

With All Your Heart  
Easter: Believing  
Luke 24:1-12  
Easter Sunday, April 21, 2019  
Pastor Dea Sharp, Pikes Peak UMC

Luke 24:1-12 (NRSV) The Resurrection of Jesus

**24** But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. <sup>2</sup> They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, <sup>3</sup> but when they went in, they did not find the body.<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>4</sup> While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. <sup>5</sup> The women<sup>[b]</sup> were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men<sup>[c]</sup> said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.<sup>[d]</sup> <sup>6</sup> Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, <sup>7</sup> that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.” <sup>8</sup> Then they remembered his words, <sup>9</sup> and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. <sup>10</sup> Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. <sup>11</sup> But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. <sup>12</sup> But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.<sup>[e]</sup>

I’ve been seeing (and love) those t-shirts that are sold this time of year that say:  
“SPOILER ALERT! THE TOMB IS EMPTY!”

One of the things that IS common across the gospels is that *no one expects* the resurrection!

Jesus predicted it.

Several times.

And yet, look closely: no one shouts “Hallelujah” or “Praise the Lord!” when they hear that Jesus has defeated death AND THE DEVIL.

No one! No one says, “I knew it...just like he said!”

This fact is apparent in today’s reading from the gospel of Luke. The women come to the tomb with spices to anoint Jesus’ body. They didn’t have the expectation that he would be raised.

It's not until the "men" (the other gospels say "an angel" or "a young man") who appear in "dazzling clothes" ask them, "*Why do you look for the living among the dead?*"

Oh yeah, the women are reminded. THEN they remember Jesus' promise!

And then, what do the women do?

They're energized, so they run back to tell the disciples what they've seen. And those guys greet them utter skepticism, calling it an "idle tale."

In fact, in Greek their words are the root of our word "delirious."

They think the women are nuts!

Maybe with grief, yes, but that they're crazy to suggest that Jesus has risen.

And who can blame them?

Resurrection isn't JUST that Jesus' body was revived.

NO!

Resurrection is that God came into the world as a human in order to create an ***entirely new reality***.

And that, quite frankly, can be frightening to some people.

One commentary I read said, "*If the dead don't stay dead, what can you count on?*"

Resurrection breaks all the rules.

And sometimes, wouldn't you agree, we have to admit, the old rules aren't perfect, sometimes they're awful, but, at least we *know* them.

They're predictable and, in that sense, comforting.

**And resurrection upsets all of that.**

It throws us off balance.

Upsets the apple cart and puts our "normal" out of whack!

Which is why I agree with the commentary (as the article went further): *“if you don’t find resurrection at least a little hard to believe, you probably aren’t taking it very seriously!”*

And, truth be told, we’ve heard this story so many times that we don’t even blink about it anymore.

We don’t have wonder and awe and surprise.

Which is sad, when you think about it, because **RESURRECTION a promise.**

And as difficult as it may be to believe at first, IT’S HUGE!

When it sinks in and gets ahold of us, everything WILL be a little different.

Now, I don’t want to panic those with us here (or others you’ll tell this story to later) who actually DO find resurrection hard to believe.

Trust me. You’re in good company.

Even Jesus’ disciples, the eleven remaining...and by remaining I mean 1) because Judas is gone (there are only 11 “remaining”) and 2) *remaining – THEY DIDN’T GO TO THE TOMB. They remained in the Upper Room.* “They were struggling with resurrection, too

They struggled because, in just those few hours since that tomb was closed, they’ve begun to realize the incredible implications.

Those disciples were realizing that when God raised Jesus from the dead, God was making something new!

Death was overthrown.

Sin defeated.

God declared that life is more powerful than death and **love** more enduring than tragedy.

Which means that maybe we should admit today that we, churchgoers, have sometimes mixed up about the nature of our faith.

We think we to give the impression that we’ve got “perfect faith” and IT conquers ALL doubt.

But, instead, perhaps...faith and doubt are actually woven together.

Questions and skepticism aren’t the opposite of faith.

They're actually essential ingredients for our faith.

Because faith isn't "*just*" knowledge.

The author of the book of Hebrews reminds us, faith

*"is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen"* (11:1).

So, maybe Easter Sunday is a good time to give God thanks for the gift of faith.

- We don't understand it all Lord.
- The mystery of resurrection is a tough one.
- But we are inspired to hope and believe that it is true. Amen?

