

**April 8, 2007**  
**The Festival of the Resurrection**

*“Don't Worry! The Stone Is Rolled Away!”*

**LUKE 24:1-12**

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**1** On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. **2** They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, **3** but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. **4** While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. **5** 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? **6** He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: **7** ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’” **8** Then they remembered his words. **9** When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. **10** It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. **11** But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. **12** 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.

If you were directing a short independent film about Jesus' resurrection from the dead, how would you portray the faces of the women as they went to the tomb? Would you have them smiling from ear to ear? I don't think so. You would have them portray worry and fear. How will we get into the tomb to finish wrapping the dead body of Jesus? Who will roll away the stone? Of course that all becomes a needless worry after they realized and saw for themselves that Jesus had risen from the dead.

Now focus the camera on your face? Do you wake up each day smiling from ear to ear because Christ has risen from the dead, or do you find your face becoming more wrinkled every day because of all the worry that wears you down? About ten years ago, the USA Weekend Magazine in your Sunday paper had a cover article about with the words, “Fear: What Americans Are Afraid of Today.” They interviewed a cross section of American people and found the top fears were such things as: Getting into a car crash. Getting cancer. Social Security failing. Not having enough assets for retirement. Getting food poisoning from meat. You can make your own list. Right at the top is the daily worry and concern about how things will work out for you.

This morning we want to assure you that your greatest worry in life has been removed. The stone has been rolled away. The message that comes from the empty tomb resonates and reverberates through every breathing moment of your life. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Because Jesus lives you have peace with God. You know what will happen to you when you die. You know that your future rests in the hands of Jesus who is very much alive. You know that he carefully orders and orchestrates your life from his majestic power at his heavenly Father's right hand. I am privileged to have a smile on my face this morning that goes from ear to ear as we speak to you on **“Don't Worry! The Stone Is Rolled Away!”**

## **Look! Jesus has risen from the dead!**

Our hearts go out to the women who went to the tomb of Jesus that first day of the week as they carried spices they had prepared to finish wrapping the body of Jesus. How interesting. They have already wrapped the body of Jesus with over 60 pounds of spices and lined provided by Nicodemus. Now these women want to add to the already wrapped body of Jesus the aromatic and fragrant spices they have prepared. Let's be kind to them and not too critical. They want the best for the body of Jesus. But they are worried about getting into the tomb. Roman guards had sealed it shut and guarded it round the clock.

If only they had remembered and believed the clear words of Jesus that he had spoken about dying and rising again in the third day. Then they would have spent Saturday night gathering choice spices to prepare delightful baskets of food for an early Sunday morning breakfast with their risen Lord instead of gathering spices for his dead body.

What an amazing sight met their eyes as they came closer to the tomb. "They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of Jesus." Look at their faces. See them change from worry to fear. They assume someone has stolen the body of Jesus. Then they look at the clothes inside and wonder what had happened. The clothes were not torn apart. There were still neatly in place with the headpiece carefully folded. Puzzled looks suddenly change to paralyzing fear. Two of God's holy angels suddenly appear to them and in "In their fright the women bowed with their faces to the ground." You would react the same way if an angel of God, shining bright as lighting, suddenly appeared to you. Sinful and unrighteous people always have that reaction at first when they come face to face with any over the top huge revelation of God's glory.

What a message the angel had for all people. "Why do you look or the living among the dead? He is not here. He has risen!" It was the wrong place to look for the body of Jesus. Why not look for Jesus on the Mount of Olives for nice breakfast or a meal on shores of the Sea of Galilee? He's alive. Take along some fresh baked cinnamon rolls, and some hard-boiled eggs, perfectly brewed coffee and some ripe Santa Maria strawberries. Eat the best breakfast you can prepare with your risen Lord. He's alive.

Nothing has shaped your life more than these words, "He is not here! He has risen!" Oh to be sure your life has been shaped by where were born, or the family that was given to you, or the marriage partner that entered your life, or your job or career, or some illness that changed your direction, or took someone special from you. Nothing has altered or changed your life more than what these women saw with their eyes when the stone was rolled away.

