

Series: Ancient Faith

The Resurrected Son

Sermon by John Craft

Luke 24:44, John 16:7

Waterstone Community Church, Littleton, Colorado

Sunday morning, May 25, 2025

Paul: Good morning. How is everyone doing today? Doing good? Yeah, I spilled coffee on my jeans again today, so I am not doing great, but other than that, it is a good morning, and it is so good to be with you, worshipping together. I am really excited today to introduce you to our guest speaker. His name is John Craft, and just a reset before I welcome him up here. Throughout this series on the Nicene Creed, one of the postures we have had throughout this series is inviting people from different expressions of Christianity to come to our church, different church backgrounds, different places that they worship, because the Nicene Creed is something that transcends all of the different local expressions of faith that we might participate in, so while I love Waterstone, I believe Waterstone is a great church, we are not the only church. I do not know if you know that or not. You probably do, and so we want to welcome people from other expressions and different bodies of worship to come and share with us about what we believe, and so today we are going to be looking at the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, and John Craft has a great message for us. He is the executive director of the Rocky Mountain Church Network, which is actually a network of churches that Waterstone is a part of. You may not know that, but it is a body of churches that work together. We are in Kansas, Montana, Colorado, the western region of the United States, and we work together to collaborate to advance God's kingdom and share the gospel in our communities, so he has been the director there for a few years, been a great friend to Waterstone. He has come and talked to our elders about different things we are going through. He was very influential as we were walking through the transition last year between Larry and myself, coaching me and Larry through different things and how to do that well, so he is a great friend to Waterstone, and I am so excited for you to hear from him today. Would you please welcome John Craft up to the stage as we get going today?

John: Thank you, Paul. Good morning, church. It is so good to be here. I have been looking forward to this for a long time. Paul actually approached me late last year and asked if I would be open to coming and preaching as part of the series, and really, really excited. If you have a Bible, turn to the book of Luke. So, you look at the Bible, it is split into two parts. We have the Old Testament, written before Jesus came. The New Testament, written after Jesus was on the scene, begins with accounts of Jesus' life. Luke is the third of those accounts. We are going to be in Luke chapter 24 for the bulk of the morning, but before you get there, I just want to say we are so thankful for what God is doing at Waterstone as you look to see how you can connect with the community, to see how God can use you to help change lives and eternities. I have had a connection with Waterstone for a long time, behind the scenes. In early 2010 I was the senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Sheridan, Wyoming. I was part of the board of directors at the Rocky Mountain Church Network during that time. We were part of that same network, and I served on that board with Nick Lillo, and I got to know Nick. We hung out for a while, and then as I stepped into this role, I had lots of conversations with Pastor Larry and now with Pastor Paul. We are thankful for that, but beyond that, really thankful for your support of us in our ministry and for the way that you have connected with

other churches in our network in ways that you may not know, and I want to just tell a quick story about that, but we have a pastor in our network here, the Denver metro area, who stepped into a really dicey situation. The church was on the verge of closing. There was a lot of conflict. It was a really difficult conversation. One of the first calls I made as that pastor stepped into that role was to Larry Renoe, and I said, “Hey, Larry, would you have some bandwidth to just hang out with a guy who is trying to figure out how to help this church?” and Larry was glad to do that. I was at that other church here in the Denver area, preaching, and before the service, the pastor said, “John, you have no idea how much Larry has helped me. I do not think I would have made it without Larry Renoe.” You as a church have a part in another church beginning to thrive. There was a point in that pastor’s ministry when they were down to about fifteen people on a Sunday, a really, really dire situation. Then, over the course of the last about year and a half, they have seen people come to Christ, seen people get baptized, some young families starting to come. I was there on a Sunday and preached, and instead of fifteen people in the room, there were sixty people in the room. There was life and vitality. You have a big role in that, so thank you for supporting our ministry, even behind the scenes, in ways that you may not know. You are having greater kingdom impact than you realize, so we are thankful for Waterstone and for our partnership, but I actually came to preach. I do not know if you know that, so I am going to pray for us, and then we will get right to work in the book of Luke, chapter 24, so let’s pray together.

Father, we thank you for calling us to follow you, to be a part of your work, to be a part of seeing your kingdom grow and expand, to see lives and eternities changed. Father, we thank you that you give us ideas of how to do that in your word, and so I pray this morning as we open your word together that you would give us soft hearts, that you would give us open minds, that we would be ready for what your Spirit and your word desire to do within us today. Father, I pray that as I preach this morning, that you would take me as the speaker, the communicator of your word to your people. God, take me and fill me with your Holy Spirit right now, so that as I preach, as I open the word, God, that these are not just a good way to spend a few moments, but that these words are meaningful and important and transformational, so that when we head out of here in a few moments, we look a little more like Jesus, we follow him a little more closely, and we bring you a little more glory, in Jesus’ name, amen.

