

Easter Sunday Lesson – April 17, 2022

GOSPEL: Luke 24: 1-12

“Looking for the Living One in a Cemetery”



Context

“Each of the four Resurrection narratives goes its own way in details, but there are three elements that they all have in common: (1) the discovery of the empty tomb takes place on a Sunday morning; (2) Mary Magdalene is present at the tomb; and (3) the tomb is found to be empty. Beyond that there are differences, and some of the differences are worth noting.

In the case of Luke’s Gospel one of the most notable features is that it has the most women on the scene. Luke puts it this way: “Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them” (24:10). Three are named but others are not. Consequently we have to conclude that, for Luke, at least five are present (three plus “other women,” plural); perhaps more than five is intended.

Two of those named are mentioned back in 8:2-3 (Mary Magdalene and Joanna) and belong to the company of those who provided for Jesus’ ministry out of their means. We are no doubt supposed to think of that company as the ones who were at the crucifixion (23:49), were subsequently at the tomb (23:55), prepared spices and ointments (23:56), and arrived at the tomb in the early dawn on Sunday (24:1).

A second distinctive feature of Luke’s Resurrection narrative is the inclusion of a reminder to the women in 24:7, in which the two men recall the passion predictions of Jesus, which appear at 9:22 and 18:31-33 (plus a shorter version at 9:44 and a hint of the passion in 22:22). As the text stands, we must assume that, according to Luke, the women being addressed were themselves among the followers of Jesus in Galilee who heard Jesus’ predictions. That is possible, since they are among the

retinue at 8:2-3, prior to the first prediction in Galilee (9:22).”
(Excerpts from workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revise-common-lectionary/resurrection-of-our-lord-3/commentary-on-luke-241-12-3 by Arland J. Hultgren)

Insight

“In the battle with skeptics regarding Jesus’ resurrection, Christians are in a “no-win” situation. If the resurrection accounts harmonize perfectly, skeptics will claim that the writers of the Gospels conspired together. If the resurrection accounts have some differences, skeptics will claim that the Gospels contradict each other and therefore cannot be trusted. It is our contention that the resurrection accounts can be harmonized and do not contradict each other.

However, even if the resurrection accounts cannot be perfectly harmonized, that does not make them untrustworthy. By any reasonable evaluation, the resurrection accounts from the four Gospels are superbly consistent eyewitness testimonies. The central truths - that Jesus was resurrected from the dead and that the resurrected Jesus appeared to many people - are clearly taught in each of the four Gospels. The apparent inconsistencies are in “side issues.” How many angels did they see in the tomb, one or two? (Perhaps one person only saw one angel, while the other person saw two angels.) To how many women did Jesus appear, and to whom did He appear first? (While each Gospel has a slightly different sequence to the appearances, none of them claims to be giving the precise chronological order.) So, while the resurrection accounts may seem to be inconsistent, it cannot be proven that the accounts are contradictory.” (Excerpts from gotquestions.org/resurrection-accounts.html)

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?

"An empty tomb? What did that mean? Men in dazzling white: who were they? I would suggest that the entire story of God's relationship with us, God's creatures, is a story of the unexpected, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord" (Isaiah 55: 8).

We need to take Easter courage to proclaim this news, first from Jesus. He continued to teach and proclaim the good news despite the thick headedness of his listeners. Over and over Jesus had watched them ignore what they saw happen before their very eyes. They had watched Jesus feed an enormous hillside of people, walk to them through a storm, and still, "their hearts were hardened" (Mark 6:52).

We need to take our encouragement and follow the example of that excited crowd of women. They burst into that locked room telling everything to their friends. They didn't care about the looks on the faces of their listeners. They didn't wait for a chorus

of "Jesus Christ is Risen Today"! They had amazing news they had to share, even if those in the room thought it was an "idle tale." Finally, we need to turn away from what is not there, focusing instead on the good news. As the men asked the women, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?"

He isn't there; he is risen. He has burst the bonds of time and space, yet we continue to focus on the unexplainable empty tomb, looking for him among the dead. The tale of Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection can seem like an idle tale. It is the story of a "king" born in a stable, an innocent man arrested and executed, and a tomb that is empty, astounding from beginning to end. He is not there—he is risen.

God's ways are not our ways. God is always doing a new thing, every day! We who have met the risen Christ are to join the women in telling "all of this" on Easter Sunday morning. And may we be emboldened by the reminder that has been woven throughout the gospels: "Do not be afraid," tell all that you have seen." (*Excerpts from workingpreacher.org, Revised Common Lectionary, by Lucy Lind Hogan*)

Readings for Further Study

- [Matthew 28: 1-10/Mark 16: 1-14/John 20: 1-29](#) *Other gospel versions of Jesus' resurrection*

Thought for the Day

"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." ~ *John 11: 25-26*

A Prayer

Merciful God of might, renew this weary world, heal the hurts of all your children, and bring about your peace for all in Christ Jesus, the living Lord. **Amen.**