

**April 11, 2004**  
**Easter**

*"Jesus Is Alive-True or False?"*

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**LUKE 24:1-12**

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**O**n the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. <sup>2</sup> They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, <sup>3</sup> but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. <sup>4</sup> While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. <sup>5</sup> In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" <sup>6</sup> He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: <sup>7</sup> 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'" <sup>8</sup> Then they remembered his words. <sup>9</sup> When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. <sup>10</sup> It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. <sup>11</sup> But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. <sup>12</sup> Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

It seems that more Christians are greeting each other on Easter morning with the words, "He is risen! He is risen indeed!" That custom goes back to the early centuries of the Christian church. Even today, Greek speaking Christians still use the ancient greeting, "Hristos Anesti" and they respond with "Alithos Anesti." Early Christians who spoke Latin began the greeting with "Vivit" and they heard the response "Vere Vivit." In Spanish they say, "Christ vi" Christ lives. In Russia, atheistic communism tried to stomp out the Christian message with a heavy boot, but as long people had lips to speak and lungs to breathe they proclaimed these words to each other, ChristOs VoskrEs "Christ is risen! VoIstinu VoskrEs" He is risen indeed!"

Why only speak these words on Easter morning? Consider using these words for every situation especially any rough days ahead. Job knew what it was like to fall into a bottomless pit that seemed to have no end in sight. There at the bottom of that pit the Lord enabled him to confess, "Christ is risen, he is risen indeed!" with these well known words. "I know that my Redeemer lives..."

We have been preaching a series of sermons in this church on "The Passion of the Christ." I have heard people ask why the Mel Gibson film, "The Passion of the Christ" devoted so much time to the suffering of Jesus and only 15 seconds to the resurrection. As short as the scenes were of the open tomb and the grave clothes being left behind, the view of the nail print in the hand of Jesus sent a powerful message that Jesus is alive. Yes Jesus is alive! What a fact this is and what an impact for our lives.

**1) Consider fact of the resurrection**

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the greatest event in the history of the world or it is the greatest hoax the world has ever known. Pity the poor women who went to the tomb carrying spices and linen to finish wrapping the body of Jesus. They walked in silent fear concerned that everything they had believed about Jesus could be a hoax. Waves of sadness washed over them just as they wash over you and me when we lose someone we really love. Imagine what they must have felt when they were separated from the love they had come to know in Jesus. How can any love you experience in this life begin to compare to what these women had in Jesus?

When the women saw the empty tomb, they should have shouted to each other "He is risen," and danced for joy. Instead it says, "They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus." Why did they not grasp the reality of Jesus words, "Destroy this body and in three days I will raise it again?"

Before you are too tough on these women for their doubting consider how often we don't live our lives as if Jesus had risen from the dead. If it is true that Jesus is alive, then we are part of the greatest miracle the world has ever known. We wake up in the morning saying to ourselves, "This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it," but then as the day wears on we are miles away from the open tomb and the fact of Jesus resurrection. I can criticize the women, but then I look at my life and wonder why I have not told more people about this greatest event in history, if I really believe it is true. We scratch our heads and wonder about their unbelief, but then find ourselves scratching our heads even more when we look at ourselves and see the way we carry out our daily affairs of life as if Christ has not really risen from the dead.

It says here in Luke that the women were "wondering about this" as they looked into the grave. They could not make sense of the empty tomb, the grave clothes left behind and the head covering neatly folded. Don't you love the words the angel used to communicate the fact that Jesus was alive? "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" Where do you go to find people for a pick up game of basketball, at a cemetery? Where do you go to by gasoline for your car, at the drive of window of McDonalds? Where do you go if you are looking for Jesus, certainly not the tomb! I can almost hear a chortle of delight as the angel asks, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" and then emphatically states. "He is not here. He has risen!"

Then joyfully the angel chided them for not remembering Jesus clear words, "Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: "The Son of Man must be delivered into hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised from the dead." Then it says, "They remembered his words." If there is one area of my life where I wanted be chided, and want to be told where I am wrong, and told I need a whole new outlook on life it is in this important area of accepting the words of the Bible about Jesus resurrection from the dead. The more I remember, the greater the joy that will be there in my life and yours.

