

Luke 24:1-12 (The Resurrection of Our Lord—Series C)
“The Living One”
Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Enfield CT
April 17, 2022

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our text for this Easter Day is the Gospel lesson recorded in Luke 24:

¹On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they went to tomb, carrying the spices they had prepared. ²And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴And it happened that while they were at a loss concerning this, behold, two men stood near them in gleaming apparel. ⁵And as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the ground, they said to them, “Why are you seeking the Living One in the company of the dead ones? ⁶He is not here, but He has risen. Remember as He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, that it is necessary for the Son of Man to be given over into the hands of sinful men and to be crucified and on the third day to rise.” ⁸And they remembered His words. ⁹And after they returned from the tomb, they announced all these things to the Eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰And these were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary, the mother of James, and the rest with them. They told these things to the apostles, ¹¹but these words seemed to them like pure nonsense, and they did not believe them. ¹²And Peter rose and ran to the tomb and, stooping down to take a look, saw the linen cloths only, and he went away by himself marveling at what had happened.

Paul calls the Gospel-writer Luke “the beloved physician” (Col. 4:14). I think Luke should also be called “the beloved historian.” In the two volumes that God the Holy Spirit gave to Luke by divine inspiration, Luke presents the history of the Church from the birth of Jesus in the Gospel through the death of the apostle Paul in the Book of Acts. He opens the Gospel that bears his name, saying, “Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught” (Luke 1:1–4 ESV).

It should come, then, as no surprise that the account of the morning on the third day after Jesus had been crucified, died, and was buried should concentrate on the event itself without any attempt to unlock the meaning of what took place. There is no attempt by Luke to wow his readers with a vivid eyewitness account of the process of life returning to a corpse. No, Luke's account reflects all the doubts, fears, confusion, and surprise of average human beings in the presence of the incredible reality of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. It's a very real account of the very real event that really took place very early in the morning on the first day of the week.

The story builds from the concluding words from last Sunday's Gospel reading of Jesus' Passion. "Then [Joseph of Arimathea] took [Jesus' body] down and wrapped it in a linen shroud and laid him in a tomb cut in stone, where no one had ever yet been laid. It was the day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning. The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment" (Luke 23:53–56 ESV). We move from sundown on Friday to the wee hours of the morning on Sunday. "On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they went to tomb, carrying the spices they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus."

The "they" is the women, the same ladies who had come with Jesus from Galilee who saw where the tomb was and how his body was laid. They went home, prepared their spices and ointments for the burial customs, rested on the Sabbath day, and returned to the tomb to complete their loving work for Jesus' body. But there is suddenly a different reality facing

the women. What did they find? The stone rolled away from the entrance to the tomb. What did they not find? The body of the Lord Jesus. This is not what was expected at all. And yet, it seems that this should have been expected.

It's not everyday that two angels in dazzling white, lightning-like, gleaming apparel show up to help explain things. But, as the angels appeared to shepherds over the fields near Bethlehem to announce the Savior's birth among His own creation, so now two angles (who might have been there at Bethlehem!) stood near the women and asked the all-important question. "Why are you seeking the Living One in the company of the dead ones?"

Wait! What? Jesus was crucified. He died; He breathed His last. The Roman soldier pierced His side to make sure that He was actually deceased, and He was. Where else would you look for the body of your dead loved-one but in the cemetery? That's all well and good if indeed you were looking for the Dead One. But the angels announce to the women that they are no longer to be looking for the One who had died on Calvary's cross because He is no longer dead but alive. He has risen and so He is not here, dead in the grave, but alive again—the Living One! So, surprise of all surprises, stop looking for the Living One in the place where dead bodies rest until the Last Day!

For Jesus to now be the Living One is not the reality that the women expected on that early morning. And yet, it should have been expected. Listen to what the angels said. "Remember as He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, that it is necessary for the Son of Man to be given over into the hands of sinful men and to be crucified and on the third day to rise." Then St. Luke reports, "And they remembered His words." And this remembering is surely more than simply a "light-bulb" or "ah-ha" moment like when you remember where

you put your car keys last night. They remembered Jesus' words foretelling His death and resurrection. Yes, they had seen Jesus' crucified. They saw Him die. They saw His body laid in the tomb. With the help of the angel's message, they looked now at the evidence of the empty tomb as they begin to understand the miracle before them. "He is not here, but He has risen."

Like thousands of Christians around the world on this first day of the week, we too, as we do in fact ever Sunday, celebrate the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead. It is the living Jesus—crucified for the forgiveness of sins and raised again from the dead for our salvation from sin and death—whom we meet in this place as we gather around God's Word and Sacraments. It is precisely to the Living Jesus who meets with us here that we bring all our doubts and fears, sins and guilt.

"Can God really love me after I cheated on my spouse? Could God ever forgive me for having an abortion? Is there any way God could ever really love a person like me, filled with anxiety, a person who is depressed, a person who feels lonely and worthless?"

"There's so much in this world that I'm afraid of. Just look at what's been going on for the past two years? Look at all the hate and distrust in society. Society itself seems to be in constant change and turmoil. What was wrong is now right and right is now wrong. There doesn't seem to be any standard, anything solid to hold on to. I'm so afraid of life in this world. It's too confusing. I don't understand how things could be this way."

To our Living Savior, we bring our doubts, fears, and confusion about life here in this world and our doubts and fears about our fallen relationship with God because of our sins and failures to be the people He calls us to be. To the Risen Lord Jesus we ultimately bring

our guilt and our sins, our worries and our troubles. Here, by Means of the Gospel Word and Sacrament of the Altar, the Living One, Jesus Christ, meets you and He takes away from you all your guilt and sin and pronounces His blood-bought forgiveness upon you in the Absolution, in the preaching of the Gospel, and in the eating and drinking of Christ's own body and blood given and shed for you precisely for the forgiveness of all your sins.

Jesus died the death of the cross for you in order to purchase and win your forgiveness. He suffered the punishment for your sins on the cross so that He might remove your guilt from you by completely forgiving your sins, thereby restoring you to a right relationship with God your heavenly Father. The guarantee of your forgiveness and new relationship to God is found in the marks of the nails that the Living One, Jesus Christ, still bears in His risen and glorified body. In this place and at this altar, the risen Jesus says to you through His Gospel Word, "With the eyes of Baptismal faith, see My hands and My feet. Know that it is for you that I died and rose again. Know that I now am the Living One who is with you always until the end of the age. I will not leave you abandoned in this crazy, messed up world. Believe in Me, come to Me, and I will give you rest and peace like that world cannot give. Hear My Word preached. Receive the forgiveness of your sins through the Gospel. Eat and drink My Body and Blood, once given and shed on the cross, for you, now provided to you with bread and wine for forgiveness, eternal life, salvation, and the strengthening of your most holy faith so that you might endure this life and so be faithful unto death, for I will give you the crown of life."

Christ's death and resurrection are recorded by St. Luke not only as history, or *His* story. They are *our* story as well. Sin, death, and the devil no longer have ultimate power

over us because we have been raised with Jesus through faith. We are no longer slaves to sin and Satan since the penalty for our sin—the penalty of eternal death—has been paid by Jesus. Therefore, you, as members of Christ’s body, His Church, are united with Christ the Living One in His conquest over sin, Satan, and death. When Jesus conquered the forces of darkness and left them disarmed and paralyzed, you were participants in that victory. Bring your sins and guilt, your fears and troubles to the Living One, Jesus Christ, and receive His gifts of forgiveness, life, and peace with God through His Holy Word and the Sacrament of His Body and Blood. Amen.