whatever impossible situation you feel is dead, know that God brings what's dead back to life. He did it for His son, He did it for John Smith, and He can do it for you. My prayer is that during this sermon series your hope has been renewed.

During the last few weeks, we have been looking at how to position ourselves to receive a miracle and how to be a conduit for God to do miracles in our lives and in the lives of others.

We have been looking at the story of John Smith from the movie "Breakthrough" as an example of God still performing miracles today and breaking through the impossible situations of our lives.

John Smith was a 14-year-old boy who fell through a frozen pond and remained under water for 15 minutes. When they pulled him out, he was dead. They worked on John for another 45 minutes. He had no pulse or oxygen for over an hour.

When the doctors prepared to call the time of death, they brought his mom into the room to say goodbye. She walked into the room and prayed, "Holy Spirit, bring my son back to life." At that moment, John's heart started to beat.

John's story is truly a resurrection story. The doctor who worked on John was the St. Louis area expert on hypothermia and drowning. In an early interview, he said John was a "bona fide" miracle. In the last two to three years, the doctors have looked for anyone else like John around the world.

Now, let me show you a clip from the movie. **(show video clip #5)**

There are two events in history which changed everything for you and me. Do you know what I'm talking about? I'm talking about the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The world in general denies the significance of these two

events. Many believe that Jesus did not die by crucifixion like the Muslims or that he did not rise from the dead like all non-Christians. But on these two events hinges the most important breakthrough for all of mankind. It was a breakthrough moment. A moment of complete hope and transformation. The Bible tells us in Romans 6:23 that the **“wages of sin is death.”** But, I’m thankful God doesn’t stop there. The verse goes on to say, **“but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

The Bible also tells us, **“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”** Romans 3:23.

Friends, we are all in the same boat. We are all in need of a savior. It doesn’t matter how good a person you are or what you do. Notice the last part of this statement, **“fall short of the glory of God.”** It reminds us that we all fall short of God’s standard. What is God’s standard? Perfection, holiness, sinlessness. Think of the most holy person that ever lived apart from Jesus. Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Billy Graham? Do you honestly believe they did not commit a sin? So, all of us are sinners and we all fall short of God’s standard. Therefore, we are in need of a savior. That’s why Jesus went to the cross for our sins. He paid the price for our sin and our healing with His life. The Bible tells us in **1 Peter 2:24b, “By His wounds you have been healed.”**

Friends, God gave His one and only son so that we could experience salvation. **John 3:16** tells us, **“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”** That’s how God loves. It caused him pain and heartache to lose his son. But he did it to gain your life.

And in **Romans 5:8** it says, **“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”**

God doesn't just talk about His love for us. He demonstrates it by sending His son Jesus to die on a cross for you and for me. So powerful! Talk about a Breakthrough. The most important miracle that can happen in our lives is the life changing power of salvation. Jesus has already made a way for that to happen. That truly is the greatest "Breakthrough" we can experience.

In our remaining moments, I want to take a look at the people who had a front row seat to Jesus's death and resurrection. The Bible tells us that on the day Jesus was crucified He had a group of followers and people who loved Him watching the whole experience happen.

**Luke 23:49 tells us, "But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things."**

Could you imagine being a friend of Jesus watching this happen?

The "friends" that scripture mentions were more than likely disciples who had traveled everywhere with Jesus. They loved Him like a brother. They had watched Him minister and had seen Him do incredible miracles.

The women Scripture mentions was Jesus' mother Mary and Mary Magdalene. His own mother stood by and watched her son walk through the crucifixion experience. I can't imagine watching someone I love experience what Jesus experienced. The beatings, the betrayal, the world turning their back on Jesus. Now, His friends stood at a distance and watched Jesus die a horrible death. What went through their minds? From a parent's perspective, it had to be excruciating.

Jesus' friends needed a Breakthrough. They were desperate. Was this it? Was it over? Was Jesus dead? Was the hope He had given them now gone? Were their lives in danger?

It's difficult to hold onto God's promises when everything looks bleak and hopeless. They were afraid for their lives. In fact, Scripture tells us Peter, one of Jesus's closest disciples, denied Him in fear for his life. What we do in moments of crisis is so important. How we respond in the middle of our darkest times is so crucial.

