

The Gospel According to Luke

Luke 24:1-12

Reading: John 20:1-18

Parallel Passages: Matthew 28:1-15, Mark 16:1-13 and John 20:1-18

Sermon #106
January 17, 2021

Unlooked For Belief

Introduction

Our text today in Luke chapter 24 is replete with disciples who were not expecting Jesus to rise from the grave, their faith had all but died with Jesus being laid in the tomb. Even though the Lord told them over and over again that He would rise on the 3rd day. While Jesus was alive and teaching about His death and resurrection, they simply did not get it. Some had made of their minds that Jesus was on His way to political kingship and they were along for the ride and would gain positions of power. Some could not comprehend the Son of God in all His miracle working abilities being captured and crucified. We simply do not know why the disciples failed to comprehend, other than the human mind is finite and limited and has a self-focused ego.

Notice with me the fact that the women were expecting to find the body of Jesus exactly as it had been placed there three days before. When the disciples heard the news of Jesus' resurrection it was as though the resurrection of the Lord had never even crossed their minds before. The idea of Jesus rising from the dead was foreign to them, even though, Jesus had told them numerous times what would happen.

There are some differences between the 4 gospel accounts of Jesus' resurrection that people wrestle with. What these differences indicate to me is that these are independent accounts. When I worked as policeman and there was an

accident or a crime the witnesses gave different details of the same story with the same theme because they naturally saw different things as important.

I want you to see this important fact that is consistent in all the gospel accounts as we work through Luke this morning; **Jesus rose from the dead just as He said He would and yet, the disciples struggled to believe.**

My beloved, let me very clear, we need to have a pure and absolute belief in what the Word of God tells us. We need to accept what God tells us in His Word regardless what our insights and inclinations tell us. We need to accept God's Word despite what the world tells us. Jesus told everyone He would rise again and no one believed Him. His Words fell on deaf ears. Their eyes and ears and experiences with Jesus lead them to their own conclusions that were different from His words of truth. They observed Jesus, they listened to Him and yet, disregarded His words. Their senses were their true authority, they believed what they wanted over and above the words of Jesus, the Son of God. They saw Jesus dead on the cross and placed in the tomb and that was their reality. Nothing would convince them that what their eyes and ears were telling them was not the final reality. It was also evident that none of the apostles immediately believed because they had seen Jesus die 3 days earlier and this caused their faith to wane. They were so locked into their perception that when Mary Magdalene told them she saw Jesus "they would not believe it" (Mark 16:11) Here is the problem with their unbelief found 3 verses later, Jesus appears to the 11 "and he rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen." ¹⁵ And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation." ¹⁶ **Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.**" (Mark 16:14-16) Mark reveals his own lack of faith and well as the other 10, he is open and honest about

his shortcomings. The honesty of the gospel writers is one of the things that appealed to those who were seeking truth.

Beloved, we must view God's Word as the ultimate reality, authority and truth no matter what we may think to be true. We live in the natural, but Jesus, as God, is supernatural. We live in the physical, but Jesus is both physical and Spirit. For those who believe in Jesus their destiny is to be with God for eternity. I pray this morning's message will increase your faith and also prepare your minds and hearts to partake in the Lord's Supper that Patrick will oversee in a little while.

Let me pray for us as we prepare to enter into the Word of God that is eternally true and is the only unfailing reality and authority and truth.

Evidence For Belief (v. 1-2)

Jesus had been in the tomb of Joseph for 3 days and 3 nights. Luke tells us, "on the first day of the week (*Sunday*), at early dawn, they (*the women*) went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. ² And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb." This passage and these verses connect chapter 24 with chapter 23 when the women saw the tomb for the first time and the body of Jesus was placed inside 3 days earlier. In other words, we know from chapter 23 the women knew or thought they knew what to expect Sunday morning. They expected to find everything as they left it 3 days ago; what was left of the spices and ointment, the linen cloth wrapped around Jesus as Joseph and Nicodemus had done and Jesus' dead body.

The women were bringing additional spices they had prepared to further embalm Jesus' body. They were on a mission, they were focused. The journey to the tomb had to be difficult, they loved their Lord and their hearts were broken.

Like many the Passover was supposed to be a time of celebration but it had been turned into a time of mourning and sadness. They most likely thought at this point there was nothing to do but show honor to Jesus by finishing the preparation of His body for the grave. But now the rest of the story – their minds were completely in a state of shock when then arrived at the tomb.

