

Sermon on Luke 24:1-12 prepared by Jonathan Shradar

Luke 24:1-12

The resurrection of Jesus frees us to live.

Big thanks to Dave Hansen for opening the word last week. It was a joy to get away and spend time with family. Resting. Playing. Pondering. Creating. Dreaming of Advent and what the Lord has for us in this season.

I am not always a good traveler, however. I really like home. I like the routine of life. The known. The expected. So usually toward the end of our trips I can get homesick. Do you know the feeling?

A longing for your place, where you belong. To the things that you know, and the people that know you. The comfort that hopefully we find at home. (Really I just miss our dogs!)

Homesickness is a good way to describe what we should be sensing at the beginning of Advent.

While we sometimes make it all bright and sugar-filled, Advent isn't about tinsel and trees. Presents and pine. It is a turn on the church calendar that reminds us of our waiting. Looking at the first arrival, the birth of Jesus to a virgin in a stable, in light of the second arrival still to come. His return.

In so doing, it can take on some gravity. Woes of the world. Struggles of our own lives. The constant stumbling onward. Advent rightly pushes us to look deep into these longings for something better, for home. And rather than paper over them with shiny foil, we wait with them.

“In the church, this is the season of Advent. It's superficially understood as a time to get ready for Christmas, but in truth it's the season for contemplating the judgment of God. Advent is the season that, when properly understood, does not flinch from the darkness that stalks us all in this world. Advent begins in the dark and moves toward the light—but the season should not move too quickly or too glibly, lest we fail to acknowledge the depth of the darkness. As our Lord Jesus tells us, unless we see the light of God clearly, what we call light is actually

darkness: “how great is that darkness!” (Matt. 6:23). Advent bids us take a fearless inventory of the darkness: the darkness without and the darkness within.” – Fleming Rutledge, *Advent: The Once and Future Coming of Jesus Christ*

Luke 24 is an Advent text because it catches us looking for home and gives us wings to fly.

Context: From the bloody cross we find ourselves here. Where words of paradise had been spoken to a sinner and Jesus gave us his spirit to death. His body taken and laid in a borrowed tomb. Sealed behind stone.

But the women were watching.

The women who had come with him from Galilee. His disciples. Those that had heard his preaching. Witnesses his miracles. Some recipients of the miraculous for themselves.

And they prepared spices and ointments... to properly bury their Savior. Then Sabbath came and they rested.

To be honest, they didn't really know what to do. We don't get any dialogue of that Saturday here from Luke. But imagine it. All of Jesus' followers, huddled together, wondering what had happened, and how could things have gone this wrong. Holy Saturday - a day of tension, darkness, and uncertainty. A lot like Advent can be.

So, they just did the next thing. And when they do... WOW!

The resurrection of Jesus frees us to live.

Faith that Fills

Coming to the tomb. I wonder if they thought about how to deal with the stone? But that stone was rolled away and they didn't find the body of Jesus. Scandalous. Befuddling. But just as promised.

Two men, who from other accounts we know are angels, greet them and remind them...

Luke 24:6–7 “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.” (ESV)

Jesus clued his followers in multiple times. A prophet should not perish away from Jerusalem...

Luke 9:20–22 “Then he said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” And Peter answered, “The Christ of God.” [21] And he strictly charged and commanded them 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.” (ESV)

Luke 18:31–34 “And taking the twelve, 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.” [34] But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.” (ESV)

Older still, it was the promise of prophecy. The suffering servant by whose stripes we are healed.

And the women had heard these things... and they remembered.

So as promised, Jesus is risen. But what does it mean? What does it prove or deliver?

The question the angels ask us helpful here.

Luke 24:5 “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?” (ESV)

The cosmic question. How we often face our longings... looking for the living among the dead.

We are bent, and conditioned, to look for satisfaction. Something to answer the ache at the deepest part of who we are. Spiritually we can say we are always looking for justification. To be made right, proven, and accepted. To have worth.

We know we need something more... the righting of wrong (and if we have language for it, the solution to sin.)

When we don't trust God's revealed reality though, we have a tendency to look in the wrong places for what we need. In pleasure. Things of varied identity. That which we can control. And it is not always bad things. It can be good things that we make ultimate things. Family. Work. Physicality.

What the resurrection helps us see is that the offer of satisfaction - of justification is true. That Jesus really did solve it all for us on the cross.

The finality of the cross - we really are forgiven and really free from the weight of sin and the world.

We believe it, I mean we gather each week, we have groups to celebrate it... Jesus' death was for us, in him we are forgiven. All sin dealt with on the cross.

But if we are honest, sometimes we don't remember it well. We live empty and think we need to earn something more. Confess in the right way. Perform well enough.

Bob George - radio ministry... in response to a listener wondering if he has been forgiven enough, if his daily confession was working. He was a believer, gone to church his whole life. "I really want to believe that God forgives me, but I can't accept it. How can you know that God forgives your sins?" Been struggling with doubts about God's forgiveness for 62 years. Felt like he has wasted his life begging God for forgiveness.

"Until you rest in the finality of the cross, you will never experience the reality of the resurrection... Here is the good news. You already are forgiven. Forgiveness is not something you earn, it is something God, in Christ, has already done for

you. Jesus has already forgiven all of your sins - past, present and future - on the cross. God forgave the sin you committed long ago, and he has already forgiven the sins you will commit tomorrow. That is what the finality of the cross means.”

Can be trusted because he walked out of the grave. The resurrection proves the work is finished.

It is the news we need in the first days of Advent when things can seem so dark as we wait. God has forgiven you - once and for all. ‘The good news is that Jesus provides us a way back to a fully transcendent relationship with God.’

This is clarity to the waiting - this makes sense of the Saturday waiting. And it is what changes everything. The lives of these women at the tomb. The lives of all who believe.

