

# A Dead Idol or a Living God

by Richard E. Bieber

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*The sermon challenges listeners to encounter the living Jesus, allowing His presence to transform their hearts and lives.*

**Duration:** 23:32

**Scripture:** Luke 24:25

**Topics:** "Idol"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of the throne inside the heart of every individual. He explains that this throne represents what or who rules our lives. The preacher emphasizes that when Jesus enters our hearts, the other things that occupy the throne, such as fear, lust, and greed, begin to fall away. He uses the example of the disciples who were transformed by their encounter with Jesus and encourages the audience to acknowledge their need, listen to Jesus, and welcome him into their hearts. The preacher also mentions the importance of the Holy Spirit and how it empowers believers to live a transformed life.

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## Transcript

Well, it's another Easter. And all over the city, people are going to church. It's the day of the biggest crowds of the year.

And that's very appropriate. Because this is the day when we come together to sing about and think about and talk about and praise God for the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The test, however, comes when church is over.

Were we to the museum? Or did we in some way meet Jesus alive from the dead? If we were to the museum to pay our respects to a dead idol of a dead tradition, then next week, it'll be back to normal. But if, somehow, here today, we encounter Jesus alive from the dead, we will be so changed by this encounter and so refreshed and renewed by it that Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and so forth will be different. Next week, we'll all be back.

And not only will we all be back, but we'll have half the town with us and they won't be able to get in the door. And this is for sure. I see people looking very skeptically about that.

Really. If something genuine happens, it will become obvious. Because when we meet Jesus alive from the dead, we don't just go away with happy memories.

We go away changed. How are we changed? To try to describe something spiritual in physical terms, in the center of the heart of each of us, there is a room. And in that room, there is a throne.

We, ourselves, never occupy that throne. It's impossible. But we do determine who or what sits on that throne inside us.

Whatever sits on the throne inside, in that room, rules our life. If fear sits on the throne, we're ruled by fear. If lust or greed or ambition sit on that throne, those are the things which dominate our lives.

If a golden calf or a silver Cadillac sits on that throne, then the spirit behind that idol controls us. In the beginning, that throne was occupied by God. When Adam and Eve walked in paradise, there was a flame burning on that throne in their inmost heart, which was the presence of the spirit of God Himself.

And by that flame, they were able to walk and talk with God. They knew Him. They rejoiced in Him.

But when they chose to trust the deceiver and turned away from God, that flame went out. The throne became empty and the room became like a vacuum. And ever since, that throne has been up for grabs.

It's been the scene of a battle. And the whole history of the human race since then has been one thing after another getting hold of the throne inside the heart. Men and women all the time striving with each other.

Lust, greed, envy, vanity, murder, bloodshed, war, death. Jesus came in order to make it possible for the throne inside the heart of man once again to be occupied by the presence of God. In Him was light, and that light was the light of men.

And that light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. And that light is intended to come from Him to the inmost heart of each of us. He came that they might have life and have it more abundantly.

Jesus began to gather around Himself some disciples, followers. And the amazing thing that happened to these men and women as they came around Jesus was that the other things which occupied the throne in their heart began to fall away. All that lust, and the ambition, and the greed, and the ego, and the fear, and the death that ruled these men and women before disappeared.

And in a wonderful way, even while Jesus was with them, in flesh and blood, He was on the throne of their hearts. Now this presence of Jesus on the throne of the hearts of these disciples was a reflected light. It was as if behind the throne there is this giant mirror, and in front of the throne is this huge window.

And as long as the window opens on Jesus, and the light of His word and the light of His countenance shines through, that light bounces off the mirror, and in a wonderful way, the image of the Lord Himself sits on the throne. When disciples became offended by things that Jesus said or did, and turned from Him, of course the light went out. But for those who continued to walk with Jesus, the light of His presence on the throne in their hearts was not an illusion, it was real.

By the light of the presence of the Lord sitting on the throne in Peter's heart, He proclaimed the kingdom with power. John healed the sick. Andrew cast out demons.

There was life there. Then came Good Friday. And as these men and women watched Jesus hang on that cross and die, that flame, that presence, that light burning in the throne in their inmost hearts went out too.

