

**JESUS THE KING**  
**Lent Worship Series – Easter Sunrise**  
*The Beginning*  
April 21, 2019

**WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINES**

Each worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed.

**Announcements and Offering**

*The Beginning*

**Call to Worship:**

In the decades before and after Jesus’s life and death there were dozens of messianic movements in Israel. In almost every case the messianic leader was killed, in many cases by execution, and after the leader’s death each of these movements invariably collapsed. Everybody went home and that was it. Of all those dozens of movements, only one did not collapse after the death of the leader. Not only did it not collapse, it exploded: In the course of about three hundred years it had spread through the entire Roman Empire.

Out of all those messianic movements, what made the Christian faith different? Christians would say it is because of what happened *after* the leader of this movement was killed. So what did happen to cause explosive growth in Christianity after its founder’s death? We read in Mark:

<sup>37</sup> *With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.*

<sup>38</sup> *The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.* <sup>39</sup> *And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, “Surely this man was the Son of God!”*

<sup>40</sup> *Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome.* <sup>41</sup> *In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there.*

<sup>42</sup> *It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached,* <sup>43</sup> *Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus’ body. (Mark 15:37-43, NIV)*

*(Jesus the King, p. 232)*

**Drama: Use It or Lose It**

**SB#228 – Low in the grave He lay**

TB-905 – Up from  
the grave He arose

HTD2-T17 (3 vs.)

Additional Optional Songs		
<b>HC#149 – In Christ Alone</b> <b>SB#861 – In Christ alone</b>	HC-149 TB-132 – same	HCD13-T19 No CD
<b>HC#164 – Before the Throne of God Above</b> <b>SB#243 – Before the throne of God above</b>	HC-164 TB-52 – same	HCD15-T14 No CD
<b>HC#204 – See, What a Morning</b>	HC-204	HCD19-T14
<b>HC#209 – Come People of the Risen King</b>	HC-209	HCD19-T19
<b>HC#233 – Christ the Lord is Risen Today</b> <b>SB#218 – Christ the Lord is risen today</b>	HC-233 TB-248 – Easter Hymn	HCD22-T13 HTD3-T9 (4 vs.)
<b>HC#241 – Crown Him with Many Crowns</b> <b>SB#358 – Crown Him with many crowns</b>	HC-241 TB-162 – Diademata	HCD23-T11 HTD1-T8 (4 vs.)
<b>SB#139 – He came to give us life</b>	TB-645 – same	No CD
<b>SB#217 – Christ is alive! Let Christians sing</b>	TB-47 – Truro	No CD
<b>SB#276 – Thine is the glory</b>	TB-746 – Maccabeus	No CD
<b>SB#847 – I serve a risen Savior</b>	TB-681 – same	HTD6-T10 (3 vs.)

**Leader:** He is risen!  
**All:** He is risen indeed!

### Invocation

### Responsive Reading

**Leader:** Jesus died in mid-afternoon and the Sabbath began at sunset. The Jewish law permitted no work on the Sabbath, which meant they could not bury the body of Jesus that night or the next day. So Joseph goes to Pilate, hoping to be able to bury the body in time. Joseph, though a Pharisee, shows enormous courage and independence of thought by asking for Jesus’s body. Mark reports:

**All:** *<sup>44</sup> Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. <sup>45</sup> When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph.*

**Men:** *<sup>46</sup> So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.*

**Women:** *<sup>47</sup> Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid.*  
(Mark 15:44-47, NIV)

**Leader:** The way Mark reports the burial is significant: He is “certifying” that Jesus was really dead. Joseph of Arimathea is named here as an identified witness who

actually had Jesus’s body wrapped up and sealed it in a tomb. A Roman centurion bore witness of Jesus’s death to Pilate. Finally, two women are cited as eyewitnesses to prove he was really dead. But Mark has more to say:

**All:** *<sup>1</sup>When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus’ body. (Mark 16:1, NIV)*

**Leader:** There is a strange redundancy in Mark’s account: Three times within a span of just eight lines, Mark records the names of some women who witnessed these events. By including these names, Mark was saying to anyone reading this document: “If you want to check out the truth of my story, go talk to these three women.” So what is it that these women witness? They have brought spices and are on their way to the tomb to finish the burial rites on Jesus’s dead body. Mark writes:

