

## Lifting ourselves up by our own bootstraps

It is critical that people choose for themselves...

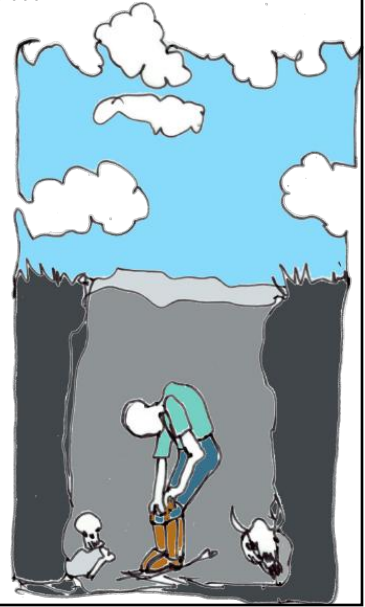
- do they **want** to get better?
- do they **want** to learn?
- do they **want** to grow?

But: We can't always lift ourselves  
out of the pits we're in

When is it wrong to tell people to lift  
themselves up by their own bootstraps?

What is our basic human condition?

What is the answer to that condition?

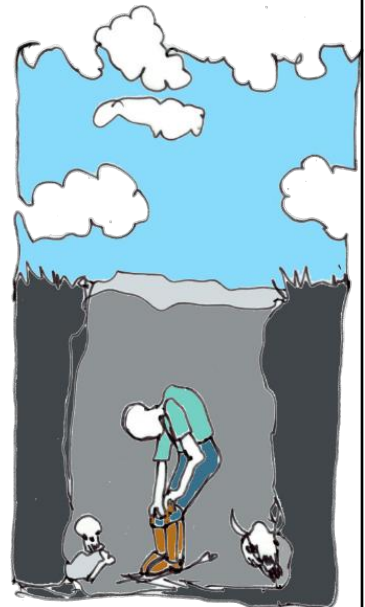


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## What Only God Can Do

*Luke 23:44-56*

[bib.ly/Lu23.NIV](http://bib.ly/Lu23.NIV)  
[tiny.cc/cmchandouts](http://tiny.cc/cmchandouts)



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## A very short summary of Luke's Gospel

### Jesus of Nazareth:

- A miraculous **birth**
- A profoundly good and miracle-bringing **life**
- An unjust and horrible **death**
- A miraculous and astounding **return to life**

witnessed by very good people  
whose key contribution was being witnesses

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### *Luke 23:44-46*

<sup>44</sup> It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, <sup>45</sup> for **the sun stopped shining**. And **the curtain of the temple was torn in two.** <sup>46</sup> Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, **he breathed his last.**

Jesus, the Son of God, is...

- Creator and sustainer of the universe
- The means of humanity to know and be known by God

Without Him...

- the natural order would cease to function
- supernatural goodness would be lost

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All people could do was watch and show honor to the lifeless body...

*Luke 23:47-49*

<sup>47</sup> **The centurion**, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, “Surely this was a righteous man.” <sup>48</sup> When all **the people who had gathered to witness** this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. <sup>49</sup> But all **those who knew him**, including **the women** who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

The witnesses of Jesus’ death had no power to undo His death  
 They could only watch in shock and sadness  
 Yet they would play a vital role by witnessing  
 both His death and His resurrection

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All people could do was watch and show honor to the lifeless body...

*Luke 23:50-54*

<sup>50</sup> Now there was a man named **Joseph**, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, <sup>51</sup> who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea, and he himself was waiting for the kingdom of God. <sup>52</sup> Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus’ body. <sup>53</sup> Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. <sup>54</sup> It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.

Even a powerful “head, heart, and hands” believer in God  
 could only honor the One who had died

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All people could do was watch and show honor to the lifeless body...

