

To Seek and to Save the Lost

The Resurrection

Luke 24:1-12

Rev. Freddy Fritz

March 27, 2016

The Resurrection

Scripture

The Gospel of Luke is one of four accounts of the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth in the New Testament. Like the other Gospels, Luke gives almost one third of his Gospel to the final week of Jesus' life.

Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday (19:28-40). The crowds began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen in the life and ministry of Jesus (19:37). During his final week in Jerusalem, all the chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people were seeking to destroy Jesus, but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were hanging on his words (19:47-48). Nevertheless, at some point during the week, one of Jesus' apostles, Judas Iscariot, agreed to betray Jesus to the religious authorities (22:3-6).

On Thursday evening Jesus ate the final, divinely-sanctioned Passover meal with his twelve apostles in a furnished Upper Room, somewhere in Jerusalem (22:7-13). During that meal, Jesus instituted what we now call the Lord's Supper (22:14-20).

After their meal together, Jesus and disciples went out to the Mount of Olives, where they planned to spend the night (22:39). While in the Garden of Gethsemane, there came a crowd of the religious authorities, along with Judas, who betrayed Jesus to them with a kiss (22:47-48).

Jesus was arrested, and throughout the night and into daybreak Jesus underwent an ecclesiastical trial before the Jewish Sanhedrin (22:66-71), and a civil trial before the Roman governor Pontius Pilate (23:1-5). The charge against Jesus was blasphemy, because he called himself the Son of God (22:70). Of course, it would be blasphemy if it were not true, but Jesus was the Son of God. Nevertheless, although Pilate found in Jesus no guilt deserving death (23:22), he eventually delivered Jesus over to be crucified (John 19:16). Jesus was crucified

on Friday morning, and was dead by mid-afternoon (23:26-49).

One of the religious leaders, Joseph of Arimathea, who had not consented to the Sanhedrin's decision and action to have Jesus crucified, buried Jesus in his own tomb before sundown on that Friday afternoon (23:50-53). With the Sabbath about to begin at sundown, the women who had come with Jesus from Galilee saw the tomb of Jesus and how his body was laid in it. The women, Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women, returned back to their lodging to prepare spices and ointments in order to complete the burial process on Sunday morning, the day after the Sabbath. On the Sabbath (that is, Saturday) they rested according to the commandment (23:54-56). Jesus, their beloved Master, was dead. They were filled with grief and sadness. However, what they discovered on Sunday morning was not at all what they expected.

Let's read about the resurrection of Jesus in Luke 24:1-12:

¹ But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. ² And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. ⁵ 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? ⁶ He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷ that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." ⁸ And they remembered his words, ⁹ and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰ 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, ¹¹ but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. ¹² 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.
(Luke 24:1-12)

Introduction

October 12, 1990, started like any other workday for Winston Bright. The 41-year-old got ready for his job as a switchman at New York Telephone, said goodbye to his wife and their three kids, and left for the office. During his lunch break, he called his wife, Leslie, and told her he would head home around 5:30 p.m. That brief chat was the last time his family heard from him.

Winston Bright never returned to his apartment and he became the subject of a missing person investigation. For more than a year, family members and New York Police Department detectives searched for him, but the manhunt came up empty.

Ten years later, in 2000, Leslie Bright gave up hope of ever seeing her husband again, and had the court declare him dead so she could collect his pension and insurance.

Winston Bright, however, eventually reappeared. He says that back in 1990 he suffered a form of amnesia and forgot his identity. He made his way to California and started a new life there. He assumed a new name and identity. But in 2007 the memories of his earlier life came flooding back. With the help of his West Coast friends, he was able to piece together his past, and then tried to contact his wife and children.

But Leslie Bright and her three children did not welcome Winston back with open arms. In fact, they do not believe that Winston is their long-lost and believed-to-be-dead Dad.

This is an interesting story, but what caught my attention was the headline: *'Dead' Man Missing for 20 Years Returns, Wants to Be Declared Alive.*¹

Jesus of Nazareth was verifiably dead. He was crucified with two thieves by Roman soldiers. Since the Jews did not want the bodies to remain on the cross on the Sabbath, the Jews asked Pilate that their

¹ See <https://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20131203/east-village/dead-man-missing-for-20-years-returns-wants-be-declared-alive>.

legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water (John 19:31-34). These soldiers were professional killers, and they knew a dead body when they saw one. Further, once a person dies, apparently the blood and serum separate, and so when what looked like blood and water came out of Jesus, it was another clear indication that Jesus was already dead.

Jesus was then buried late on Friday afternoon.

When the women came to the tomb early on Sunday morning, they were expecting to find the corpse of Jesus. Never in a million years did they expect to find Jesus alive.

Lesson

The resurrection of Jesus in Luke 24:1-12 shows us what happened to the women at the empty tomb of Jesus.

