

Text – Luke 24:1-12

For prior reading Psalm 16 and Luke 23:26-56

Main Point

Introduction (300)

The resurrection is the most significant event in history. There are no events that rival its significance

This event has shaped the world over the last 2000 years.

It has shaped societies and nations, and through that affected millions of people in numerous ways.

But it is more than that a shaping phenomenon, like a world war or an earthquake. The Resurrection is incredibly personal. Its significance affects everyone.

It is significant for every single one of us here today in a personal way.

Today, this morning, we focus our attention on this glorious event. Please turn with me to the Book of Luke.

In chapter 24 we have the account of the events surrounding the Resurrection of our Lord.

We learn of this event through the eyes of people. Through the eyes of People like you and me. People full of emotions, full of doubts, full of shattered hopes, full of questions and full of pain.

In this account, we see two reports of the Resurrection and three Responses to those reports.

Each of the reports and the responses highlights the significance of the resurrection. The significance of the resurrection to men and women like you and me.

It also highlights how incredible the event of the resurrection is. Even those who saw it with their very eyes struggled to believe the facts. It is so incredible that even for those who were there struggled to compute what was happening.

Just like when a young man proposes, she says YES. He hears the words, sees her accepting, but he struggles to compute what is actually happening. It is too good to be true.

Part 1 - Set the scene

Friday

But let us start at the beginning.

Look at verse 1 of chapter 24

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared.

We are early Sunday morning. At the crack of dawn when it is still half dark and cold. The sun just about to rise.

Two days ago, Jesus had been blatantly betrayed, falsely accused, cruelly beaten, and mercilessly crucified. His disciples had abandoned him. Peter had even publicly denied him three times.

Strange things had happened while Jesus was hanging on that horrible cross. There was a darkness in the

middle of the day, there was an earthquake, and there were reports that the curtain in the temple had been torn in two.

When Jesus finally breathed his last breath, one of his followers took courage and negotiated with the Romans to at least be allowed to bury his body. To show this great man some dignity in death.

Burial

Seeing no reason to decline, the governor agrees that Jesus can be buried. He was dead after all. His soldiers had made sure of that.

So, before sundown, on Friday evening, the body of Jesus is placed in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

because the Sabbath was about to begin His body could not be properly prepared for burial. His followers knew he deserved better, but there was only so much they could do with the little time they had.

Friday sunset marked the start of the Sabbath. It was a sin against God to do any work on the Sabbath. So they quickly wrapped his body in a cloth, placed him in the tomb, and rolled the stone in place.

Women watching

All along a group of women were watching on.

- Watching Jesus hang on the cross.
- Watching him breath his last.
- Watching him be taken down.
- Watching him be placed in the tomb.

These women included Mary Magdalene, the woman who Jesus had rescued from demon possession and saved her from slavery to sin. Joanna and another

Mary are also mentioned by name, and verse 10 also tells us there were other women too.

Women's plan

This group of women watch on, and they decide in their hearts that something has to be done. They could not let the one whom they loved so much be buried in this way. If they could do anything about it, they would.

And so, with what time they have left on Friday evening, they prepare some spices and ointments, in preparation to anoint the body of Jesus when they could.

Saturday comes and goes. Luke tells us "*they rested according to the commandment*" but we can imagine how troubled that rest would have been.

The shock, the fear, the sorrow, the inability to do anything. All these and more would have made for a troubled rest.

So, in the midst of their sorrow and their shock, they still have purpose and direction and they set off early on Sunday morning to the tomb with the spices they had prepared.

Reaching the tomb

Now we don't know if these ladies knew that the roman soldiers were guarding the tomb and that the roman governor had placed an official seal on the tomb to stop anyone from opening the tomb. They may have been unaware of those obstacle to their plan.

But they were very aware of the large stone in front of the tomb. The account in Mark tells us they did not know how they would move the stone.

But regardless of these obstacles, they go anyway. In the midst of their sorrow and their grief they go anyway.

When they finally arrive, they do not find things as they expected.

²And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

First, they find the stone rolled. That is good. That is the one obstacle dealt with.

But secondly, they **did not** find the body of the Lord Jesus.