**Women:** *<sup>2</sup>Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb <sup>3</sup>and they asked each other, “Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?”*

**Leader:** *<sup>4</sup>But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. <sup>5</sup>As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.*

**Men:** *<sup>6</sup>“Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.*

**All:** *<sup>7</sup>But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’” (Mark 16:3-7, NIV)*

**Leader:** “He is risen! He is not here.” Can you imagine how these women felt, what they were thinking, as they heard these words? They had come to the tomb expecting to find a dead body. Instead they hear the words “He has risen! He is not here.”  
(*Jesus the King*, pp. 233-235)

<b>HC#209 – Come People of the Risen King</b>	HC-209	HCD19-T19
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#149 – In Christ Alone</b> <b>SB#861 – In Christ alone</b>	HC-149 TB-132 – same	HCD13-T19 No CD
<b>HC#164 – Before the Throne of God</b> <b>Above</b> <b>SB#243 – Before the throne of God above</b>	HC-164 TB-52 – same	HCD15-T14 No CD
<b>HC#204 – See, What a Morning</b>	HC-204	HCD19-T14
<b>HC#233 – Christ the Lord Is Risen Today</b> <b>SB#218 – Christ the Lord is risen today</b>	HC-233 TB-248 – Easter Hymn	HCD22-T13 HTD3-T9 (4 vs.)

<b>HC#241 – Crown Him with Many Crowns</b> <b>SB#358 – Crown Him with many crowns</b>	HC-241 TB-162 – Diademata	HCD23-T11 HTD1-T8 (4 vs.)
<b>SB#139 – He came to give us life</b>	TB-645-same	No CD
<b>SB#217 – Christ is alive! Let Christians sing</b>	TB-47 – Truro	No CD
<b>SB#228 – Low in the grave He lay</b>	TB-905 – Up from the grave He arose	HTD2-T17 (3 vs.)
<b>SB#276 – Thine is the glory</b>	TB-746 – Maccabeus	No CD
<b>SB#847 – I serve a risen Savior</b>	TB-681 – same	HTD6-T10 (3 vs.)

**Message – The Beginning**

<b>HC#89 – Knowing You</b> <b>SB#565 – All I once held dear, built my life upon</b>	HC-89 TB-725 – Knowing You	HCD7-T19 No CD
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#5 – There Is a Redeemer</b> <b>SB#204 – There is a redeemer</b>	HC-5 TB-881 – same	HCD1A-T15 No CD
<b>HC#128 – My Tribute</b>	HC-128	HCD11-T18
<b>HC#137 – Worthy Is the Lamb</b> <b>SB#201 – Thank You for the cross, Lord</b>	HC-137 TB-947 – same	HCD12-T17 No CD
<b>HC#156 – Enter In</b>	HC-156	HCD14-T16
<b>HC#160 – I Surrender</b>	HC-160	HCD14-T20
<b>HC#164 – Before the Throne of God Above</b> <b>SB#243 – Before the throne of God above</b>	HC-164 TB-52 – same	HCD15-T14 No CD
<b>HC#226 – I Worship You</b>	HC-226	HCD21-T16
<b>HC#234 – Beneath the Cross</b>	HC-234	HCD22-T14
<b>SB#161 – Beneath the cross of Jesus</b>	TB-574 – Beneath the cross	No CD
<b>HC#239 – Fountain/Doxology</b> <b>SB#202 – There is a fountain filled with blood</b>	HC-239 TB-71 – Fountain	HCD22-T19 No CD
<b>HC#256 – At Your Mercy Seat</b>	HC-256	HCD24-T16

**Testimonies of Faith – I believe because...** [Testimonies from the congregation or choose someone who can testify on this theme.]