Let's use the following outline:

1. They Were Perplexed (24:1-4a)
2. They Were Rebuked (24:4b-5)
3. They Were Instructed (24:6-8)
4. They Were Witnesses (24:9-12)

I. They Were Perplexed (24:1-4b)

First, they were perplexed.

One of the difficulties some of us have with the Easter story is actually because of our familiarity with it. We know and believe that Jesus rose from the dead on the first Easter Sunday. And so we know that the story of Jesus' passion, betrayal, trials, crucifixion, death, and burial has a happy ending – his resurrection.

But that was not the case with Jesus' disciples. The women who

went to the tomb that first Sunday morning were grief-stricken, depressed, exhausted, and mourning. Their beloved Teacher had been killed in the prime of his life. His teaching had filled them with hope and expectation of the glorious kingdom of God. Sadly, they misinterpreted his teaching, and thought he was going to bring about a political or military kingdom rather than a spiritual kingdom. Nevertheless, when Jesus was crucified, all their hopes were dashed.

The women went to the tomb of Jesus that first Sunday morning to complete the burial process, and according to *The Gospel of Mark*, wondered how they would get into the tomb (Mark 16:3). They expected to do their task, shed some more tears, and then go home.

Have you ever taken flowers to a grave in a cemetery? If you have, you know that when you get to the grave of your loved one, you do not expect to see an empty grave, do you? But if you did see an empty grave, what would you think? You might wonder why someone has exhumed the casket. You would wonder what in the world anyone would want to do with body of your loved one. Would it ever occur to you that your loved one had risen from the dead? Of course not!

Luke said that **on the first day of the week, at early dawn**, the women **went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared** to complete the burial process. **And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb**. I am sure they were glad because they had been wondering how they were going to roll the stone away. **But when they went in** to the tomb **they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus** (24:1-3), although the linen cloths were still there (24:12).

Understandably, the women **were perplexed about this** (24:4a). They did not understand what had happened to the body of Jesus. In fact, Mary Magdalene even went so far as to say, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him" (John 20:13). She did not know if the body of Jesus was stolen or just placed in another tomb. At this point the women simply did not know where the body of Jesus was. The empty tomb intensified their grief.

They were perplexed.

II. They Were Rebuked (24:4b-5)

Second, they were rebuked.

Luke went on to say that while the women were perplexed about this, **behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel** (24:4b). These **two men** were in fact angels. *The Gospel of John* tells us that Mary “saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet” (John 20:12). Luke describes them as dressed in **dazzling apparel**.

And as the women were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men, that is, the angels, said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead?” (24:5). Now that may seem like a harmless question. But it was in fact a rebuke to the women.

You see, the angels said to the women that they were mistaken in coming to anoint a lifeless corpse when they should have known he would be alive. It was a monstrous mistake to look for the risen Lord Jesus in a tomb.

They were rightly rebuked.

III. They Were Instructed (24:6-8)

Third, they were instructed.

Just in case the women did not understand what was being said to them, the angels said, **“He is not here, but has risen”** (24:6a). Can you imagine how those women must have felt when they heard those glorious words? They thought that someone had taken away their Lord, and they did not know where they had laid him. But now they were being told, **“He is not here, but has risen.”**

While they were processing those glorious words, the angels continued to explain, **“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”** (24:6b-7). As the angels finished explaining what had happened to Jesus, Luke said that the women **remembered his words** (24:8).

Jesus had predicted his death and resurrection on several occasions. For example, just after Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ of God, Jesus said in Luke 9:22, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and *on the third day be raised.*"

On another occasion, immediately after Jesus' transfiguration, he said to his disciples in Mark 9:31, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, *after three days he will rise.*"

And when Jesus was leaving Galilee to go to Jerusalem with his disciples, he said to them in Luke 18:31-33, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and *on the third day he will rise.*"

Jesus repeatedly told his disciples that he would be killed, and that after three days he would rise again. But Jesus also often spoke in parables and metaphors, and they probably thought that his prediction about his resurrection after being dead for three days was some kind of parable or metaphor. However, after the angels' instruction, the women **remembered his words** (24:8).

Commentator Kent Hughes says, "The great truth here for us is that the significance of the Resurrection is inseparable from Jesus' prophetic word about his death and resurrection. It is the Word of God that makes sense of everything."² Later on that first Sunday Jesus chided the two disciples who were on their way to Emmaus from Jerusalem. We read in Luke 24:25-27, "And he said to them, 'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning

² R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 401.

himself.” Even later on that same Sunday, Jesus appeared to his apostles in Jerusalem. We read in Luke 24:44-46, “Then he said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead.’”