This is to add insult to injury.

Their hope to properly bury their Lord is dashed. Their desire to honour their Lord one last time is cruelly denied.

Part 2 – First Report

Women Perplexed

But they are also confused.

- What can explain this?
- How did this happen?
- What does this mean?

The crucifixion and death of their Lord made little sense, but this makes no sense at all. Why is the tomb empty?

They are confused, stunned, and perplexed.

⁴ While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel.

In the midst of their confusion, two men appear out of nowhere. We are told these men are in “dazzling apparel.” Or “*dressed like lightning and clothing white as snow*”, Matthew tells us in his account.

You can imagine the women in the dark tomb one moment, the next, these two men appearing and lighting up the entire tomb in blinding light.

Now the women are afraid.

Now they bow their faces to the ground in fear and respect as they see these two heavenly messengers.

Why these heavenly messengers?

Angels as witnesses

Someone needed to explain why the stone was rolled away.

Someone needed to explain why the tomb was empty.

And it had to be someone with authority.

Someone who could be trusted.

Which is why the Angels appear.

The two heavenly witnesses. Two witnesses to confirm the truth of the report.

In the presence of these angels, the women are afraid.
Look at verse 5

⁵ And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead?”

Despite the fear of the women, the angels explain the stunning truth. And like a parent who want's their child to figure out a riddle themselves the Angels give a hint by asking a question. But it is also a mild rebuke:

Why do you seek the living among the dead?

You can imagine the ladies being fully attentive now. They are seeing these men. They are hearing these words. They are starting to compute.

- “we are seeking the living among the dead...” ,
- “are you saying Jesus is alive....”
- “ but that is impossible...how?”

Life changing statement – But has risen

But the angel does not prolong their agony.

In one simple, profound and life changing, sentence he gives the answer to all their questions.

⁶ He is not here, but has risen.

That is the truth of the matter.

That is why the stone was rolled away – He has risen

That is why his body is not here – He has risen

That is why he is not among the dead – He has risen

That is why He is among the living – He has risen

That simple explanation changes everything for these ladies.

- Their hope is restored: Jesus Christ is who he said he was: the promised messiah.
- Their expectations are renewed: Jesus Christ was not defeated: He will reign forever
- Their sorrows are repaired – Death does not have the final word

He is not here, but has risen.

The Romans, the evil Jewish leaders and Judas do not have the victory. Their plots to silence Jesus have failed.

They thought it was over. They thought that Jesus was finally dealt with. That his influence would die with his body and that his memory would decay with him. But they were wrong.

They failed and Jesus would have the final word.

He is not here, but has risen.

This was God's plan and his His plan always come to pass.

Even in the midst of the sorrow and cruelty of the crucifixion God was still in control.

Yes there it was evil, great evil and cruelty, and God did not make evil good, but he uses the evil for good.

This only confirms that God is sovereign at all times and in all places. He is forever good, wise and powerful.

God never abandons his people, He never fails to keep his promises.

Some thought that was the case, but *He is not here, but has risen.*

Application – Risen changes how we live too

This statement, this fact, is just as profound and life-changing for us as it was for these ladies.

It gives a completely different perspective on any suffering we face.

- Because he has risen, we know God will have the final word on all injustices
- Because he has risen, we can trust God's ways even though we don't always understand.
- Because he has risen, we know God will have the final word
- Because he has risen, what is there to fear when our God can raise the dead?
- Because he has risen, we mourn with hope because death is not the end.

He is not here, but has risen.

But even more fundamentally, this fact changes our eternal hope:

- Because he has risen, you can be saved.
- Because he has risen, your sin can be paid for, your guilt can be dealt with.
- Because he has risen, you do not need to pay for your sin in hell for eternity.
- Because he has risen, you have every reason to trust in him as your saviour.

- Because he has risen, you have every reason to follow him as Lord.

He is not here, but has risen.

The facts contained in that simple sentence changed history. And it can also change your eternal destiny.

Angels Explain more

Thankfully for the women at the tomb, the angels give a bit more explanation.

But really, they just help them remember what the Lord Jesus Christ had already told them.

The middle of verse 6:

Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷ that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.”