When they arrived, Luke tells us, the stone had already been rolled away. Luke does not tell us how it was rolled away. But the tomb is open and Jesus is gone! The women were in a state of confusion. Reading from Mark's account, in chapter 16, beginning in verse 1, **“When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. ² And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. ³ And they were saying to one another, ‘Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?’ ⁴ And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large.”** The way these ancient tombs worked was that there was a large wheel-shaped stone that sat in a curved groove so that it would serve as a locking device to prevent people or grave robbers from opening the tomb without great effort. John indicates the stone had not just been rolled back but it had been **“taken away”** meaning it was out of the track and could no longer be rolled back into place. The gospel accounts do not tell us who rolled the stone away, but it had to be supernatural; similar to the veil in the temple being torn from top to bottom. In other words, it would have taken great effort and a number of people to roll the stone out of the way, off the track and away from the tomb. The guarded tomb prevented a group working to remove the stone, it had to be supernatural or of God.

We need to understand the stone was removed for the women and the disciples; Jesus did not need the stone rolled away. We have accounts in the

Gospels that Jesus, now glorified, passed through solid walls and doors and vanished instantly. The stone was not in the Lord's way, it was in the way for the women and apostles to enter. All this happen as Jesus said it would and for the apostles to have the faith they needed to take the Gospel to the unbelieving world.

Belief Founded On The Word (v. 3-5)

Sunday morning the women arrive and come up against something that does not compute, something that should not be. Reading from Luke at verse 3, “**when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.**”⁴ **While they were perplexed about this.**” Do you see there in your Bible, verse 4 says, “**they were perplexed**”. They knew Jesus had died and was placed in the tomb. Dead bodies remain where they are put, they do not get up or walk or move. The simple truth is dead is dead. But the tomb is empty and they do not know what to make of this until, “**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?’**” Matthew and Mark both report that one of the angels invite the women to come in and inspect the place where they had placed Jesus’ dead body. Immediately, their senses are giving them different information. Jesus is not in the tomb; the linen cloths are there and standing before then are two men in dazzling beauty. Something amazingly supernatural is taking place. Their perplexity as they entered is now turned into amazement and fear with the presence of angels.

When people come in contact with angels there is always the same result - fear and usually they fall to the ground. Americans can be so glib, I am always slightly surprised when I speak with people and they say things like, “*Yeah, me and God had a talk and I’m ok or Yeah, me and the man upstairs have an*

agreement and it has worked out or God and I working on me and Him coming to an understanding.” In the Bible when humans come in contact with angels, they usually are very fearful and even faint at times. That is just how people respond to angels, but there is no record of one working a deal with God, He does not make deals. No one speaks to God directly and no one especially speaks to Him as if He is a mere man. People spoke to Jesus, who they thought was a mere man while He walked the earth, but after He was raised and glorified people were in awe and fell to their knees for they knew they were in the presence of God.

The angels ask the women, [“Why do you seek the living among the dead?”](#) A grave is where dead people are. They came to the tomb for the purpose of preparing a dead body for the grave. Jesus’ body is not there because He has risen. His body is changed into a glorified eternal body, He is not dead but lives eternally. That morning the women accepted what the angels told them, but the men struggled with the truth – Jesus had risen.

Belief Through Remembrance (v. 6-10)

The angel delivers the message God had sent them to deliver, reading at verse 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.”](#) The angel’s message is simple [“He is not here, but has risen.”](#) Then the angel says, remember. He says, [“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.” Back in Matthew chapter 16 and Mark 8 and in Luke 9 we see when Jesus had told them He would rise after 3 days. Jesus “strictly charged and commanded the *disciples* to tell this to no one,²² saying, ‘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.**’” (Luke 9:21-22) About a year later Jesus again gathered the 12 and³¹ “he said to them, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and **everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished.**”³² For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon.³³ And after flogging him, **they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise.**” (Luke 18:31-33) This is confirmed in both Matthew 20 and Mark 10. Here is 2 examples, but how many times did Jesus teach this and it is not recorded in the Bible?

