**4/19/25**

**Easter Vigil**

**Vicar Vince Piekarski**

**Luke 24:1-12**

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 1:2, NRSVUE) (2) **Amen.**

Welcome… and thank you all for joining us here this evening. We are indeed blessed that you are here. Easter greetings to each and every one of you!

Now I would be remiss if I did not stand in this place and share just a brief glimpse into my life, and some of the memories and experiences that God has allowed me to have that continue to shape me into the very person I am becoming. With that being said… I must admit… as a child growing up… the Easter Vigil was always something I looked forward to. Quite honestly… it was the place to be!!! Being an Altar Server in the Catholic Church allowed me a behind the scenes glimpse at all the amazing things going on… it allowed me to play a key role in the pageantry of the evening… everything from the fire and the new Paschal Candle… to the water and the incense… to the music and the voices joining together in praise and adoration… to the Word and the blessing… to the meal at the table. It was the ultimate front row ticket… it was indeed an Easter moment! It was everything you could ever imagine… and it was so much more!

As a result, one would say I was built for this… one would say that I was meant to be standing up here delivering the Sermon and playing a key role in yet another Easter Vigil… but… that does not mean that I was not nervous and concerned that the words I share with you all would not be enough, or even what you needed. That was of course was until I took a step back… until I allowed things to be taken off of my shoulders… that is when I surrendered and allowed things to be on the very shoulders of our Triune God. I quit making this about what I said or even how it affected you… and I left it all up to God to touch your hearts and minds. So, as this serves as yet again another Easter moment… and another Easter memory… let’s get to it! Let us be the people of God and dig into scripture here this evening.

Alright… one could say that we have an uphill battle here… and one could say that attempting to focus on all the messages delivered and received here this evening would be way too much… and I could not agree with you anymore. That is why we will keep it simple… that is why we will focus on the Gospel Reading that my soon to be fellow Seminarian, Kenneth Bassett, so masterfully read and shared with you all. For we have now traveled through Lent… we are traveling through the Three Days… and we are precisely where we all wanted and hoped this continued journey would bring us at this very moment in 2025. We have made it to the Easter Revelation that He is no longer bound by death… that He is no longer in the tomb… and most importantly… that everyone and anyone can carry out this message so that all can hear it and truly come to believe. Yes… I made no error or mistake there… I said and I meant everyone and anyone!

The life of Jesus is of course countercultural through and through. Following his death and being locked up in the tomb the women are out and going about the ordinary business anyone would following the death of one of their friends. The women are paying respect to a loved one. The women are taking the spices that they had prepared for Jesus to the very body that all past experiences and common knowledge would lead them to believe was still laying in the tomb. Who would know that Jesus was cooking up something holy and entirely different?!?! Who would know that these women would be encountering two characters and a stone rolled away from a tomb that was supposed to be covered by guards and never to be opened? Who would know that these women would have the experience of a lifetime? Who would know that these women would be called into the very mission and ministry that each and every one of us is called into? The very ministry of presence and proclamation… The very ministry of being part of community. After all… We are the Church is not constrained to one building, to one congregation, to one denomination, to one affiliation, to one anything! We are the Church is the life and the ministry of all believers.

Furthermore, these women’s experience was no “idle tale” as scripture puts it… but that is precisely where we are all called to dig in and focus more on the Word. There actually is more than we might hear or observe at first glance. In that very same verse, it also says “seemed.” Of course this was something that never happened before! Jesus may have told all of His followers precisely what would happen several times over the course of His life and ministry, but it had never been done before. No one had experienced it, and His words were clearly above their head and their mindset at that time. However, now it was real! All Jesus had told them had come to fruition.

Forget the concept that gets painted over and over again that Peter ran to that tomb to validate the message that these women had brought back to him and the other disciples. Forget the concept that only a man’s word was valid at that time, or even now. Forget the concept that Peter did not believe these women. However, take special notice and take special attention to the very fact that Peter was the only one willing to actually get off of his butt and go out there and experience and see this amazing feat for himself! Peter was not in doubt… Peter was in belief… for we all know that seeing is believing… and that is precisely what Peter went and did! That is also why he went home amazed at what had happened, because the women had already proclaimed the message.