<b>HC#164 – Before the Throne of God Above</b> <b>SB#243 – Before the throne of God above</b>	HC-164 TB-52 – same	HCD15-T14 No CD
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#23 – Such Love</b> <b>SB#243 – Such love</b>	HC-23 TB-845 – same	HCD2A-T13 No CD

<b>HC#89 – Knowing You</b> <b>SB#565 – All I once held dear, built my life upon</b>	HC-89 TB-725 – same	HCD7-T19 No CD
<b>HC#148 – Agnus Dei</b>	HC-148	HCD13-T18
<b>HC#149 – In Christ Alone</b> <b>SB#861 – In Christ alone</b>	HC-149 TB-132 – same	HCD13-T19 No CD
<b>HC#156 – Enter In</b>	HC-156	HCD14-T16
<b>SB#222 – He is Lord</b>	TB-649 – same	HPC1-T13/14

**Benediction:**

Lord, move afresh in the midst of your church today. Come in Your peace; remove all our doubt. Open our minds so that we may understand the scriptures. Fill us with the power of the Holy Spirit so that we may be witnesses of your resurrection, preachers of repentance and messengers of forgiveness.

*(The NIV Worship Bible, page 1419)*

<b>HC#239 – Fountain/Doxology</b>	HC-239	HCD22-T19
<b>SB#202 – There is a fountain filled with blood</b>	TB-71 – Fountain	No CD
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#161 – My Great Redeemer’s Praise</b> <b>SB#89 – O for a thousand tongues to sing</b>	HC-161 TB-59 – Azmon TB-75 – Grimsby	HCD15-T11 HTD4-T4 (4 vs.) No CD
<b>HC#209 – Come People of the Risen King</b>	HC-209	HCD19-T19
<b>SB#271 – Rejoice, the Lord is king!</b>	TB-200 – Darwalls	HTD1-T7 (3 vs.)

*Jesus the King: Understanding the Life and Death of the Son of God* by Timothy Keller, 2013; previously published as *King’s Cross: The Story of the World in the Life of Jesus*, 2011 (Penguin Books).

<b>Lent 2019 Sonrise</b>	
<b>DRAMA</b>	
<b>Use It or Lose It</b>	
<b>By Martyn Scott Thomas</b>	
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<b>Topic:</b>	Resurrection
<b>Scripture:</b>	Mark 15:37-43
<b>Synopsis:</b>	Joseph recalls the burial of Jesus.
<b>Characters:</b>	Joseph of Arimathea
<b>Props/Costumes:</b>	Modern or Biblical.
<b>Setting:</b>	Bare stage.
<b>Running time:</b>	2 minutes

*[Joseph enters and stands center stage.]*

**Joseph:** What do you consider to be a waste of money? Is it spending more than you need to for a certain product or service? Is it paying for something and not receiving it? Is it paying taxes and seeing no benefit? How about spending money on something that you will eventually need, but will never enjoy? Something like a grave plot? Or maybe a burial tomb? That has to be near the top of the list.

Don't get me wrong – I know that it's part of life. And death. Everybody is going to die. And one should be prepared for the inevitable and not leave those details to one's family. It just seems like such a waste – I spend an obscene amount of money on something that I'll never know if I even use. I hope my family will put me in there. I don't know what else they'd do with it.

So, in spite of my hesitations, I bought a tomb. And not just any tomb. A man of my position shouldn't be buried just anywhere. I went all out – a garden tomb, carved out of the rock. It's actually quite a nice setting. Too bad I won't be able to enjoy it.

Then something changed. I met Jesus. He was a great teacher – no more than that. The more I listened to him, the more I began to realize that this man was from God – maybe even God himself. Or so I thought. The religious leaders didn't seem to think he was. They called him demon-possessed and a lunatic. They tried to discredit him at every chance, but they only helped solidify his standing among the people. He spoke in a way like no one had before – with real authority and knowledge. He was a remarkable man.

I say was, because he died today. Actually, he was executed for some suspicious charges. I'm sure the religious leaders were behind this somehow, even though it was the Romans who handled the crucifixion. Everything is still unclear. It's going to take some time to process. But I did have one clear thought.