And that inmost room became shrouded in darkness. And as they watched Jesus die, even the mirror behind the throne smashed into a million pieces. The Sabbath which followed was the most desolate day of their lives.

Then, Jesus rose from the dead. Before any of these disciples knew what was going on, Jesus stepped forth from His tomb, alive, never to die again. In a body as different from the body that had died on Good Friday as day differs from night.

He was sown in corruption, He was raised in incorruption. He was sown in weakness, He was raised in power. Then He began to speak to these disciples.

And whenever Jesus would come among the disciples, alive from the dead, and would speak to them, as they heard Him speak, even before they recognized Him, a flame began to burn on that throne in their hearts, which was not reflected, but which was there, if they were willing, forever. Luke describes to us how this worked. Reading from Luke 24, 13.

That day, two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing Him.

And He said to them, What is this conversation which you are holding with each other as you walk? They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered Him, Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days? And He said to them, What things? They said to Him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who is a prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered Him up to be condemned to death and crucified Him. But we had hoped that He was the one to deliver Israel.

And now our hope is gone. That throne inside us is empty. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since this happened.

Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find His body. They came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive.

Some of those who went with us to the tomb found it just as the women had said, but Him they did not see. And He said to them, O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all the prophets have spoken, was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory? And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself. O foolish men, slow of heart to believe all the prophets have spoken, was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory? Now Jesus is alive from the dead and He's on His way.

He's entering into His glory. And we think of this, and rightly so, that He's on His way back to the headquarters of the universe to sit on the throne of power. All authority is given to Me in heaven and on earth.

And that's true. But it's also true that Jesus enters into His glory even at that moment as He speaks to these two men. For as Jesus speaks to these two men, the flame of His light ignites and burns inside them.

And Jesus is entering into His glory in their hearts. So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He appeared to be going further, but they constrained Him, saying, Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.

So He went in to stay with them. And when He was at table with them, He took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened.

They recognized Him. He vanished out of their sight. They said to each other, Did not our hearts burn within us as He talked with us on the road and as He opened to us the scriptures? And indeed their hearts burned within them as He talked with them.

Because as He spoke with them and opened the scriptures, He began to live inside on that throne. These two men. And He did this every time He appeared.

He ignited that light inside them, these men, these women. And then for 40 days, He nurtured this life which He put within them and watched over it and taught them the things they needed to know. Then He left them.

Commanded them to stay in Jerusalem until they received power from on high. And then on the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit fell, this little flame burning inside their hearts became an immense blaze in them that shook the city and as they went forth into the world, it shook the whole world. Did not our hearts burn within us as He spoke with us on the road and as He opened to us the scriptures? From 1 John chapter 5. And this is the testimony that God gave us eternal life and this life is in His Son.

He who has the Son has life. And he who has not the Son has not life. And to have the Son is not to have the doctrines in your head.

To have the Son is to have the life of Jesus burning in your heart. Reading on in 1 Peter. Chapter 1 verse 3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

By His great mercy, we have been born anew to a living hope. Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. A living hope.

And that living hope is a flame. It's a light burning on that throne. Jumping over to Colossians chapter 1. The mystery, hidden for ages and generations, but now made manifest to His saints.

To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery. This mystery which is Christ in you. The hope of glory.

Christ in you, the hope of glory. Jesus entering into His glory by occupying the throne in your own heart. How do you know when somebody has met Jesus alive from the dead? When someone has met Jesus alive from the dead there is a burning flame inside them that manifests itself as a life lived in His nature.

His mercy. His joy in God. His continuous forbearance with other people.

If these things aren't shining forth from that inner flame then it's doubtful. Something's wrong. And this flame that burns within us when we meet Jesus alive from the dead is not a reflected light.

Like we so often experience when I'm among the believers I feel strong in faith. And then when I'm back on my job or home with my wife or my husband or in the midst of all these problems my faith evaporates. When you have the presence of the Lord burning on the throne in your heart it's there all the time.

So, it's a wonderful thing that we have the chance to come together like this and celebrate and rejoice at the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. And as we come together in His name in this way He comes into our midst as He does in countless other places in Detroit and across the earth. He's here.