I love how Jesus' mother Mary and Mary Magdalene and a man named Joseph responded to this moment. Joseph was a member of the council that had put Jesus to death, but he did not believe Jesus was guilty. Joseph went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. The Bible tells us in **Luke 23:53, "Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid."** Joseph was risking a great deal. His reputation was at stake, and there could be huge repercussions. But he was willing to risk everything to take care of Jesus. Talk about a bold move in the moment of crisis.

The women didn't leave either. They were staying until they saw a breakthrough! They were holding onto all that God had promised. **Luke 23:55-56 tells us, "The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment."**

In the middle of what seemed like a hopeless situation, the women didn't give up. They held on and believed there would be a breakthrough.

After the women rested for the Sabbath, the Bible tells us they came back on the first day of the week, which would have been Sunday in Bible times, to take care of Jesus. Imagine how difficult that would have been for these women. From a human perspective, it would have been easy to lose hope. They were coming back to be reminded Jesus was dead. At that moment, it looked like the One they had put their hope in was dead.

They arrived at the tomb and something had happened. The grave they left sealed tightly was now open. They walked in and discovered Jesus wasn't there. Scripture says the women were greatly perplexed. Where was Jesus? Who had taken his body? Were they about to experience more pain and sorrow? What was going on?

I can't imagine the emotions and feelings the women must have been walking through at that moment. They didn't give up, though. They held onto God's promises and did not lose hope.

The Bible goes on to say that two men suddenly appeared to the women with a message of hope and encouragement. The men said in Luke 24:5-8, **“In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, ‘Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: “The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.”” Then they remembered his words.”**

Jesus had been resurrected! The grave was empty. At that moment, the greatest miracle/breakthrough the world would ever experience took place.

The death and resurrection of Jesus is a complete game changer for you and me. It changes everything for us. It's the moment God brought back to life what was dead. Joseph, Mary, mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and others experienced an incredible breakthrough because they were not moved in the face of incredible impossibility. They did not let their fear stop them. In an instant, what appeared to be hopeless and dead was brought back to life. The impossible happened right before their very eyes. When it would have been easy to give up and run like everyone else, they stood still and experienced the single greatest miracle mankind would ever see.

How did these women stick it out? Why didn't they run? Even when the situation looked bleak and hopeless, what kept them holding on and believing for a miracle?

Let's be honest, they were facing what looked to be an impossible situation. I'm sure they experienced hopelessness and fear. Jesus was dead. It would have been easy to look at the physical evidence right in front of them and forget what God had promised. They could have let the impossibility they were facing outweigh the promises God gave them, but they refused to give up. They kept showing up, even when it meant they were coming only to care for Jesus' body. Their hope and dreams would be lying there dead in front of them. What caused them to look beyond what seemed to be impossible and believe for a Breakthrough?

I want to share with you three keys from this portion of Scripture that caused these people to hold on and believe for the impossible. These are truths that we can also hold onto when we face challenges and impossibilities.

### **Key #1- Be More Than a Spectator**

When Jesus was crucified, there were spectators standing around watching, and then there were people who knew and loved Jesus. **Luke 23:47-49 (MSG) tells us, "When the captain there saw what happened, he honored God: 'This man was innocent! A good man, and innocent!' All who had come around as spectators to watch the show, when they saw what actually happened, were overcome with grief and headed home. Those who knew Jesus well, along with the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a respectful distance and kept vigil."**

The spectators took off as soon as the show was over. They were overcome with grief and left. The reality of what just happened became very real to them. They left empty. Imagine the despair and sadness they felt as they left.

The people who actually knew Jesus and had followed him “kept vigil.” They did not allow the circumstances or what they saw or felt to dictate their response. They knew Jesus. They had followed Jesus. They refused to give up! They stood by Jesus even at what appeared to be the most hopeless moment anyone on earth has ever experienced.

Today, we have the same challenge. When we face moments in our lives that seem hopeless and impossible, are we going to run away from Jesus? Or are we going to run to Jesus? Are you a spectator or a follower of Jesus?