Remember that waste of money I was talking about? The one that I would never use in my lifetime? Well, I think I'm about to get my money's worth. You see, I'm giving my tomb to Jesus. He certainly couldn't afford one. And he deserves so much more than an unmarked grave. He truly needs to be remembered. And if my tomb can help people remember who Jesus was, then I've done the right thing.

Besides, I can always get another grave. It's not like I'm going to know the difference any way.

[*Blackout*]

***JESUS THE KING:***  
*Understanding the Life and Death of the Son of God*  
**Lent Sermon – Easter Sunrise**  
*The Beginning*  
April 21, 2019

**Title: The Beginning**

**Scripture: Mark 15:37 – 16:7**

***Jesus the King* (Keller, 2011): Chapter 18 (Pages 232-239)**

He is risen! He is risen indeed!

We are here early this morning to remember and celebrate Jesus' resurrection from the dead. We are here to put our own stamp of truth on Isaiah's words, quoted by the Apostle Paul: "*Death has been swallowed up in victory*" (Isaiah 25:8, quoted by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:54b, NIV). We are here to raise the same triumphant questions penned by Hosea, and echoed by Paul: "*Where, O death, is your victory? / Where, O death, is your sting?*" (Hosea 13:14, quoted by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:55, NIV)

Jesus is risen! Death has been defeated! Because Christ lives, we too shall live!

For many in today's world, our celebration is of a fanciful story. They find the scriptural story of the resurrection no more credible than other ancient stories that do not fit into a scientifically proven box. For them, the tale of Jesus' resurrection fits into the same category as stories of rabbits hiding treats in the lawn for good children to find on a Sunday morning. Full of hope and good feelings, but coming up short on reality.

Others express that whether true or not, Jesus' story follows all the other tales of tragedy turning into triumph and joy. Curiously, in our world, stories with a happy ending are often viewed with suspicion, not with hope. Somehow, the tragic is viewed as *the "real"* worldview. Tragedy—not happiness—fills life. This leads to a sense of darkness and despair that cloaks and colors the events of life. It's a pretty dark picture of life. And, if you listen closely, that's a predominant theme you hear in today's world.

When carefully examined, Jesus' resurrection helps to move us from a place of despair and hopelessness to joy and abundant hope. This is the best and greatest news the world has ever or will ever receive! In this early morning hour, our task is to take a careful look at Mark's record of the resurrection. In doing so, Mark will provide us with layers of testimony to the reality of Jesus' death and resurrection. We will discover a true account of an event from history that produces the opportunity for an eternal happy ending that encompasses you and me today.

**I. Witnesses who certify that Jesus really died on the cross. (Mark 15:37-47)**

Mark begins his testimony in a very similar way Charles Dickens begins his famous story, *A Christmas Carol*. In the opening words, Dickens quickly, but with certainty tells us that Jacob

Marley is dead. In life, Jacob had been the business partner of Ebenezer Scrooge, but now, he is dead. He is, Dickens concludes, “as dead as a doornail.”

It is easy to miss the details Mark weaves into his account as he certifies that Jesus is dead. In order to grasp Mark’s certainty, we have to move backward in order to move forward. Mark carefully certifies through the experience of several individuals who stand as witnesses to the crucifixion that Jesus is dead. If you will allow, Jesus too is “as dead as a doornail.”

Look with me at Mark 15:37-47 (NIV). As we pick up the story, Jesus has been on the cross for about six hours.

<sup>37</sup> With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.

<sup>38</sup> The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. <sup>39</sup> And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, “Surely this man was the Son of God!”

<sup>40</sup> Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome. <sup>41</sup> In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there.

<sup>42</sup> It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached, <sup>43</sup> Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus’ body. <sup>44</sup> Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. <sup>45</sup> When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. <sup>46</sup> So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. <sup>47</sup> Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid.

Four individuals stand as witnesses to the fact that Jesus died because of the crucifixion. First, the **Roman centurion**, a hardened soldier who has supervised Jesus’ crucifixion is nearby when Jesus cries out and breathes his last breath. His response to Jesus’ death is stunning. He says, “Surely this man was the Son of God” (39)!

