

A Sermon At The Cemetery

Luke 24:1-12

Trinity Lutheran – Kearney, Missouri

March 31, 2013 – The Resurrection of Our Lord



In the name of the Father, and † of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. You go to the cemetery – the tomb of Jesus – the place where they buried His dead body three days earlier. You go to spice and perfume His already decaying body. You go to pay your last respects. What you expect to see is the dead, carefully buried corpse of the Lord Jesus. After all, Luke tells us that these women had “followed Joseph of Arimathea, saw the tomb, and how Jesus’ body was laid in it.” However, very early in the morning at *this* burial place something very strange has happened – something totally unexpected – although it shouldn’t have been all that unexpected, since Jesus told them that this is what would happen. “They found the stone rolled away from the tomb.” And when the women ventured to enter into it, “they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus!”

It was panic mode – terror time. “What has happened?” they wondered. Has the grave of our Lord Jesus been looted by thieves and robbers? Are those miscreants still in there? Has His body been disturbed, defiled or destroyed by His enemies? Did some wild animal drag His dead body off, or had the chief priests and Pharisees been right? Was it Jesus’ disciples who pulled off a graveyard heist, got past the Roman guards, broke into His sealed tomb, and stole His body? Would the disciples have been bold enough to dare to do something like that? And if so, why? Where’s the upside?” Can you imagine? What would you think? You’d think the worst too, wouldn’t you? Wouldn’t you be shocked and sick to your stomach – your mind and heart racing as you tried to figure out what had happened. As if the bloody, brutal beatings and the horror of the crucifixion hadn’t been bad enough. Now there was this. This is a nightmare on steroids.

And so the women wondered and puzzled over what they had seen. They talked to and ques-

tioned one another. They examined every angle as they tried to make sense of it all. But “while they were wondering about this” – while they were conjecturing, speculating and guessing, all of a sudden, out of nowhere, two powerfully stunning preachers show up – heavenly preachers, angels, messengers from heaven, gleaming white like lightning. So brilliant was their appearance that they were difficult even to look at. But they weren’t there to just sit and stare at like eye candy, to call attention to themselves, or even to worship. The women were fearful, refused to look, and fell flat on their faces. But the angels were in the tomb for a reason. They were there with a sermon in their mouths.

They were preachers – preachers sent by God Himself to preach a sermon there at the cemetery. They had come with an external Word from the Lord for the women, and yes, *for you*. And it is the Lord’s Word which you are to hear this morning – not the words and wonderings of the women, or of your own heart and mind. And this is what the angels preached: “Why do you look for the living among the dead?” Did you catch that? “The living.” But they’re not done. There’s more. Listen: “He is not here.” The women must have thought to themselves: “No kidding! We see that! That’s why we’re so perplexed! So what gives? The angelic preachers continued: “If you’ll let us finish we’ll tell you. He is not here. *He has risen!*”

“Risen?” they wonder. “How can that be?” Then the angels asked them: “Don’t you remember the Lord’s own words? Don’t you remember *His* preaching? He told you time and time and time again – most especially in Galilee – that *this* is what would happen – that it *had* to happen. This is what Jesus said: ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’” And then the angel’s sermon abruptly ended. They

had done their job. Our Lord's Word had been preached, delivered, and put into the ears of this female cemetery congregation. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ," Paul reminds us. And here the Lord's preached Word did what it was sent to do for the women. "They remembered what Jesus had said."

Notice that all their wondering – all their talking to themselves – accomplished nothing. It took a sermon – an external Word from the Lord – to bring about faith so that they might finally trust what Jesus had said He would do for them and their salvation. Now they can't keep this Good News to themselves. So off they go to tell the Eleven and the other disciples the truth of Jesus' resurrection – proclaiming what the angels had told them – the "all things" of Jesus suffering, death and resurrection – the empty tomb and the sermon of the angels from heaven. Sadly, however the Eleven and all the others, "did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense." It was as if the women were delirious, not reliable, not credible.

But Peter decided to hoof it to the tomb to take a look inside. He saw the "strips of linen lying by themselves" and also wondered what this meant. If only he would have remembered that as a Baby Jesus has been wrapped in swaddling cloths – a sign of His Messianic birth. But now all Peter is able to see are burial clothes. Peter marvels and is astounded, but doesn't know what to make of it all. So he "went away wondering to himself what had happened." He needed a bigger dose of preaching – and that's precisely what He would get later on that very day from our Lord Jesus Himself when a meal of broiled fish and a sermon would open his mind to understand the Old Testament Scriptures – that "this is what was written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day."

And so you, too, dear children of God, also receive a big heaping helping of preaching so that you are not left to wonder what all this means as Sunday after Sunday messengers are sent by God to you. For nearly 35 years here at Trinity congregation, our Lord has sent preachers with sermons in their mouths – an external word from the Lord *for you* – namely: "It *is* true. Jesus *is* risen from the dead just as He promised. He appeared to Peter and all the apostles, as well as hundreds of others. He even appeared to St. Paul. And all of this He did just *for you*. Death has been defeated. It no longer has any power over you." And yet there's still more. In just a few short moments the living Word of Jesus which instituted the Lord's Supper on the night He was betrayed will be preached into your ears again. Those blessed, saving, holy words of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself will once again clearly proclaim the Good News of the Gospel *to you*. "This is My body. This is My blood, given and shed for you, for the forgiveness of Your sins." That divine forgiveness is for you, dear Christian. That forgiveness and life is there for the long haul, for His forgiveness spoken and given to you today in the Sacrament will see you through your grave, to the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. And like the women, you will not be able to keep this Good News to yourself. You will share it with others wherever and whenever God gives you the opportunity – and that Word, that blessed word of salvation and life, will not return to Him void. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Christ is risen! *He is risen indeed!* Christ is risen! *He is risen indeed!* For you and for your salvation. Alleluia! Amen. And now that peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in that one true faith in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.