When I preach, I do not tend to use a lot of like big theological words. I think they can be a distraction. I think they are important because they describe important things, but I don’t necessarily like to dive into big terms, like to talk about the difference between infralapsarianism and supralapsarianism and the logical order of the decrees of God, and one of the reasons I do not do that is because I can see already a couple of you nodded off. You need to elbow someone next to you, because they can disconnect truth and reality sometimes from what we are trying to focus on. Sometimes I am concerned that if I dive into trying to unpack the difference between the trichotomous or dichotomous view of human existence, that it is just a way for me to show how smart I am, which, by the way, is not very, but this morning, as we begin our sermon, I cannot get around the fact that I need to use a big technical theological term in order to lay the foundation for what we are talking about as we think about the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, and the big technical theological term is this, “jacked up.” You know what I am talking about, because if you look around, all sorts of things are jacked up, our world, our culture, our society. There are lots of things around us that are just simply jacked up.

Relationships are broken. You may know of parents who abuse or neglect kids. You may have experienced the pain of a child walking away, abandoning the faith. You may have a relationship that has gone sideways, and you have no idea how to get it back straight. Jacked up. You look around culture, and there are divisions everywhere we look. Divisions are apparent. I am not saying anything new to point out the fact that there are political divisions in our culture, in our society, in our families, in our communities, that sometimes have ruptured relationships. Jacked up.

Cultural divisions are apparent that sometimes we live in fear and distrust of someone else simply because of the language that they speak or the place that they were born. Divisions. Jacked up. People live their lives in emptiness and frustration. Would you look at the person who serves you when you go out for lunch this afternoon, be aware of the fact that they may have woken up this morning just trying to figure out how they were going to make it to the end of the day, and that they are going to lay their head down on their pillow knowing that they are just going to wake up to start the process once again? Lives of emptiness and frustration. Jacked up. Everywhere we look, chaos, chaos because of sin.

As we come to this point, what I see as the central point of the Nicene Creed, we actually come to a point, a passage in the Creed that shows the central part of God's work in addressing the chaos that is creating the jacked-up ness in our world. By the way, that is another big theological term, jack-up ness. You can look it up in the dictionary afterwards, but this central portion shows what God is doing and how God addresses the jacked-up ness of our world, and it says this: "On the third day He rose again in accordance with the scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. These two events, the resurrection of Jesus, where Jesus went to the cross, He died, was buried in the ground, and He rose from the dead, the resurrection and the fact that Jesus then went to the Father and is seated at his right hand right now, that is what God has done to address the chaos that we see in the world today. It is important that we recognize that this is about what God is doing today, because when you unpack, you back up, and you look at that Nicene Creed, the section about Jesus which takes up the biggest chunk of that creed, this is a transitional moment, because everything that leads up to this point is past tense. Jesus created, Jesus was conceived, Jesus came, Jesus lived, Jesus suffered, Jesus died. They are all past tense. Now you move beyond this, and it is all future tense. It is Jesus will come. Jesus will judge the living and the dead. What we see right here is the one present-tense verb in the creed, that He is seated at the right hand of the Father, and because He is seated at the right hand of the Father right now, alive, He can impact you and me in the middle of our chaos right now, and God does that by bringing order to chaos and beauty to order. It is what God has always done. He moves chaos to order, order to beauty.

You even see it in the creation story, the creation account in Genesis, chapter one. Genesis 1:1: "God created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was formless and void." It is a picture of chaos, of things swirling around. God then takes that chaos, and He moves it from chaos into order, and He does that by making divisions. He says, "Here we have this chaotic world. I am going to create order here. We are going to make light and dark." There is a division. "We are going to make heaven and Earth." There is another division. "We are going to make the water above the sky and the water under the sky." That is a division. "We have the land and the water." That is another division. "We have the division of where animals go. We will put the fish in the water, because if they are on the ground, that is bad for them. We will put the cows on the land, because if they are in the water, that is bad for them." He creates order by

division. He creates male and female division. He creates order, but then to that order, He brings beauty, because as He brings beauty, you see that Adam and Eve have perfect relationships. They have a perfect relationship with each other. They have a perfect relationship with creation. They have a perfect relationship with God, but then sin happens, and sin brings chaos back into the equation, broken relationship. Adam and Eve, no longer perfect relationship, no longer perfect relationship with creation, no longer perfect relationship with God, so God begins the process of bringing order and then beauty to the chaos. He does that by addressing sin in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus and by making all things new, and so we will see how those come together.

