

Luke 24:1-12 | “He’s Not Here! He’s Risen!”

Pastor Matt Brown

We will be in Luke 24, verses 1 through 12 today, as we will be looking at Luke’s resurrection account.

We are taking a very brief break from 1 Peter to consider the truths of the resurrection. *[pause]*

Resurrection Sunday every year is a time to remember and celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

While, of course, we can and should remember it throughout the year, we can really focus in on the truths of it on this day. *[pauseeee]*

You know, there are times when our expectations are completely upended.

I think about how our day can be completely different than what we expected.

Have you ever had one of those days where you pictured the day going a certain way, and all of a sudden, you’re taking someone to the ER...

...Or something breaks down and you have to spend your day figuring out what to do about it. *[pause]*

Maybe it’s one of those days at work where you think that you’re going to focus on a specific task to get done, but something comes up and your attention is elsewhere all day.

Or maybe you go to an event and you have certain expectations as to how it’s going to go, but then your expectations are dashed, as it’s nothing like you expected. *[pause]*

Or maybe it’s your life as a whole.

Your life is nothing like you expected as a younger person. *[pauseeee]*

There’s our expectations and then there’s reality, right?

Something that I see regularly are these pictures online that have on one side ‘expectation’ and then on the other side it says, ‘reality.’

And usually on the expectation side is this picture of something going smoothly or looking perfect, and then on the reality side, it’s a disaster.

With those ‘expectation and reality’ pictures, it usually goes from picturing something good to actually having something bad happen.

Well, what about the opposite?

Expecting something bad, but in reality having something good happen.

Have you ever had that?

In our passage this morning, the women who go to the tomb of Jesus had that sort of experience.

They came to the tomb with all of these expectations of taking care of the dead body of Jesus...

...But what happens next changes everything and the reality was way better than what they expected. [pause]

Let's READ THE STORY.

Before this story begins, Jesus has died and was placed in a tomb.

When he was placed in that tomb, the women who show up in our story, had actually watched which tomb he was placed in and how he was laid in it.

But since the Sabbath was starting soon, they couldn't go and put spices on the body.

So they have to wait, and after the Sabbath they go back to the tomb with their spices to take care of the body.

But as they come upon the tomb, they see something interesting...the stone is rolled away.
[pause]

Now, they are aware that *something* happened at the tomb of Jesus.

What happened, they don't know at this point.

So they go in and can't find the body of Jesus.

Just imagine all the thoughts swirling around in their heads.

'Did someone steal the body? Did they move it? What's going on?'

We're told that they're perplexed.

And it's at that moment that two men dressed in dazzling apparel appear to them.

These are two angels and the women are frightened by this and bow their faces to the ground.

And it's the angels' message that I would like to really center our attention on this morning.
[pause]

What we find in this passage is first...

I. A rebuke

The first thing that the angels say to the women is at the end of verse 5, as the angels say, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?"

This is in effect a gentle rebuke. *[pauseeee]*

To understand why the women are rebuked here, you have to understand their mindset.

If you notice, they come to the tomb *fully expecting a dead body*.

It's almost like they have no doubt in their minds, for they are totally ready to prepare Jesus' body in its final resting place.

Their expectation is that Jesus will be dead when they get there.

That's essentially a lack of faith, for as the angels point out: Jesus told them that he would rise from the dead. *[pause]*

So they come searching for a dead body, when they should be searching for a risen Christ.

That's why the angels say, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?"

It doesn't make sense to do that.

It's illogical and absurd. *[pause]*

Imagine you were driving past a cemetery when you saw your spouse walking around it searching for something.

So you stop your car, get out, and try to find out what they are doing in a graveyard.

You get up close to them and say, "Uh, hunny, what are you doing?"

And they say, "Oh good! You're alive! I was looking for your grave."

That wouldn't make sense, right? It's absurd.

You're alive, not dead, so why would they be seeking the living among the dead?

That's the same sort of thing that the angels are asking the women. *[pause]*

Jesus' identity and word are so sure that to look for him in the tomb after three days is absolutely absurd.

