

Mark 16:Final A

Luke 24:5-11

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Matthew 28:9-15

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Now we need to remember where we are in our story. All the Mary's and their friends had gone to the tomb early Sunday morning. Mary Magdalene must have been in the best shape because she got there first. She saw that Christ wasn't in the tomb and ran and told Peter and John.

The order at this point is a little unclear to me. It would seem to me that the women following behind Mary Magdalene would have gotten to the tomb next. They heard from the angel. Then on their way to the disciples they meet Jesus. After they left the tomb Peter and John arrive. There are no angels or Jesus. They go back home. Then Mary Magdalene returns to the tomb. She sees the angels and meets Jesus.

By this time the rest of the women give their report to the disciples. Remember that Peter and John saw the tomb empty and it says they believed, which could mean the evidence of how the wrappings laid gave them the impression that Jesus left them from the inside. They believed, evidently, that He had resurrected. Maybe they just believed that Christ was no longer in the tomb. That is the story line we enter this morning. We are going to look at the woman's experiences and their report to the disciples. So let's look at the women's experiences.

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We see the state of mind of the women at Christ's tomb in Luke 24:4. They are perplexed. If we follow this through all of the accounts, these women are going on the greatest emotional roller coaster ride of their lives. First, it is just turning light by now. So it is still in that state, possibly, where **you aren't sure what you are seeing**. So first, the stone is rolled away. That is their first clue that something isn't right. It is like going home and finding your front door broken open.

Then verse 4 says they are perplexed. They can't wrap their minds around what could have happened. They went to find a body. There is one constant in life. Dead bodies remain dead. So they are trying to solve this mystery that has been suddenly thrust upon them. Then they see the angel and they are absolutely freaked out. And that is the state that we begin our Luke text this morning. Try to put yourself in their shoes this morning.

Grief mixed with dread, followed by alarm and apprehension, followed by being absolutely freaked out.

Evidently these women recognized these guys as angels. John's account tells us the angel's appearance was like lightning. The women bow their faces to the earth in the presence of these angels. They were still afraid.

Now the angels say something to the women.

Why do you seek the living among the dead?

What a truth revealing question. These women had allowed all of their expectations to be shaped by what they saw and experienced. They were moving to the grave of Christ in a similar way that people have approached death throughout all human history. Their expectations were based on what they had always experienced in the past. So **they think** that they are seeking the **dead** among the dead. Prior to arriving at the grave, I doubt that anyone could have convinced them otherwise. Our expectations tend to be based on our prior experiences. And that is fine except for one thing.

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men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.' " 8 And they remembered His words.

Can you see the look on the faces of these women as they remembered? You can almost see the “Oh Yeah” look as it dawns on them what Jesus actually said.

The angels told them the truth that **they should have known**. Christ was no longer in the tomb. His three days are up. If they could count, they should have been able to come to the tomb for a celebration instead of a funeral.

The angels remind these women of Christ’s words.

The wording for Is Risen is the aorist passive tense in Greek. It might be more accurately translated **Christ has been raised**. Scripture tells us in other places (Rom 6:4, Gal 1:1 | Pet 1:3) that Christ was raised by the power of the Father. As Christians, we have got to learn to love the word “**remember**”. Remembering summarizes a huge amount of what we need to do in the Christian life. As I prepare these sermons I am comforted by this fact. Much of how God wants to use His spokesmen is not to wow people with new and exciting discoveries. Much of the ministry of the New Testament writers and ministers was primarily to do **one thing- remind people** what God has said.

There is enough knowledge in this room to foster all kinds of faithful thoughts and actions. We have enough knowledge to fuel the greatest revival in history. My guess is if we were hypnotized we could probably quote a great deal of the Bible. We have it in our heads. But our problem is the same as the problem of the disciples, both male and female. We don’t **remember it** when it counts.

