

“Fatal Blow to Earthly Logic”

April 20, 2025

First Christian Church

Scripture Text: Luke 24: 1-12

According to our reading from Luke, the story of that first Easter morning starts with at least 5 women going to the tomb where Jesus was buried. Luke names 3 of them, “Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James,” and then adds “and the other women with them.” Women is plural, so if you have 3 named, and then add other women, at least 2, there was a minimum of 5. There may have been 20, but Luke tells us there were at least 5. And these women are not strangers to us. We were officially introduced in chapter 8 as Luke put them alongside the 12 disciples as those who followed Jesus and even ministered to Him out of their own resources. More recently, these are the women who followed Jesus through the streets from Pilate’s court to the place of Jesus’ crucifixion. These are the women who lingered at the cross after Jesus was declared dead. These are the women who followed Joseph of Arimathea and watched him wrap Jesus’ body in linen cloth and put Him in a tomb. These are the women who watched them seal the tomb with a large stone. These women are qualified witnesses of what happened. They knew Jesus when He was alive. They saw him die. They saw them bury His body in the tomb. And now, on Easter morning, they are the ones who come to that same tomb and find it empty. Yet they did not run in fear. They stayed and tried to figure out what happened. That is when “two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them... and said to them, ‘Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen. Remember how He told you, while He was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to the hands of sinners and be crucified and on the third day rise again. Then they remembered His words.’” It doesn’t say, “remember when Jesus told the disciples in Galilee.” It says “remember how He told you.” Then “they remembered His words.” They were there. They remembered. These women are not only qualified witnesses who can testify to seeing Jesus die, they are lifted up as disciples from Jesus’ inner circle who had been with Him since Galilee. Whatever different churches and even different Bible verses say, God found these women worthy and capable messengers of the Gospel. God announced Easter resurrection through them.

The women then returned and told the disciples and others of the empty tomb, the angels and the message of resurrection. But verse 11 says, “these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.” Some have said the disciples didn’t believe them because they were women, and women in that day were not seen as reliable witnesses. I disagree. The disciples have known these women for years – ministering alongside them with Jesus. It is not that they didn’t trust the women. They wanted to believe the women. It is simply that they already believed something else. People say “I don’t believe it” because there is something else that they believe more strongly. In this case, the dead stay dead. No matter how strong they were. No matter how careful they were and in what great shape they were. No matter how

much we wish they would come back to us, no matter how much we pray for them to come back to us, no matter how much love is in that final kiss we gave to them; they stay dead. We have seen on TV when dead bodies are dug up and exhumed, they stayed dead. Even when the pharaohs were buried with food and wives and riches, they stayed dead. We know there are some who are dead for just a few moments and come back, but once you are all the way dead, you stay dead. That is what they knew. That is what we know. But then these women come and tell us about angel messengers and an empty tomb. It is not that we don't believe them. It is just we believe our experience with death more. But these are women we trust. Our mothers, our grandmothers, our Sunday School teachers, our elders tell us not to be so certain that what we know is actually true. You think you know, but you might not. Not all who die stay dead. "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen." "Remember how he told you... on the third day He would rise again." Jesus not only did it. He called it. The tomb is empty except for a couple of angels in "dazzling clothes." The women we know and trust told us it is so. And a little crack forms in our certainty. Is death the end? Is there more? Could life win? Could God possibly bring life from death? God has had to pick us up before, heal us, forgive us, and set us back on the path again. Can God still come to us in the grave? Can God bring us back to life, to something more than this life?

The answer is "yes". It is the witness of the empty tomb. It is the witness of the women who knew Jesus in His life, in His death, and now in His resurrection. It is the witness of Cleopas and his friend who walked with the Risen Jesus on the road to Emmaus. It is the witness of Peter, Thomas and the other disciples. It is the witness of Paul and James and the 500 mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15. Jesus is risen!

So if Jesus was resurrected from the dead. Not just resuscitated back to life, but resurrected to a new life – life without end, life that raises up to the presence of God – if death is not the end, what else do I believe about life that isn't true? Three times Jesus said that He would be arrested and put to death then come back on the third day. And He did. That proves Jesus was who He said He was and that everything He said was in fact, the very Word of God to us. What else did He say that goes beyond what we know? He knows things we don't believe because we believe something else more – something that is too small. Like, we believe in scarcity. We keep things just in case. You don't just give things away, because then you will not have them anymore. Whether we are talking about money or love or energy; you always keep back what you might need later. Just in case. Because these things are scarce and therefore valuable. But God says give it away. Invest your money in other people. Share love with everyone you meet. Pour out your energy into things that are important. "And I will fill you back up," says God. The more love you share, the love you will have. The more wealth you share, the wealthier you will be. The more you give of yourself, the more of you there will be. Can you believe that or do you believe scarcity more? Are you going to believe the One who conquered death or what we call common sense? We know how to treat our enemies. We call them names and do our best

to put them in their place. But the One who rose from the dead says to love your enemies. Show them kindness. Treat them like they are valuable to God. Are you going to follow the one who conquered the unconquerable or your ego? Can you believe Jesus more? You and I both know acceptance is a lifelong struggle. We learn proper behavior in front of our parents so they will accept us and affirm us. That behavior gets tweaked by teachers, siblings and friends in elementary school. We then learn to dress a certain way and speak a certain way and listen to certain kinds of music in order to be accepted by our peers – choosing one peer group over another and doing whatever we need to do to be accepted. We change and make adjustments again when we try for a job and then need to be accepted there. We adapt our behavior, our language, even our outlook to win over and then be accepted by our spouse. But then Jesus comes along and says, “I love you and accept you right where you are, just as you are. I love you too much to let you stay there, but I love and accept you right where you are.” He says what I did on the cross was to take the punishment for all your wrongs, to make forgiveness possible, to bring you home, to make you acceptable. You are now and have always been acceptable in my arms. Are you going to believe the unbelievable from Jesus who overcame death, or hold onto your insecurities which can’t even overcome a stain on your shirt?

Would you grab your litany again for me.

Hanging someone on the cross is the end of that person.

But the cross is empty. Christ is Risen!

They sealed His tomb with a stone and posted guards to keep it sealed.

But the stone is rolled away. Christ is Risen!

They laid Jesus’ body in the tomb as its final resting place.

But the tomb is empty. Christ is Risen!

We cried the tears of mourning, for our hope was gone.

But joy came in the morning. Christ is Risen!

The worst thing is no longer the last thing.

For resurrection is real. Christ is Risen!

We thought the cross was the end, but it wasn’t. We thought the stone sealed the tomb, but it didn’t. We thought His final resting place was final, but it wasn’t. We thought the worst thing – the arrest, the trial, the whipping, the crucifixion, the death; the aches and pains, the home health, the hospital stay, the pain, the losing control, the saying good bye – we thought the worst thing was the last thing in life, but it isn’t. God gets the last word. And for those who believe, life is that last word. Resurrection is real. Christ is Risen! I wonder what else we’re wrong about?

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