Looking for Jesus' dead body after three days is like looking for a desert in the middle of the ocean...

...It doesn't make sense, and it will not be there. *[pause]*

It was a vain search, as they were looking for something in the wrong place.

They shouldn't have been looking for a dead body, but should have been waiting for Jesus to appear alive somewhere. *[pause]*

Yet don't we do the same sort of illogical things in our lives?

God's Word is sure and he has made so many promises to us, yet just like those women, we expect them to not happen!

God has promised to provide for your needs, yet here you are worrying about tomorrow.

God has promised to always be with you, yet here you are alone and fearful.

When God promises something and you expect it to not happen, that is unbelief, which is totally illogical when you have such a perfect and faithful God. *[pauseeee]*

Jesus has promised that he would die and rise again the third day, yet they were expecting Jesus to still be dead. *[pauseeee]*

If God has promised something, why are you looking elsewhere?

If God has promised peace, why are you seeking it out in the places that the world offers?

If God has promised joy, why are you seeking joy in that job, car, or spouse? *[pauseeee]*

Deep down, people are seeking life, but they are seeking life among graveyards.

They are seeking things that are lasting, among things that fade away.

They are seeking the precious jewel of truth among the pebbles of falsehood. *[pause]*

Essentially, they are seeking a Savior, but in all the wrong places.

And God is saying, "Why are you seeking a Savior there?"

"Why are you seeking the Living One among the dead?" *[pause]*

People are looking for a Savior, but they look in the cemetery of their good works that can't save.

People are seeking a Savior, but they look in the graveyard of the world's philosophy.

People are pursuing a Savior, but they search in the burial ground of the pleasures of this world.

Those things will not and cannot save you, for you are looking for the living among the dead. *[pauseeee]*

What Savior are you looking for?

If you're looking for the Savior of your own making, then you will wander the graveyards of this world, and never find one.

But if you're looking for THE Savior, you won't find him in the tomb anymore, for he's alive!

You won't find a dead Jesus, you will only find a risen Jesus! *[pause]*

He conquered death and gives life to all who call upon His name.

Trust in Him! He's the only one who can save.

He's the only one who can deal with your guilt and shame, for he bore it for you on the Cross.

Turn to Him to find forgiveness and eternal life! *[pauseeee]*

The angels gave the women a gentle rebuke to get their attention, help them see their unbelief, and point them back to the truth.

And sometimes that's how God works with us: he gives us a gentle rebuke to get our attention, help us see our unbelief, and point us back to the truth. *[pause]*

Maybe this morning is that gentle rebuke that God is using in your life.

He's saying to you, "O you of little faith, why are you expecting My promises to not come true?" *[pause]*

So often we are looking for things to fail and for God to not work, but that only reveals our unbelief.

It's like we are serving God, but expecting only graveyards, as we think, "This isn't going to work out. It's impossible.

That person won't be saved. This person can't change. That church is going to die." *[pause]*

But the resurrection reminds us that we serve a death-conquering, resurrecting, and life-giving Christ, who can be trusted with everything.

If he's able to conquer his own death, then he's able to do immeasurably more than you could ever imagine.

So believe Him.

Take God at His word, believe that He can do the miraculous, and expect that what He said He would do, He will do. *[pause]*

You serve a risen Savior, who can be trusted, so trust Him! *[pauseeee]*

Not only is there a rebuke here in this passage, but there is also a...

II. A report

When you turn on the news, you'll often find a reporter talking.

Now I know nowadays there's news that you can't always trust, and so often it's hard to trust the reporters, but basically a reporter is supposed to give a report.

They give a shorthand record of what happened.

Well in our text, we are given a report from these two angels, and their report is authoritative and trustworthy because it comes from God Himself. *[pause]*

It's not from the news, where you wonder whether it's true or not, but this report is a divine report.

It is the report and announcement that, "He is not here, but has risen." *[pause]*

This is a statement of fact, it is a historical truth - it actually happened.

The angels don't say, "We don't know what happened."

They don't say, "He just appeared to be dead and resuscitated."

They don't say, "It was all just an allegory for what he would do."

