

Easter Sunday
St. Luke 24:1-12
April 21, 2019
St. George's Bolton
Fr. Chris

Dead or Alive?

Why do you look for the living among the dead?

The answer is, they were grieving. They knew that Jesus had died a horrible death just three days before. They were eye-witnesses. They were the women of His inner circle. They came looking for his dead body, not a resurrected friend. They went to the cemetery to the tomb, as any grieving persons would do. They were brave. In their sadness, they could not imagine the authorities had anything else up their sleeves to do to Jesus. It was over. 'They' won, or so it seemed.

Why do you look for the living among the dead?

The question is, where to look?

The women came to the tomb, expecting to find Jesus dead and in his tomb. They came to anoint the body with the costly and aromatic nard and other spices.

But Jesus was not in the tomb. The tomb was empty. All that was left behind were the burial cloths.

Emotions sent to the limit: Deep Sadness. Fear. Anger. Wonder. What could this be? What does this mean? Imagine if your loved one's grave were opened and the remains are missing. Not a nice thought. It is the way we would think though, back then on the first Easter morning and even today, because there doesn't appear to be another explanation. Where have they taken his body, the women asked?

No one had taken it anywhere. Not the Romans. Not the religious leaders of the people of Israel. Not Herod. Not the Disciples. Not Nicodemus. Not Joseph of Arimathea. Not anyone had touched or messed with the remains in the tomb. This would seem to be a case for T.V.'s CSI Team. A challenging mystery was unfolding before them. So what do you think happened?

We do have the benefit of hindsight, but try to get inside the heads of these frightened women who are sad and grieving already. They must have felt even more lost.

Jesus did give them a clue. The two “men” in dazzling clothes reminded them with these words: “Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.’ Then they remembered his words...”

Could it be? Or could it be too good to be true? The confluence of their emotions and experiences and their memories of the words of Jesus himself gave them great joy and hope. Death had not conquered. As agonizing a defeat as the crucifixion and death of Jesus seemed, now this moment was being transformed into an amazing, possible, potential victory. They ran to tell their male companions who were hiding out for fear that they might meet the same fate as Jesus if they ventured out. You can imagine how they were debating their next move: like how fast could they get out of dodge and get back to their fishing boats and tax collections.

The amazement of the women was difficult to contain. They were clearly excited by the good news of the first Easter Morning. Something big was happening to them. Still, they found the eleven disciples and other followers from the inner circle of believers were skeptical about the stories of the women. “But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.”

They had witnessed for themselves many things they could not explain. And some of them had proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah, the one who has come from God to be with them. They all knew that this Jesus was no ordinary man. But could there be still more to their story together?

The first Easter. This Easter. We are looking for hope itself to rise from the dead. Why do you look for the living among the dead? Too long have we succumbed to the hopelessness of stress and busyness, death and taxes. Is there life in those things? Does being hyper-busy make you alive? Does working until you drop keep the grim reaper at bay?

“...two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you”

Remember. Memory is sacred. Remember the life and experience of generations of human beings gone before us. This life is not all that there is. It suits the modern advertisers to tell you otherwise, so you will go on a spending binge to affirm you are alive and fill up your lives with things as an insurance policy against your mortality, a folly that will never suit you and will bankrupt you in the end, financially and spiritually. Remember the words of Jesus. Remember his actions. Remember he lives so you might live with him in God. There is so much more than this life to live. Be alive in Christ and dead to sin. Remember with all you heart and might and soul. ...Do this in remembrance of me!

Easter is not a tradition: it is a faith experience. We will hear these words from the living Risen Lord next Sunday as he confronts ‘doubting’ Thomas: ‘Blessed are those who have not seen the risen Jesus, and yet believe.’ Blessed are you and I as we set forth on this Easter Journey this morning! May we remember this Easter Day and not be distracted or diverted from what is central to our lives and our living. Let us arise from our graves with him. If you came seeking the living this Easter Morning, you came to the right place!

Why do you look for the living among the dead?

Here is life. Abundant life. Take it and it will change you for the better. Easter infuses our faith with abundant life. Easter validates the hope that has been given us and lives in us. Don’t look in places that are tombs for life. Even the dead do not reside in cemeteries. Where is the risen Lord?

Like the children soon searching for Easter Eggs this morning after the service, it is a reminder that you will find Jesus everywhere, and when you least expect. He is out there in the world. He is in here in your hearts. He is embedded in your memory. This morning we gather here to be close to the Risen Jesus. He in us and we in Him. We gather to celebrate God’s victory, which is also our victory.

“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you...”

He is Risen! AMEN.