The other morning, my wife and I were discussing what to have for our Easter dinner. My wife's father was also at the table with us. I made some comment about being hungry for a leg of lamb. Susan's Dad joined in the conversation and said, "I don't like Lego Land." I was probably mumbling about leg of lamb, and he thought he heard us talking about

the famous "Lego Land" in the San Diego area. This morning we rejoice that the Jesus did not just mumble a few words to his disciples about the resurrection that could not be clearly understood. The angel said, "Remember how he told you." And the words of the angel are so clear for us, "He is not here! He has risen!" The tomb is empty. The grave clothes are left behind. The headpiece neatly folded. Everything points to the fact of Jesus resurrection.

## **2) Cherish the impact of the resurrection**

The fact of Jesus resurrection made a powerful impact on these women who went to the tomb. The gospel account in Matthew says, "So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples." What amazes us though is the lack of impact this message had on the doubting disciples. "When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others." And what was the response from these disciples? It says, "But they did not believe the woman, because their words seemed to them like nonsense." Imagine, dismissing the historical event of Jesus resurrection as a bunch of hysterical nonsense spoken by some overly emotional women!

But that night something happened to change these doubters into believers. Do you recall what happened on the night that Jesus rose from the dead that changed these disciples? The gospel of John tells us that Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be to you." Then it says, "After he said this he showed them his hands." Artists have shown this scene with the eyes and mouths of the disciples open wide, not in disbelief, but in belief and unbelievable joy. It says in John, "the disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord." What an impact Jesus resurrection had on these disciples from that time forward, and impact they cherished daily.

Some years ago, a man by the name of Bob came to one of our classes where people learned the basics of the Bible. The first lesson was from Genesis 1 and 2 on creation. Bob was a scientist with a doctorate degree in environmental studies. The first chapters of the Bible conflicted with everything he had been taught in his classes. Still he stuck with the classes to learn more. One night we were reading the account of Jesus appearing to his disciples and showing them his hands, and even making a special appearance to Thomas. Bob, jumped up from his chair, and said rather loudly, "That's me, that's me." From that point on he began to accept more completely the words of Scripture because the resurrection of Jesus had opened his heart to believe, just as it did with the women who went to the tomb and the disciples who thought the women were talking nonsense.

The resurrection of Jesus has had a radical impact on your life that you cherish daily in your life. Your whole worldview is now based on God performing miracles to rescue you from sin, and ultimately raising you to life on the last day. Because of Jesus resurrection you have an "IRA" account, not an individual retirement account, but an "Individual Redemption Account." Your own personal account. The Bible says, "We have redemption through his blood the forgiveness of sins." How do I know the account is for me and there is enough in that account to pay for my sin? The answer lies in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Romans 4:25 says, "Christ was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification." If the full payment for all sin was not made by Jesus, then the Father would not have raised him from the dead. All religions of the world say that your redemption is

based on what you place into the account to make up for past sin. Only in the Christian faith do you have Jesus providing an account for you, where the debt is removed and his perfect life is credited into your account. If there were debts unpaid, the Father would not have raised his Son back to life again. Jesus was raised for your justification, to declare you not guilty. What an impact that has on you. You have peace with God and you have strength to war against sin.

Jesus is alive and because he lives, he is able to guarantee your bodily resurrection on the last day. The words of Jesus are simple, plain and clear, "Because I live you shall live also." And Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life who ever lives and believes in me will never die." The fact of Jesus resurrection guarantees our own bodily resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15 says, "We shall be changed in the moment, in the twinkling of an eye." And when the problems of this life mount we can joyfully say with Paul, "the sufferings of this present life are not worthy comparing to the glory that shall be ours." I attended a funeral recently of a Christian and the pastor began the service by saying, "Christ is risen!" and without a hitch the congregation responded, "He is risen indeed!" Again and again the great reformer Martin Luther comforted himself in times of trouble with the Latin word, "Vivit!" he lives. Some of you sitting here this morning may not see another Easter. I don't know if my dad will make through major surgery facing him in the month of May. Because Jesus is alive we always come out ahead whatever the future brings. "Whether we live we live unto the Lord and whether we die we die unto the Lord. Whether we live or die we are the Lord's. Christ risen! He is risen indeed! Amen.