They are standing in the tomb saying, "He is not here, but has risen." *[pauseeee]*

He used to be in that tomb, but not anymore!

You will not find him in that tomb, for he is not there.

You could spend your whole life searching all of the tombs of the Middle East and never find the body of Jesus.

There will be no skeleton, not even his remains of dust that you could use as DNA to trace back to him.

Nothing will change the fact that nowhere on this earth is Jesus' dead body, he's not there! *[pauseeee]*

Enemies of Christ tremble, for he is not in that tomb!

Spend your time looking for his body, you won't find it.

Strive in all your might to prove it, you won't prove that he's still there. *[pause]*

We rejoice and stand upon the fact that he is not there, but has risen! *[pauseeee]*

This is the reason for why he's not there: he rose!

There was no stolen or moved body, instead, he has risen from the dead.

This is the miracle of miracles to come back to life. *[pause]*

Death is so permanent and all people are subject to it's grip, yet in the resurrection, Jesus conquered death and demonstrated that He has the power over death.

He defeated death and promises life to all those who trust in Him.

Death couldn't hold him, for we have a miracle-working God. *[pause]*

Those women took time to gather and prepare the spices and ointments for the dead body of Jesus, yet they were the most unnecessary preparations of all time.

And you know what, I'm sure to them, looking back at preparing those spices was the most joyous waste of time because it meant they didn't need them! *[pause]*

He has risen!

Spices and ointments and preparations for the dead body of Jesus are more useless than glasses on a person with perfect vision. *[pauseeee]*

"He is not here, but has risen" is the never-ending, monumental message that we proclaim to the world.

It's what the women went and told the apostles and other disciples.

It is one of the most foundational truths of our faith, and we must never neglect to announce it for all to hear.

It's the resounding message of Christianity: Christ died, was buried, and rose. *[pauseeee]*

So there's a report given in this passage, but also a...

III. A reminder

We all need reminders, don't we?

For me, I'm grateful for how my smartphone reminds me of important things.

If I have something important to remember or an appointment to go to, I put a reminder on my phone so that I don't forget it.

There have been times where I forgot about something, but all of a sudden a reminder pops up on my phone...

...and I'm like, "Oh yeah, I forgot about that! Whew, I'm glad that I put a reminder on my phone." *[pause]*

We all need reminders, as we are forgetful people.

So also, the angels here have to remind the women of what Jesus said.

They say in verse 6, “Remember how he told you,” and it’s then that they finally put it all together.

They remember his words and go and share the truth with others. *[pause]*

Hasn’t this happened in your life?

You have read a certain passage before, but all of a sudden, you are reminded about it, and it all makes sense and you are deeply affected by it.

You needed to be reminded and this reminder led to belief and change.

That’s because sometimes we need a reminder of truth for it to impact us. *[pauseeee]*

‘Remembering’ in the Bible isn’t simply recalling information, but also implies having an appropriate response to that knowledge.

Throughout Israel’s history, God called them to “remember.”

1 Chronicles 16:12 states, “Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles and the judgments he uttered.”

In the Old Testament, the feasts would be continual reminders for them, as well as certain altars set up, and names of cities would remind them of what God had done there.

They were even told to make tassels on the corners of their garments, and a cord of blue was on the tassel of each corner.

This, God says, would be a constant reminder of His commandments, as they looked down and saw these tassels.¹ *[pause]*

God uses reminders in our lives to refresh our memory as to what God has said, and he uses these times to soften our hearts to live in light of its truth. *[pause]*

The women had to be reminded of Jesus’ words, and then they were able to put it all together.

It’s like, “Oh yeah! He said this would happen and now here is it!”

This is why we need to continually be in the Word of God, for it reminds us and helps us to apply his Word to our situations. *[pauseeee]*

What exactly did the angels remind the women about?

“that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.”

¹ See Numbers 15:37-40.

They are pointing them to the specific things that Jesus said about his death and resurrection.

Jesus said this would happen, and now it happened. *[pause]*

What does that show us?

First, this is proof that He is who He said He was.

Jesus claimed to be the bread of life, the way, the truth, and the life, and the resurrection and the life, and now he proved it!