We will see how those come together, and that work continues today in a passage, Luke chapter 24, at the very end of the book, a passage that encompasses both of the events. So, this passage happens after Jesus has gone to the cross. He has died. He has been buried. He rose again from the dead, and we know that He rose again from the dead because He appears, so there is an event, the death and resurrection, and then the proof, the appearing, and He appears several times, and so his disciples know that He has risen from the dead, and now here in Luke chapter 24 we see Jesus communicate some of the last things before He ascends back to the Father. Luke, chapter 24, verse 44, says, “Then Jesus said to them, ‘These are by words that I spoke to you.’” So says Luke 24:44: “‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then He opened their minds to understand the scriptures and said to them, ‘Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer and on the third day and rise from the dead and that repentance for the forgiveness of sin should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things, and behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you, but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.’”

What we need to understand as we dive into this passage is that Jesus points out that this moment in time is the point of everything. This is the point of everything. Again, Luke, chapter 24, verse 44, Jesus says, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Jesus says this is the point. This is the reason for everything, and here is why we see that. Jesus does something really important and very interesting right here. This is the one time in all the New Testament where you see all three divisions of the Old Testament together, the law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms. A couple of times in the New Testament, you will see a reference to Moses and the prophets. A couple of times it will reference the Psalms. In fact, in Acts chapter 13, Paul as he is preaching, he references specifically the second Psalm, so you see references, but this is the one time where all of them are together, and Jesus does that because He is saying, “Everything that we have in scripture is about me. The totality, everything you read it is about me, so when you read in the Garden of Eden, and Adam and Eve sin, and God, He makes clothes for them out of animal skins, that is about me. That is a picture of what I am going to do. The sacrifices that happen over and over and over, that is about me. It is a picture of what I am going to do,” and when you read the genealogies, you know the genealogies. That is the part you always skim over. First of all, I think Jesus says do not skim it. Well, Luke says do not skim it, because they are important, because they are about Jesus.

How are genealogies about Jesus? Well, here is what the basic formula, structure of a genealogy looks like. It says like in Genesis chapter 5: “This guy was born, and he lived this many years, and he had this son, and then he lived this many more years, and then he died,” and then it says, “and that guy, he lived this many years, he had this son, and he lived this many more years, and then he died, and he lived this long and had this son and lived this much longer, and then he died, and then he died, and then he died,” like, over and over. It is a depressing refrain. How is that about Jesus? Because He is the one who conquered death, and He is the one who is bringing the answer to death, and so we pay attention, because everything is about Him. Then Jesus opens the disciples’ minds to understand that everything has been moving towards these two events, the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. Luke chapter 24, verse 45 says, “Then He opened their minds to understand the scriptures and said to them, ‘Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer, and on the third day rise from the dead.’” Everything is pointing to this, because this is what God is doing to bring chaos to order and order to beauty.

So how does Jesus’ resurrection and ascension move us from chaos to order to beauty? I want to suggest three things that Jesus points out here. First, because Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to the Father, they give us his presence. They give us his presence. The resurrection, that happened at a point in time, that is a specific event, but as one pastor said, the resurrection was a point in time, but Easter continues. The work of Easter goes on, because Jesus is still alive. Jesus is still alive, because when Jesus rose from the dead and then ascended back to the Father, He broke all sorts of rules of space and time. He broke all sorts of rules. He appears in a locked room. How does He do that? He is breaking the rules of space and time. Jesus lives forever. How does He do that? He is breaking a rule in time there, because you and I do not live forever. We will come to a point where we die. In fact, you look at scripture in the New Testament, and there are quite a few people who have risen from the dead, like you think of Lazarus. Jesus Himself raises Lazarus from the dead. I have always felt sorry for Lazarus, because that dude had to die again. I have always wondered like, the second time around he is like, “Oh, man, here we go again. I know what is coming.” He died again. Jesus did not. Jesus rose from the dead, and He lives forevermore, and because He breaks the rules of space and time, He ascended, but He is not absent.

The ascension allows us to live the fact that Jesus rose from the dead and lives forever. The ascension allows us to live in what one pastor called the present risen-ness of Jesus. I love that thought, that we can live in the light of the fact that Jesus is here with us today, that Jesus dwells in us, that He is alive, that He is seated at the right hand of the Father, praying for us, interceding for us, ministering on our behalf, advocating for us, John writes. Jesus says in the Great Commission, “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” It is not the end of the age yet, which means that Jesus is still with us, so the resurrection and the ascension give us his presence, and his presence moves us from chaos to order to beauty. So, they give us his presence.