Think about it. What were these women guilty of? Weren’t they responding like any human would in light of the experiences they were having? Bingo. That is the very heart of the problem. We trust flesh’s evaluation of life so we don’t even look for a second opinion. We don’t even search the database of our mind’s information.

The problem with us is **what we trust** for guidance. We trust our gut. We trust our instincts. We trust our heart. We trust our wisdom. We trust our impulses. We trust the lessons life has taught us.

Don’t believe me?

Next time someone does something to you and you respond in anger, stop in the very middle of it and ask this question- what am I trusting? Does God’s word direct me to respond in anger? Does God’s word direct me to put this person in their place? Does God’s word direct me to make them pay for what they have done to me? I only use anger as an example because it is normally a strong emotion. Any strong emotion will do. Lust, fear, envy, coveting, worrying, these are all places where **we easily forget**. It isn’t that we **don’t know**. We just trust **something else**, so we don’t look to God. It is like the idolaters in the Old Testament. They trusted in something else, so they weren’t inclined to run to

God. Sometimes it isn't even like we are even **rebellng against** God's guidance. We just simply think **we don't need it**. We think, "we've got this". We think, I know what to do. I don't need to consult God.

And look at the unnecessary grief these women experienced because they would not bring to mind what Christ said. It was there. This truth was there in their heads. They knew it. They knew the facts. They just didn't look for it.

They have gone through probably 4 days of emotional agony. They are feeling loss and grief and longing and confusion. They had problems that would keep a ministry team busy for weeks trying to help them. But the reality was, if they would have just believed what Christ said, their lives would have been freed from all that misery. They could have been spreading joy and encouragement instead of being miserable.

You know where I am going with this. How about our lives?

This song talks about Prayer, but the focus is similar.

What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
Oh, what peace we often forfeit,
Oh, what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer!

There is a last verse to that song that isn't in our books

Blessed Savior, Thou hast promised
Thou wilt all our burdens bear;
May we ever, Lord, be bringing
All to Thee in earnest prayer.
Soon in glory bright, unclouded,
There will be no need for prayer—
Rapture, praise, and endless worship
Will be our sweet portion there.

How much misery do we cling to because **we will not remember** what God says and believe it? How much misery do we have because of **lack of belief**? We can know this. When our actions do not portray what **scripture describes a Christian Life should look like**, it is because of lack of belief. It is because of lack of trust in the character of God at some point. We believe a lie. And for some sick reason

we like it that way. It usually has to **hurt really bad** before we will give it up our favorite lies.

I am not trying to say that everything we are going to experience should be a barrel of laughs. Losses hurt and we are in keeping with our Christian walk to experience them congruently. Hurt hurts.

I have found a fresh source of humor lately. For some reason when Carla physically hurts herself now, it hurts a lot more than it used to. I kid her now that she is fully human like the rest of us. Hurt hurts. It is supposed to. And living in this fallen planet will have its share of rejection, betrayal, abuse, loss, suffering. It will. David shows us how to deal with that in the Psalms.

But there is much pain **we invite on ourselves** because we will not trust God. Our fears and anxieties are often fueled with lies. Our bitternesses and anger are often fueled with lies. Our grudges and resentments are often fueled with lies. We suffer under the weight of them and we make everyone around us suffer as well.

There is enough suffering in life without inviting pain from ignoring God's word. Think of what the disciples would have been experiencing during this 4 day period **if they would have just remembered and believed** what Christ said.

You know what. Scripture describes that we are, in a sense, in the same situation as they were. They faced the future with dread and uncertainty due to focusing on only part of the truth of their circumstances, when they were given promises in those circumstances that could have transformed their lives. The same thing is true of us. The hope of **Christ's promises being fulfilled in our lives** is to empower us for Godly living and to change our outlook here and now.

Look at what Romans tells us.