*Luke 23:55-56*

<sup>55</sup> The **women** who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. <sup>56</sup> Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

Even the amazing faith and courage of the women who showed such faith to follow and to risk honoring His body could do little more than honor His body

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## Two inescapable problems for all people

- None of us will ever be as good as we ought or want to be **sin**
  - Together, we rarely do better than apart
  - “What a tragedy that we will inevitably bring harm and sadness to the ones we love, and worse to the ones we don’t”
- All of us will die **death**
  - Every human group, and all humanity, will end
  - “What meaning can a person’s life have which would not be annihilated by the awful inevitability of death?” (Tolstoy)
- **Except for Jesus...**

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Two days later, the tomb was empty...

*Luke 24:5-6*

“Why do you look for the living among the dead?  
He is not here; he has risen!”

Jesus NEVER thought, said, or did anything wrong  
Jesus died having been condemned as though He were a sinner  
Yet He came back to life because “it was impossible for death to  
keep its hold on him” *Acts 2:24*

The two inescapable problems for all people (sin and death)  
are not problems for Jesus

And we know about His death and resurrection  
because of human witnesses (“You shall be my witnesses”)

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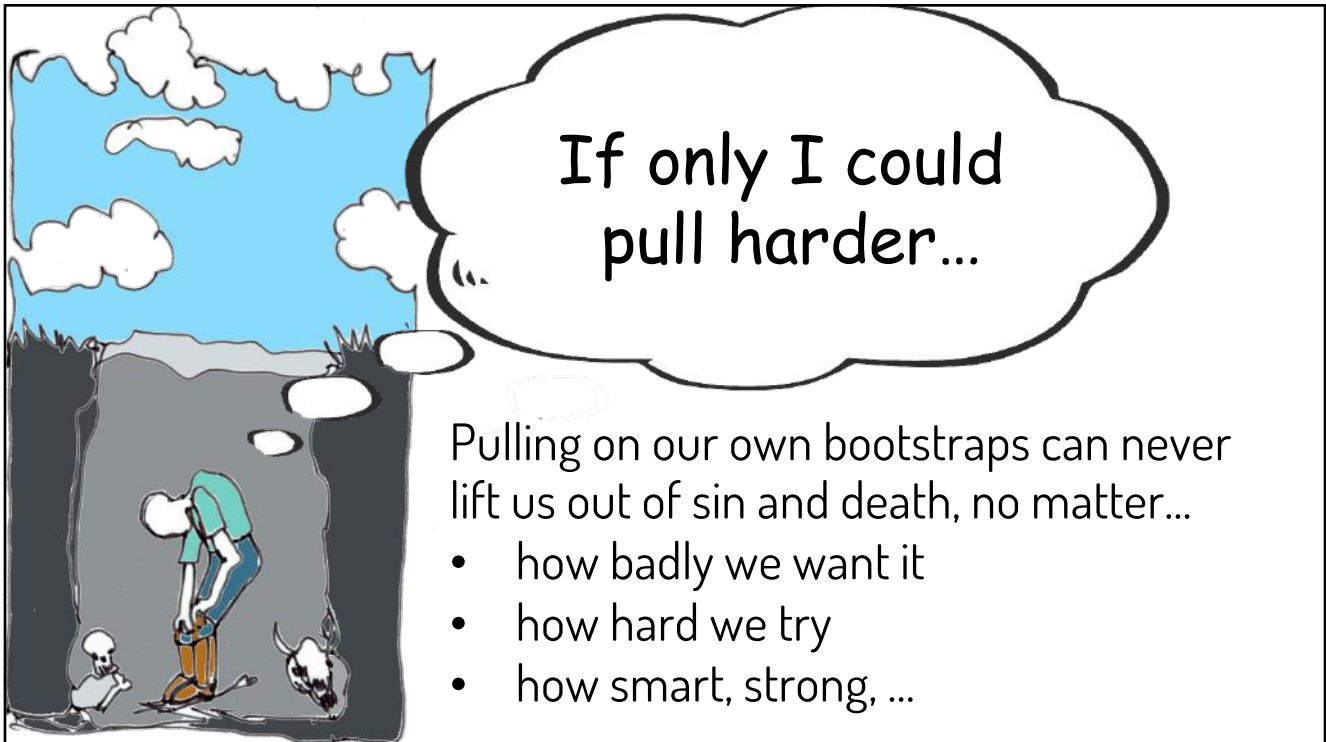
### The Big Idea