Everything happened *exactly* as He said it would.

He is truly the Son of God, the Messiah, the Lord! *[pause]*

We can rest on this fact: Jesus is who He said he was, for he proved it in his death and resurrection. *[pause]*

We serve Jesus, who is genuinely the Christ!

We can confidently live in light of the fact that we serve a risen Savior.

He knew his death and resurrection would happen, but he not only knew it, he promised it.

And he willingly went through with it.

Why? Because the Son of Man *must* be delivered, crucified, and rise.

His work on the Cross and Resurrection were a “must”.

They needed to happen in order to provide the way of salvation. *[pause]*

Aren't you thankful that Christ did exactly according to what had to happen?

He didn't cut corners, or take the easy route, but he accomplished precisely what was needed for our salvation.

That's our Savior!

He predicted what would happen to him, he did the work necessary in our place, and in all of this, he proved that He is the promised Deliverer.

All of this was necessary for God's plan and our salvation, and Jesus did it.

That's what we stand upon...

We stand upon the fact, “that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.”²

This is the message of first importance - the gospel. *[pauseeee]*

As we come to Resurrection Sunday, we are being reminded, just like the women.

But we don't remember the work of a dead person, we remember the work of an alive person, who died and rose again.

We remember His words, and we remember His work.

We remember that He is alive even now, and is working in the world. *[pause]*

It's His Word that we remember, which leads to belief and action.

And His Word can be trusted.

Do you remember his words and believe them? *[pause]*

That leads us to...

IV. Our response

When we hear about a miracle, there are two different responses.

We either believe it or we don't.

Simple and pretty obvious, right?

Well the resurrection of Jesus creates the same divide among people, there are those who believe it and those who don't.

And our passage confronts us with making us evaluate what our response is to the resurrection by showing us other people's responses. *[pause]*

Starting in verse 8 until verse 12, we see different responses by the people in the story to the fact of the empty tomb.

We see the women respond with belief and excitement, so they go and tell the apostles and others what had happened.

This shows us that truth leads to belief, and belief leads to proclamation. *[pause]*

We don't just believe in “nothingness,” but we believe in a historical fact, which is the truth.

² 1 Corinthians 15:3b-4.

We believe that Christ died and rose again, which is what they believed in once they remembered his words and put it all together. *[pause]*

Now I admit that it does take faith because you have to believe that Jesus was who He said he was, and you have to believe in something miraculous happening. *[pause]*

So let me first ask you - have you believed that Jesus Christ, the perfect Son of God, died on the Cross for your sins and rose again in power?

It's going to take faith, especially since you weren't there.

But it's the truth of God's Word that leads us to believe.

We hear about or read the truth, the Spirit works in our hearts, and we believe. *[pause]*

The women heard the message of Jesus rising from the grave, and they had to respond.

So likewise, you have heard the message of Jesus dying for your sins and rising from the dead, will you respond in faith?

It is only through faith that we can be forgiven and given eternal life.

We don't have to do a certain amount of good works, but we simply believe in what Christ did for us.

It is the truth that leads to belief, and then this belief leads to proclamation. *[pause]*

The women go and proclaim that Jesus was not in the tomb, but has risen.

That's the message we share with all, as well.

It's the Gospel message that each Christian is called to announce to others.

Are you sharing it with other people?

They need to hear the truth, so that they, too, can respond in faith. *[pauseeee]*

So the women went and told the apostles and others what had happened, and you would think that they would all believe them and go to the tomb for themselves, but that's not what happens.

Instead, they thought that what they were saying were "idle tales" and didn't believe them.

That is, they hear of Jesus being resurrected and they deem it utter nonsense. *[pause]*

This is the response of many to the resurrection - they see it as an idle tale and utter nonsense. *[pauseeee]*

Now Peter does get up and check it out himself, and we are told in the Gospel of John that John goes with him, but still, overall the disciples don't respond too well at this point.

These were the ones who walked with Jesus and heard his teaching, yet they don't believe that he rose from the dead.

At this point, they were disbelieving.

