

“The Risen Body of Christ”  
Luke 24:1-12  
April 17, 2022

I wonder what those 3 women were thinking, as they made their way to Jesus’ tomb early on that first Easter morning in order to complete the embalming process on Jesus’ body that they started on Friday when they asked each other, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?” This is a picture of a tomb from the Holy Land and you can see that on one side of the tomb is a large stone propped up against the side of the tomb/cave. If you look closely you will notice that the stone is actually a little higher than the bottom of the entrance to the tomb. We don’t know if the stone at Jesus’ tomb was even round, but Mark’s Gospel does tell us that the stone was “very large.” I’m sure it took several strong individuals just to get the stone moved over the entrance to the tomb on Good Friday. Listen to the sound of that huge stone moving into place, crushing smaller rocks, scraping against the wall. Now imagine these women trying to move that stone away from the entrance, up a small incline by themselves, so that they could get to Jesus’ body. When that stone was put in place over the tomb, it was with the intent that it would never be moved – it was there to stay.

There is no way those women could have moved that stone by themselves, but that reality doesn’t seem to stop them. They continue on to Jesus’ tomb with their spices, ready to take care of Jesus’ body, even though they haven’t addressed that one really big detail. Who is going to let them in? But when they get there, they notice that the stone has been rolled away. I wonder what went through their minds at that moment? Did they think, “Haven’t they done enough to Jesus? Why would anyone go inside His tomb? Can’t people show some respect for the dead?” Imagine the confusion they experienced. Who rolled the stone away? Where is Jesus’ body? They don’t know what to make of what they have seen.

But then two angels appeared and the women were scared. I don't think they were cute, beautiful angels that we often picture in our minds at Christmas time. Angels are often described in the Bible as powerful beings that many times cause people to fall to the ground in fear and awe. But these angels are not there to scare the women. They have come to remind them that Jesus kept His promise. He died on a cross, but now on the third day he has risen from the dead, just as He said He would. As a result our Gospel lesson tell us they remembered Jesus' words and they believed. Even though they don't see Jesus, they believe He has risen and they go tell the disciples the amazing news. Their confusion and fear immediately changes to hope and joy.

Over the past year I wonder if we have had many of the same feelings. I think many of us and people in general have experienced confusion and fear, along with hope and joy. We haven't seen an empty tomb or any dazzling angels, but as we look at many of the things that have happened in our world over the past year, it is very tempting to ask, "Where is Jesus?" just as the women did.

For example, over the past few months we have watched and read about Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Millions of people have fled the country, thousands of civilians have been killed or injured, and communities and homes have been destroyed. (Thousands of Russian soldiers have been killed, as well.) Churches and relief organizations are trying to help by providing shelter, food, clothing, and medical care. As we see the pictures of war, it is hard to understand the purpose of all this fighting and in our confusion we may find ourselves asking, "Where is Jesus in this chaos?"

As we are now two years into this pandemic there has been a lot of confusion, to say the least, over everything we have experienced. We started off with great resolve to support and encourage one another as we took on this invisible virus. While we couldn't meet for worship in

person, large numbers of people watched online. We commented online to let everyone know we were watching, praying, and singing at home. We missed being together. We couldn't be with people in hospitals or nursing homes. Students in schools and universities switched to online instruction. Surgeries were postponed, graduations were cancelled, and weddings were delayed. Some businesses even closed. But slowly we started to come back as things began to open again. Unfortunately, as the pandemic dragged on and as we hit the one-year mark, it seemed like fighting took over. Something as simple as a mask divided people. "I'm not wearing this, no one can make me." "I'm not going out unless everyone is wearing a mask." Churches were criticized over decisions they made, some people who watched worship online began to drift away, and many started finding other things to do on a Sunday morning. As different variants hit and as many people died, it was very tempting to ask in the midst of our confusion, "Where is Jesus in this chaos?"

The fact is He has always been with us. Wherever there is confusion, fear, and chaos, Jesus is there; and He is here today – working and moving in us, building up our faith, and filling us with hope. Note what the women did after the angels told them that Jesus was not there, but had risen from the dead. In verse 9 it says, "And returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest." They ran to tell the disciples the amazing news. They didn't stay at the tomb. They went back to their lives with the risen Jesus present with them. And so do we.

As we leave this worship service today, where Jesus has been with us, and go back to our homes and daily routines, we know that Jesus will be with us as we face a world of war and anger, division and fighting, sickness and suffering. But we go back knowing that the body of Christ lives within us. We are His feet as we walk into the homes of the elderly and shut-ins to bring the presence of Jesus to their loneliness. We are the hands of Christ when we buy

groceries or cut our neighbors' lawn when they are sick, or when we touch them with love when we pray for them. We are the mouth of Christ when we speak love and gentleness to those who are grieving or when we seek reconciliation with someone who we've hurt or who has hurt us. We are the mouth of Christ as we sing these wonderful songs today so that everyone will know that Jesus has risen. We are the ears of Christ when we listen patiently to those who express their pain and sorrows. We hear them with the love of Jesus. We are the eyes of Christ when we see people who are weak and powerless as they suffer injustice and we become their ally as Jesus becomes our advocate before His Heavenly Father. We are the heart of Christ when we generously donate our money, our time, and our abilities to help those in need in our community, our country, and throughout the world. It is the very heart of Christ which compels such compassion from us.

As members of the Body of Christ, we must take care of one another. That is why we come together here. When we are together the body of Christ is complete, but when people are not here, then we are not whole. When we are together, we draw strength from one another. We also draw strength from God's Word, that told us today in our Old Testament lesson from Isaiah that the day will come when Jesus will return and we will see him face to face. No more disease or fighting to take away our strength and our life. All of creation will live in peaceful harmony. No more anger or hate, as grief will give way to gladness and rejoicing.

We also draw strength from the sacraments of Baptism, which gives us new life, and Communion, which sustains us with the body and blood of Jesus our Savior. We need His Word, we need His sacraments, and we need each other to keep us united with Him and to have the strength day after day to be the Body of Christ bringing God's love into our world. That is why we gather here week after week, so we can keep on being the feet, the hands, the mouth, the

ears, the eyes, and the heart of Christ. That's the good news for today, despite the chaos of our world, and the good news for eternity is that we will live with Him forever in a perfect world, because Christ is Risen, He is risen indeed, Alleluia.