

*St. John Lutheran Church*

*The Sermon*

*Rev. Andy Rutrough*

---

Resurrection of Our Lord

April 17, 2022

Luke 24:1-12

The sun came up this morning. I was not surprised at this. Indeed, most of us believe that the sun will come up every morning because we have seen it happen. The sun has come up every morning for as long as anyone can remember. So we believe that the sun will come up.

Likewise, I believe that when I throw a ball up in the air, it will come back down, because I have seen it happen again and again, and everyone else has seen it happen for their whole lives. So, most of us believe that when we throw a ball up in the air, it will come back down.

This is a good way of believing. It shows us wonderful things about the world. We believe that the world is round, that the world orbits around the sun, that the universe was created in the midst of a big bang that happened about fourteen billion years ago. We believe that birds can see the magnetic fields of the earth from a set of electrons in their eyes. This helps them know which way to go when they migrate. Believing that is a powerful way to believe.

But believing that, is not the only way to believe. It is not the only way to know the world. There is also believing in. For example, I believe in my grandfather, because he was a big part of making me who I am. His sense of integrity and of honor, his simple presence, warm, with love mixed in deep. I believe in my parents, who were not perfect, but who loved me and my sisters: their exuberance, the inquisitiveness, their celebration of life, helped make me who I am. I believe in.

The women in the gospel lesson for today come to the tomb because they had believed in Jesus. There were at least five of them: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Joanna, and at least two others because it says, “The other women.” More than one. At least five, maybe seven or even ten. The women come to the tomb because they had believed in Jesus.

They had heard Jesus’s teaching: How Jesus insisted that people who could not see in the same way most people could see, were nevertheless still a full part of the community. If you could not walk very easily, maybe had to use a wheelchair, you were still a part of the community. If you had a different kind of intelligence. Maybe if you had downs syndrome, offered a certain wisdom and insight that everyone else needed, but didn’t do multiplication tables so well, you would still have an important place in the community.

The women had heard Jesus insist that people who are poor, who don’t have enough to eat, or who were troubled in their minds, were still important in the eyes of God, and therefore had to be important in the eyes of us. Jesus insisted that sinners, us sinners would receive forgiveness of sins when we repent. They had heard Jesus’s teaching.

And they had been treated by Jesus as fully human people. Not second-class citizens, but as women of intelligence and honor and perception and dignity.

The women believe in Jesus.

They also believed that Jesus was dead, because in their experience, over their whole lifetimes, and over everyone else’s lifetime, when people died they stayed dead. Maybe someone heard about a ghost, or a zombie. But ghosts and zombies are still dead, aren’t they. That’s kind of the point of ghosts and zombies. The women believe that Jesus was dead. So they bring spices to put on his body.

I think, sometimes, that we believe Jesus is dead. I mean, yes, of course, we say the Apostles’ Creed, that Jesus rose from the dead. But we have seen death: the death of loved ones, the death of abilities and strength in our bodies, the death of dreams. At one point, we thought we had a pretty good handle on disease. After all, smallpox only exists in a few vials in a freezer somewhere, when it used to kill millions. Then the pandemic came.

We thought we had a country moving in the direction of prosperity and justice. Now we are told we have deep divisions. We thought the cold war was over, that Russia was not a threat any more. Now we're not so sure. We thought racial equity was coming along. Now we find it's not. We thought maybe we might be able to minimize climate change. Now, the longer we delay, the less likely it becomes.

It's been a rough few years, hasn't it. It's easy to think that dreams stay dead, people stay dead, Jesus stays dead. Or at least he doesn't have a strong effect on our lives. And we might grieve.

Then, as they approach the tomb, the women notice something different, something unexpected. They see that the stone has been rolled away from the tomb. We also see something different, something unexpected. We have heard a rumor out there, that there is something in this world which is bigger than our crushed dreams, bigger than our failing health, bigger than our fears, bigger than death itself. So the women go to investigate. Maybe you've come here, to church, to investigate too.

The women look inside the tomb. Are you willing to look inside the tomb? To look inside the hard places in our world, the difficult places in our relationships and in our families. Are you willing to look into the hard places in our own souls? Because that's where the angels are.

The women go inside the tomb. Jesus' body is gone. Instead, they find two men in dazzling clothes. Later on the women will call them angels. And the angels say, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? Jesus is not here. He is risen, as he said he would be."

Yes, we believe that people stay dead, that dreams stay dead. But we also believe in Jesus. And when we believe in Jesus, then it's not just about what we know, not just about what we have experienced, rather, it's also about relationship. And when it's about relationship, especially relationship with God, then anything can happen.

"He is risen, just as he said." We believe in Jesus, who is risen from the dead. Therefore, we choose to hope. We learn from our observations. We learn from experience, yes. And, also, Jesus has made us who we are: a people of the cross and resurrection, a people of hope. Therefore, we choose to hope. Whether we see good or we see bad, whether we experience good health or ill health. We choose to hope,

and we choose to work. We choose to work for health and wellness in our families. We choose to work for peace and wholeness in our world because we believe in Jesus.

This makes us who we are. Indeed, in the end, this will make the world what it is. There will be connection, there will be peace in our streets and in our homes. There will be balance with the environment and freedom from illness, because Jesus is risen from the dead. Not only that, but that blessing that will be some day, breaks into our day, this time, this moment with us, right now. This, we believe:

Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed, alleluia.