Secondly, they open the way for the person of the Holy Spirit. They open a way for the person of the Holy Spirit. Jesus says this Luke, chapter 24, verse 49: “Behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you, but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” When Jesus ascended, it meant that He would then send the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit comes in a new way as Jesus ascends to the Father, and it is important. In fact, Jesus describes how important this is in a really shocking passage. It would have been shocking to be one of the disciples to hear Jesus say this. In John Chapter 16, verse 7,

Jesus says, “Nevertheless, I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the helper will not come to you, but if I go, I will send Him to you.”

I want you to take a moment, put yourself in the shoes of one of the followers of Jesus who heard Jesus say this, so this passage happens after the Last Supper in John chapter 13, after the Last Supper. Jesus in the next chapter is going to give the high priestly prayer, and then He is arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, so this is a pivotal moment. The disciples are trying to figure out what is going on. They have walked with Jesus for three years. They have been with Him. They have followed Him. They have given up everything to be with Him, and then Jesus says, “You know what? It is better for you if I leave,” and if I were there, I would say, “Hey Jesus, I don’t know if you know what you are talking about. There’s no way it is better if you leave,” but ultimately what Jesus is saying is it is better to have the Spirit of God inside you than the Son of God beside you. To have the Spirit of God indwelling you, empowering you, teaching you, guiding you, illuminating scripture for you, bringing things to remembrance, giving you gifts, sealing you for salvation, all the things that the Holy Spirit is described to do in the New Testament. It is better to have the Holy Spirit inside you than to have the Son of God physically next to you.

It would be so awesome, I thought. I would like to have dinner with Jesus, to be in one of the scenes and see what they ate and to hang out with Jesus. That would have been so cool, but what does Jesus say when people, like He sees Mary after He rises from the dead and by the tomb, and Mary Magdalene falls and worships, and Jesus says what? “Don’t cling to me, because I have not yet ascended into my Father.” The relationship has changed, but the relationship is deeper and better, because now Jesus can send the Holy Spirit, and now we do not have just Jesus beside us, telling us what to do. We have the Spirit of God inside of us, empowering us to do it, and so God, through Jesus sending the Holy Spirit, moves our lives from chaos to order to beauty.

Thirdly, the resurrection and the ascension bring new purpose to our lives. As a church and particularly in the work that I do, coming alongside, helping churches figure out how they can better fulfill what God has called them to do, but we talk a lot about the Great Commission, and I love talking about the Great Commission, because it is the mission of the church, where Jesus says, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything that I have commanded you. Lo, I am with you always.” That is what we are supposed to do as a church, but Matthew makes a very interesting commentary just previous to the Great Commission that sometimes I think we do not pay enough attention to. It says this in Matthew chapter 28, verse 16: “The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them, and when they saw Him, they worshipped, but some doubted.” Some doubted, and I look at those eleven disciples, and I think, “Guys how can you doubt? You have seen Jesus. You know He has risen from the dead. You have spent time with Him. You have heard Him teach after He resurrected. You have seen it. You ate meals with Him. You know He is alive. In fact, He is like, right there. How can you doubt?”

I think it is important that we recognize that the word that Matthew uses here does not necessarily imply disbelief. The word that Matthew uses here carries the connotation, it carries the meaning almost literally, of being between two stances, and I think what is going on is the disciples, they look, and they see Jesus. Jesus has done what He said he was going to do. Jesus has gone to the cross. He has died a real death. He has risen again, and those disciples look at Jesus, and they realize that they are now between

two stances. They have a choice to make, because if Jesus can do that, then my life can no longer be the same. I have to have a new purpose, and that purpose is no longer to fulfill what John wants, as much as I would love that. If you could find that verse in the Bible for me, I would really appreciate it, but it is not there, because the purpose is no longer to live for what John wants. My new purpose is to live for what Jesus wants, to live in light of his word and his desire, to be the one who, as Jesus says, preaches repentance for the forgiveness of sins. That is our new purpose, and as we step into that purpose more and more and more, what we see is that we are moved from chaos, just trying to satisfy our own selves, into order and into beauty, to see the incredible things that God has for us, because when you serve, you minister in Jesus' name, you get to see Him do miracles in people's lives. You are not just a Sunday school teacher. You are seeing miracles take place as kids are moved, and they realize that someone who loves Jesus loves them, that their lives and eternities are changed. That is a miracle. When you give to a church, it is not just pushing a button on a phone or dropping something in a box. It is being a part of God doing miracles in your church and in your community, because lives and eternities are changed. Chaos moves to order, order moves to beauty, and you can have a part of that as you realize that you now have a new purpose in your life. The presence of Jesus, the person of the Holy Spirit, and the purpose of following Him brings beauty.