Romans 15:12-13

¹² **And again, Isaiah says: "There shall be a root of Jesse; And He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, In Him the Gentiles shall hope."** ¹³ **Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.**

That is a mouthful of truth. Paul is praying that the God of hope, the God who gives us hope, the only true and lasting hope available to mankind, **may that same God** fill you with joy and peace. But how do those qualities happen to us? Does it come in a zap from God? No it comes from believing. We remember what God says. We remember it even when all of our intuitions, and reactions, and life lessons tell us something else. We believe what the God of Hope has said. And we experience joy and peace. And as that happens we end up full of hope. And when you see a person who is full of hope based upon the promises that God is going to fulfill for them, you can know that this person is full of the Holy Spirit.

Hebrews 6:17-20

¹⁷ Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath, ¹⁸ that by two immutable things, in which it *is* impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before *us*. ¹⁹ This *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence *behind* the veil, ²⁰ where the forerunner has entered for us, *even* Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Here is hope again, as the anchor of the soul. This anchor will keep the boat we are in **secure**, even in the worst storms. We will not be washed into the rocks. Our souls won't be undone. Because of hope. In light of circumstances that scream to us that God doesn't care about our pain, God doesn't care about our lives, God doesn't care about our hearts, we cling to the promise that God says He has prepared for us places to live that were crafted just for us in eternity. And He promises that all things are working toward that end in our current lives.

Romans 8:28

²⁸ **And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.**

So we find the women in our story forgot the truth of God and experienced unnecessary turmoil. Will we learn from their lesson? Will we actively seek out and remember God's Word and allow it to establish an unshakable hope that transforms us even in the midst of our suffering?

Let's go on.

Matthew 28:9-15

⁹ **And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!" So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go *and* tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me."**

I know it is odd but I had to go see the film Risen before I realized that the disciples were told to go to Galilee to see Christ. Both the angels and Christ Himself said this. Somehow that fact had escaped me.

Now remember the emotional rollercoaster these women were on? They went from the bottom and here is the top. Here is the body they came to prepare. But it needs no preparation.

The women were experiencing grief mixed with dread, followed by alarm and apprehension, followed by being absolutely freaked out. Now they have unspeakable joy. Their wildest hopes have been exceeded. Christ is alive. If anyone describes the Christian life as boring, they have no idea what they are talking about.

Here Christ says “rejoice”. I am not sure that is the best translation. This is a common salutation and means- be well. It might be similar to our word “hello”. There is a part of this that just strikes me as being funny. And I am not certain that this is not, **in part**, what Christ intended. I guess we will know when we meet Him. It is a very informal greeting. It would almost be like saying, “How ya doing?” We can rest assured that both parties were feeling incredible joy. Christ was back among His friends after having done the most incredibly difficult task ever done by anyone in a human body. And his friends are shocked to see Christ in visible form speaking to them like He always had, kind of like He had just gone for a walk and returned.

Remembering the state of these women, can you just imagine this scene? How they must have thrown themselves at Christ in their joy and relief. I remember watching in my rear view mirror as the car that Carla was driving flipped completely over. I think two of the kids and Carla were inside. I never understood the phrase of my heart being in my throat until then. And it was an amazing relief when I reached the car and Carla said, we are all ok. Well this would have been that times 10.

All of the time these women had wasted grieving for Christ was shown to be just that. A waste of time. Now it was party time. Christ is alive. The best of all possibilities and a possibility they had never even considered. It was too much to hope for. But here it is. Christ is casually saying Hello to them.

After they had **expressed their emotion** to Him Christ must have known these women were fearful. I am not sure why, except the whole ordeal would have been unnerving.

¹⁰ **Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go *and* tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me."**

So both the angels and now Christ gives these women the job of taking this message to the disciples. This is a bit odd. Why did Christ not deliver this message Himself? After all, Peter and John had visited the tomb. Christ could have easily delivered the message to them. But He didn't. Why?

