

Sunday Lesson – April 4, 2021
Easter Sunday

GOSPEL: Luke 24: 1-12

Resurrection

Background

“Chapter 23 told of Jesus’ trial (23:1-25), crucifixion (23:26-49) and burial (23:50-56). Luke tells us that “the women who followed with him from Galilee” witnessed the crucifixion (23:49). He also tells us that they “saw the tomb, and how his body was laid” (23:55). In other words, the witnesses to the open tomb (24:2-3) first witnessed Jesus’ crucifixion and burial.” *(Excerpts from sermonwriter.com/biblical-commentary/luke-241-12/)*

Insight

“Everything in Christianity rests on the historical fact that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. Darrell Bock writes, “Without resurrection, Christianity is just another human approach to reach God; it is emptied of transforming power and hope; it is a mere shell, not worth the energy one devotes to it... To believe in Christ is to believe not merely in his example, but in the power of his resurrection to grant new life” *(Excerpts from bible.org/seriespage/lesson-113-foundation-our-faith-luke-241-12)*

Gospel Reading

“At the crack of dawn on Sunday, the women came to the tomb carrying the burial spices they had prepared. They found the entrance stone rolled back from the tomb, so they walked in. But once inside, they couldn’t find the body of the Master Jesus. They were puzzled, wondering what to make of this. Then, out of nowhere it seemed, two men, light cascading over them, stood there. The women were awestruck and bowed down in worship. The men said, “Why are you looking for the Living One in a cemetery? He is not here, but raised up. Remember how he told you when you were still back in Galilee that he had to be



handed over to sinners, be killed on a cross, and in three days rise up?” Then they remembered Jesus’ words. They left the tomb and broke the news of all this to the Eleven and the rest. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them kept telling these things to the apostles, but the apostles didn’t believe a word of it, thought they were making it all up. But Peter jumped to his feet and ran to the tomb. He stooped to look in and saw a few grave clothes, that’s all. He walked away puzzled, shaking his head.” *The Message*

What It Could Mean?

“One illuminating theme of this Lukan passage is Jesus’ shifting forms of presence and absence. Typically, we think of “presence” and “absence” as opposites.

At the start of Luke’s empty tomb scene, a group of faithful female disciples whom we know from earlier in the Gospel—Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and “other women” (24:10)—go to the tomb with spices which they have prepared to pay their respects. They have a completely predictable, if gut-wrenching, job to do, one they have likely done many times before. Yet, to their great surprise, the women do “**not** find the body of the Lord Jesus” (24:3). Jesus is absent. Most of us are desensitized to how utterly shocking this must have been: if anyone should be present in a particular place, it would be a dead body in its tomb. But Jesus’ body is missing.

Still, Jesus’ absence unexpectedly points to his presence in a new way. Two angelic messengers, echoing Jesus’ own prediction in Luke 9:22, urge the women not to fear, to remember that this is not as unpredictable as it might seem: “Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again” (24:6-7).

Notice that this is the first time in Luke’s Gospel that we hear of Jesus’ resurrection. Luke never describes God raising Jesus from the dead; instead of narrating the event itself, the author

tells his audience about the resurrection through a series of spoken testimonies. First, the messengers meet the women and remind them of Jesus' own spoken testimony. As a result, "the women remembered his words" (24:8). Their memory of what Jesus said when he was present before prompts them to go "tell all these things" to the eleven (the twelve apostles, minus Judas; 24:9). Whereas the male disciples do not initially believe, the women understand correctly that Jesus' absence from the tomb means he is present on earth again. Church tradition has dubbed these women "the apostles to the apostles" (the official name is: *quae apostoli ad apostolos*).

In fact, the male disciples do not go to the tomb at all until the women testify to what they have witnessed. When they hear the news from the apostles to the apostles, they still do not believe. They misunderstand Jesus' missing body, thinking it represents an absolute absence; even Peter, who runs to the tomb to see for himself, simply "wonders what happened" (24:12), a response about which Jesus later questions him (24:25-31).

What I want to highlight is that Jesus' absence from the tomb creates the opportunity for the women to speak boldly and faithfully on his behalf, and they do. Their proclamation that Jesus is present—he is alive on earth again—is an act of redemptive **remembering**, in two senses: their remembering is a recalling of Jesus' earlier teachings, but it is also a remembering insofar as they re-member the body of Christ. They seek to draw together again a community that has been dismembered—torn apart—by fear, confusion, grief, and distress. Later, the Gospel closes with the image of Jesus' ascension into heaven (24:50-53); this time, Jesus' bodily absence from earth creates new space and opportunity for all of his disciples—including those who follow him today—to **re-member** in similar ways.

Luke 10:26-28 tells us that Jesus taught the two greatest commandments are to love God and love your neighbor as

yourself (see also Matthew 22:38-39). The empty tomb scene presents one way to put these two commandments into action. The women's experience, and their response to it, remind us that when we love God, neighbor, and ourselves with our words and our actions, we render Christ visible in a world where the divine all too often seems absent. We draw community together, instead of being pulled apart by fear, confusion, grief, and distress. When we do that—draw attention to a deeper reality that is often hard to remember or believe—God is still present and working in the world. Death does not, and will not, have the last word. That good news—that **gospel**—is what Christians proclaim when we say that Christ is risen. He is risen, indeed."

(Excerpts from workingpreacher.org by Michal Beth Dinkler)

Readings for Further Study

- [Matthew 28: 5-10/Mark 16: 2-8/John 20: 2-18](#)
Resurrection accounts from 3 other Gospels
- [Phil 3:10 & Galations 2:20](#) *"that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection/..."delivered Himself up for me."*
- [John 20: 20-31 & 1 Cor 15:17](#) *believing you may have life in His name/If Christ not raised, your faith is worthless*

Irish Easter Blessing

At the breaking of the Easter dawn
may the Risen Saviour bless your home
with grace and peace from above,
with joy and laughter, and with love
And when night is nigh, and day is done
May He keep you safe from all harm."

Beannachtaí Ná Cásca oraibh!

May the blessings of Easter be upon you!

A Prayer

Risen Messiah, Hallelujah! Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!
Glory be to you, whom death could not defeat. Praise to the savior of heaven and earth. Honor and glory are yours, now and forever, Christ our savior and redeemer. **Amen.**