As one reads Luke’s gospel account, they get the impression the angels in heaven listened to every word Jesus spoke throughout His ministry. They watched and listened in awe as God’s plan for redemption unfolded just as He said it would. Peter and the prophets of old knew this, for he wrote,¹⁰ “Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully,¹¹ inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when **he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.**”¹² It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through **those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.**” (1 Peter 1:10-12) The angel remembered the Words of Jesus and even quoted them back to the women. Once the angel quotes Scripture back to the women and shows them the empty tomb, their senses unite, what they were now seeing and the Word of Jesus agree; they believe. There is no dead body

where they left the dead body. They saw the linen that He was wrapped in and they are now reminded of the Words Jesus spoke – now it all becomes clear; it makes sense and now they believe!

Belief By Seeing (v. 10-12)

The believing women go back and report to the disciples and from the 4 gospel accounts it is clear that at that point the disciples do not believe them. Reading from verse 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.” Verse 11 is interesting; it uses the words “idle tale” These 2 words come from the one Greek word “*leros*” (*lay·ros*). The physician Luke uses a medical term, meaning speaking nonsense or the babbling of a fevered and sick mind. Basically, the disciples thought the women had been out in the sun too long and refused to believe what they said. Again, for the disciples, the last thing they knew was what they had seen - Jesus dead on the cross and Joseph and Nicodemus taking Jesus’ dead body and laying it in the tomb that was sealed by a large stone. No idle tale or babbling of women was going to change their minds.

However, Peter and John wondered if it was possible, could it be true. So, they decided they would find out. The apostle John tells us that Peter and he ran to the tomb. Luke tells Peter’s side of the story, but John gives greater detail, ³“**So Peter went out with the other disciple (John), and they were going toward the tomb.** ⁴**Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.** ⁵ **And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying**

there, but he did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, ⁷ and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. ⁸ Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹ for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead." (John 20:3-9) So, John after his experience at the tomb - believed. Luke tells us that for Peter the spark of faith was ignited, but, but Peter "went home marveling at what had happened." Peter was always the tough one, the one it took time for understanding, but once Peter got it, he was the rock of solid and true belief.

Believing Despite Not Seeing (v. 6-7)

Where I think this text challenges us is in the area of faith. The women and Peter and John and the rest of the disciples were challenged to believe the Words of Jesus, the angel reminded them saying, "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." Everything they saw and heard and experienced in the physical world told them Jesus was still dead. Because once someone dies, they stay dead. It took an angel to explain things to the women and then it was Jesus, Himself who would later explain the supernatural to the apostles, but for most that Sunday morning, not John, but most of others, they did not believe. So, the disciples had nothing over Thomas who did not believe until he saw and touched Jesus. It took Jesus standing before them for the eyes of their soul to be opened for them to have faith.

Before we are too judgmental of the slow to believe disciples were, we must realize we have something they did not on that Sunday morning. We have the Holy

Spirit dwelling in our souls. God has given us the gift of Himself as the Holy Spirit in order that we may believe without seeing.

Eight days after that Sunday morning Jesus appeared again to the disciples and Thomas was with them this time. ²⁷ “Then Jesus said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.’ ²⁸ Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ ²⁹ Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? **Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.**’” (John 20:27-29) Thomas not only needed to see Jesus but to also hear Him and even touch His scars or wounds in order to believe. Then he shouts, ‘My Lord and my God!’

We, my beloved, we have never seen Jesus but we still believe because we have the Holy Spirit who convicts and convinces us. He resides within us as Christians and He explains the very Book God inspired, the Bible. We can and must believe. We must believe the Bible despite what our senses tell us. We must believe the Bible despite what the world wants us to believe. Peter who was slow to believe, but once he did, he would not let anything detour him from his faith. Peter wrote to us, to you and to me, listen, ³ **Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,** ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ⁸ **Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now**

see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹ obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.” (1 Peter 1:3-9) For the disciples, seeing was believing. For us, not seeing is believing. We must see through the eyes of faith. We see Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit and with spiritual eyes, not physical eyes.

I believe the Lord has challenges for all of us. Challenges to trust Him in whom we have never laid eyes on and rely on His Word regardless what things look like in this broken and chaotic physical world. My challenge for you and me as well, is to take God at His Word, obey it because it is the right thing to do and do not concern yourself with all the possible outcomes. Paul laid out his path of life and it should be our path of life, simply, saying, ²⁰ “**as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.** ²¹ **For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.**” (Philippians 1:20-21) It is time, my beloved, for us as individuals, as families and as Christ’s church to take the Word of God and believe, obey and live it for the glory of God no matter what happens in this world – for this is living by faith in Christ! Amen!