

Sermon ✝ April 17, 2022

Luke 24:1-12

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I'm not sure how you imagine God looks . . . but have you ever wondered . . . does God wink? Well I think God does . . . and I think God is winking at us this morning. The angel's question, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?", is asked with a wink. Do angels wink? In this story they do.

It is Easter. And Easter is a truth that is too good to be true . . . that comes true. Only not everybody knows it nor does everybody believe it.

It requires faith to enter into the gladness of this day. The purpose of the text is to invite you to believe. Maybe believing will happen to you today.

The Easter story. It was the first day of the week Sunday . . . like today. It was the day after the Jewish Sabbath and Jesus had died on Friday. At early dawn some women went to the grave taking spices to anoint the body in its tomb. They were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James. When they arrived at the tomb, they found the huge stone rolled away and the body gone. The women were perplexed.

Now comes the good part. Suddenly two men in dazzling apparel appeared. They were angels. I've never seen an angel. They probably hadn't either. But they needed no introduction, they were angels.

And they spoke: "Why do you look for the living one among the dead?" I'm sure they said it with the hint of a smile and a twinkle in their eyes. It was said with a wink.

It was a gentle rebuke. Correction with affection. "Don't you remember? He told you it would be this way . . . even way back in Galilee."

Light bulb! "That's right!"

Can you imagine their excitement? I'm not sure that I really can.

So what happened next? The women ran to tell the others, but these words seemed to them an "idle tale" . . . "nonsense" . . . "a fairy tale".

The disciples did not believe them. We can sympathize with them. How many of your own acquaintances have come back from the dead? None of mine! We know better. We've experienced too much death. We know it has the final power.

So . . . in our own way we are much like those disbelieving disciples of old. It is easier for us to believe in death than in someone coming back from death. We can cultivate a whole "Good Friday cult".

There are those who would entomb Jesus in traditions and creeds. It may also be that for those first disciples, the death of Jesus meant that they were “off the hook”. Maybe they figured that they could now get back to normal. Sure, Jesus had some good ideas, but, man, he was asking a lot. Life would be easier without Jesus telling them (or us) to love our enemies and to be servants and all of that other stuff.

And what if the disciples had taken the easy way out . . . discounting the story of the women. It might have really ended there (given our inclination to disbelieve and to live life with less demanded of us).

But, oh, what we'd be missing.

For he said “Come to me, you who are weary, and I will give you rest.”

He said, “You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.”

He said, “Your sins are forgiven.”

He said, “Here is life abundant.”

Despite all that good news we might still have preferred disbelief . . . the easy way out. But that was not the end of the story. The Easter story doesn't end with the angel's message.

This Jesus started appearing. He appeared to the women. And then the disciples as they met in a locked room. He appeared to Paul on the road to Emmaus. He cooked breakfast for Peter and the disciples by the seashore. And then he appeared to five hundred at one time.

The resurrection appearances turned a defeated, dismayed, discouraged, grief-stricken group of disciples into a band of Easter believers. And they turned the world upside down.

And now it is up to us. It is our turn. How about it . . . would you like to join this group of Easter believers? It is time for us to cease being mere spectators and become the actual players in this ongoing drama. For you see, the Easter drama is our story, too.

God is winking at us this day. “Why do you look for the living among the dead?”

Jesus' promise to us is the same one he uttered so long ago...

“Death has been defeated.”

“I am the resurrection and the life.”

“You who believe in me shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

And then with a smile and a wink he says, “Pass it on...it is the good news!”

“Why do you look for the living among the dead?”

He is not here.

He is alive.

He is alive.

Amen.