Then in the ascension we see that God is still at work. We see that that God, that Jesus is still at work. At the end of this account, the end of the book of Luke, we see in verse 50 of Luke chapter 24, that "Jesus led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting his hands, He blessed them, and while He blessed them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven." This actually is one of my favorite passages in all the New Testament. Jesus leads his disciples out. They are walking with Him. Jesus is probably still teaching. He is opening their minds. They are understanding more and more of what He has done for them, and then it says He raises his hands, and He blesses them. Those are the hands that healed lepers. Those are the hands that fed thousands. Those are the hands that raised a little girl from the dead. Those are the hands that still bear the marks of the crucifixion, that it shows what Jesus did to pay the penalty for sin, and He raises those hands, and He blesses them, and then, I love that Luke says, "While He blessed them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven." Like Jesus is actively blessing, and then He is out of there, which to me shows that He is still blessing, still at work, moving us from chaos to order to beauty.

So, as you think about that work of Jesus, giving you his presence, giving you the person of the Holy Spirit, giving you purpose in your life, do not say stuck in chaos. You may have a relationship that has been broken for a long time. What can you do in Jesus' name to set that right, through the power of the Holy Spirit giving you the courage to go and apologize, to ask for forgiveness, to try to restore that relationship? Maybe the chaos in your life is that you have been living for yourself, and you have come to the point where you realize that that is not really going how you thought it would, and so instead, you need to take a moment today and ask God to show you what He would have you to do, how He would have you to live, how He would have you to serve, to give, and to minister.

Maybe you are here today, and you are stuck in the chaos of sin, and you recognize right now that the path that you are heading on leads to death, separation from God. I want you to know this morning that God wants to set you free from that chaos, because He brings order through providing forgiveness for sin, because Jesus bore the penalty for that wrong that you have done in his body when He died on the cross, and then He rose from the dead to show that that is gone. It is conquered. It is taken care of, and He

can bring beauty to your life now. If you want to know more about what Jesus did when He died in your place and on your behalf, I will be down here towards the front. I would love to talk with you more. One of the pastors or elders would love to talk with you more, because maybe today would be the day that you are finally set free from the chaos that has entrapped you for so long, and you can find order and beauty. Remember, Jesus came, Jesus lived, Jesus died, Jesus rose again, and He lives forever to move chaos to order and order to beauty. Live in the present risen-ness of Jesus. As we go from here, let's stand together as we wrap our time up with a word of prayer and prepare our hearts to enter into some further worship in response to what Jesus has done for us.

Father, we thank you for Jesus. We thank you for his incredible sinless life, for his sacrificial death, for his glorious resurrection. Father, I pray that as we continue to think about who Jesus is and what He has done and what He accomplished through what He has done, God, I pray that you would open our hearts and minds more and more, that just as Jesus opened the disciples' minds to understand the scriptures, God, I pray that our minds would be opened to understand what you have done for us through Him. Father, I pray for someone in the room, or someone who is watching online, who maybe is stuck in the chaos of sin. God, I pray that today would be the day that they recognize your great work and your great love for them and that they can find a way to be set free from that through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, but for now, Father, as we consider how we are going to live in light of what you have done, draw us close to your heart. Help us to honor and glorify you, in Jesus' name, amen. I would like for you to stay standing as we continue and worship.

Paul: Would you pray with me? Heavenly Father, God, as John reminded us today, the ways we look around the world and see chaos, the way that we see and experience things not quite as they should be, Lord Jesus, I was reminded that the idea that you are seated at the right hand of the Father not only means that we can have your presence, not only that we can have purpose, but also that you have been given all power and all authority. You have been given authority over death and the grave and all of the chaos that we see in this world. You reign, and so Father, in the name of Jesus, we ask you to do what John said today, to move in this world. In the places where we experienced the chaos and the brokenness, we pray for redemption and reconciliation. We pray that you would do what only you can do, which is bringing new life into places that look dead and forgotten. God, may you be the king of our hearts, and may we proclaim and lift you up as the king of this world, and it is in Christ's name we pray, amen.

38:20 minutes