Because of Jesus resurrection from the dead, your eyes are open to see and your heart to believe in miracles. You and I were born into this world wanting only to accept as true what we can see with our eyes, feel with our hands, smell with our noses and hear with our ears and taste with our tongues. We are born with the firm conviction that we can judge reality and truth with what we feel inside of us. The resurrection of Jesus changes everything. It opens a door into a room where there is the evidence that the body of God's Son was once dead and cold and wrapped with linen and spices, but is now alive. This resurrection

room has other doors that lead to other rooms and other miracles such as creation of our world, God taking our sin and putting it on his Son, and a real glorious place waiting for us after we die, and a God who is a heavenly Father who cares about us and loves. On the night of his resurrection Jesus told his disciples who saw the nail marks in his hands, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." The resurrection opens our faith eyes to see things that are more real to us than what we see with our physical eyes. What we see all around us with our physical eyes is only temporal, what we see with eyes of faith is eternal.

During the rise of communism in Russia a man by the name of Nikolai Ivanovich Bukharin enjoyed promoting atheism and putting down Christian faith. He was instrumental in the Bolshevik Revolution and was the editor of the communist paper, Pravda, which means truth. There is a story told about a journey he took from Moscow to Kiev in 1930 to address a huge assembly on the subject of atheism. He aimed his heaviest arguments against Christianity, which Lenin labeled "opiate of the people." After a very long lecture intended to wear the people down he asked, "Are there any questions?" Deafening silence filled the auditorium. One elderly man approached the platform and mounted the stage near the communist leader. He surveyed the crowd first to the left then to the right. Finally he shouted only two words in Russian, ChristOs VoskrEs "Christ is risen!" And the people responded with two words but with a thunderous roar, "VoIstinu VoskrEs" He is risen indeed!" Because Christ is risen indeed, God's Word is able to assure you that nothing in all creation will ever separate you from the love of God that exists in Christ Jesus your Lord. Now you can smile a lot more and worry a lot less.

### **Listen to the angel's message**

Do you want even more evidence of the truth of the resurrection besides the forensic evidence left behind in the tomb? Listen further to what the angel tells the women and each of us who have way to many worries in our lives and wrinkles on our faces. "Remember how he told you while he was still with you in Galilee; 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'" Then it says, "They remembered his words." While they were still in Galilee long before his crucifixion, Jesus kept on telling them what would happen. They forgot the words Jesus spoke to them about rising from the dead, just as we lose touch with God's Word in our lives. But then they remembered his words.

How many times has the Holy Spirit helped you when you were caught up in worries and doubts and sinful actions by causing you to remember an important promise from the Lord in his Word, or helped you remember that Jesus lives? Remembering. It is all about remembering isn't it?

How do you know something is true enough to trust with your life? We want evidence but also need someone to bear witness to what really happened. Did you hear about the woman who claimed her dog saved her life when she was choking on an apple? She tried to administer the Heimlich method to herself but it did not work. According to her account the dog started jumping on her, the apple dislodged and she stopped choking. How do we know this really happened? No one was there to witness what happened.

This is not the case with Jesus' resurrection. The angel tells us to remember how Jesus gave witness to his resurrection before it happened. The faithful women had the evidence in the tomb, the words of the angel and the words of Jesus that they remembered. When the women told the disciples what had happened the poor disciples did not believe their story because it seemed like nonsense to them. Later that day Jesus would appear to them and show them his body and open the Scriptures to them so they could see not only see the evidence in his body but also in the Scriptures. Do you know that 1000 years before Jesus rose from the dead the book Psalms predicted the body of Jesus would not see decay and the book of Isaiah predicted Jesus after he died he would see the light of life? These predictions of the resurrection give us that extra evidence that takes us from the land of worry and doubt to the land of conviction and joy. Listen to the Scriptures and your faith will grow.

The stone is rolled away. Look at the body of Jesus that came forth from that grave. The body of Jesus is the evidence that our heavenly Father accepted what Jesus did on the cross to rescue us. I can find no hope of rescuing myself by looking into my body and my life for it is marred by sin. The body of Jesus, the source of my salvation is pure and holy. Look at the body of Jesus and believe that he will come again and raise us to life again in a real world with real bodies where God will wipe away all tears from our eyes. Look at the body of Jesus, no longer in the tomb, but sitting at the right hand of God taking very personal care of you the way a shepherd cares for the sheep. It is so real. We don't have to worry. An elderly lady once told her pastor that Easter was her favorite service of the year because that was when the congregation and the pastor had smiles that went from ear to ear. Why can't these smiles be with us from ear to ear every day of our lives? They can be. Don't worry the stone is rolled away." Christ is risen!...He is risen indeed!