**Follow the King to the Cross**

**What the Empty Tomb Tells us**

Luke 24:1-12

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Today we consider the resurrection of Jesus in our Easter series, Follow the King to the Cross, looking at passage the kids recited, Luke 24:1-12, describing some disciples of Jesus finding the empty tomb. The empty tomb tells us that the resurrection is reasonable; that the resurrection is merciful; and that the resurrection is personal.

**The Resurrection is Reasonable (1-8)**

The christian faith is not a blind leap in the dark but is a reasonable response to the evidence of the claims of Jesus, his death and resurrection. If you are a christian and believe without giving much thought to your faith, it will be weak and anemic and will not sustain you in the difficulties of life. You may be surprised to know that the disciples of Jesus struggled with believing the resurrection like many people do today. Yet they were not gullible nor naive people taken in by a delusion. Luke 24:1 tells us that a few women went to Jesus’ tomb with spices, expecting to find his dead body in the tomb. When they got there, the stone that covered the entrance to the tomb had been rolled away and when they looked inside, there no body (1-3). They were confused because the tomb was empty but they could not conceive of Jesus being raised from the dead. They had a cultural bias against believing the resurrection like many people do today. For instance, the Greeks did not believe in a resurrection at all. For them, the afterlife was the soul freed from the body to an immaterial existence. The Jews believed in a resurrection at the end of time but not in an individual resurrection before then. So, people in Jesus’ day were as predisposed to dismiss the resurrection as today.

As these women were there wondering where the body of Jesus was two angels, messengers, show up and chide them, why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen. Remember how he told you that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise *and then they remembered his words* (4-8). It was the messengers reminding them of Jesus’ own prediction of his arrest, death, and resurrection that convinced them that Jesus had indeed risen. Though they were biased not to believe in Jesus’ resurrection, they believed when the evidence was presented.

Some claim the resurrection stories are made up. One of the early critics of Christianity was a Greek philosopher, Celsus, who wrote a number of works criticizing Christianity. One of his arguments was that Christianity could not be true because the accounts of the resurrection were based upon the testimony of women and women are hysterical. That was an acceptable argument in his day because there was a cultural bias against women. They had a low view of women. Women could not testify in either a Roman or Jewish court of law. Yet all the gospel accounts of the resurrection, tell us that women were the first to find the empty tomb and testify to Jesus’ resurrection. Historians tell us that if the gospel writers were inventing the resurrection stories, they would never have put women in there because they were not credible witnesses. The only reasonable explanation is that the women were there and the accounts are true! They even give their names because they are known in the community. Historians tell us that names are given in historical documents like this as a kind of footnote. It is like saying, you know these people, go ahead and ask them. The disciples not invent the resurrection stories, they doubted it. And when presented with the evidence for the resurrection they were slow to believe. So, the resurrection is reasonable and second, the resurrection is merciful.

**The Resurrection is Merciful (7-8)**

The messengers pointing the women back to Jesus’ prediction of his death and resurrection is a summary of the gospel message (7-8). The bible tells us that Jesus’ death on the cross was God’s plan. The Father and the Son devised this plan to overcome the problem of human sin. His death overcomes both the guilt of our sin and the power of our sin over us. The resurrection is merciful because it demonstrates that he defeated sin and makes forgiveness possible. If Jesus did not rise from the dead then his death is meaningless, his life was tragic, and his teaching nonsense. His teaching is not just a philosophy of life to live by, his claims are much grander. He claimed that humanity needs a Savior to rescue us from our sin. Jesus claimed to be that Savior. If he did not rise from the dead then he is neither good nor wise, but a deranged religious fanatic. Because he did rise from the dead his is a merciful Savior. The resurrection is reasonable, the resurrection is merciful, and the resurrection is personal.

**The Resurrection is Personal (9-12)**

Coming from the empty tomb, the women share the good news of the resurrection with the apostles and other disciples who too are skeptical so think their story is nonsense (10). But Peter would not let his skepticism stop him from investigating himself. He runs to the tomb, looks inside and sees only the linen cloths that were wrapped around Jesus’ body. Some have argued that Jesus’ body was removed from the grave by the disciples or stolen by his enemies. But if the body was taken, they would not have spent the time removing the linen wrappings. Nor does that claim consider the hundreds of people to whom Jesus appeared (1 cor 15:3-4).

History confirms the resurrection of Jesus. At this time in history, there were many Messianic types. This is usually what happened. They would gather a following, be seen as a threat and be killed and shortly afterwards, the movement died out. But Christianity exploded because his skeptical followers were radically transformed and Christianity changed the known world starting with the Roman Empire. All because of the resurrection. The evidence points to resurrection is reasonable, merciful, and personal. The message of Christianity is just too great and too amazing to be ignored. The gospel promises to transform your existence, transform your life, and transform your eternity.

Questions for Life Groups:

1. Why do you think that all the gospels tell us that it is women who found the empty tomb first?
2. How is the resurrection reasonable?
3. Why were the women perplexed about the tomb empty?
4. How many times did Jesus tell his disciples about his death and resurrection?
5. Why were the apostles and other disciples skeptical that Jesus was resurrected?
6. How does the resurrection speak to you personally?
7. How does the resurrection give you hope?