Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

If one person arrived at church this morning and said that they saw an Air New Zealand plane make an emergency landing on Lincoln Rd in Henderson, would you straight away believe them? Or would you quietly pop out your phone and look up the Herald website to see if there was a report of an emergency landing? But if three different families arrived at church at the same time and they all said that they had seen an ANZ plane land on Lincoln Rd, there would be no doubt in our minds that this *must* have happened. And this is because the more witnesses there are of anything the more certain we are that we are hearing a true account.

Well, this is precisely why we are given lots of evidence for the resurrection of Jesus in the Bible. Bible commentators speak about the *silent* witness, the *supernatural* witnesses, and the *set* of eye-witnesses:

1. The **silent** witness is the empty tomb.
	1. Once Jesus’ dead body had been placed in the tomb, a large stone was rolled in front of it and the Jewish authorities “*made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard*.” But at the beginning of Luke 24 we read: “*On the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb taking the spices they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus*.”
	2. So the very fact that the tomb was empty is the *silent* witness of the resurrection.
2. But there are also the **supernatural** witnesses of the resurrection – angels that Luke describes as two men “*in dazzling apparel* (clothing).” They said to the women who had come to look for Jesus, “*Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen!*” So the angels are the *supernatural* witnesses.
3. But we also have a whole **set** of human witnesses who saw the risen Lord Jesus with their own eyes, some of them on multiple occasions.
	1. I have put a list of these resurrection appearances in the Bulletin. Five were to one or more people on the day of resurrection and seven were to one or more people, including at one time to a group of over 500 people, sometime after the day of resurrection. The Apostle Paul gives a list like this in 1 Cor. 15.
	2. And these are the *set* of eye-witnesses.

Well, today we focus our attention on one of those appearances on the day of His resurrection, which was this meeting between Jesus and the two people walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus. It probably took place some time on the afternoon of that day, because we are told in v29 that after they had talked a while, one of them urged Jesus to stay and eat with them because it was “*toward evening*.”

So what we are going to do is some **Easter Eavesdropping**.

To eavesdrop is to deliberately listen to other people talking. And usually that is not a very polite thing to do. Maybe you boys and girls can remember a time when Mum and Dad realized that you were listening to them talk and they told you to close the door or to go into another room because their conversation was supposed to be private. So you were eavesdropping. But our eavesdropping is OK because the Holy Spirit has recorded the conversation between Jesus and these two in the Bible. The Holy Spirit wants us to know about this conversation. And as we do our Easter Eavesdropping, we get to see **the resurrection connection between Jesus’ cross and His glory**. And we don’t have any points today; we will simply work our way through the conversation between Jesus and these two people in order to see the resurrection connection between Jesus’ cross and His glory.

