

Scottie Alvarez 4-20-2025
EASTER 2025: LOVE IS THIS

Happy Resurrection Sunday CVCHURCH! I'm thankful you chose to spend your Easter with us and to invite your family and friends. Welcome to our guests, online and in the worship center. As we like to say: welcome home! Today is part 2 of our 4-part Easter mini-series LOVE IS THIS **[Show LOVE IS THIS]**. I hope we give you a little appetizer of how we feast on God's Word every day, and I look forward to seeing you again next Sunday, April 27th when we conclude our verse-by-verse journey through the Luke account of the resurrection narrative. If you enjoy today, you can watch last week's Part 1 of this series on our **website cvchurch.com, YouTube channel & Facebook page @cvchurchla**. There you'll find video, scripts, and notes from every Friday (when Celebrate Recovery meets) & Sunday service. Before we start, let's re-focus on Jesus. He's who we celebrate today. Let's pray: *Jesus, on this glorious Resurrection Sunday, we focus our hearts and minds on you. Some of us are here out of family obligation, some out of curiosity, or guilt, some are in anticipation of Your living Word. We thank You for gathering us together. Lord, we declare that You are risen! We ask You, Holy Spirit, to illuminate Your Word today. Speak to us in a fresh way. Jesus, we receive Your understanding, Your revelation, Your strength to apply these truths to our lives. We open our hearts to Your resurrection Power and Your transforming grace. We pray this in Your living Name, Jesus, Amen!*

Follow in your notes as I read the 1st of our 3 passages, the Gospel of Luke 24:1-5. As I read, ask yourself: **"How can I apply to my life today the resurrection power of Jesus?"** This will allow the Holy Spirit to speak to us about His definition of love. Our culture says, 'love is love', or 'love is this', or 'love is that', or 'love is whatever you want it to be'. Jesus says love is this: I died for you. Follow along with **Luke 24:1-5a – THE RESURRECTION – “¹BUT VERY EARLY ON SUNDAY MORNING THE WOMEN WENT TO THE TOMB, TAKING THE SPICES THEY HAD PREPARED. ²THEY FOUND THAT THE STONE HAD BEEN ROLLED AWAY FROM THE ENTRANCE. ³SO THEY WENT IN, BUT THEY DIDN'T FIND THE BODY OF THE LORD JESUS. ⁴AS THEY STOOD THERE PUZZLED, TWO MEN SUDDENLY APPEARED TO THEM, CLOTHED IN DAZZLING ROBES. ⁵THE WOMEN WERE TERRIFIED AND BOWED WITH THEIR FACES TO THE GROUND.”** To celebrate Jesus' resurrection this Easter, receive His Biblical love, allow Him to redefine your view of love, and invite Him to show you how His love is *this*. Here's the first fill-in in your notes: **I. LOVE IS THIS: DEVOTED.** The Gospel of Luke's resurrection narrative begins after Jesus' brutal, horrific death on the cross, and after His placement in a tomb. Imagine the scene: The women who followed Him throughout His ministry were feeling a somber mix of grief and devotion. Grief due to them witnessing their beloved rabbi's brutal crucifixion firsthand, up close. **[Show Women Faces]** They meticulously observed where and how His body was laid in the tomb so they could return after the Sabbath, early Sunday morning, to properly anoint Him with the spices and perfumes they'd prepared. They were clearly grieving His death, but they also were standing firm in their devotion because they believed, they KNEW, by faith, He was the Messiah. He was Who God promised would redeem their nation. In Jewish tradition, the Messiah would