Only God (Father, Son, and Spirit)  
has the power to rescue people from sin  
and to raise the dead to life

Only Jesus’ actual death and resurrection  
bring true hope in life  
that continues to greater glory through death

Not people  
Not science  
Not spirituality  
Not government  
Not business  
Not freedom  
Not power  
Not hope  
Not love  
Not faith  
Not anything!

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### The Big Idea

Only Jesus' actual death and resurrection  
bring true hope in life  
that continues to greater glory through death

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**What would you say about someone  
who knowingly sends someone who is in great need  
to someone or something they know can't really help  
when real help is available?**

**only There is hope and help for every human problem  
in the power of Jesus over sin and death  
through the resurrection  
and nowhere else**

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## Jesus' Resurrection was the Centerpiece of Acts

To be an apostle, one must be “a witness with us of [Jesus'] **resurrection**” *1:22*

“God **raised [Jesus] from the dead**” *2:24*

“You killed the author of life, but **God raised him from the dead**. We are witnesses of this.” *3:15*

“the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus **the resurrection of the dead**.” *4:2*

“It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom **God raised from the dead**, that this man stands before you healed.” *4:10*

“With great power the apostles continued to testify to **the resurrection of the Lord Jesus**.” *4:33*

“The God of our ancestors **raised Jesus from the dead**—whom you killed by hanging him on a cross.” *5:30*

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## Jesus' Resurrection was the Centerpiece of Acts

“God **raised [Jesus] from the dead** on the third day and caused him to be seen... by us who ate and drank with him after he **rose from the dead**.” *10:40-41*

“Though they found no proper ground for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him executed...but God **raised him from the dead**.” *13:28, 30*

“As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and **rise from the dead**.” *17:2-3*

In Athens, people responded to (and rejected) Paul's “preaching the good news about **Jesus and the resurrection**” *17:18*

When on trial, Paul said: “I stand on trial because of the **hope of the resurrection of the dead**.” *23:6*

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### The Big Idea

Only Jesus' actual death and resurrection  
bring true hope in life  
that continues to greater glory through death

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### Application

#### Set our foundational hope on Jesus and His resurrection

- Only Jesus has the power over our greatest problems
  - sin and death
- Every other hope falls short of what we need
  - “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.” *1Peter 1:3-5*

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## Application

### Set our foundational hope on Jesus and His resurrection

- Make lesser hopes be only lesser hopes
  - A “better” job or friends or church or ...
  - Better health, more pleasure or money, ...
  - Getting married, having kids, ...
  - Trying harder or smarter
  - Without the peace and the power of Christ, these are empty
- Abandon despair and cynicism
  - “Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, **set your hope** on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.” *1 Peter 1:13*

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## Application

### Set our foundational hope on Jesus and His resurrection

- View everything in life with the resurrection in mind
  - Nothing in this life, including death, is the final word!
    - “For our light and momentary troubles [in Christ] are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.” *2 Corinthians 4:17*
    - Ask ourselves: “How does the power of the resurrection change how I see this problem?”
  - We may fear that hope in the resurrection leads to poor living in this life
    - Not if we follow and obey Jesus!
    - Physical lives and goodness and justice **mean more** because the new earth will also be a physical place

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## Application

### Be witnesses of God's power

- See God's power
  - Have faith and expectation for God's work, watching for it
  - Pray for His power, and pray for eyes to see His power
- Tell about God's power
  - “You shall be my witnesses” who point to Jesus the only one who can solve sin and death
  - “I am not ashamed of this Gospel for it is the power of God”

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## The Big Idea

Only Jesus' actual death and resurrection  
bring true hope in life  
that continues to greater glory through death

“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may **know** ...his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.” *Ephesians 1:18-21*

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