

“They Remembered His Words”

Luke 24:1-12

Christ is Risen!! He is Risen Indeed!! Alleluia!!

All throughout the Lenten Season and Holy Week, we have turned our attention to Luke’s Gospel and the various places of Christ’s Passion: The Upper Room, the Garden of Gethsemane, the Courtyard, Calvary. Real places with real people where the Son of God suffered and died so that, for you, the forgiveness of sins is real, the resurrection of the body is real, eternal life is real.

It’s easy to get distracted at Easter with lilies and dresses and hats and eggs and chocolate bunnies – forgetting the celebration of Christ’s victory. It’s easy to get distracted and even overwhelmed by all of the outside noise. But when you listen to Luke tell the Easter story, he focuses your attention on one thing. Remembering the words of Jesus.

The first Easter was a swirl of activity and emotion. Women come to the tomb with spices and find that the tomb is already open and the body of Jesus is gone. They come across men who are dressed in “dazzling apparel” – fancier than any Easter dress. And these men know what these women are doing: “Why do you look for the living among the dead?” They know what has happened: “He is not here, but has risen!” and they even know what has been done and said in their past: “Remember how He told you, while He was still with you 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” (Luke 24:5–6).

And in the midst of all of this commotion, what does Luke focus our attention on? One simple act: “They remembered His words” (v. 8).

Our memory can be powerful. Remembering can take us away from our present. I see this happen all the time at funerals. Members of the family gather by the casket and someone comes and simply begins to remember and tell stories of the past. And soon, you see these people taken away from the awfulness of the present to another place, a place where weary faces brighten, and you can hear laughter . . . even at a funeral. Such is the power of remembering. It can rescue you from the present.

On the other hand, there is another kind of remembering that does not take you away from the present but brings you more fully into it. You see this type of remembering all the time with grandparents. On the day they hold their first grandchild, you bring your son or daughter and place them in your mother’s arms. She remembers what this was like. She cradles the child’s head, kisses the forehead, and then looks up and begins to talk about what it was like when you were young. This time, memory is not taking her away from the present. It is bringing her more fully into it. Through memory, she is able to more fully delight in the joy of holding her grandchild in her arms.

So what kind of remembering happens at Easter? What happens when God comes among us today and through His Word causes us to remember His Word? Does He take us away, rescue us from our present or bring us more fully into it? The answer is “yes.” He does both.

For the women at the tomb, remembering the Lord's words brings joy and brightens their weary faces far more than remembering funny stories at a funeral. They are immediately brought more fully into the present. With the words of Jesus, they begin to understand the strange new world that surrounds them. The empty grave and presence of angels makes sense to them when they remember the words Jesus had spoken concerning being crucified, rising from the dead on the third day, participating in the kingdom of heaven. Without that remembering, there is only confusion. When they remember His words, the empty grave gives a glimpse of heavenly joy.

The good news is the empty grave is just as real for us as it was for them. Seven weeks ago, I gave a presentation at the Quincy Bible Institute on the evidence for the resurrection. There really was an empty tomb. Not even the critics of Jesus could deny it. And all the Roman world was talking about it – even the Emperor. This really happened. Jesus of Nazareth died and rose again so that you are rescued out of this present life.

Our world tries to tell us differently. But remembering the words of Jesus not only rescues us out of the sin and brokenness of this life, but remembering Jesus' words also brings us more fully into the present. When we remember our Lord's words this Easter, the world around us acts as if we have entered the realm of imagination and lost touch with the present. The Son of God rising from the dead? A world filled with sin and the devil and angels and demons? "Get with modern times," they say.

In these modern times, we live in a world filled with sin and the devil and angels and demons. And there is still an empty tomb in Jerusalem testifying that these words are real.

Which is why it is good that our remembering these words also takes us away from our present world of sin, death, and the devil. On Maundy Thursday, I proposed a question: Think of how radically different it would be if all the people around you right now knew everything that you had ever done. Every moment, every failure, every unfortunate word – it would make for an uncomfortable gathering. All of us have a past and a present that is strewn with anger, fractured relationships, enemies (perceived and real) – perhaps even a broken relationship with God leaving you feeling defeated. Some even believe that our past has destroyed our future.

But God comes today and speaks to us. He says, “Remember. Remember My word of promise. My suffering, My death, My cross, My empty tomb is for you.” Your sins are forgiven because Jesus carried every broken or fractured word or work to the cross and grave. He rose from the grave. What He carried there stayed. He is the author of life. Through Him, you are a redeemed child of God. In remembering His Word, He takes us away from our present world of sin and brokenness. In remembering His Word, He makes the reality of salvation and eternal life yours right here, right now.

Today, Luke proclaims the resurrection and asks us to remember. Remember the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In Him, you are forgiven. By Him, you have new life. With Him, your life is part of the reality of His kingdom being revealed. Amen
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