I can't state this with authority, but my opinion is that Christ wanted to make a point with the disciples. The disciples probably regarded the women who followed Christ as second class citizens. And Christ was going to change that. While males and females have different roles, those roles are no less significant. While these women would not be allowed by the rules of scripture to be elders of churches, they would, none the less, be the **spokespeople** that Christ would use for getting a very vital piece of information to the disciples. The disciples were not to confuse the **importance of the ministry of women** with the positions that they are **eligible for** and **ineligible for**. Superiority is not the issue. Suitability is. Whether we like it or not, men and women were designed differently with

different strengths and weaknesses. And men and women both get it wrong when they confuse **design** with **importance**.

We cannot fight what our culture does when it ignores what God has determined for its creation. But we need to stand strong under God's Word inside the church. We need to tell His truth to each other.

In our text this morning, Christ entrusted information to these women that He was not going to entrust to the disciples directly. We can make of that whatever we should.

Now after we are told what the women are supposed to do, we see what they did.

Luke 24:⁹ **Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.** ¹⁰ **It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary *the mother of James*, and the other *women* with them, who told these things to the apostles.** ¹¹ **And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them.**

Isn't this interesting? Jesus specifically gave these women a message to deliver. And Jesus did that fully knowing how it was going to be received. Now how do you think these women received this rejection by the disciples? I'll bet it did not go over well at all. If ever any women had a gripe, it was these women. They have heard from Christ, and these men were not receiving it. The disciples probably made fun of these women who were 100% correct.

Women, have you ever had this frustration with men? How did you deal with it? Well, even though these women were correct and these men were not correct, God did not change the order of things. He did not suddenly give these women the positions of leadership of the church. The fact that the women were correct did not give them the positions of authority. But it had to eventually be a source of embarrassment to the leaders when they realized how wrong they were.

All this shows us is that just being the **correct gender for leadership** does not mean the **proper discernment** is inherited. These leaders should have done better. But they blew it in this case.

I think there is a very important application for us here. God works through His people. He sends insights through His people. Sometimes a believer may not do a very good job at being logical or even reasonable. But that does not disqualify them from being the spokesperson Christ will use next to convey His message to the church. We need to be very careful to listen to what fellow believers say. We do well not to put any believer in a box that says that nothing they will ever say can be trusted, even if they don't seem to be very accurate with truth at times. These disciples put these women in a box. But the message the women were conveying should not have been disregarded.

Now Peter and John knew something was up. They believed Christ was gone. I assume that means they knew He was resurrected. It dawned on me later that maybe they just believed He was gone. Whatever the case, I am sure they thought they were being wise and discerning when they rejected the women's stories. But they were as wrong as wrong can be. The word for idle talk means nonsense. These women were telling the truth and it was easier for the disciples to believe that it was sheer wives tales, imagination, the fruit of vivid imagination. When we hear other believers tell their stories, we need to guard from pre-judging those stories. We always have to be prepared for God to do the unexpected.

And the other application- if you know you are telling the truth, stick to it. Eventually God Himself will back it. There is no sense punishing people for not believing it. It could just as well be **you** who doesn't trust the truth that another believer **tells to you**. Just be patient and stick with the truth. God will validate that truth in His time.

As for application this morning I don't think we can escape the importance of remembering. This week we are very likely to fall into our default patterns. When we experience strong feelings, we are prone to follow it with the same responses we have always had. We have trained them over years and they don't die easy. This week is the week to break that pattern. It is time to stop in the middle of our pattern and ask, what does God say about this? What truth do I know that I am not applying? What is there in my flesh that is being appealed to in this situation? What am I longing for that I am not getting? What am I afraid of in this situation? Why does this situation affect me so strongly? What is the lie at the heart of this trained response?

This simple act of bringing to mind what God has said in the middle of our despair or fear or turmoil or lust or anger is the act the Holy Spirit will use to dramatically change our lives. In it we will experience **peace with God** in situations that used to create **distance from God**. In it we will experience **communion with believers** when we have in the past created **conflict and distance**. If we will do just this one thing this week, we will see real change begin **in our lives, in our relationship with God** and in our **relationship with other believers**. Will you commit with me to do this?

Sing "What a friend we have in Jesus"