In unbelief, they had it set in their minds that no one can rise from the dead, and refused the report.

They were thinking of Jesus as simply another person, who was killed, instead of being the Son of God on a mission to die and rise again. *[pause]*

Their disbelief in his resurrection actually came from dismissing God's Word and disbelieving God.

Jesus had predicted what would happen, yet they didn't take Him at His word.

And that is the essence of unbelief - not believing God. *[pause]*

What about you?

Will you believe God and His Word or will you disbelieve? *[pauseeee]*

You know the great thing about this account is that although the disciples didn't believe at this point, they did end up believing later.

And maybe you're here today and you haven't believed in Jesus Christ in the past, and you have even viewed his death and resurrection as utter nonsense - well that can change! *[pause]*

Because of your sin against the holy God, your relationship with God was broken, and you are deserving a judgment.

But in Christ taking your sin upon himself, dying on the cross, satisfying the wrath of God and paying your penalty, you can be forgiven and made right in the sight of God.

And he rose again 3 days later, conquering death, showing that God accepted the sacrifice and proving that He was the perfect sacrifice on your behalf.

Your relationship with God can be reconciled, so I "implore you on the behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God!"³

Repent of your sins and turn to faith in Jesus alone.

Scripture says, "Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation."⁴

Don't wait; don't delay.

³ 2 Corinthians 5:20.

⁴ 2 Corinthians 6:2.

“Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart,” but respond in faith and you will be saved.⁵ *[pause]*

Luke’s resurrection account, which we have studied this morning, confronts us with the truth and reality that...

Jesus Christ has risen from the dead, but will you believe it?

I’ve already talked to the person who doesn’t believe in the resurrection, and I’ve called for you to believe in faith.

But now I want to direct my attention to those who are Christians, who believe in the resurrection of Jesus. [pause]

You have once again been reminded of the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but has it impacted you like it should?

This is one of the most foundational truths of our faith!

Our faith rests on the fact that he is not in that tomb, for he has risen. *[pause]*

Maybe this morning is a rebuke for you.

Your expectations in life have been devoid of faith and have been filled with unbelief, instead.

Instead of expecting God’s promises to come about, you are only expecting God to not come through.

Like the women in the story, you haven’t been believing that you follow a Savior, who can be trusted.

And what is happening is that you are despairing because you aren’t trusting God’s Word.
[pause]

If Christ predicted his death and resurrection, and actually did it, don’t you think his other words will come true?

Let the truth of the resurrection put the wind back in your sails.

“Lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees,” by the reminder of the resurrection.⁶

Let it be your confidence, your foundation, your fortress. [pause]

This passage may be a rebuke for you to start living more by faith in a risen Savior, rather than by faithlessness and fear. *[pauseeee]*

⁵ Hebrews 4:7.

⁶ Hebrews 12:12

But maybe this morning is simply a reminder of the truth of the resurrection.

For you, you needed to be reminded like the women in our story, and it has made all the difference.

You haven't forgotten the facts of the resurrection, but maybe you have forgotten its *power*.

You have been so accustomed to the story of the resurrection that the supernatural, groundbreaking nature of it has been forgotten. *[pause]*

Think about it: Jesus predicted his death and resurrection and then actually rose from the dead!

That is mind-blowing!

It's so astounding that Jesus' own disciples thought it was an idle tale when they first heard it! *[pauseeee]*

You serve a Savior who conquered death, has life in himself, and gives life to those who trust in Him.

And that means that our future rests on the fact that he is not here, for he is risen.

He gives us eternal life, and he paved the way for our bodily resurrection because we are in Him. *[pauseeee]*

The angels declared about Jesus, "He is not here, but has risen."

And because of *his* resurrection...

...If you die before the Lord returns, one day God will raise up your body out of the grave so that it could be said about your grave someday, "He is not here, but has risen."

Or, "She is not here, but has risen."

Because as Scripture says, "he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus."⁷

That is our hope! That is our confidence! That is our Lord.

May we never forget the marvelous truth and power behind the announcement that, "He is not here, but has risen."

⁷ 2 Corinthians 4:14.