

Luke 24:1-12 *On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. ² They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. ⁵ In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? ⁶ He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ⁷ 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' ⁸ Then they remembered his words. ⁹ When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. ¹⁰ It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹ But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. ¹² Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.*

Jesus Lives!

1. The proof
2. Why it matters

How do you celebrate a victory? Champagne, parade, expensive rings, big trophy? How did Tiger Woods celebrate his Masters win last week? With a big roar, right? We can learn something from the world about how to celebrate a victory. We have a victory to celebrate today. Far greater than winning the Super Bowl or the World Series. More valuable than winning the Powerball lottery. More important than winning the war against terror. The cross of suffering and death is gone. The grave is empty. The Bible is true. Our sins are forgiven. Jesus Lives!

And how do we celebrate it? We paint eggs and tell our kids about a giant, mysterious rabbit. What do painted eggs and bunnies have to do with the resurrection of Jesus anyway? Easter is not about baskets and bunnies, eggs and candy. Easter is the resurrection of Jesus from the grave. We celebrate the victory of Easter because Jesus lives.

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. ² They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. The women were going to do some nasty work. They were going to finish preparing Jesus' body for the grave. The body of Jesus would not be a pretty sight. Once again they would see where the thorns had pierced his brow and where the scourge had ripped and torn and bloodied his back. They would have seen the holes from the nails and the spear. But they saw none of that. Because Jesus wasn't there. Jesus had risen. Jesus lives!

While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. ⁵ In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? ⁶ He is not here; he has risen! Angels appear at every significant step in God's plan of salvation. Angels barred the way to the tree of life after man's fall into sin. The angel Gabriel was sent by God to tell the virgin Mary that she would be the mother of the Savior. Angels came to serve Jesus after he was tempted by Satan. And an angel strengthened Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Jesus lives! The appearance of the angels tells us that what we have here is something miraculous. Nobody stole Jesus' body. The women didn't go to the wrong tomb. Contrary to the laws of nature and everything we know about life and death, Jesus' dead body came back to life and left that tomb. Jesus lives!

We can understand their reluctance to believe something so contrary to everything we know about death, but they should have expected it. *Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ⁷ 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be*

raised again.' "8 Then they remembered his words. This must happen, Jesus said. Good Friday and Easter were never optional in Jesus' mind. Why? Because we are evil. We gossip and complain. We worry and covet. We are tight with our money and loose with our tongue. And 40% of people's internet use is for evil purposes. God's justice demands that these sins be punished. Someone had to die and that someone was Jesus. The Apostle Paul wrote, "He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification." (Romans 4:25)

Jesus had to die. But Jesus had to rise again. His resurrection proclaims sins forgiven and salvation accomplished. Take away the resurrection of Jesus and you take away Christianity. Take away the resurrection of Jesus and you take away forgiveness of sins. Take away the resurrection of Jesus and you take away heaven. So Jesus had to rise to assure us of eternal life. Jesus lives!

How did the disciples celebrate that victory? *But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense.* You would have expected the disciples to shout, "Hallelujah!" when they heard the resurrection news. You would have expected them to dance and sing and high five one another and praised God for keeping his promises. You would have expected them to ask when and where they could see Jesus again. But they didn't. They didn't believe a word of it. So Peter had to look for himself. *Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.* What did Peter find? An empty tomb! Just like the women had told them.

Jesus lives! But why does that matter to you?

Because this life is not what God wanted for you. Sometimes our lives may seem like a bad dream. The teasing and taunting at school never ends. Your best friend moves away. Your spouse says, "I don't love you anymore." The doctor says, "There's no cure." A loved one dies, and you're left all alone. Our sins weigh us down. Our conscience gives us no rest. Life seems dark and dreary.

But Jesus lives! That tells us that his death on the cross paid for all our sins. We can confess them to God with confidence that he has forgiven them in Christ.

Jesus lives! And that means life is promised to every believer. Our loved ones who have passed away in Christ – don't look for them among the dead. Don't look for them in the past. Look for them in the future, in heaven, where there is life. Let's not look for ourselves among the dead either. Baptized in Jesus, we live. And we now live a life that will never end.

We have our pains in life. We have health problems. We have financial stress. We struggle along from day to day. Our jobs can be tough. Our families have troubles. Some relationships are strained. The world despises our Christian faith. We lose loved ones. Our own bodies get weaker and older every day, and finally we die.

But in every pain, celebrate Jesus' victory! His resurrection proves that all God's promises come true. Our sins are all forgiven. Our pains are working for our good. We will be raised to life with glorified bodies. We will live forever with no more tears or sorrow or pain or death.

Jesus lives! We can quit our foolish worrying about tomorrow. We can confess our sins with full confidence of forgiveness. We can flood the throne of God's grace with requests and prayers.

Jesus lives! That means we don't look for ourselves among the dead anymore either. Sin is no longer our master and death is no longer our tyrant. We are no longer dead in sin, but we are now dead to sin. It need not control us any longer. In our baptisms we are raised to a new life with Christ. We live. We live lives of promise. We live lives of hope. We live lives of service to others. We live lives that glorify God. Why?

Jesus lives! Let's celebrate that today, every day and for all eternity!