The Angels are saying, “you should have been expecting this! It was no secret that Jesus would rise again. He told you plainly”.

Cross references of prediction of death

Just looking at the accounts in Luke we find a number of times where Jesus plainly and clearly told his disciples about his death and resurrection.

For example in Luke 9:22 we read Jesus saying this to his disciples:

²²~~saying~~, *“The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.”*

And further in the chapter, at a later time we read

^{43b} *But while they were all marveling at everything he was doing, Jesus^[d] said to his disciples, ⁴⁴ “Let these words sink into your ears: [pay careful attention. This is important. Listen carefully]*

The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men.” ⁴⁵ But they did not understand this saying, and it was concealed from them, so that they might not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying.

- Maybe they thought he was speaking in parables.
- Maybe it was another one of those teachings that they heard but did not really understand. One among many things they did not get, so they forgot about it.

Jesus had clearly told them and they had forgotten. But now the angels remind the women.

⁸ *And they remembered his words,*

You can imagine them confirming with each other, and echoing each other:

- “true! He did say that” ,
- “ How did we forget that?”
- “He even told us to pay careful attention when he was telling us. I had no idea this is what he meant”

And so their sorrow is forgotten. Their fear and confusion disappear. Their hope returns. Their joy builds. And in their excitement, they go off to tell the others!

This changes everything. Everyone must know.

⁹ and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰ Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles,

Part 3 - Second Response

Report not believed

So this group of women, at least five of them, go off to tell all the other followers of Jesus. They leave the tomb with still some fear but also much joy, the Matthew account tells us.

And you would think that when the women tell the others, that they too would rejoice at the stunning news, that they too would find hope, that they would join the women in their excitement and thrill that Jesus has risen from the dead.

But the response of the disciples is more than disappointing.

The women give their report to the eleven and to all the rest

¹¹ but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.

“these words seemed to them an idle tale”

“Idle tale” is used elsewhere describing the delirious talk of those who are very sick. The delusional mumblings of a sick person.

The disciples thought these women were making things up. They thought that in their grief, and the strain of the past events, these women must be making

things up to help them cope. It was their way of processing the tragic events. Their emotions had gotten the better of them and all this babble of angels and an empty tomb was “an idle tale”.

Shame on them, right!

Women show strength

In reality these women have shown more fortitude than any of the eleven. They kept it together. They saw where he was buried, they prepared the spices, they got up early and they made the hike to the tomb at the crack of dawn. We are not talking about a group of women wallowing in their emotions. Despite their emotions they took charge and had purpose.

My humble attempt to colour in the detail here is that the disciples **themselves** were wallowing in their emotions and they simply assume that is how everyone must be feeling. They know their own emotional state, and consider that they themselves could come up with all sort of foolish stories. In their minds angels, bright lights, and an empty tomb fit that bill.

So yes, shame on them, they should have had a higher regard for the report of these women. And they should have expected it, and themselves been out there at the crack of dawn.

But they don't and they don't believe the women.

Application – Do we think it is an idle tale?

Now in saying “shame on them”, how many of us considered the account of the resurrection as an “idle tale” for a long time?

Maybe some of you here today you still consider it an “idle tale”.

Of all the characters in this account, the disciples are the ones who best represent the average Kiwi. You hear the story, but dismiss it as an idle tale.

And there may be a host of reasons why you may dismiss it.

- Maybe the one who told you the account had no credibility. Like women in the first century, the one who told you could easily be dismissed. But that does not change the truth of the account.
- Maybe the one who told you seemed to be driven by emotions. How can you believe someone who is excitedly trying to explain that someone raised from the dead some 2000 year ago? But how do you know if you are driven by emotions?
- Maybe you have already set in your mind what can and can't happen. But what if those assumptions are wrong?
- Maybe you have decided that miracles cannot happen. But what if that preconception is wrong?

There may be a host of reasons why you did or why you currently consider the resurrection an idle tale.

But be bold enough to ask yourself why you dismiss it. Why do you consider it an idle tale? You will find, as you carefully examine your own heart and and carefully examine the evidence, those reasons will gradually melt away.

The resurrection is no “idle tale”. That may be your first response, it was the disciples' first response after all, but don't let it be your final conclusion.

