

Easter Sunday - April 20, 2025

Video Online Bible Study with Rev. Gary E. Mathiesen

"Everything [in] Between"

~ Meeting God [in] the Midst of Extremes ~ "The Women Grieve & Peter Runs to the Tomb: Grief and Hope"

Luke 24:1-12

AN INTRODUCTORY COMMENT BEFORE WE BEGIN -

☞ There are variations in the resurrection account with all four gospel writers (known as the Synoptic Gospels). This study is not an attempt to explain away or reconcile these differences but to accept Luke's testimony at face value.

☞ For instance -

- * Matthew has an earthquake and angels involved in rolling the tomb stone door away from the entrance whereas the other three gospel writers simply state the door is open.
- * Mark has Peter running to the empty tomb whereas John has Peter and John both running to the empty tomb.
- * Mark ends his resurrection account abruptly with the women leaving the empty tomb "afraid" whereas John has Mary Magdalene meeting Jesus (unawares) in the tomb's garden (Matthew and Luke have their own post resurrection stories).
- * All four gospel writers list different people at the site of the resurrection tomb (Matthew lists Mary Magdalene; Mark lists Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome; Luke lists Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joanna; John lists Mary Magdalene).

☞ These variations do not call into question the veracity of the resurrection story (the tomb is empty) but highlight the limitations of human observation.

THE RESURRECTION STORY -

☞ v. 1 The duty of grief -

"On the first day of the week" - This notation of the week becomes central to the resurrection story a little later in the text.

"very early in the morning" - This was the women's first opportunity to attend to the unfinished business of a "proper" burial as allowed by Mosaic Law (severe restrictions on "work" during the sabbath - which would be Saturday in our calendar). The corpse of Jesus was hastily put in a tomb by Joseph very late in the day (Friday) and so with the sabbath rest coming, the women were prevented from doing their ceremonial duty of preparing Jesus' body for burial; see Luke 23:54-56.

"the women" - These women are the central witnesses to the resurrection! (1) These women were eye witnesses of the death of Jesus (Luke 23:49); (2) These women were eye witnesses of Joseph putting the body of Jesus into the tomb (Luke 23:55); (3) These women were the first people at the tomb as soon as the requirement of the sabbath rest was over (Luke 24:1, 2a); (4) These women were the only ones who encountered the messengers of "two men in clothes that gleamed like lightening" (Luke 24:4); These women were entrusted with the message of resurrection "He has risen!" (Luke 24:6)

☞ vv. 2-4 Three Surprises in Rapid Succession - "Wondering" and "Bowed"

Surprise #1 "they found the stone rolled away from the tomb" (Luke 24:2)

Surprised #2 "they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus" (Luke 24:3)

The result? Wondering! "... they [the women] were wondering about this ..." [We will come back to this very important word a little later!]

Surprise #3 "suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightening stood beside them" (Luke 24:4)

The result? Fright! “The women bowed down with their faces to the ground ... ”

☞ vv. 5-7 A Reminder to “Remember”

“Why do you look for the living among the dead?” - A great opening line!

“He is not here; he has risen!” - The central message of the resurrection.

“Remember ...” The messengers remind the women of the words of Jesus (back in Galilee) when he said this all would happen as it had. The call to remember is integral to the religious practice of the faithful. We remember God’s deeds and commands and respond with our actions. Remembering is not passive (pleasant memories) but a call to action based upon promises/commands of the past.

☞ v. 8 “Then they remembered ...” - There is no record of Jesus speaking directly to these women, but they were certainly around the twelve disciples during Jesus’ ministry in Galilee (see Luke 8:1-3) when Jesus spoke about his death and resurrection (as Jesus set out for Jerusalem in Luke 9:21-22,44; and, as Jesus was approaching Jericho in the final days of his journey to Jerusalem; 18:31-33).

☞ vv. 9-11 The Women’s Report to the Apostles/Peter Looks for Himself

vv. 9-11 “[the women] told all these things to the Eleven ... but their words seemed to them like nonsense.” The Apostles and others gathered together that day cannot believe the testimony of the women, except maybe Peter ...

☞ v. 12 “Peter got up and ran to the tomb ... and went away wondering to himself what had happened.” Peter sees for himself the empty tomb (as did the women in verse 4) and is left “wondering” as were the women earlier that morning.

TWO KEY WORDS -

☞ “Wondering” The word means “to be astounded” “at a loss” “perplexed” [does not mean “awe or admiration and respect that arises when encountering something vast, beautiful, or powerful”]. To have a disconnect with current circumstances in the face of a difficult or unexpected situation; not knowing what to do or how to proceed; not being able to put all the pieces together. The women at the tomb “when they found the stone rolled away from the tomb ... and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus” and Peter “when he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves” were stumped. Like the rest of the Apostles and disciples, it “seemed like nonsense.” Disconnect between what you expect and what is (grief is often like this - being in a place of loss that does not match expectations).

☞ “Remember” The word means “to remember” “to recall” “to be mindful of” ... by making a connection between this moment with these pieces and what you are told should and will be the case. Remembering is integral to our faith because it connects my faithfulness to God today with the deeds and commands of God from the past. Remembering brings us out of the past (not just a pleasant memory) into the present moment with direction toward the future. Remembering makes connections of the past with today. In both Mary and Zechariah’s Songs (about the promised Messiah), they remember God’s mercy and covenant in the announcement of the birth of a Messiah (see Luke 1:54; Luke 1:72). Adam was told to remember “you are free” (Gen. 2:16-17); Noah was told to remember “my rainbow in the clouds” (Gen. 9:12-13); Abraham was told to remember “I give this land ...”(Gen. 15:18); Moses was told to remember “you will be for me a holy people” (Ex. Ch 19-24); the people of Israel were told to remember “be careful that you do not forget” (the Shema of Deut. 6:4-9). Remembering is to place the weight of your faith on the words and deeds of God.

☞ The women remember and move past wondering into the promise of resurrection. Peter is left wondering.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION ...

☞ Are you one of the women who come back from the empty tomb remembering? Are you one of the Apostles/disciples who can only see nonsense? Are you Peter, who sees for himself the empty tomb but is still left “wondering?” What promise of God calls you out of “wondering” and into the hope of the resurrection?

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