

Luke 24:1-12 The Day of the Empty tomb
April 20, 2025

It does not matter the topic, it can be gravity or relativity or energy or any of the other scientific or historical discoveries of the age, or it *could be* about something theological, such as the Incarnation or the Trinity, or the Atonement; there is always a distinction between the moment of initial awakening, when the lights come on, and the later uncovering of deeper understanding.

In some cases, the initial experience may lead to a lifetime of learning and attempts at a better life. There is no stronger example of such an experience than *Easter*.

At first, the discovery of the empty tomb by the women was followed by confusion as to just what had happened. When they told it to the disciples they were not believed. Their words seemed like nonsense. They were like 7th graders introduced to the Pythagorean Theorem for the first time. You can hear them saying, what is she talking about? Even Peter was left wondering what had happened.

The first stage of a better knowledge involves simply the basic facts. Jesus had been executed, and laid in a freshly hewn grave by Joseph of Arimathea, just before the Sabbath, which began at sundown on Friday evening, and ended at sundown on Saturday evening. The women, who had prepared spices for the burial, and in order not to be out after dark, waited

until daybreak on the first day of the week, what is to us Sunday morning.

When they arrived they discovered the stone that covered the entrance to the tomb had been moved and when they went inside they found the linen cloth, but they did not find Jesus. There were two men dressed like lighting who told them that Jesus wasn't there (which they could plainly see), and that he had been risen (perhaps so that they wouldn't think the body had been stolen), and they were reminded that Jesus had already told them about all this. They were afraid, then they remembered. Up to this point, that is all there is.

Later there would be more. The Gospel of Luke goes on to describe the appearance of Jesus to the two disciples on the Emmaus Road. Matthew tells about an appearance before the eleven in Galilee at the time when Jesus gave the Great Commission.

The Gospel of John is interesting, it has the encounter in the garden between Jesus and Mary Magdalene when she mistook him for the gardener. It also relates the times he met with the disciples in a locked room both without and with Thomas. There is also the scene at the lake in Galilee with the miraculous catch of fish and the restoration of Peter in the aftermath of his infamous denials.

But even all of those are not the end of the discovery. Christians have been experiencing the risen Christ ever since and thinking out the implications, striving

for a better understanding, and there is no reason to believe it will end anytime soon. But all of that comes later.

Today is the Day of the Empty Tomb. On Easter day, we stand with the women and the apostles like Peter, and marvel; wonder what happened, what kind of words can be used to proclaim it?

There are options. First, one may choose not to look. It is possible to just walk by. For a number of reasons some are too busy with the demands of life to stop in for a look. As a result some live in a post-resurrection world as if nothing has happened. Even believers can fall prey to this phenomenon.

It is also possible to stand at the threshold of the tomb, so to speak, and take it in, but then go on without being swept in, caught up in the life that happened there. Sometimes when life presents a miracle, one does not know what to do, and it is possible to simply ignore it, to set it aside in the corner and decide to deal with it later, maybe never.

Or it could be made the object of investigation, an attempt to learn everything one can learn *about it*; to try to explain it in scientific terms, in terms of its historical significance, or by some other measure of human judgment.

That is, it is possible to take this serendipitous divine gift and make an effort to tame it, which is just another way of saying, to control it. Needless to say, the

gospel message of the resurrection of Jesus Christ refuses to be domesticated.

On Easter day, we stand with the women and the apostles like Peter, and wonder what happened, what kind of words can be used to proclaim it?

Before we say anything, let us be silent before it. If there *are* any words, let them be exclamations of astonishment, gratitude, and praise, perhaps in song.

After all, the whole Christ event, especially the resurrection of Jesus, has been inspiring artists and composers ever since it happened. And since Easter faith has been around for awhile, and Easter is celebrated annually, the music has become traditional for us;

Christ the Lord is Risen Today - Wesley
Low In the Grave He Lay
Crown him with Many Crowns
The Day of Resurrection - a poem by the 8th century monk John of Damascus
I Know That My Redeemer Liveth - 2 versions
I Serve A Risen Savior - He Lives
Alleluia, Sing to Jesus
The Hallelujah Chorus itself

It is also traditional to read the account each year in one of the gospels, this year it is from the Gospel of Luke. We adorn the sanctuary with lilies. These traditions, along with for some breakfasts and sunrise services, are all very meaningful, but even they pale by

comparison to the thing itself, the resurrection itself, before which there is finally nothing we can say; life born out of death, the victory of light and peace over darkness and chaos; before which we stand.

In the glow of its light, let us remember our commitments, to faith and goodness, to love and justice, to honor and integrity; and take seriously again our attention to the things that make for health, both personally and in relation to God and with other people, and with the world.

And let us be glad. No matter the shape of our lives or the life of the world, today is a joyous too good to be true day. It is like a Sabbath rest from the demands of everyday life, when one can set aside anxiety and rest assured of the Grace of God, an assurance of God's love and acceptance for every one of us, an ever-present hope in all we do.

It does not matter the topic, there is nothing like Easter to set us wondering, dreaming, following after a better knowledge, a stronger faith, a deeper love, and a higher joy and hope.

The Resurrection of Christ

15 Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. 2 By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. 3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. 6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, 8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. 9 For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. 11 Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed. 12 But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. 14 And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. 15 More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about

God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. 19 If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

20 But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. 22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. 24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 27 For he “has put everything under his feet.” Now when it says that “everything” has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. 28 When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.

29 Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them? 30 And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour? 31 I face death every day—yes, just as surely as I boast about you in Christ Jesus our Lord. 32 If I

fought wild beasts in Ephesus with no more than human hopes, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised,

“Let us eat and drink,
for tomorrow we die.”

33 Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.” 34 Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame.

The Resurrection Body

35 But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?” 36 How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. 37 When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. 38 But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. 39 Not all flesh is the same: People have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. 40 There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. 41 The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor.

42 So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; 43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; 44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. 45 So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. 46 The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. 47 The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven. 48 As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. 49 And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.

50 I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

54 When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

55 “Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?”

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

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