How does anyone ever believe the good news that Jesus has risen from the dead? At the end of the day, every one of us comes to believe the good news of the gospel because we believe the Word of God. Kent Hughes puts it this way:

The prophetic word from Jesus and . . . the entire corpus of the Bible is central to the gospel. Jesus’ atoning death is fully understood only in the light of the whole Word. His resurrection is only understandable in conjunction with his Word. In point of fact, those who had rejected the prophetic word rejected the Resurrection, just as Jesus had taught they would: “ ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead’ ” (16:31).³

One of the reasons Billy Graham was such a powerful evangelist is because his constant refrain was, “The Bible says. . . .” Billy Graham’s sermons were not models of human persuasion. Rather, they were powerful examples of biblical exposition, pointing people to the truth of God’s Word and challenging listeners to believe God’s Word because it is in fact the Word of the living God.

Let us be people of the Book. Let us read the Word of God, believe the Word of God, meditate on the Word of God, and live the Word of God. Since God is the divine author of the Word of God, let us hear his Word, and heed his Word.

So, the women were perplexed, rebuked, and instructed.

³ R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*, 401–402.

IV. They Were Witnesses (24:9-12)

And finally, they were witnesses.

Having remembered Jesus' words, and now understanding that Jesus was indeed alive, the women returned **from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. 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** (24:9-10). Notably, the first ones to proclaim that Jesus was alive were the women. In those days a woman's testimony was not valued, but, consistent throughout his entire Gospel, Luke showed how highly Jesus valued women and their testimony about him.

Astonishingly, the good news about Jesus' resurrection by the women to the eleven and to all the rest **seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them** (24:11). Like the women initially, the other disciples had not expected Jesus to rise from the dead. They also were grieving the death of their beloved Master and Teacher. What these women now said seemed to them unbelievable.

But, to his credit, 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 (24:12). In *The Gospel of John* we read that John also ran with Peter to the tomb. John got to the tomb first, but did not go into the tomb. Then Peter came, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. Then John, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed (cf. John 20:6-8). And then John makes a very interesting comment that "as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that [Jesus] must rise from the dead" (John 20:9). It seems that the disciples still did not understand at this point that Jesus must rise from the dead. They clearly saw that the body was gone, because the linen cloths were lying there, along with the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head. So, they at least understood that the body was gone, but did not yet believe that Jesus was

alive. It was not until Peter saw Jesus alive later that Sunday evening that he came to understand and believe in the resurrection of Jesus.

The women were witnesses of Jesus' resurrection, and the people to whom they witnessed should have believed their message.

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed the resurrection of Jesus in Luke 24:1-12, we should believe that Jesus is indeed alive and surrender our lives to him.

One of the great truths that emerges from this narrative is that the disciples did not invent the resurrection story. They were not expecting Jesus to rise from the dead. Even when presented with evidence, they did not believe it at first. They were not prone to making up a story about a dead man coming back to life again. In fact, Alexander Maclaren said, "The evidential value of the disciples' slowness to believe cannot be overrated."⁴

Kent Hughes notes that the only reasonable explanation for the apostles' devotion, even at the cost of their own eventual deaths, is:

- They saw the empty tomb.
- They met the risen Lord.
- They came to believe the Word of God: "... that Christ died for our sins *in accordance with the Scriptures*, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day *in accordance with the Scriptures*" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4, italics added).⁵

What about you? Do you believe that Jesus has risen from the dead? There is plenty of evidence to show that Jesus did in fact rise from the dead. But, at the end of the day, I urge you to believe Jesus and the Word of God "that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures." Amen.

⁴ Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scriptures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1971), 322.

⁵ R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*, 403.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church
is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

This sermon, and other sermons, by the Rev. Freddy Fritz can be
found at:

1. www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/sermons
2. www.sermoncentral.com/contributors/freddy-fritz-sermons-11181.asp
3. www.sermonaudio.com/source_detail.asp?sourceid=Fred-dyFritz

Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church (PCA)

Answers for Life!

Address: 19911 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., Tampa, FL 33647

Telephone: (813) 973-2484

Fax: (813) 973-4673

Email: Office@TampaBayPresbyterian.org

Web site: www.TampaBayPresbyterian.org

PRAYER:

Father, thank you for raising Jesus back to life again. Jesus Christ indeed died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, was buried, and was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. Millions of people around the world today have come to believe, beyond a shadow of doubt, that Jesus is alive. And their lives are completely transformed because of their faith in Jesus.

Father, if there is anyone here today who does not yet believe in the resurrection of Jesus, will you grant that person faith in Jesus Christ? Will you open that person's eyes to the sacrificial and substitutionary death of Jesus? Will you open that person's eyes to the resurrection of Jesus? And will you enable that person also to repent of sin?

And for this I pray in Jesus' name.

BENEDICTION:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.

CHARGE:

Now, brothers and sisters, go and serve God wholeheartedly!