

A Sermon Preached by Pastor Justin Johnson  
Our Saviour's Lutheran Church Bellingham, WA  
Easter Sunday April 4, 2010  
Text: Luke 24:1-12

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Grace to you and peace from God the Father and from the Risen Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

“Then they remembered his words.”

This is what Luke tells us that the women did after the angels had told them “Remember how he told you the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified and on the third day rise again.” This encounter takes place at the tomb where Jesus was buried. The women had gotten up early in the morning, to go anoint Jesus' body with spices that they had prepared. When they got to the tomb that morning, they found the stone rolled away. They are not sure what has happened. They decide to investigate, they go into the tomb, and they do not find the body and confusion sets in. What has happened? Was Jesus' body stolen? But who would have rolled the stone away? Who would do this?

While in their confusion, two men in dazzling clothes appear, the women are terrified, and they bowed their faces to the ground. The men ask the women, “Why do you look for the one who is alive among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you.”

Then the women remembered. But this remembering was not like most of our remembering. Our remembering tends to be past-focused. Our remembering tends to be thinking about how things used to be. Our remembering tends to be a pining for what once was and a longing to return to the good old days.

That is not the kind of remembering we have going on in the resurrection account in Luke. The remembering that we have here is a remembering that drives the women to go tell the rest of the apostles. It is a remembering that moves the women from the place of the dead to the living. It is a remembering that drives them into a future that is uncertain, for death is no longer final. For when they were reminded of Jesus' words, they remembered what he said. And with Jesus what he says, happens.

We see this in Luke's gospel as he tells his disciples to go find a colt for his entry into Jerusalem and they find it exactly as he told them. When Jesus gave his disciples instructions as to where to make preparations for the Passover meal, his disciples found it just as he said. But more than that, wherever Jesus went and what he said happened. When he said to the lame man, take up your mat and walk, the lame man did. When he said to the blind man, open your eyes and see, the blind man saw. When he said to the demons be gone, they were gone. When he said to the sinner your sins are forgiven, they were. When he called to Lazarus in the grave, the dead man came out, alive. Yes, what Jesus says happens.

And so the women have to be reminded of this, remember how he told you that the son of man must be handed over to sinners, and he was, and be crucified, and he was, and on the third day rise again. Ah, now here is where we come upon a stumbling block. For their experience and our experience is that dead people stay dead.

But here when the women remember that Jesus said that he would rise again and they have the empty tomb, they are moved into a new future. And their perspective on the present is changed. For death is now uncertain. Jesus is raised.

And so it is for us as well. This day, we remember, Christ's death and resurrection, but it is not a pining for the past, but it is a remembering of events that shapes our present reality. It is a remembering that propels us into a future where what once was certain is no longer certain. And that is the hope of Easter. For Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. Death was defeated by the power of God. And so while we experience death in this life, in Jesus Christ, we know that it does not have the final word. But rather Jesus Christ does, and that word is for us.

And so while we remember, it is not a remembering of what once was, but it is a remembering of what is. And that is that Jesus Christ is not dead, but Jesus Christ is alive and on the loose. Forgiving sinners, healing the sick, binding up the broken hearted, and one day, he will stand at your grave and mine and call us forth. He comes for you and for me. For in his death on the cross your sins, and my sins, and the sins of the world are forgiven. But the grave could not hold Jesus, its grip could not contain him and he was raised. He lives, for you and for me and for the world. Alleluia, Christ is Risen! Thanks be to God. Amen.