1. And just by way of a side point, you will note that I have referred to Jesus and **these two people**. We know that one of them was named Cleopas and that he was a he. But we are not told, anywhere, whether the other one was male or female. It could have been Cleopas’ wife or another of Jesus’ wider group of disciples, but we are not told. So we shall just refer to them as ‘the two’ or Cleopas and friend.
2. And first of all, it is obvious from v14, that Cleopas and friend were **pretty upset and confused** about what had just happened in Jerusalem. From v18, it is clear that if Instagram or Twitter had been around back then #crucifixion would have been the trending topic! Everyone was tweeting, whoops, I mean talking, about what had happened to Jesus.
	1. As we said a moment ago, this meeting probably took place on the afternoon of the Day of resurrection. v1 tells us that it was “early dawn” when the women discovered the empty tomb, heard the angels, and from the other Gospels, met the risen Lord. So a number of hours have passed since the discovery of the empty tomb.
	2. But what Cleopas and friend knew for certain was that Jesus was crucified and that He died three days ago. We see that in vv19-21. But vv22-24 reveal that they had also heard the report from the women about the empty tomb and the message of the angels that Jesus was alive. But remember also that in **Matthew 28** we are told that the guards who were supposed to watch over the tomb had been given hush money by the Jewish leaders and told to tell the people that His disciples had stolen His body from the tomb. So Cleopas and friend must have waited in Jerusalem as long as they could to try and make sense of the conflicting reports that were swirling around. But for whatever reason, they had to leave Jerusalem and head to Emmaus, which is a journey of about 14km. And as they walked, v14 tells us that “*they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened*.”
	3. Well, just then, as they were walking and talking, **Jesus drew near and joined them**. We read that “*their eyes were kept from recognizing Him*.” And so, when He asked them what they were talking about, v17 says that “*they stood still, looking sad*.” All their hopes and dreams about Jesus had been shattered. They didn’t know what to make about the claims that He was alive. What they did know for certain was that He had died on the cross. And they were gutted!
3. Now, let’s just pause here and take a moment or two to think about the significance of that phrase in v16 that tells us that as Jesus joined them, “***they were kept from recognizing Him***.” And we need to do this because this is a very important salvation truth.
	1. If you have ever worked with a **drill**, you have probably tried to drill a hole with a blunt drill bit. Have you ever done that? It doesn’t matter how hard you press down on the drill, you ain’t getting through! It is not until you put in a sharp drill bit that you pop through and get your hole.
	2. Well, as we read this conversation between Jesus and these two, we might wonder if the problem was that Jesus was, you know, “using a blunt drill bit.” Maybe He had been unclear up till now? Maybe He had not done a good job of telling His disciples what was going to happen? Was that the problem?
	3. Uh uh. We know from **Luke 6** that while Jesus had the twelve special disciples, He also had a much larger group of disciples who travelled around with Him. And all of the Gospels tell us that there were several times when Jesus made very plain statements about what was going to happen to Him. Just listen to this one from earlier in **Luke 18:31-34**: Jesus said, “*See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For He will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging Him, they will kill Him, and on the third day He will rise*.” That’s pretty plain, isn’t it? It’s not code language. Jesus very simply laid out that He would be killed and then rise again on the third day.
	4. But listen to how Luke 18 continues: “*But [the disciples] understood none of [what Jesus said]. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said*.” And here in Luke 24, as Jesus meets these two, who clearly knew Him, we are told that “*they were kept from recognizing Him*.” So the problem is not a lack of clarity on Jesus’ part; it is the spiritual inability of these two to understand.
		1. **1 Corinthians 2:14** says, “*The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned*.” A person can only understand even the most basic spiritual truthes by the work of the Holy Spirit.
		2. There is no way around this – up until this moment these two have had their ears and eyes covered or blocked by the Holy Spirit. They have been kept from understanding!
		3. And there are **two important lessons** in this for us:
			1. The first is that if you believe in Jesus, it is not because *you* were so clever to work out the message of the Bible. If it was just up to you, you would still be stumbling around in your spiritual blindness and deafness. It is praise *God* that His Spirit has opened your soul to Jesus! As a Reformed Church, we trace our history back to the Reformation of the 16th century. One of the catchphrases of the Reformation was *Soli Deo Gloria* – All glory to God. And this is what *Soli Deo Gloria* is all about – it is God *alone* who deserves the glory for our salvation, not we ourselves!
			2. But secondly, if you are sharing the gospel with a family member or a neighbour or a work colleague, what should you do at the same time? **Pray**! Pray that the Holy Spirit would open their ears and their heart to eternal life in Jesus.