For our guests (or someone observing even when it's NOT Easter), be comforted to know, that I DO ask the Family of Faith questions a lot. They don't always answer (I don't expect them to right away) but we sure do have opportunities to reflect and see God working in new ways.

So, (no outloud answer needed) think about what makes believing in the resurrection so hard.

- Does "we've never seen anything like it" come to mind?
- Or "we've never experienced it."

For sure we've got reasons to wonder and doubt!

But – think about this: WHEN WE BELIEVE IT, WHAT ELSE IS POSSIBLE?

- "Ha! Death doesn't win!"
- "We'll see our loved ones who've already died."

And this one's a biggie: "God has a future for all of us. **Anything** is possible!"

Resurrection faith came slowly to most of the disciples.

But ***when it came it*** changed everything.

It percolated a little bit in "old" Peter, didn't it?

He thought the women had flipped!

But, slowly, he began to wonder, "what if it's true."

Death is death...and if the dead don't stay...WAIT...what if....

And off he RAN to the tomb to see for himself.

Maybe, at one time, we walked in Peter's footsteps, too.

And we're going to encounter **new** believers, when we step on with OUR FAITH to tell them about Jesus, who will want to know...IS IT TRUE?

The astonishing question, "Why do you look for the living among the dead" causes overwhelming and cart-upsetting news!

Jesus CONTINUES to do things differently than what's expected!

- He turned us upside down with his Sermon on the Mount of bass-ackwards comments like: "blessed are the meek. They're the ones who will inherit the earth."
- He rode a colt into Jerusalem instead of a steed.

And ALERT: the tomb was empty. Why look for the living among the dead?

Those disciples heard the good news that Christ **is** risen from the dead.

And they need to change...from people who are bringing spices for burial to BECOME apostles who are witnesses of the living Lord.

That's us, too.

We can't be lookin' in the wrong place?

We Dear Ones, living by faith...

...reading and hearing the words of those first disciples...

...need to stop living in the past and start living in the future.

No more being bent over to fear!

Get up and get out and be bold to share that God is stronger than death!

Be bold: God's love is stronger than hate!

Get loud: God's peace is stronger than human violence.

And PRAISE GOD: Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead and is alive.

***I KNOW THAT YOU KNOW.***

Most of you know this story...and you probably know somebody who NEEDS to hear IT.

Let me tell you, we need to tell others the story like their lives depend on it, because they do!

This isn't a tale of the past, it's a RIGHT NOW tale...

This is the good news of Easter: Jesus Christ, who was crucified (it's medically and historically proven,) has been raised from the dead.

And NOT ONLY THAT, but the power of resurrection can change our lives.

The promise of Easter SAYS we can.

We don't need to go looking for the living among the dead and we sure don't need to go about like the living-dead.

We can live new lives, here and now, by the power of the resurrection.

But it's not easy, is it? Changing.

The old, the past, is comfortable and we're used to.

It says in the OT book of Lamentations, "God's mercies are new every morning."

And some of us say,

*"At my age, this promise of newness every morning is a mixed blessing. I'm at the point in life when I really don't want anything new in the morning. I want my slippers right where I left them the night before. I want my orange juice and bran flakes for breakfast, as normal. At my age, I can do without a lot of newness, especially in the morning."*

Okay, I get it.

What we do with this good news is up to us.

We can ponder it and fret about it.

Or we can accept it in faith and make it our own.

Right here, right now.

We can stop looking for the living among the dead and claim the new life that is given to us by the **risen** Christ.

The resurrection IS NOT the end of the story – it’s just the beginning.  
It’s the POWER to show death that there is “a possibility for love to come again.”<sup>1</sup>  
And we can get on with living the abundant life our **risen** Lord promises us.

Jesus Christ is risen from the dead.  
He’s alive and he’s gone ahead to prepare a place for us.  
He promises to meet us there.

Why do we keep looking for the living among the dead?  
New t-shirts with the spoiler alert are coming soon. THE TOMB IS EMPTY!

Alleluia!  
Christ is risen.  
He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

The choir anthem is one that we come back to...it’s comfortable, right?  
But, it’s also one that indicates JUST WHO JESUS is.....and how we will look to him  
in our resurrection life!

Be blessed as you listen to “Jesus, the One and Only.”

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<sup>1</sup> Cheryl Lawrie, “When the Inevitable is No Longer Sure.” 2010. <https://holdthisspace.org.au/when-the-inevitable-is-no-longer-sure/>