

Sermon: Complete Resurrection in an Incomplete World**Scripture: Luke 24:13-49****Preacher: Rev. Will Burhans****Date: April 19, 2026**

We are well within Eastertide here and our worship is punctuated by these mysterious accounts of Jesus' resurrection. This will happen for 40 days leading up to the Ascension and then 10 days later at Pentecost we'll celebrate Jesus' Holy Spirit infiltrating the world and giving birth to the church. The point I've made many times, is that you'll notice it's really not about saving us from Hell and sending us to Heaven when we die, though the conquering of death and the promise of eternal life with God is certainly a part of what Easter has been about, but the mystery of Eastertide centers on resurrection of the body, the physical, material, manifest body, the individual body of Jesus and the corporate communal body of the church and the wider world.

It is the very opposite of disembodiment of spirit and yet that's where Christians tend to go with it. And I think that's because we are pretty uncomfortable in our bodies. We are pretty uncomfortable for the most part on this earth. Case in point is the billion dollar industries creating products that fix our bodies or change our bodies from... too much weight or from too much aging, or too little sun or too much sun, or too much hair loss or too much hair, or not the right color and texture of hair, or too little muscle or not enough in shape and that we should eat this and drink that and definitely don't drink that or eat this and I could on like this for pages... the multitude of ways we are uncomfortable and trying to fix our bodies. And then of course along with that comes how we judge and control and seek to own others' bodies - both through the psychological domination of

advertising or the militaristic domination of other nations like we are doing in Iran right now. And on top of it all there's what we do to the earth, the piercing of the earth's body to extract fuel and the sheering off of mountains to get at materials and the pollution of air and water and the clearcutting of forests and the plastics and trash, I could go on for pages... but it's all evidence of how uncomfortable we are on the body of this earth as well.

C.S. Lewis, in his book Miracles, argues that this very discomfort, this not-at-home-ness we feel in these physical bodies of ours points to the mystery of the resurrection. We have this strange sense that how we know ourselves to be embodied is somehow incomplete and imperfect and it seems the trend is towards more imperfection as time goes by. Something doesn't feel right about it all which is why we are desperate to fix it but the problem comes when we grasp for ephemeral solutions to deeper spiritual discontent.

CS Lewis reminds us that our pets, our cats and dogs for instance, don't have this experience. They are really quite at home in their bodies. Our late black cat Percie had no issue with the fact that he was rather over-weight at about 22 pounds and that toward the end of his life his fur was turning grey in spots and he was losing it in other spots. While the same thing is happening to me in my 50's and I can't say I love my growing forehead. I wish I could be as cavalier about my aging and my body as Percie but... I'm human.

There's a disquiet we humans feel about our natural state, the disquiet of being material beings with a consciousness that allows us to be aware that this physicality is winding down towards death, towards what we fear is an eventual nothingness. We are living beings aware that we are dying beings... and most of us can't help being bothered by it. It's all very natural, it's the very process of nature herself, and yet we have this sense that just

because it's natural doesn't necessarily make it just or right! Otherwise we would not struggle against it so desperately.

You might say that Eastern religion addresses this very issue by saying our mind is doing a number on us and what we believe is essentially an illusion and we need to see or comprehend rightly. But Western Christianity has mostly suggested that the world is actually imperfect and we know this because we are creatures of The Creator with an inbuilt sense of wholeness by which we measure this world as broken. Our dissatisfaction with the way things are in our body and in our world is evidence, CS Lewis would say, of the reality beyond this material worldly existence. How would we know that things as they are not quite right unless there was some Right with a capital "R" by which we could measure it? If there were not some Greater Limitless Wholeness, call it God, then how would we know of our limited, less than wholeness? Our souls yearn, and at times intensely, for something more, something better, than what we are experiencing in this world, something more perfect than what we often experience here, more satisfying, more peaceful, more harmonious, because our souls know there is in fact something more perfect than this. Our incompleteness, our imperfection is everywhere and painfully evident to us.

It's a tricky place that we humans find ourselves in, with a deep inner sense of the Supernatural Whole, of what is possible, and yet we must bear that we are not there... at least not yet and sometimes it's enough to make us crazy, to burn new hair follicles into our heads to stop hair loss! We experience this discontent and yearning, what Rainer Rilke called "the great homesickness we can never shake", a God-shaped hole in our souls, an ache that makes us who we are. Or as the ancient African theologian Augustine

said in his book, Confessions - “you have made us for yourself O God and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you.”

This is what the disciples were experiencing on that road to Emmaus. They were in their sorrow and ache over the loss of their Lord and surely the loss of the meaning and purpose they had finally discovered for their lives. Jesus though walks with them and interprets the scriptures that explain quite clearly, that it all had to be. Then he sits and eats with them - the resurrection accounts are all so bodily and physical, the walking, the eating, the breaking bread - and it is in the breaking of bread, the act he had given to the disciples at the last supper to make him present to them in the bread and wine, that their eyes are finally opened and they see him for who he is, for the first time again clearly. And they say “were not our hearts burning within us as he was talking to us on the road?” For that is the experience of the natural human encountering the unfiltered supernatural Christ. It’s like a burning, a burning away of distraction and impurity and imperfection so that one can behold, encounter, undergo, touch even if for a moment the Supernatural Whole in the midst of the natural partial and the natural incomplete.

But then, the scripture says, the risen Christ departs from them. Now why is that? One answer might be that the burning must do its job gradually, otherwise it would have consumed them. They would have been a little pile of ecstatic ash which would have defeated Jesus’ purpose because he was not taking them home to heaven, he had work for them to do in the here and now. And their becoming, nature’s becoming must be and always is gradual, it’s got to be a process. As St Irenaeus said in the early century of the church: “God wanted to give human beings their fullness right from the beginning, but they were incapable of receiving it, because they were still

little children.” We are all little children needing to grow into who we are to become which is somehow the physical body transformed within the natural world into a perfect form and the world in all its physicalness awakened to love and life and flourishing. But we are not quite there yet, we get tastes and glimpses and can work towards greater glimpses (for instance by working towards curiosity over conflict which is what our 11th Hour presentation is on) but it’s important for us to hold the truth humbly and mercifully towards others that we are all in this in-between state and we will be until some kind of fullness of time arrives.

I love this writing by the theologian and scientist Teilhard de Chardin and I’ll close with it because it feels like a good reminder to lay ourselves open to the promise of what God is doing to us and through us in the Resurrected Christ. That the complete resurrection is a vision to sustain us in this forever incomplete world. Teilhard writes:

Above all, trust in the slow work of God.
 We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay.
 We should like to skip the intermediate stages.
 We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new.
 And yet it is the law of all progress
 that it is made by passing through some stages of instability—
 and that it may take a very long time...
 Don’t try to force [it],
 as though you could be today what time
 (that is to say, the grace [of God] and circumstances acting on your own good will)
 will make of you tomorrow.
 Only God could say what this new spirit
 gradually forming within you will be.
 Give Our Lord the benefit of believing
 that his hand is leading you,
 and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself
 in suspense and incomplete.