But now we're very much like those two disciples on the way to Emmaus. He was walking there and they didn't know who He was. And it wasn't doing them any good until somehow He ignites the flame within them.

And what we need is not only to have Jesus standing in our midst alive from the dead. We need to have the flame of His burning light occupying the throne of our inmost hearts. And we can have this.

Now God knows our hearts. He alone really knows. And we all too often succumb to the temptation to analyze our brother or our sister's heart.

Let's not do that now. Let's leave our brother's heart alone. Let's not psychoanalyze our sister's spirit.

But let's worry about our own. And no doubt just thinking about our own condition there's every variety possible here. Some of us have little teeny tiny flames we came with this morning.

And some have flames that shoot up every six months for about three days. And some of us, it's like there's a little bit of smoke left. And we remember what was once there.

And some of us perhaps have never experienced this at all. But the good news is that for all of us whether we have a big flame or a thin flame or no flame the Lord wants to come and occupy that throne inside us today. And all we have to do is exactly what these disciples did on the road to Emmaus.

They did three things. First, they frankly and openly acknowledged their need. Secondly, they listened as Jesus spoke to them and drank it in.

And thirdly, they welcomed him into their hearts. First thing they did was admit their need. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.

Now our hope is gone. That room inside our hearts is dark and empty and cold. Something's missing.

And we need to do this too. Far better than to pretend to ourselves and to all the saints what ripsnorters we are. Far better to admit there's a terrible need in each of our hearts.

None of us can say otherwise. Lord God, when I see the needs around me when I understand the things I am now called upon to live through and do I simply don't have enough. A friend of mine has come on a journey and I have nothing to set before him.

I don't have the strength and the life. God, fill me with the presence of your Son. I have no need.

If you ask, you receive. If you knock, the door opens. If you seek, you find.

Nothing happens all too often. Once we understand these things then don't do any knocking or asking. Second thing, they listened when Jesus spoke to them.

They didn't still know who this was but they drank it in. Oh foolish man, slow of heart to believe all the prophets have spoken. Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and enter into his glory? And they drink this in, they listen as he speaks and even as he's speaking the flame begins to burn.

And he speaks to us. He opens the scriptures to us. Right now, today, not only through sermons not only through the scriptures that are read but in the hymns and even as we sit in silence the spirit that gives life the flesh is of no avail.

The words that I speak to you says Jesus they are spirit, they are life, they will ignite you. If you listen, God help us to listen with teachable, broken spirits like children. God help us to lay aside the attitudes that hinder the flow of his word getting into our hearts.

All too often I know all the answers so it gets this far and bounces off until I stop knowing all the answers and approach him with poverty of spirit then boom, he comes in and I begin to live. Finally, the disciples when they got to Emmaus said to Jesus stay with us for it is toward evening and the day is far spent and those words which they spoke to Jesus are the precise words we need to speak. It's not quite 12 o'clock 11.32 the day isn't far spent but the day of our life on this earth whether we're 15 or 21 or 35 or 79 it is toward evening and the day is far spent.

Lord Jesus come into my life and transform these few remaining hours of the day that I have in this world of flesh and blood into something meaningful into life. Please Lord come in and stay with me stay with us for it is indeed toward evening and the day is far far far spent. Shortly we'll be going on our way.

Will we have been to the museum to pay homage to a dead idol of a dead tradition or will we have in fact somehow somewhere met Jesus alive from the dead. If we met Jesus alive from the dead in this place today we will go from this place differently. The plane that we had if we had any at all when we came will be much larger much steadier much stronger and we will buy that plane be able to go out into the world and proclaim the kingdom of God and manifest the mercy of God and show the forbearance of God to our husbands and wives and children and neighbors and fellow workers people who give us a hard time that foreman on the job whatever it is we'll be able to live in a totally different atmosphere where we will be in fact living by the atmosphere of heaven which now dwells inside.

So let's do these three things as we go to prayer. Let's acknowledge and confess before the Lord our own need of his resurrection light burning inside. Let's listen as he speaks and he will to each of our hearts each according to his or her need and let's invite him in.

Stay with us Lord for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent. Let's pray.

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