**Three named followers of Jesus—all women**—were also present at the crucifixion. Mark repeatedly names them in the passage we just read. Mary Magdalene is first. Mary the mother of James the younger and Joseph (in a variety of forms—but the same woman) is next. The last woman named is Salome. In addition, a number of unnamed women were also present who followed Jesus faithfully.

These women are remarkable! Mark breaks all the rules of Jewish culture and elevates them in his writing. This must have been shocking to his readers, as Jewish males assigned Jewish women a second-class status. More shocking is that these women have been a part of Jesus’ ministry as his loyal followers all along! David Garland helpfully writes, “Prior to Jesus’ crucifixion and burial, there has been no indication in the Gospel that Jesus had any women

followers. Now they surface as the prime witnesses to the events that are the foundation of Christian belief. . .” (*NIV Application Commentary*, 610).

**Joseph of Arimathea** is another interesting character. He is a well-known member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council. Up until this point, he has remained a silent sympathizer. Now, he steps out of the shadows and takes bold action. Identifying himself with Jesus could have caused the Romans to conclude Joseph was another radical, and crucify him too! He secures Jesus’ body, takes it from the cross, and buries it in his own tomb at his own expense.

Some scholars believe that the details of the secret trial and crucifixion are the eyewitness testimony of Joseph of Arimathea as a member of the Sanhedrin (Barclay, *Daily Study Bible*, 386). First-century readers would associate a face with his name, giving added credibility to Mark’s writing. They could easily question him in order to come to the truth.

The last witness to Jesus’ death is **Pilate**, who does so in an official capacity. While Pilate does not see Jesus’ dead body, he questions the centurion tasked with the crucifixion. The centurion certifies that Jesus is indeed dead. As the leading government official, Pilate completes the death-record by giving Joseph of Arimathea custody of the body.

Because the Jewish Sabbath begins at sundown, there was not much time available to bury Jesus. Joseph is the one who purchased the linen shroud, and quickly wrapped Jesus’ body in it. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph witnessed the hasty burial and its location in the garden tomb. If the first-century reader had doubts, Mark provides specific names for cross-examination of the witnesses. In effect, Mark is saying loud and clear, “Make no mistake, Jesus is dead, and these are the witnesses who can attest to the fact.”

## **II. Witnesses who certify that Jesus really rose from the grave. (Mark 16:1-7)**

With good reason, an entire day passes before Mark picks up the story again. The crucifixion concluded only hours before the Sabbath began. Sabbath regulations prohibited any kind of work after the first star was visible in the evening sky. In addition, this particular Sabbath coincided with the celebration of the Passover, one of the high holy days of the Jewish nation. The day of rest provides a silent, sober pause.

Mark continues his account. We continue our reading in chapter 16:1-7 (NIV):

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus’ body. <sup>2</sup>Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb <sup>3</sup>and they asked each other, “Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?”

<sup>4</sup>But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. <sup>5</sup>As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

<sup>6</sup>“Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.

<sup>7</sup> But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’”

Did you note that this is the third time in just eight verses this same trio of women are named? Timothy Keller notes that:

Biblical scholar Richard Bauchham says that this is another way Mark is letting us know that he is recording a historical account, not writing a legend. The repeated names of the women here are source citations. . . . These women must have been alive at the time that Mark was writing, or he wouldn’t have cited their names repeatedly. By including their names, Mark was saying to anyone reading this document: “If you want to check out the truth of my story, go talk to these three women. They’re still alive, and they can corroborate anything I have said” (*Jesus the King*, 234-235).

The faithful three—Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome—are busy and active as soon as possible following the Sabbath and Passover celebrations. They visit the market and purchase the necessary burial spices. They hurry to the tomb, just after sunrise in order to follow Jewish burial customs. Their primary concern is care for the body of Jesus. They go fully expecting to find their dead loved one. Their mission is to provide dignity for him in death.

Mark records they are worried. Their concern is not for personal safety. They are fretting about the heavy stone that Joseph of Arimathea used to secure the tomb. In all their shopping preparation, they had failed to tend to this daunting physical challenge. The stone was far too heavy for them to move. No male disciple accompanied them. They were helpless. They are downcast in eyes and heart.