The compassion and forgiveness, the love and humility, the grace and mercy that are delivered to each and every one of us… that very living out of scripture… that very life that Jesus lived out here on earth as a human being is priceless. Everything He did is so genuine, it is so awe inspiring, it is ever so impactful. When we all hear and experience this entire story year after year, I just do not know how it does not bring a tear to one’s eye… I just do not know how it does not cause one’s heart to flutter… I just do not know how the very life and ministry of Jesus creates any doubt or disbelief in anyone… I just do not know how it does not have any of us springing up and running out of these very pews excited to share this very story and this good news.

The history and the accounts that we read and hear by no mistake are similar, but yet… are ever so different. For if one would have four of the same exact accounts of a story then we would come to believe that they were conspired in some manner. One would come to believe that the story was not even true. One would come to believe that the corroborated story of Jesus Christ’s life, death, and resurrection were just some clever ruse. However, they are not! Nothing was spared, not even a single detail. We get several amazing accounts in scripture, and we are encouraged to read through them all and study them time and time again. We are called to dive in and explore our faith more and more. That is the true and present blessing of being together in community as well. That is the ever-present blessing of all of us being together under one roof this evening. That is the very blessing of being able to go out to share and proclaim this word and this experience with others tomorrow morning at our respective places of worship and beyond. “It is also an occasion for the church to claim the resurrection promise that God is making all things new, beginning with the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.” (7) Remember, we have not seen it either. We simply have the Word, and the Word truly stand on its own. With all that we have heard and experienced yet again this evening let us rejoice and proclaim… Jesus Christ is Risen… He is Risen Indeed!

**Amen.**

**References & Study Points**

(1) Sundays and Seasons

 Preaching

 Year C 2025

 April 19th, 2025—April 20th, 2025

 Resurrection of Our Lord

 Vigil of Easter—Easter Day

(2) BibleGateway.com

(3) The Four Pages of The Sermon

 Revised and Updated

 A Guide to Biblical Preaching

 Paul Scott Wilson

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 Abingdon Press

(4) WorkingPreacher.org

 Resurrection of Our Lord

 An embodied resurrection requires that continuity and change be held together

 April 20, 2025

 Commentary on Luke 24:1-12

 Jerusha Matsen Neal

(5) WorkingPreacher.org

 Resurrection of Our Lord

 The narrative of the empty tomb signifies overturned expectations, hope renewed,

 and an invitation to participate in God’s ongoing narrative through Jesus Christ who

 is risen.

 April 21, 2019

 Commentary on Luke 24:1-12

 Holly Hearon

(6) WorkingPreacher.org

 Easter Vigil

 What we seem to have here is a discounting of eye witness testimony.

 March 26, 2016

 Commentary on Luke 24:1-12

 Michael Joseph Brown

(7) WorkingPreacher.org

 Resurrection of Our Lord

 Each of the four Resurrection narratives goes its own way in details, but there are

 three elements that they all have in common: (1) the discovery of the empty tomb

 takes place on a Sunday morning; (2) Mary Magdalene is present at the tomb; and

 (3) the tomb is found to be empty.

 March 31, 2013

 Commentary on Luke 24:1-12

 Arland J. Hultgren

(8) WorkingPreacher.org

 Resurrection of Our Lord (Year C)

 Preaching at Easter has its unique challenges and opportunities.

 April 4, 2010

 Commentary on Luke 24:1-12

 Craig R. Koester

(9) SermonCentral.com

 Impossible

 Contributed by Mari Larson on Nov 28, 2017

 Scripture: Luke 24:1-12

 Denomination: Lutheran

**Luke 24:1-12**

1 On the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they went in, they did not find the body. 4 While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. 5 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. 6 Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, 7 that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.” 8 Then they remembered his words, 9 and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. 10 Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. 11 But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. 12 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.

**Luke 24:1-12 (NRSVUE)**

Evidently expecting to find Jesus’ corpse, some of the women among his followers go to the tomb with embalming spices. After a perplexing encounter with the empty tomb and angelic visitors, the women become the first to proclaim the amazing news of resurrection.

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