

## HE HAS RISEN!

Luke 24:1-35

Key Verses: 24:5b-6

*“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee.”*

In this passage, Luke tells us that Jesus rose from the dead. He has risen! The tomb was empty. He appeared to his disciples to convince them that he was alive. The resurrection of Jesus is at the heart of the gospel. Without it, we cannot be certain about the forgiveness of our sins. We cannot be sure if we will go to heaven when we die. The problem is that it is not easy to believe in resurrection. Today's passage teaches us that we can have resurrection faith if we open our hearts to the word of God.

### I. THE MESSAGE OF RESURRECTION (1-12)

Look at verse 1. *“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.”* It was early Sunday morning after Jesus had died and buried in a tomb. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and some other women went to the tomb. These women had received much love from Jesus. Mary Magdalene, for example, was the one from whom Jesus drove out seven demons (8:2). She had been tormented by the demons. People called her “a crazy woman.” But Jesus knew her problem. He healed her. She was given a second chance in life. And she loved Jesus dearly. As an expression of her love, she served his ministry behind the scene. She followed Jesus on his evangelistic journeys and supported him out of her own means (8:1-3). She was joyful to serve him. Then something terrible happened. Jesus was crucified right before her eyes. It should have never happened to her Lord. But it happened. Such a good man Jesus died on the cross between two criminals. Her precious Lord and Savior died on a most tragic and terrible death. When they nailed Jesus to the cross, they left in her heart a wound as deep as her love for Jesus.

A woman's love is beautiful. The love of these women was beautiful indeed. Jesus had died on the cross. But their love for Jesus did not die. They loved Jesus all the more. They asked themselves, “What can we do for him now?” They bought some expensive spices and perfumes for the body of Jesus. They could not sleep. In sorrow and pain, they waited until the Sabbath passed, until the early dawn of the first day of the week. They went to the tomb in order to anoint his body. They wanted to express their undying love for Jesus, through this final goodbye.

When they arrived, however, a surprise was waiting for them. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body (2-3). The stone covering the tomb was big and heavy. Who could have rolled it away and for what reason? Could it have been tomb-raiders? But Jesus wasn't buried with any valuable things. What was even stranger was that the body of Jesus was missing from the tomb. The tomb was empty. Look at verse 4. *While they were wondering about this,*

*suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them.* These two men were God's angels (23; Jn 20:12; Mt 28:2; Mk 16:5). In their fright, the women bowed down with their faces to the ground. But the angels were not there to scare them. They had a message to deliver. What did they say to the women? Look at verse 5b: "*Why do you look for the living among the dead?*" These women were looking for the dead body of Jesus, not realizing that he had risen. The angels rebuked them. They should have known better. The death of Jesus was no ordinary death. He died as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him (Ac 2:24). The women should have known this, because Jesus had told them about his resurrection many times. Looking for the living among the dead, however, is something many people do today. We do that if we study the Bible as if it were only a historical document with no practical relevance to our daily life. We do that if we attend worship service as if it were a memorial service for a dead relative. Jesus is alive. He is with us here today. The Risen Christ can actively involve our personal life only if we accept him as someone who is living.

The angels continued: "*He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again'*" (6-7). Jesus had repeatedly talked about his upcoming death and resurrection. But in their sorrow, these women completely forgot about his words. Now the angels reminded them: "*He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee ...*" Then they remembered his words (8). When they remembered what Jesus had said, their spiritual eyes were opened. Their sorrows melted away from their hearts. They were filled with joy. They rushed to the Eleven disciples and all the others to tell them the good news of Jesus' resurrection (9).

How did the disciples respond to the women's message? Verse 11 says that they did not believe them, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. One of them probably said, "Mary, you are tired. You haven't eaten for three days. You are losing it." 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.

Resurrection is not a natural thing we observe in our lives. We see that neither humans nor animals come back to life after they die. There is a sense of finality to death. So it is difficult to believe in resurrection. We can understand why Peter had a difficult time. Many people today have no problem in accepting the saving grace of Jesus through his cross. But they have a hard time believing in his resurrection. This is serious. Because without resurrection, there is no saving grace either. If there is no resurrection, we Christians are to be pitied more than anyone (1Co 15:19). Our faith is useless. So is our preaching. We become liars when we talk about our hope in heaven and eternal life. Life would have no meaning because death would swallow up everything. All Christians, both living and dead, would be victims of a cruel hoax. If there is no resurrection, it would be wise to follow the motto, "Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die" (1Co 15:32). Carpe diem and YOLO.

But Jesus has indeed been raised from the dead. And his resurrection is the beginning of the resurrection of all mankind (1Co 15:20). Jesus said in John 5:28-29, “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out--those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.” We will rise to live with Jesus even though we die. Because of this hope of resurrection, we can live each day faithfully as men and women of mission.

Still, resurrection is hard to believe. It is against our common sense. You might think that you would have easier time to believe it if there were some concrete evidence to look at. Well, these women saw the tomb was empty. Only his grave cloth was lying there. The Bible says the Risen Christ appeared to many people personally including his disciples. And we know that they were willing to put their lives on the line to preach his resurrection. That is powerful evidence indeed. Why would anyone risk his own life to preach resurrection if it weren't true? Of course, we don't see the empty tomb or the linen today with our own eyes. We don't have resurrection witnesses physically with us. But we do have the most important thing that helps us to believe in resurrection. What is this? It is the message from God. The angels delivered the message to the women. “He has risen!” The women delivered it to the disciples. And St. Paul says that this message was given to us long before it happened. He says in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 that “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” Jesus' resurrection happened according to the word of God. We learn that it is important for us to remember the word of God. To believe and experience the glorious resurrection of Jesus personally, we must remember the word of God concerning his suffering, death and resurrection. My father passed away when I was 13 years old. I remember how terrified I felt in my hands his body getting cold and rigid. My mother also died of cancer when I was 26. But by the time, I had a message of resurrection in my heart. God comforted me with the hope that I would see her again in heaven. It was a very different experience because of God's promise. I pray that God may help each of us to have resurrection faith based on the word of God!