unite Israel's 12 tribes, gather all Jews back to Israel, and rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. How could that happen now? He's dead! Despite the unimaginable loss and the crushing defeat of the cross, their loyalty was steadfast. They even took the time, these fully devoted followers of Jesus, to observe God's appointed Sabbath day of rest. Are you grieving today? Jesus was going to rescue us! What hardship are you enduring? This was not supposed to happen! Are you in disbelief? What crushing defeat have you experienced? In your pain, do you stay faithful to Jesus like these women, even when all seems lost? Do you rest when you need to? They were committed and determined, even in their sorrow, to rise early on Sunday morning after the Sabbath, and to finish the burial process, a final act of honor and respect for their fallen rabbi. As they approach the tomb that early Sunday morning, the weight of grief, the emotional toll of the preceding days—the cross and the tomb—combined with the physical exertion of their recent journey (Galilee to Jerusalem is 90 miles, a week on foot)—it all must have created a heavy atmosphere of sorrow. **[Show Tomb]** Who were these women? What were their names? There's debate over all of the relationships, and the identities, but most scholars agree on six: 1) Mary Magdalene, one of the earliest followers who Jesus healed; 2) Joanna, the wealthy and influential wife of King Herod Antipas' manager; 3) Mary of Clopas, the wife of Jesus' uncle Clopas (which makes her Jesus' paternal aunt) and she's also the mother of the disciple 'little' James; 4) Salome, Jesus' maternal aunt, wife of Zebedee, and the mother of disciples John & 'big' James; 5) Susanna, another follower whom Jesus healed; and 6) some translations also include Mary, Jesus' mom. They're the heartbeat of Jesus' ministry, and they understood and cared for Jesus and His disciples. As they approach the tomb, ready to perform the burial rites, they see the tomb is open, the stone rolled away from the entrance. They go in, but there's no Jesus! They're puzzled, perplexed, at a loss. They don't know what's going on. Where's Jesus' body? No grave robbers could have moved a stone tomb door of that size. We saw Him crucified and buried, and now He's gone! Suddenly, two men appear in dazzling robes that gleam like lightning. **[Show Angels]** The women react with understandable terror, a normal human response to the sight of the supernatural beings before them. Jesus had told them! He would be raised from the dead after being killed, but in all the chaos and confusion, they can't fit the pieces of the puzzle together. Do you have a hard time wrapping your mind around the resurrection? Jesus' disciples did, too. Despite all their fear and confusion, they still give a devoted response. They don't run, they don't argue, they bow before the angels, their faces to the ground. How are you confused, grieving, afraid? Devote yourself to Jesus today. He'll reveal Himself in unexpected, surprising, glorious ways. It might be a word, a prompting, an insight, encouragement where you least expect. Seeking Jesus is never in vain. Take your questions, confusion, doubt, fear—take them to Him, and you'll find Him.

Follow along as I continue with our 2nd passage, **Luke 24:5-8 – “⁵THEN THE MEN ASKED, ‘WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AMONG THE DEAD FOR SOMEONE WHO IS ALIVE? ⁶ HE ISN’T HERE! HE IS RISEN FROM THE DEAD! REMEMBER WHAT HE TOLD YOU BACK IN GALILEE, ⁷THAT THE SON OF MAN MUST BE BETRAYED INTO THE HANDS OF SINFUL MEN AND BE CRUCIFIED, AND THAT HE WOULD RISE AGAIN ON THE THIRD DAY.” ⁸THEN THEY REMEMBERED THAT HE HAD SAID THIS.”** The next fill-in: II. LOVE IS THIS: PROMISED. The angels, God's divine

messengers, speak the essence of Easter. It's a paradox. **"Why are you looking among the dead for someone who is alive?"** Maybe that's you today. Are you like I was? Weary from seeking life in places of death? Death can't hold Jesus. He's not found in the realm of the deceased. The question challenges our fundamental ideas of life and death. The angels point us to the miraculous reality of the resurrection. **"He isn't here! He is risen from the dead!"** Jesus isn't found in a tomb. He's alive! A dead man, Who claimed to be God Himself, decaying in a tomb for three days, comes back to life. Have you wrapped your mind around this? It's not like planting a seed in the Spring and harvesting it in the Fall; this is supernatural, beyond nature. It's incredible, and if you're a skeptic or cynic, I get it. I was too, but this miraculous event, this resurrection of Jesus, is the foundation of our faith. If God can do this, He can do anything! The angels don't just declare it; they direct the women, and us, to *REMEMBER*. **"REMEMBER WHAT JESUS TOLD YOU."** If you're here today, onsite or online, when did you first hear about Jesus? Maybe today is the first time, or maybe you heard about Him as a child, but then turned away. Or maybe you've heard, over and over, but resisted, and yet something you're hearing today is just hitting a little different. Our faith is not new. It's ancient. It's not a new concept. It's not iOS 18. It's OT—Old Testament. Jesus is the fulfillment not only of what all of the Old Testament faith heroes and prophets predicted, but also what Jesus Himself foretold. If you would choose to follow Jesus today, you'll have a chance to do that, but before we can choose to follow Him, we must first recognize Him as our risen Lord and Savior by remembering His own words and deeds. The angels remind us of His clear predictions of suffering, death, and resurrection: **"...THE SON OF MAN MUST BE BETRAYED INTO THE HANDS OF SINFUL MEN AND BE CRUCIFIED... AND RISE AGAIN ON THE THIRD DAY."** Let's stand and join our worship team in singing our Easter theme, 'Love is This'. As we sing, imagine the angels reminding us to remember! **[Song 'Love is This']**