When the going got rough, the spectators took off. The followers kept a vigil. They refused to leave Jesus’s side.

We have to make a decision today. Am I going to be a spectator? Or will I be a follower of Jesus? Following Jesus is not always easy and requires us to be completely obedient to Him.

To overcome impossibilities and see breakthrough in our lives, we must make the decision to become followers of Jesus, not just spectators. No matter how difficult being a follower becomes or how challenging life is. We need to run towards Jesus, not away from Him, especially when we are facing impossibilities.

### **Key #2 – Rest in the Lord.**

The Bible tells us the women rested on the Sabbath. They didn’t try to fix anything. They didn’t try to take things into their own hands. They simply rested. They completely rested in the fact God was in charge.

I’m reminded of what Jesus did in the middle of the storm on the Sea of Galilee that we talked about three weeks ago. The waves and the wind roared around Him. The disciples panicked and Jesus rested.

I’m reminded of the video clip earlier where Joyce completely surrendered and gave God control of the situation. She realized she had to give up control.

That's what these women did. They rested. They allowed God to be in control of this situation. There was not a thing they could do that would change the timing or God's plan and purpose. So they rested and allowed God to do what He needed to do. They allowed God to give them a peace that passed all understanding.

Many times, in the middle of impossibilities or challenges, we "help" God by trying to control the outcome. The last thing we want to do is rest. But what if resting in Him and trusting He has everything under control is exactly what He wants you to do?

Some of you here today are worn out. You have been trying to fix things on your own. Maybe you have run yourself ragged trying to "help God" and nothing is working. The circumstances seem to be going from bad to worse. The impossibilities you are facing seem to be getting bigger. The more you try to fix things for God, the worse things get. What if God is saying "rest"? Maybe you are not supposed to be doing anything except trusting God and allowing Him to work in your situations.

Even Jesus' mother rested. Moms in this room, you know how hard it is to rest when your children are going through trials. Imagine how hard it would have been for Jesus' mom to rest in this moment. But, in the middle of her greatest storm, she rested.

Resting means complete trust that God has everything under control, even when things don't make sense or when it seems like everything is falling apart.

### **Key #3 –Remember God's promises.**

When the ladies showed up on Sunday morning to take care of Jesus' body, He was gone. What would have gone through their mind? After all they had been through, now Jesus' body was gone. Things just kept getting worse. Was the body stolen?

The Bible says the women were greatly perplexed concerning everything happening. The Bible also said they were afraid. But they didn't let fear rule their lives. They exchanged fear for faith.

Two men showed up and reminded the ladies of the promises Jesus made to them. In Luke 24:8, **"Then they remembered his words."**

How did these women hold steady in the midst of such challenging times? They went back and remembered the promises Jesus made them. Jesus told them in Galilee that this would happen. He also promised that, on the third day, He would rise again. It was the third day! God's promises had been fulfilled!

When Jesus makes a promise to you, don't forget it. No matter what the circumstances look like, Jesus always keeps His promises. We can hold onto those promises. He will always come through. It may not always be on your timeline, but He will definitely come through for you.

If you are in the middle of an impossible situation right now and your circumstances look hopeless, go back and remember God's promises He has spoken over your life. Write down every promise He gives you so you can refer back to them in moments of crisis. Remember, what you see or what you are going through this very moment doesn't change the promises God has given you. No matter how dark or challenging things may be, hold on. Your moment of Breakthrough is coming!

### **Closing**

This afternoon, the most important miracle that can happen in your life is that you give your life completely to Jesus. If you have never made this decision before, I encourage you to do it at this moment.

Jesus died for you. He loves you. He gave His life so that you can experience eternal life. All you have to do is make the decision today. It's easy. The Bible says we need to confess with our mouth that we need a savior and

believe in our heart that Jesus is our Savior and we will be saved. It's simply turning your life over to Him.

It wasn't over when Jesus died on a cross. It was only the beginning. The world was about to see God's power on display as He resurrected Jesus. The Bible tells us the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to us today. When we walk through difficult times, or we face impossibilities, we can know we serve a powerful God that still does powerful miracles.