“It is a wonderful thing to know that God is no longer dealing with us on the basis of our sins.” Dallas Willard

Because of the resurrection, we are always in - secure. And when the clouds get heavy and the light seems dim, this is what keeps us. Christ and him crucified.

Gives us faith that fills. That matches our longings with Jesus. Our satisfaction. It is what we keep coming back to, to stay full.

Nutrition. If we could survive for life on one meal alone, how boring. That burger I had 30 years ago has really given me strength since. No, we eat again. We savor again. We get our fill and we thrive.

This is what the resurrection invites us back to, the table of Jesus’ finished work for us.

It is so good. But satisfaction does leave you wandering. There is more for us.

Stacy and I were lamenting, pondering how we can neglect this gift. Gospel posse, good friends at the right time. But the waiting has been hard for some of us. And honestly, a few have stumbled back into seeking the living among the dead. End up missing what the life of the “filled” is meant to be.

When the women told these things... it seemed an idle tale... and they did not believe them.

But Peter was curious...

Faith that Flies

Everyone else is in the grave. All the other mystics, great teachers, prophets, enlightened ones. Jesus though is reigning over all things and waiting for the day of his Advent. To dwell with us forever.

Resurrection gives us new life to live. Not merely to wait under the clouds of brokenness and soul sickness. But to be set apart, to thrive, to bring Christ's kingdom to bear.

“The reality of the resurrection, being made alive by Christ, can only happen when the issue of our sin is over. Now we can live as new creations and sing and dance in the kingdom of God's beloved Son.” James Bryan Smith

Romans 6:3–5 “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? [4] We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. [5] For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.” (ESV)

Walking in newness of life. No longer seeking the living among the dead.

Ewen loves rollercoasters. You buy a ticket and ride. It is exhilarating. I am learning to trust Jesus enough to do it!

But, while the ticket (the permission, the ability to be in the line) is good, cool. The thrill is in the ride.

When it comes to life in Christ, some of us have settled for just holding the ticket.

The resurrection means we are not merely given a ticket but put on the ride. The same power that saves, that raised Christ from the grave runs through us by the Spirit that we would live - that we would fly!

2 Peter 1:3–8 “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, [4] by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. [5] For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, [6] and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, [7] and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. [8] For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (ESV)

This is a life that looks different. That faces our longing and knows where they come from. We know fulfillment’s source.

It is a life that spreads hope. Like the women, the first preachers of the resurrection. We tell others of forgiveness and new life.

This is a life oriented forward - to the future hope of HOME.

“The disappointment, brokenness, suffering, and pain that characterize life in this present world is held in dynamic tension with the promise of future glory that is yet to come. In that Advent tension, the church lives its life.” – Fleming Rutledge, *Advent: The Once and Future Coming of Jesus Christ*

And as we wait we ask to be transformed to be like him. Sacrificial. Merciful. Gracious. Confident in the hope we have.

Selling everything for the field that has the real treasure.

Luke 24:12 “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. (ESV)

Advent can have us marveling in lots of things: lights, nostalgia, the hope of toys big and small.

May we marvel upon Jesus, the resurrected King.

Christmas, the incarnation, his first Advent means something because the resurrection proves what was promised. Now we can live.

The resurrection of Jesus frees us to live.

Are you seeking the living among the dead? See Jesus. He is what your heart aches for. Forgiveness. Identity. Purpose. Run to him.

Live in him on your way home. What is Christ's is yours. Live now for his glory. United with him.

When the heaviness of Advent settles in. When we feel the angst of waiting for Jesus' return. We can take hope in the resurrection. We can have faith that fills and that flies.

Every Moment Holy - "Inconsolable Homesickness"

Let me steward well, Lord Christ,
this gift of homesickness—this grieving for
a childhood gone, this ache for distant family,
lost fellowship, past laughter, shared lives, and
the sense that I was somewhere I belonged.

It is a good, good thing to have a home.

But now that I have gone from it, let me steward
well, O God, this homesick gift, as I know my
wish for what has been is not some solitary
ache, but is woven with a deeper longing

for what will one day be.

This yearning to return to what I knew is,
even more than that, a yearning for a place
my eyes have yet to see.

So let me steward this sacred yearning well.
Homesickness is indeed a holy thing,
like the slow burning of an immortal beacon,
set ablaze to bid us onward.

The shape of that ache for another time
and place is the imprint of eternity
within our souls.

So let those sorrows do their work in me,
O God. Let them stir such yearnings as would
fix my journey forward toward that place
for which I've always pined.

O my soul, have there not always been signs?
O my soul, were we not born with hearts on fire?
Before we were old enough even to know
why songs and waves and starlight so stirred
us, had we not already tiptoed to the edge of
that vast sadness, bright and good, and felt
ourselves somehow stricken with a sickness
unto life? Hardly had we ventured from our
yards, when we felt ourselves so strangely far
from something—and somewhere that we
despaired of ever reaching—that we turned to
hide the welling of our eyes.

We knew it, even then, as the opening of

a wound this world cannot repair—
the first birthing of that weight
every soul must wake up to alone,
because it is the burden
of that wild and
lonely space that only
God in his eternity can fill.

And as we wait, this sacred, homesick
sorrow works in us to cultivate a faith
that knows one day, he will.

That is the holy work of homesickness:
to teach our hearts how lonely
they have always been for God.

So let these sighs and tears, Lord Christ,
prepare me for that better gladness that will
be mine. Let all your children learn to
grieve well in this life, knowing we are
not just being homesick;
we are letting sorrow carve
the spaces in our souls,
that joy will one day fill.
O Holy Spirit, bless our grief, and
seal our hearts until that day.

Amen.