

EASTER WEEK: LEADER  
 WEEK 8: WEEK OF APRIL 21  
**THE EMPTY TOMB**  
 Luke 24:1–11

OPENING

- L Alleluia! Christ is risen!  
 C **He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**  
 L Almighty God, as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
 C **so are Your ways higher than our ways and Your thoughts than our thoughts.**  
 L But You made Your way of salvation known  
 C **in the proclamation of Your Holy Word;**  
 L in the death of Jesus Christ, our Savior;  
 C **and in His resurrection from the dead.**  
 L Now work in our lives through Your Word and Spirit  
 C **that we might be living witnesses of your life-giving work.**  
 L Alleluia! Christ is risen!  
 C **He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

INTRODUCTION

In this section of the Passion Narrative (Luke 24:1–11), Luke relates the resurrection of Jesus. At the heart of this scene is the contrast between confusion and clarity.

The women go to the tomb with spices to care for the body of Jesus. Upon finding the tomb open and empty, they stand there confused about what they see. When they leave the tomb, however, they have clarity. They run to the disciples, proclaiming the resurrection. What accounts for this reversal?

The words of Jesus.

In the center of the narrative, between the coming and the going of the women, stand angels. Angels are messengers, and these angels bear the message of the words of Jesus.

Thus, Luke reveals to us how the words of Jesus bring clarity to the meaning of His Passion and inspire God's people for witness to the world.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**1. When you read Luke's account of Easter, you will notice that Luke has three events that follow the resurrection: the appearance of angels to the women at the tomb (24:1–12); the appearance of Jesus to the disciples on the road to Emmaus (24:13–35); and the appearance of Jesus to His disciples (24:36–53).**

**If you read these events as a sequence, how do you see a greater and greater revelation of Jesus in the movement from morning to evening on the first Easter day?**

Luke is recording the events of one day. He begins early in the morning (v. 1), continues later that day (v. 2), and then closes with events that happen that evening (v. 33). As the reader is taken from place to place on this day, Luke offers a fuller and fuller revelation of Jesus.

In the first event, the women are at the tomb. They discover the absence of the body of Jesus. Angels appear to them, but the women do not see Jesus, and Peter confirms that the tomb is empty (v. 12).

In the second event, Jesus is present with the disciples on the road to Emmaus (v. 15). Here, however, the disciples are prevented from recognizing Him. Thus, Jesus is there but not there for most of the account. When Jesus breaks bread, their eyes are suddenly opened, and Jesus just as suddenly disappears (v. 31). So, in the second event, the disciples have a brief glimpse of a hidden but present Jesus.

In the third event, Jesus is fully and richly present with His disciples. When Jesus stands among the disciples, they think that He is a spirit (vv. 36–37). In response, Jesus reveals His full fleshly existence. He asks them to see Him (v. 39a), to touch Him (v. 39b), and to give Him something to eat (v. 41). This Jesus then bodily ascends into heaven (v. 51).

In recording these events of the first Easter Day, Luke offers the reader a growing revelation of the bodily resurrection of Jesus. The disciples are not lost in delusions of mourning or wishful thinking but slowly discover the risen and ruling Jesus, present with them and yet also ruling over all.

**2. As Luke offers us a fuller and fuller revelation of Jesus, Luke also offers a fuller and fuller remembering of God's Word. As you read these three events as a sequence and focus on the sections of dialogue, how do you see a fuller and richer revelation of God's Word?**

In this sequence of events, Luke joins the growing revelation of the risen Jesus to a growing remembrance of God's Word.

In the first event, the angels ask the women to recall what Jesus had said to them during His ministry: "Remember how He told you, while He was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise" (vv. 6–7). Luke then informs the reader that "they remembered His words" (v. 8).

In the second event, Jesus speaks to the disciples on the road to Emmaus and calls to their minds “all that the prophets have spoken” (v. 25). Whereas the angels pointed the women to Jesus’ words, Jesus points the disciples to the words of the Scriptures: “beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (v. 27). While the women understood the resurrection on the basis of the words that Jesus had spoken, the disciples on the road to Emmaus understand the resurrection on the basis of the words of Scripture.

In the third event, Luke brings both of these witnesses together, so that the resurrection is attested by the testimony of Jesus and the testimony of the Scriptures. After Jesus reveals Himself to the disciples, He asks them to remember “My words that I spoke to you while I was still with you” and “everything written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets” (v. 44). Luke thus joins the fullest knowledge of the bodily resurrection and rule of Jesus with the fullest remembrance of God’s Word, both the words that Jesus has spoken and the words of Scripture.

**3. In Luke’s Gospel, when the words of Jesus and the words of Scripture are remembered, one has the fullest revelation of the resurrected Jesus who rules over all, and one sees how God’s people become witnesses of God’s work in the world.**

**What happens in the ending of each of these events, and how does that ending encourage us in God’s work among us today?**

At the ending of each of these events, Luke offers a revelation of how God’s people become witnesses of the resurrection.

In the first event, the women are named for the reader, and Luke records how they went and told the disciples of these things (vv. 9–10).

In the second event, the disciples on the road to Emmaus return to Jerusalem and tell the others “what happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of the bread” (v. 35). Here, Luke records their excitement about the message they have been given to share, noting that although it was already evening and they had already traveled that day, they “rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem” (v. 33). Upon arriving, they discover that Simon Peter had a similar experience, as the eleven who were gathered were discussing that “the Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon” (v. 34), something which Peter must have returned to tell them.

Finally, in the third event, after Jesus opens the Scriptures to His disciples and reminds them of His teaching, He commissions them to be “witnesses of these things” after they have been “clothed with power from on high” (vv. 48–49).

The message of Scripture is centered in God’s work of salvation in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the Good News that we celebrate this day as we celebrate Easter, and this is the Good News that we share with others as we leave this place and enter into the world.

## CONCLUSION

The apostle Paul often speaks of the Gospel as the mystery of salvation (e.g., Romans 16:25 and Ephesians 3:9).

On that first Easter morning, Luke reveals how that which was hidden for ages was made manifest to the world. Christ not only opened the grave, but He also opened the Scriptures, opened His teachings, and opened the mouths of His disciples that they might bear witness to the clarity of salvation from sin by the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Christ.

Today, as we remember Easter, we also remember the words of Jesus, the words of the Scriptures, and the words of all who have borne witness to this work of God for us. By remembering God's words, we, too, become witnesses of God's saving work in the world.

## CLOSING PRAYER

Almighty God, when the women came to the tomb that first Easter morning, You sent angels to teach them Your Word, and You changed their lives forever.

Be with us now as we celebrate Easter. Open our minds to understand the Scriptures, open our hearts to trust in Jesus Christ, our risen Savior; and open our lives to be witnesses of Your work in this world until Your Son returns and brings His glorious kingdom that never ends.

Through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and ever. Amen.