Follow along with our 3rd and final passage: **Luke 24:9-12 – ⁹SO THEY RUSHED BACK FROM THE TOMB TO TELL HIS ELEVEN DISCIPLES—AND EVERYONE ELSE—WHAT HAD HAPPENED. ¹⁰IT WAS MARY MAGDALENE, JOANNA, MARY THE MOTHER OF JAMES, AND SEVERAL OTHER WOMEN WHO TOLD THE APOSTLES WHAT HAD HAPPENED. ¹¹BUT THE STORY SOUNDED LIKE NONSENSE TO THE MEN, SO THEY DIDN'T BELIEVE IT. ¹²HOWEVER, PETER JUMPED UP AND RAN TO THE TOMB TO LOOK. STOOPING, HE PEERED IN AND SAW THE EMPTY LINEN WRAPPINGS; THEN HE WENT HOME AGAIN, WONDERING WHAT HAD HAPPENED."** The angels' urging the women to remember Jesus has its intended effect. Their fear and confusion dissipate when confronted with His truth. Do you need Jesus to calm your emotions? He's the Prince of Peace. When we remember His Word and understand it, we encounter the risen Jesus. It's not enough to just hear Scripture; we must hold onto it, meditate on it, and allow it to shape us. Do you struggle with the magnitude of the empty tomb? Remember Jesus and His Words we have documented for us in the Bible. Remembering unlocks meaning, and once we grasp the significance of the resurrection, we're launched into action! The final fill-in: **III. LOVE IS THIS: ENERGIZED.** The angels preach the Gospel, and it energizes the women into action. The women, once filled with doubt and fear, activate to become the first evangelists! **[Show Women Telling]** They rush to tell the 11 remaining

disciples—and everyone else—the Good News of the empty tomb. Why only 11 disciples? Jesus' betrayer Judas left them. He not only betrayed Jesus, he betrayed his friends. He chose to leave them. He couldn't accept Who Jesus really was. He couldn't let go of his own notions of Israel's Messiah. Are you holding on to your own ideas? Do you respond to the Good News of the empty tomb? These faithful women *took action on* what they saw and heard. The first ones they had to convince were the disciples themselves! This is the 1st recorded missional moment in history! The women preaching the good news to Jesus' own disciples! Jesus says "no one comes to the Father except through Me"—not even My own disciples. Is the Good News stirring something new in you today? Oh, it sure stirred those women. They started a revolution that changed the world forever—our very nation wouldn't exist without these women—and it started with their dearest friends: *"Hey Peter, Andrew, Big James & John, Little James, Matthew, come here, listen... Jesus is alive! No, He's not dead! We went to the tomb, and we saw these angels, and remember what Jesus said? It's all true! He's risen from the dead!"* What's stopping you from being energized? You can boldly proclaim His Good News, even when faced with doubt or unbelief. Jesus own disciples didn't believe it—not at first. Their response is skepticism: *"Crucified dead men don't come back to life! Didn't you see what the Romans did to Him?"* They dismiss the women's testimony as nonsense. Yet, even in their disbelief, a seed is planted. **[Show Peter]** Peter is curious. Their brash, outspoken leader, despite his skepticism, goes to investigate himself. This is how faith spreads. We—you and me—speak the Gospel boldly to our friends, to everyone, and people reject it, people reject us, but seeds are planted. Peter, the rock upon which Jesus builds His church, this church, when he first hears the Gospel, coming from women no less, he doesn't believe it, but he goes to investigate for himself, and the Holy Spirit begins to work in him. *"Did Jesus really rise from the dead? Could God's love for me, for us, be this?"* Soon, Peter encounters the risen Jesus Himself, and his tune changes! **[Song 'I Know a Name']**

Do you, like Peter, disbelieve? We all face it. It's normal. If that's you, investigate like Peter. See for yourself. The resurrection is unbelievable at first, but even in doubt, Jesus' truth prevails. We have amazing resources on our book table to help you answer your questions. Examine the evidence. The resurrection of Jesus is not a myth; it's a reality that transforms lives today, just like it did then. Maybe you're here and you once believed Jesus is risen, but you turned away? If that's you, it's not too late. He hasn't given up on you. Turn away from your selfish ambition. Turn back to Him. He wants to show you how His love is *this*. If you're here and only came out of guilt, obligation, or religious ritual, we're honored you're here. I urge you: go all in. The women were all in. Peter, eventually, went all in, and when he did, he proclaimed Jesus' resurrection to anyone and everyone who'd listen. He and the apostles turned the world upside-down. Jesus offers you a chance today, to say, "Yes, Jesus, I'm all in." You might still struggle, even when God reveals His power to you. The empty tomb isn't a sign of loss, it's a sign of victory. It declares that death is defeated. If you choose today, Easter Sunday 2025, to see that Jesus' love for you is *this*—*this* devoted, *this* promised, *this* energized, and you want this to be yours, pray with me: *Jesus, we turn from our rebellion, and we turn to you. We receive your love today. We acknowledge that your love is this, this devoted to us, this promised to us, this energized in us and through us. We declare you are our*

risen Lord & Savior. Empower us, Jesus, like the women we heard today, to boldly declare Your Good News to anyone and everyone, even when we doubt and fear. Give us Peter's curiosity to seek You, encounter You, follow You, and live in Your resurrection power. It's in Your risen Name, Jesus, we pray, Amen. If you prayed that with me, please let me know on your friends card or see me out back after service. I'm here to help you with resources for your journey with Jesus. Have a great Easter! Here's Kathe to close.