

## Easter Sermon 2010 The Vindicated Word Luke 24:1-12

Dear Believers in the Vindicated Word:

It's a good question: **"Why seek the living among the dead?"**

Have you ever had a good question?

One of our presidents of the past had two questions when he first became president. He ordered his attorney general to find out the answers to two questions. The two questions were...

- Who was behind the assassination of President Kennedy?
- Are there really aliens from outer space who have visited this world?

This man had these two questions in his mind when he became president. They sound like good questions.

What about you? What good question do you have?

"Why do you seek the living among the dead?" This was the question the angels posed to the women who visited the tomb of Jesus on Easter morning. It is a good question to ask these women.

- What were the women doing there, early in the morning?
- What did they expect to find?

The women were there to finish preparing Jesus' body for burial. They had come to finish...

- Anointing Jesus' body with spices and oils
- Properly burying Jesus' body

These women expected to find a tomb with a stone door and a corpse. The big question on their minds was: "How in the world are we going to move that huge stone away?"

When they arrived at the tomb they were met with a surprise. The stone had been rolled away. The Gospel writer Matthew says an earthquake took place and an angel rolled away the stone. The Romans guards who were there fainted in fear. Matthew 28 Apparently when the women arrived the Roman guards had come to and fled the scene.

Here the women were all alone with an empty tomb. But they soon found out that there were two angels in the tomb. As they entered the tomb they saw the angels whose clothing “gleamed like lightning.”

The women were terrified and bowed down before the angels

- Who would not be afraid?
- The women then heard the great news: “He is not here, but has risen!”

The news of Jesus’ resurrection should not have come as a surprise to these women or to Jesus’ disciples, either. Jesus often spoke of his resurrection before he died. He told people I will rise on the third day!

The angels command the women to go tell the disciples that Jesus has arisen. The women leave...

- Stunned
- Overwhelmed
- Trembling
- Bewildered

Have we ever thought to ourselves, why were these women so stunned about the resurrection? Why did the disciples not believe the women when they first told them about the resurrection? Luke says that when the disciples heard the news of the resurrection from the women “these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.” Luke 24

When Peter hears the news, he runs to the tomb and saw it was empty. Luke writes that Peter went home “marveling” at what had happened.” Should we be critical of the women and disciples for not believing what they saw at first?

- What if we would have been in their place that first Easter morning?
- What if we would have been the first ones to see Jesus’ empty tomb?
- What if we would have been among the first disciples to enter that empty tomb?
- How would we have responded?
- How do we respond today? Would we have some...
  - Questions
  - Doubts
  - Misgivings

The women and the disciples did not expect Jesus to have come back from the dead despite the fact that Jesus had predicted his resurrection numerous times to them. But they forgot his words.

St. Louis Cardinals pitcher Dizzy Dean predicted before the start of the 1934 baseball season that his team would win the pennant. He also predicted that he and his brother would win together as pitchers at least 40 games for the Cardinals. His predictions came true. The Cardinals won the World Series and he and his brother won together 49 games. After the season Dizzy would say: “It ain’t braggin’ if you can do it.”

Jesus predicted His resurrection

He did it

- He rose from the dead
- His Word is Vindicated...proven true...proven reliable

A few years after Jesus' resurrection people were as skeptical of the resurrection as they are today. The Greek people who lived in Corinth when the Apostle Paul was alive denied that the body could rise again. So Paul wrote these words as he was led by the Holy Spirit: "For I delivered to you as of first importance...that Christ died for our sins...that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day...that He appeared to Peter, then to the twelve. Then He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time...then He appeared to James...last of all...He appeared to me." I Corinthians 15:3ff

The Apostle Paul reminds us how important the resurrection is. He reminds us what the resurrection means to us. Paul also writes that if Christ is still dead, **if He had not been raised then...**

- His preaching would be useless
- My preaching would be useless
- Our faith would be useless
- The witnesses of the resurrection would all be liars
- We all would still be in our sins
- The dead would be lost and there would be no hope

Paul says if there is no resurrection then we are the most pitiful fools that have ever lived. If Christ is not raised from the dead then we might as well find something else to do or believe in.

But, Christ indeed has been raised from the dead. The message of the angels rings loud from the tomb across the centuries to our ears this morning. **"He is risen!"**

- The women bear witness
- The disciples bear witness
- The 500 bear witness
- Those martyrs – men and women who died in faith – bear witness

If Jesus had not been raised, all the Romans and Jewish religious leaders would have to do was to show the body. “Show me the body.” But there was NO body. No corpse. He had arisen from the dead.

In 2007, a group of fifteen British sailors were held captive in Iran for twelve days for allegedly invading Iranian waters. They signed statements indicating that they indeed were in Iranian waters. They also said they were sorry for past British transgressions against Iran. After their release, they renounced everything they had said and signed. Under pressure, they were willing to lie in order to save their lives.

What about those who said they saw Jesus alive? Did they ever take those words back? Did they ever deny the resurrection to save their own lives? NO. The witnesses to the resurrection were willing to die – and some of them did – for they knew it was true and real.

We live in the “last days” of this old creation, the time of the fulfillment of God’s promises. The work of saving this fallen cosmos has been accomplished. Jesus said on the cross “It is finished” meaning that our sins have been paid for and we have been given the free gift of eternal life through faith in Him.

- The believing dead are raised “In Christ shall all be made alive.” I Corinthians 15
- Christ has risen.
- His Word is vindicated
- Your faith is vindicated
- You can be confident of your resurrection someday
- Our preaching is not in vain
- Your faith is not in vain
- There is hope in this life and in the life to come

All of this hinges on one little sentence: **HE IS RISEN**

Our journey to the cross of Jesus started back on Ash Wednesday, February 17. We traveled through Holy Week with Jesus and his disciples celebrated the Lord's Supper. We stood at the foot of the cross on Good Friday. Now we stand before the empty tomb. Through this journey we have heard Jesus...

- Pardoning Word
- Promising Word
- Faithful Word
- Compassionate Word
- Suffering Word
- Dying Word
- Remembering Word
- Fulfilled Word

This morning we hear the Vindicated Word of the Resurrection!

Rejoice! He is risen! Rejoice and Remember Jesus' words: "I have come that you may have life and have it to the full." John 10