Just before they have any thoughts of abandoning their work, Mark records their arrival at the tomb. They look up and see that the stone has somehow been removed. Mark is completely silent as to how this great problem has been resolved.

Just as quickly, they encounter another astonishing reality. Jesus’ tomb is empty. Instead of seeing his body, they see a young man dressed in a white robe. He reminds them in verse six of what Jesus has repeatedly told them. “*He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him*” (NIV). They had not remembered, fully absorbed, or believed Jesus’ repeated and clear teaching that he would rise on the third day. (See Mark 8, 9 and 10 for these teachings.) And now, it is the third day, and Jesus’ prophecy has come true.

Mark’s resurrection account concludes with the young man in white robes giving them an instruction. Though Jesus is not currently present with them in the tomb, He will see them again in Galilee. Listen again to the instructions given to the women (Mark 16:6-7, NIV):

<sup>6</sup> “Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.

<sup>7</sup> But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’”

With this, Mark's resurrection account closes like a player piano roll comes to its end and flaps on the upper spindle. Mark has concluded his account using the same brief and breathless style he has used all along. If we were left with only Mark's account, we might be left scratching our heads. And, God, in His wisdom has provided four other writers to help fill in the witness list to the resurrection. We do not have time to look at each writer's work in detail. But we do have time to name names. We do have time to call out those other witnesses, in addition to the women, who also provide firsthand, eyewitness testimony to the resurrection of Jesus.

Several of the disciples encounter the risen Jesus firsthand, and tell their story to the Gospel writers:

- Luke the physician tells us that Jesus appears to Simon Peter in an undisclosed location (Luke 24:34).
- Cleopas and another unnamed disciple encounter Jesus as they are walking home from Jerusalem to Emmaus. They have an extended conversation with Him, and invite Him home for supper. When Jesus blesses the bread, they recognize Him, and He disappears (Luke 24:1-35).
- In Jerusalem, in a locked room, ten disciples plus Cleopas and the unnamed disciple are surprised by the resurrected Jesus as he appears before them. Thomas is not present (Luke 24:36-43 and John 20:19-23).
- Eight days after the resurrection, in the same house, with Thomas also present, Jesus appears and invites Thomas to touch Him in order to believe (John 20:24-29).
- Jesus appears again to the disciples who have returned to fish on the Sea of Galilee. Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel, James, John and two other unnamed disciples encounter Jesus (John 21:1-24).
- On a mountainside in Galilee, Jesus appears again to the eleven disciples and teaches them (Matthew 28:16-20).
- Later, the Apostle Paul gathers the testimony of all those who had seen Jesus as he writes to the believers in Corinth. Listen to Paul's witness list from 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 (NIV):

<sup>3</sup> For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. <sup>6</sup> After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. <sup>7</sup> Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, <sup>8</sup> and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

Though none of the disciples had fully absorbed or believed Jesus' many predictions of His death and resurrection, they become fully convinced by their encounters with the risen Christ. They allow their encounters to be recorded. Anyone still skeptical in their day had the opportunity to cross-examine these witnesses. Could all those people hallucinate?

And even more compelling, these men and women were so sure of the resurrection that they became martyrs. They died horrible deaths because they stood by their testimony in the face of

strong opposition. A movement that should have died out with the eyewitnesses has kept going strong for over 2,000 years!

Timothy Keller helps us with a great summary:

Three fundamental lines of evidence intertwine to convince us that Jesus rose from the dead: the fact of the empty tomb, the testimony of numerous eyewitnesses, and the long-term impact on the lives of Jesus' followers (*Jesus the King*, 239).

This morning, you have received the written testimony. Do you believe? If you are still skeptical, what further evidence do you need?

Jesus' tomb is empty. Jesus has risen from the dead. He's alive and active in our world today through the lives of those who place their faith in Him. Will you believe?

*Jesus the King: Understanding the Life and Death of the Son of God* by Timothy Keller, 2013; previously published as *King's Cross: The Story of the World in the Life of Jesus*, 2011 (Penguin Books).