

Text: Luke 24:1-12.

Easter!

**April 21, 2019.**

The Lord is risen! (He is risen indeed!)

Mary, Joanna and Mary went to the tomb of Jesus. It was dark. It was dangerous. At least for women to travel so early in the morning. It was damp. Probably like mornings are. They were depressed. Jesus was dead. Their friend, teacher, master, Savior? Was dead. Dead. Talk about a dreary day. Jesus was dead. But they prepared spices. They went to show their final act of love and respect to Jesus by finishing the burial preparations they simply ran out of time to do on Friday afternoon. They still overcame these obstacles and went. And they were the first to see, "He has risen!" They were the first to hear, "He has risen!"

Look at what they found when they arrived at the tomb. The stone had been rolled away. So many questions? Who could have done this? This stone took several strong men to roll into place. Who could have rolled it away? What happened? Why would anyone roll away a stone from a grave? Imagine you went to grandma's gravesite and the headstone was moved? Vandals? Lightning? And then look at what they didn't find. They didn't find the body of the Lord Jesus. They didn't find the body of the Lord Jesus? A stone rolled away is one thing. But a missing dead body is another thing. I know if you've heard this true account before, you are thinking, "Of course they didn't find the body of the Lord Jesus. He has risen!" That's why we are here. That's why we celebrate Easter! That's why Christians have gathered every Sunday since to rejoice in this good news! He has risen!

But what if you were Mary, whose tears fell on this dead body as you helped take him from the cross? What if you were Joanna, who had helped wrap this body up in burial cloths? What if you were Mary, who heard the stone thud into place? Boom! One final sound of death, despair, depression? And then you don't find the body? I doubt you are jumping up and down for joy. Jesus must be risen? This guy we buried must be alive? Do you expect that when you go to the cemetery?

There was shock. Surprise. Fear. Awe. And then! Look! And then! Behold! Two men in clothes that flash like lightning strike across the darkness of the dawn. Two men that look like you have always pictured angels to look, show up, suddenly, stand right there! And you can barely shield your eyes to look down or look away, and before you have two seconds to think about what's going on and even begin to process, these men, these angels, speak. "Why do you look for one living person among so many dead people?" Why would you come to a cemetery to look for the living one? Why are you staring in the tomb of a dead person trying to find one who is alive, forever and ever? And the answer to us, who now know the rest of the story is obvious. He has risen! He has risen! He has risen! He has risen indeed!

And that's exactly what the angels said, "He has risen!" He has risen! He has risen! I know they only said it once, but those words rung in the ears of Mary, Joanna and Mary. He has risen? Those words echo through the centuries. He has risen! Millennia later we chose Resurrection as the one thing we want our community to know about our church. He has risen! He has risen! He has risen!

He has risen! These aren't just empty words to repeat once a year. Or to know a special password when pastor says, "The Lord is risen!" (He is risen indeed!) He has risen! This means you will rise. Yes, you will rise from the dead. Just as surely as Jesus rose, you will rise. Jesus as certainly as Jesus is alive and lives forever and ever, so you will rise and live forever and ever. You have definite hope, certain confidence. You will be in heaven. He has risen! Your sins are forgiven. Jesus paid for them in full. The empty tomb

screams across the seas, "Paid in full!" He has risen! You are perfect in God's eyes! The empty tomb says it once and for all. Christ is perfect. So all who were given the name Christian in baptism are perfect. Let that sink in. He has risen! The power that raised Christ from the dead is working in us and among us. This Christ is worthy of our worship, not just once in a while, but every week and every day. He has risen! His words are trustworthy and true. He said he would rise. And he rose. That's some promise. That's more incredible than a perfect March Madness bracket. He said he would rise. And he rose. Could we blame the women if they forget? Could we scold them if they needed reminding? Would it really surprise us if they couldn't recall the words of Jesus at their hour of despair and depression on a dark and dreary day? Doesn't the person in the mirror who watches me brush my teeth do the same? Forget the words of Jesus in difficulty? More often than I remember! Read my Bible and actually remember it? If I remembered it all, I wouldn't have to keep reading. Are the obstacles too great to come and hear? I'm busy. Have to work. The kids have sports. And we never even hear, let alone remember. Isn't once enough? Once a year often enough? Jesus repeated the words promising his resurrection three times in three years. And they all forgot!