## II. ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS (13-35)

Look at verses 13-14. *Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened.* Why were these two disciples traveling to Emmaus? They were running for their lives. They had witnessed how their Lord Jesus was crucified after a bogus trial in a kangaroo court. Now they weren't sure what the Jewish police would do to the followers of Jesus. Jerusalem became a city of terror in their minds. So they decided to go back to their hometown Emmaus. Look at verses 15-16. *As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him.* They thought a stranger joined them in their walk.

One question that comes to our mind here is that why didn't the disciples recognize Jesus? Actually, most people who met the Risen Christ did not recognize him

right away. I think he was different from the suffering servant they remembered. He would enter a locked room and then disappear quickly. He was no longer bound by time, space and physical limitations. Still, they did not recognize Jesus because they were not prepared to see him. And I think we would have the same problem today. We won't recognize Jesus who stands among us, if we are preoccupied with our own desires, if we are too busy to pay attention to him, or if we are not looking for him. We will be kept from recognizing him if we let our pride, sorrow, and human problems block our vision to see him. A man in Colorado moved to Kansas and built a house with a large window. The view of a wide-open prairie was before him. But he said, "There is nothing to see here." A man in Kansas moved to Colorado and built a house with a large window overlooking the Rocky Mountain. He said, "I cannot see anything. The mountain is blocking my view."

Jesus didn't say he was sorry about their failure to recognize him. Instead, he asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" (17) They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" (18) Cleopas said in a frustrated tone of voice, "Haven't you read Jerusalem Post? Don't you watch news on TV? It is all over the Internet too!" "What things?" Jesus asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him" (19-20).

Then they began to explain their sorrow and frustration. They had hoped that Jesus was the one who would redeem their nation Israel by establishing an earthly messianic kingdom. But their dreams were shattered when Jesus was crucified. In addition, they were confused when some of their women, who went to the tomb early in the morning, came back to report that his body was missing and that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive (22-23). In recounting the story, the two disciples said that the women saw a vision of angels. Actually, they saw two angels dressed in dazzling white. It was not a vision. These disciples did not believe the women to change their story like that. They also said, "Some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus" (24). These disciples were so focused on their disappointment and sorrow that they could not recognize the Risen Christ, even though he was walking right beside them.

How did the Risen Christ help these disciples? He rebuked them for their unbelief. Look at verses 25-26. *He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?"* Why did Jesus call them foolish? It was because they knew the Scriptures but did not understand the meaning of his death and resurrection. Their Bible knowledge was useless. So Jesus began to teach them the Bible. Look at verse 27. *And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.* Beginning with the woman's offspring promised in Genesis 3:15, the virgin birth of the Immanuel God in Isaiah 7:14, and the suffering servant in Isaiah 53, the pierced one in Zechariah 12:10, and the messenger of the covenant in Malachi 3:1, Jesus explained to them how he had to die on the cross

according to the Scriptures, to be buried and raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (1Co 15:3-4). Jesus taught them this truth before his crucifixion. But they did not remember. So he had to teach them again.

The disciples enjoyed the roadside one-to-one Bible study very much. As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them (28-29). They invited Jesus to come in. Then he went in to eat with them (Rev 3:20). When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then, an amazing thing happened. Their spiritual eyes were opened and they recognized the Risen Christ. The disciples had seen Jesus take bread, give thanks and break it many times before. Jesus was always thankful to God. He always fed them first, even though he was also hungry. When he did the same this time, their spiritual eyes were opened and they recognized him. They met the Risen Christ. As soon as they recognized him he disappeared from their sight. So we ask one question here. What was Jesus' purpose in appearing to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus? It was to remind them of the word of God concerning his resurrection. This means that we also have the most powerful evidence with us to help us to believe in his resurrection. We don't have to travel to Jerusalem to look for the empty tomb. We have the word of God to help us!

Look at verse 32. *They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"* It was an amazing experience for them. The word of God touched their hearts as Jesus taught them. Their hearts were burning within. We experience the same when the word of God touches our hearts. Let us pray that God may touch our hearts when we study the word of God with eager learning minds.

What did the two disciples do after meeting the Risen Christ? They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem to proclaim the gospel of salvation. They were no longer afraid of the Jewish police. They became the witnesses of the Risen Christ. In Jerusalem, they found the Eleven and those with them. The two disciples told them, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." (34) Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread. Their human dreams were gone. But their lives were changed forever since they met the Risen Christ. Without meeting the Risen Christ personally, we cannot but despair, because our lives would end up in death sooner or later. But when we have resurrection faith, we have a new hope in life, not only in this world, but in the kingdom of God. We will be with Jesus there forever!

In this passage, we learn that Jesus wants us to have resurrection faith based on the word of God. Jesus died on the cross as the Lamb of God to take away all our sins. But his death was not an end, but a beginning, because he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. The tomb was empty. He appeared to many witnesses. He told them to believe in the word of God. May God help us to remember the word of Christ! May God help us to have resurrection faith based on the word of God!