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Luke 24:1-12

Easter, 2011, 9 am

The women went to the tomb early in the morning on the first day of the week.

They found the stone that had covered the opening to the tomb had been rolled away, and when they looked inside, it was empty.

Two men in dazzling white clothes asked them “Why do you seek the living among the dead?”

A good question. One problem.

2

They were looking for someone who was dead, so of course they were looking among the dead!

Where else would they look?

So they didn't find Christ there, because he wasn't dead any more!

The men told them, "He is risen, just as he said!"

Well, yes, the women might have quietly said to each other, I guess I do remember him saying that, but I was never quite sure what he meant by that.

Risen how? Risen to where?

We have never heard of anyone rising from the dead, so we thought somehow it was just another parable, a metaphor, a figure of speech.

We thought maybe he was talking about living on in our memory or something.

How can someone rise from the dead? Like a ghost?

Yes, we know about spirits and demons and other mystical kinds of things.

But this, we didn't expect!

His body got up and walked out of the tomb??

4

Like Lazarus?

Oh....

Like Lazarus.

He was dead, and he's alive!

Wow!

Hey ladies! Let's go tell the guys!

And so they ran and told the disciples,

And the guys didn't believe them.

Luke tells us that the men thought what the women were just telling "an idle tale."

But Peter was always a man of action. He couldn't sit still and just dismiss what the women said.

After all, he had been the one who once recognized that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the Living God!

And he had heard Jesus say that he would be killed and live again on the third day.

And so he ran to the tomb and found it empty just as the women had said. And with no men in dazzling white to tell him anything, he knew the women had told the truth.

And he was amazed that Christ had risen from the dead.

He believed it because the tomb was empty!

Do we believe it? For us today, nearly 2000 years later, especially for those of us who come to church regularly, this seems so familiar that we want to say of course Christ rose from the dead, of course he is still alive, of course!

And yet I have to ask----do we really believe it? Or do we just repeat the words because we've heard this Easter story so often, just like children don't question why on earth a bunny would deliver colored and chocolate eggs!

If we believe it, why do we so often live as though we don't? I know that people don't just walk out of their graves, so why should I believe that Christ did?

It's a good question.

On the other hand, if I believe that Christ gave sight to a man born blind, healed people of leprosy, cast out demons, and restored the lives of a little girl and a friend named Lazarus, why would I NOT believe he could walk out of a tomb after he had died?

If you believe in one miracle, why draw a line? Why not believe in them all?

But we don't live like we believe in any of them.

We still find ourselves living as though this life is all there is. We grab and get as much stuff as we can. We hoard and refuse to be generous. We are afraid of dying.

We are afraid of the cost of really hearing Christ's words and following him.

We do not live life abundantly, the way that eternal life should be lived---all out, full speed, no holds on love and grace and forgiveness.



We don't even accept that God loves us and everyone else unconditionally!

And that's how we would live if we believed in the resurrection of Christ!

Because if God doesn't love each one of us without any restrictions or conditions, then why would Christ have died? Why would God send His only begotten son, knowing that he would suffer horribly and die, if God doesn't love us? What would have been the purpose?

But God did send him, and scripture tells us clearly, that "God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten son!"

God did not send Jesus to condemn us, but to save us.

Do we live like that? Do we live like we believe God loves us? Or do we live in fear of being condemned? Do we continue in our sins because we believe that we will never be good enough to deserve God's love?

Or do we try to live as beloved children of God, knowing that God in mercy will forgive us for what we have done when we ask for help?

Do we live as though death is still the final answer, or do we live in hope and joy and gratitude to God for giving Christ the victory over sin and death?

Christ came out of the tomb, bringing us with him to eternal life with God.

Christ is alive, leading us through this life into the next!

When we believe, we will run to tell others that Christ is alive! We will share the Good News of resurrection with the world!

Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!

Hallelujah! Amen!