He has risen! This is good news for every day. He has risen! That's good news to never forget. He has risen! There's good news you will hear every week, right here. He has risen! When you remember those words, even the impossible is possible. Even the dead rise. Jesus raised himself from physical death. He has raised me from spiritual death. He will raise you to eternal life. He has risen! These are angelic words, right from heaven. He has risen! These are Jesus' words, right from his mouth. He has risen! These are the best music to our ears, the best relief for the heart, the greatest joy for the soul. He has risen! Keep on hearing. He has risen! Keep on remembering. He has risen! Let us keep reminding you. He has risen! There's strength in suffering, joy in sadness, hope even in despair. He has risen!

You know, it's so cool that the women who overcame the most obstacles were the first to see the empty tomb. The women who trudged out early in the morning were the first to hear, "He has risen!" Those who overcome the most obstacles get the most blessings. Those who are the first to seek are the first to find. And they got to be the first to share.

Now at first their sharing didn't go so well. Even Jesus' closest friends, people who had followed Jesus for three years, some who even promised to die with Jesus, they thought the words, "He has risen!" were nonsense. An old wives' tale. The wild talk of the delirious. They did not believe. They refused to believe. Even when the women told them over and over, "He has risen!" They did not believe. Over and over.

Sound familiar? Like anyone you know? Do you have doubts about, "He has risen!" You are not alone. The first time these words hit the ears they seem like nonsense! Do you expect objections the first time you share the angelic words of Jesus himself, "He has risen"? Yeah. But in doubt, consider this. There were over 500 eyewitnesses, who actually saw the physical body of Jesus after he rose from the dead. Over 500! Is that enough eyewitness testimony? Many of these eyewitnesses had nothing to gain. In fact, they had everything to lose by sharing this message, "He has risen!" And in fact, they did lose everything, their reputations, their money, their very lives. Yes, many of these eyewitnesses gave up their lives rather than change their story. They saw Jesus alive and they wanted the world to know, "He has risen!" If the Bible were a hoax, would you have your first witnesses be ordinary women? If they had just gone to the wrong tomb, wouldn't all the enemies of Jesus have been happy to direct them to the correct one? If Jesus didn't really rise, there were plenty of people who would have been happy to

produce his body. Even Jesus' enemies didn't deny his resurrection. They just paid people to cover it up. Yes, the resurrection of a dead person seems like a fairy tale. But in fact, it's the best attested fact of history. It's the most written about account from this time. And more people have given their lives to enjoy eternal life with Jesus than have given their lives for any other cause. Have no doubts. He has risen!

One of those who gave his life was Peter. I know his first reaction doesn't exactly get an A plus. He heard the women. Reliable friends whom he had known for some time. He sees the evidence: the empty tomb, the burial cloths. Yet he goes away wondering. Maybe the words of some women weren't enough. Maybe he needed to hear from Jesus himself. Maybe these words today, from a guy, especially a guy in a white dress don't seem like enough. But the words of the women were not their words. They were reporting the words of an angel. They were remembering the words of Jesus himself. These words you are hearing today are not the words of this guy. They are the words of Jesus himself. He has risen! Believe it! These are the words God sent angels from heaven to proclaim, "He has risen!" Trust it! These are the words that I will live for. And die for. And give up my life rather than give them up. He has risen! I know this account ends on a sad note of nonsense and wondering. But there is more. Come and hear it the next several weeks. Peter heard more from Jesus. And Peter believed. And Peter was God's angel to preach this good news to many people, "He has risen!" There is a happy ending for Peter. And I pray there will be a happy ending for you. That you don't leave wondering, but leave with wonderful words. He has risen! That you don't leave anxious, but amazed. He has risen! That you don't leave doubting, but doubly delighted. He has risen! He has risen! He has risen! The Lord is risen! (He is risen indeed!) Amen!