

Luke 24:1-12

The Power of the Story

The darkness that waits in the grave is the most terrible of things. It is the specter that haunts our darkest dreams and the menace that lurks in the deepest places of our imagination. Death has such a finality to it, we see it as completely without hope, ultimately without help... death comes for all and is no respecter of persons.

It is important for us to acknowledge the natural state of things as we consider the morning of the resurrection.

For on this side of Calvary we see so clearly what was still hidden from them, that victory had already been won, that the Lord of Life has been restored to His own and that their hope was not in vain... But seeing it from here, while it lets us know the end, also robs us of the power of its experience. Most of us cannot even comprehend a world where the knowledge that Jesus is risen is not ubiquitous and constant. We ALL know the story, we ALL know the tale of the cross, the tomb,

the silly woman who thought that someone stole the body, the fear filled disciples who could not remember what they were told, and worse, refused to believe the evidence of their own senses....

But these things that we all KNOW, are things that we ONLY know because we live NOW. We have the benefit of the end of the story being told before we experience the beginning or the middle. And while there might be comfort in being told "she does not get eaten at this time" it also robs the story of some of its power to thrill and compel... And certainly reduces our ability to empathize with those who did not have the perspective that we have been permitted.

So, for just a few moments, I want to ask you to forget what you know. To consider with me the impact of the empty tomb. I want to think about death in a more visceral manner than we might be accustomed to consider its horror. I want us to consider the grave. And not just any grave, but HIS grave. The grave of Jesus.

First - understand that as the women were coming to give honor to their fallen Master, God had already honored Him above all others and had already raised Him from the dead. Now, I am not changing my mind about you forgetting, but here is the simple fact. Whatever you might be facing, unknown, uncharted, unexpected, undesired - God has already known it. Has planned it from the foundations of the universe, has ordained every single circumstance to bring it about... in short, He DELIGHTS in the big reveal. You see, God is the Master storyteller. He invented story. He knows all the tricks and appreciates how wonderful it is for us to be swept along in the current, to be scared and worried then to see with clarity that the God who is has kept all of His promises and that the things that made us so sad or afraid were all designed to teach and to shape us in fundamentally important ways. So in the confusion of your darkness, remember that God has already fashioned your answer!

Secondly - in spite of their sorrow, fear and anguish, they were coming to honor Christ with the best they had and the fullness of the love they bore for Him in the act of coming. We often respond to our darkness

by pulling away. We allow fear, hurt or sorrow to create a rift in our spirits. We permit our own hurt to keep us from that which is in front of us to do.

Beloved, God is never willing that we should stop living all the days of our lives. He has work for us to do in THIS day, and our act of sacrificial love for Him just might become the victorious cry that shook the world - He is RISEN!! We can never know what is just around the bend, but we can be faithful in the midst of our moments and wait for God to reveal what He is planning to reveal. We are called to be faithful with things that are ours to do. Period.

Lastly - I want to remind you all that the empty tomb still holds real power for this age. It stands triumphant over every painful aspect, over every sorrow, over every broken promise over every disappointment, over every wound... the empty tomb is the victor's declaration that NOTHING holds any power over us any longer. The women forgot what they were coming to do, they no longer needed the spices or the wraps... they no longer cared that Jesus had died... I know that this sounds strange, but think on it. His death was the only thing they could see when it was all they knew...

but as soon as God showed them the rest, the pain and the horror of that Friday was lost and forgotten forever in the wonder of that Sunday. All too often we focus on the things that are our wounds; that cause our hurt, that bring us pain. We cling tightly to the events of the past that shape our today in ways contrary to our desires... but they are not even half the story any longer. They are simply background. The real story is that He is NOT in the tomb!! He is risen and that changes everything! That simple thing alters the whole of our lives, the entirety of our existence and the scope of our perspective. Or, at least it should. My challenge to us all this day is to seek to see the empty tomb with fresh eyes. To consider just what it meant and just what it means. My challenge to each of us is to live out the declaration of the angels - He is NOT here, He is RISEN!!!