4. Well, let’s return now to our Easter eavesdropping! In answer to Jesus’ question about what they were talking about, they began to tell Him about all they had heard and seen. They thought that Jesus was the Messiah. Look at what they say in v19, “He *was a prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and all the people*.” But then, and here we get **their huge problem**, “*The chief priests and our rulers delivered Him up to be condemned to death, and crucified Him*.” Crucifixion was how *cursed* ones died. Messiah was not supposed to be killed, let alone crucified! But Jesus had been crucified *by the church* of that day – the Jews!
	1. Have you ever been doing a school test and there is some part of the question that just doesn’t make any sense to you? You know – Joe and Jenny have to run a marathon and they train by running 5km a day, which they increase by 1.25 km a day, for 12 weeks. So how many chocolate fish have they eaten by day 8? And it doesn’t matter what algorithms or logorithms or biorythyms you enter into your calculator, you just can’t get past the chocolate fish!
	2. Well, these two could not get past the cross. The cross bought all their hopes to an end. So even though they had heard from some women that His tomb was empty, and that an angel had told them He was alive, all they could see was THE CROSS.
	3. And you know what brothers and sisters, **the cross** is still the greatest stumbling block of the gospel but also *the* *thing* we most need to tell others.
		1. Tell people that their only hope of salvation is to believe in someone who died on a cross and many of them will laugh at you or pity you.
		2. The Apostle Paul says in **1 Cor. 2:4**, “*We preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but (he continues) to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God*.” To some, the cross is ridiculous; but to others, the cross is everything!
		3. So we must be those who preach the cross. By all means, discuss moral issues or creation, etc, but what people most need to hear from you is that the Son of God died on the cross for the forgiveness of sins.
	4. At the moment though, for Cleopas and his friend, the cross is a stumbling block.
5. But now, from 25, the conversation takes a dramatic turn! For now Jesus speaks, and not as someone who is ignorant of what is going on around Him, but with the voice of prophetic authority!
	1. He even begins by calling them **foolish**, which is not usually a good way to warm up your audience for your message! He wants them to see that all that has happened to Him is exactly as was foretold by the OT prophets. So He says, “*O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?*” He doesn’t remove the cross; He puts it into the perspective of His glory!
	2. And He does this by **preaching a sermon** **about Himself from the OT**. We read, “*Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself*.”
		1. Genesis 3:15 – the first promise of the gospel;
		2. Genesis 22 – the substitute sacrifice for Isaac;
		3. Exodus 12 – The Passover Lamb;
		4. Leviticus 16 – The Day of Atonement;
		5. Numbers 21 – the bronze snake lifted up on a pole so who ever looks at it is healed;
		6. Deut 21 – hang the bodies of those who break my covenant on a tree;
		7. The suffering of Elijah and then His ascension to heaven in a chariot of fire.
		8. Jonah being three days in the belly of the big fish;
		9. Isaiah 53, which we read this morning.
		10. What a sermon this must have been! First comes the cross, then the resurrection, then glory. No cross; no resurrection; no glory – “*Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory*?”
6. And then, as He breaks the bread with them, **the Spirit withdraws** His hands and fingers and Cleopas and friend finally see and hear! We read in v31“*And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And He vanished from their sight. They said to each other, ‘Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked to us on the road, while He opened to us the Scriptures?*’ So despite it being late in the day, they now knew for sure that the Lord Jesus had risen! They simply had to share this good news with others. So they raced back to Jerusalem in order to tell the disciples! Wow! What a wonderful moment!
7. And it means that our Easter eavesdropping is ended. Don’t you wish you could have been there to hear Jesus preach that sermon? But of course, you have the sermon in the Bible! You have the OT and the NT, which together very plainly proclaim the facts of and the meaning of the resurrection. It is in here that Jesus says, “*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live*.”
	1. Do you have the comfort of knowing that you have eternal life? Do you know and believe that Jesus died and rose again to secure your salvation?
	2. But just as the knowledge that Jesus was risen had an instant effect on these two, in that they immediately ran to tell others, so it should affect our lives also. That is why we read from **Colossians 3** earlier. It asks those who have been raised with Christ if they are seeking the things above rather than the things on earth? Does that describe you?
		1. The earthly things that are mentioned are sexual immorality and covetousness and anger and slander and filthy jokes and lies. Are they things you hate and strive to avoid? The heavenly things are compassion and kindness and humility and meekness and patience. Are they things you love and strive to be and do?
		2. Are you letting the word of Christ dwell in you richly? Is public worship and regular Bible study a fixed part of your calendar?
		3. Are you seeking to be Christ-honouring in your relationships?
		4. And how would those who are you are with each day answer these questions about you?
		5. Are you striving to live a resurrection life?

Jesus is the Son of God. He died on the cross and three days later He rose from the dead. Hallelujah! May we live resurrection lives that honour Him and broadcast the reality of the resurrection. Amen.