More proof – Disciples could not have imagined the Resurrection

At this point, it is worth pointing out that there is no way the disciples could have made up the events of the resurrection.

I mean, these men could not even accept that it had happened when they were plainly told about it. We can't imagine them making an elaborate plan to steal the body, thinking up a story of the resurrection, and propagating that through the streets of Jerusalem. That is just not the picture we have of these men.

This account is not propaganda, trying to put the best foot forward to ensure maximum effect.

The account is painfully honest about the awkward details

1. The least credible group find the tomb empty.
2. The leaders themselves cower in fear
3. And the leaders don't even believe the account

This is no propaganda. This is an honest account of the historical facts.

Peter's response

But there is one last piece in the account.

The women explain what they saw. The disciples do not believe them. But Peter does more than just disbelieve.

He does not believe, but he is also intrigued. Verse 12 of our account tells us:

¹² But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.

During his time following Jesus, Peter had started to learn to take Jesus at his word. If Jesus said it would happen.

Maybe as he hears the women telling him that Jesus himself had promised he would raise, he thinks back at other promises Jesus made and were fulfilled.

Maybe he thought back at the time Jesus told them to put down their nets so they would get a catch of fish. Jesus was true to his word then.

Or maybe Peter thinks of a more recent event, a more painful event. Jesus had said that Peter would deny him three times, and despite hearing the warning, Peter had done exactly that.

What Jesus promised always happened.

What about now?

Full of doubt and confusion Peter runs to the tomb. He stoops down, he looks into the tomb.

- He too sees the empty tomb.
- He too sees the linen cloths.
- He too sees the body is not there.

But what does it mean?

- Is the resurrection of Jesus the only adequate explanation for what he saw?
- Did Jesus really promise that he would raise from the dead?
- Has God really acted?
- Is Jesus alive today?

These questions and many more would have been swirling in Peter's head. He goes home wondering,

marvelling and pondering what has just happened. Jesus himself would later appear to Peter, but our account finishes here. With Peter, not believing yet, but pondering and wondering over the facts.

If you don't believe the account of the resurrection, let me encourage you to be like Peter. Run to the tomb. Run to the facts. Stoop and look inside. Turn over the details. Study. Seek to understand. Ponder and marvel at these things.

At the end of the day, all of us have to ask ourselves the same questions:

- Is the resurrection of Jesus the only adequate explanation for the facts of history? Peter would later conclude yes. What about you? How many facts would it take to convince you?
Yes the resurrection is the only adequate explanation for the facts
- Did Jesus really promise that he would raise from the dead? Peter would have to compare notes with the other disciples.
We can look to their record and see clearly that Jesus predicted his resurrection multiple times. Yes he did predict his resurrection and what he predicts always comes true
- Has God really acted? Peter would come to conclude that God is always acting. And the resurrection is the fulfilment of His plan of salvation, which He put in place from the beginning.
Yes, God has acted, just like he said he would.

Conclusion

Is Jesus alive today?

Peter asked himself that question three days after the death of his Lord.

We ask the same question 2000 years later: Is Jesus alive today?

As we close our time together, we answer that question with a resounding YES!

Yes! He is alive today!

Yes! He rose and never tasted death again.

Yes! He is alive and ascended into heaven.

Yes! He is seated, even now, at the right hand of God.

Yes! He is the king of king and Lord of lords.

Yes! He is alive and worthy of our worship

Yes! He is alive today, and that changes everything

Over the centuries, millions of people have heard of the account of the resurrection.

- Some believe with joy, like the women
- Some consider it an idle tale like the disciples initially
- Others are intrigued, and like Peter seek out the facts and ponder and marvel over them.

The response of others is interesting, but what matters most is your response to the resurrection.

The resurrection is the most significant event in history, there is no doubt about that. But will you make it the most significant event in **your** history?

Will you let the simple phrase “*He is not here, but has risen.*” change your life in an even more profound way than it has changed history?

For many of us, like for the women and eventually for the disciples and Peter, for those of us who believe in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, this simple phrase fills us with hope, awe and joy:

He is not here, but has risen.

Pray