

**The Rock: 04-17-2022**

**Easter Sunday**

**Title:** The Empty tomb

**Scripture:** Luke 23:44-56 (black bible  
Pg.831 ESV)

**Theme:**

New Creation is launched as Jesus rises from the dead. Nothing in this world will ever be the same.

**Introduction:**

As we gather this Easter morning, what a thing to celebrate! To jump for joy over! Ain't no grave!! He is risen, he is ascended, and He intercedes for you and me non-stop before the Father.

But, let's back it up a bit to the moments of that first Sunday morning, and the reality of life. All of His disciples, in spite of what Jesus had told them, believed that it was over.

Jesus was crucified and dead, now He had been laid in the tomb and three days have passed. There was only one expectation for them, going to the tomb and finishing the burial ritual.

But that isn't what happened! What happened, when the ladies got there messed with everything they knew to be true.

So much so, that when the disciples were told of what the ladies saw, they responded this way:

**-Luke 24:11 (ESV)**

"...but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them."

Even His closest followers didn't believe at first. So much for the notion that they were a deluded bunch of misfits.

They were smart enough to investigate for themselves, ponder the evidence that was before them, and eventually believe.

**The Story:**

It's such a striking contrast as we look back on these events from the perspective of 2022. History swings on the hinges of what happened on that hill and in that grave yard.

So many today look at this story and think these people, uneducated, non-scientific and backwoods had been duped and then made up this story to perpetuate a myth and save face.

I love the Chuck Colson quote, and have shared it before. Colson spent time in prison for his part in the Watergate coverup, and came to Christ as a result.

**(Read quote)**

A story should never be written this way if you want it to be believable, and yet, here in Luke's Gospel, he does so. He simply records the facts as given to him regarding that morning:

**-Luke 24:1-2 (ESV)**

"But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb."

The same women we saw this past Friday evening going home to prepare the spices -Remembering where Jesus was put, are now on their way back to finish the burial ritual.

Why? Because Jesus was dead, and these ladies knew it. There was no plan in their mind that He would be anything at all when they got there, other than, still dead.

The problem for them, arose however, when they got there and saw the stone rolled away. So, they went inside the tomb.

Now, having the stone rolled away really wouldn't be a problem, as Joseph and Nicodemus could have perhaps gotten there already and were inside.

Still a very plausible scenario, that is until it wasn't.

**-Luke 24:3 (ESV)**

"...but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus."

No body -For there ain't no grave..

I love verse 4:

**-Luke 24:4 (ESV)**

"While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel."

"While they were perplexed". Ya think?

I really wonder if Luke didn't clean that up a bit. I mean no disrespect here, but if you went to the tomb of someone near and dear to you, someone you loved, and found that their body was gone -

Would you sit down and with your hand scratching your forehead think out loud: "My, isn't that perplexing."

No- You, much like every other human being, would freak out - just a little.

You can't make this up, I mean you could, but why would you?

There is nothing at all to be gained by perpetuating this story. Had Jesus remained dead, they would not have moved the body, rather they would have just completed what they had come for in the first place -finished the burial ritual.

Then, much like many who came before Jesus, and after Jesus, who claimed to be messiah, when they died and it was proven that they weren't, people simply went back to life as it had been.

Admitted that they were mistaken, that Jesus wasn't whom He claimed He was, but rather he was a false prophet, and life would slowly return to normal.

Messiahs came and went, all of them dying. Do you know any of the names of the Messiahs? No, probably not. Why? Because they were frauds, false messiahs who died, and their deaths proved it.

His (Jesus) death is historically verifiable, as would be His body still laying there in the tomb. But He had told them He would rise.

**-Luke 24:5-7 (ESV)**

"And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said

to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise."

Don't you remember? This is what He had told you. Frightened, as any of us would be, the ladies don't know what to say. But the angels do.

They are messengers, and ministers who bring good news of great joy and messengers of hope, bringing glory to God and encouragement to His people.

"Listen, there's nothing to worry about here. Everything is going according to plan."

"According to plan!" Jesus was dead, now He's gone, and you angels are talking to me about the plan! Yup, just "another Sunday in the garden." Nothing to see here!

Remember, when people don't believe this, and perhaps you are here this morning and you are one of those who don't believe, there are two reasons as to why:

- 1- The Holy Spirit is either not working on the heart (unlikely), or

you/they are ignoring Him (Most likely)

2- Let's be honest -It's weird! It is very hard story to believe. Dead people stay dead, and if His followers struggled to believe the unbelievable, why are we surprised when we do or others struggle?

All of us struggle with belief and unbelief from time to time. However, disbelief does not make something untrue.

Prayerfully processing what has happened, pondering the events which have unfolded in front of them. This is important for us to do as well.

You see, in the unsettledness of the unknown, the fear of "no answers" - trusting in the story and promises of God will carry you through these types of faith challenges. Boy -this was a big challenge!

They take what they learned as well as what they were reminded of, and go find the other disciples to tell the story:

**-Luke 24:8-9 (ESV)**

"And they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest."

So here we are back at verse eleven, discovering that they were, for all intents and purposes, simply blown off as overly emotional women:

**-Luke 24:10-11 (ESV)**

"Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them."

"Seemed an idle tale." Let's remember that these ladies had been with Jesus the entire time these men had, and they had also, served along-side these men in so many ways.

This is what makes it so "believable" -If it wasn't true, and if it weren't women who were the first witnesses, and as a result, the first "sent ones" (Apostles), why in heavens name start the story that way?

Women were not even considered second-class citizens, and that is a bit of what we see coming out here. "Rational men", leaders of course -yet hiding in fear - tell these women that they are acting like, well, women.

Offensive? Yes! But that was the culture, and sadly in many ways it still is. Let's

make no mistake, the men were hiding and afraid, and the women weren't.

There are many reasons for that, and perhaps one of them was because women weren't taken seriously, they wouldn't be seen as a threat, and therefore wouldn't attract the attention of the Romans or the Sanhedrin if they were looking to make arrests.

But that is speculation on my part. Not idle speculation, as I believe that is one of the reasons.

But here the eleven are, regardless - in hiding. And there they are on that Sunday morning, three days after the garden scene and the collapse of Jesus' followers.

Who do we see as the first one to take off running to check the scene out? None other than our good buddy, Peter!

**-Luke 24:12 (ESV)**

"But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened."

None of us is so far gone that we are too far gone. Impetuous Peter, denying Peter, I'm ready to kill for you but not die

with you Peter. He leads the way to the empty tomb.

Could it actually be?

All the evidence points to something other than a stolen body. The women were reminded by the angels that Jesus has said it would be this way.

They told the eleven the same thing. I wonder...

What was going through Peter's mind? He is not jumping to conclusions here, is he? He is not boastful, threatening or saying things he shouldn't.

"I just wonder... Is this actually real? All the things He said, could it be. It must be. It has to be." Why?

Everything He had ever said to Peter or told to Peter about what he would do, all came true, especially about the things Peter would do.

"I wonder, could this be true also? Could He be alive? If He is, this changes everything. My life, everyone's life, the world itself will never be the same."

Marvelous! There ain't no grave...He has risen.

