

The First Day of the Week
Resurrection (Easter) Sunday

April 20, 2025

Luke 24:1-12

Genesis 1 - King James Version

1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

² And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

³ And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

⁴ And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.

⁵ And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

The Gospel accounts of Jesus' resurrection differ in a number of ways. But they all agree that the empty tomb was discovered on the first day of the week - the first day of creation as told in Genesis chapter 1. This is a new day, and a new creation. A new heaven and earth. The light is divided from the darkness. This is the day we celebrate Christ's resurrection and the promise of new life that is offered to us all.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Agreement

Another part of the resurrection story which is written in all four Gospels, is that the empty tomb was first discovered by women. These women were followers of Jesus. They had stood at a distance when he was crucified. When Jesus was taken down from the cross and buried on Friday, Luke tells us:

Luke 23:54-56 - NIV

It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin. The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body

was laid in it. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

Jesus died on Friday, the day of preparation for the Sabbath. There was no work the women, or any other devout Jew, could perform on the Sabbath, so they had to wait until the following day, Sunday. So, Luke tells us something about these women.

- First, we know some of their **names**: Mary Mag'dalene and Jo-an'na and Mary the mother of James. But there were other women with them.
- Second, we know that they had **stood by** and observed Jesus' death when others of his followers had abandoned him, so they were brave.
- Third, we know that they were **obedient** to their faith and observed the Sabbath.
- Fourth, we know that they were **thoughtful**. They prepared the spices and perfumes on Friday so that they could be ready on Sunday to anoint Jesus' body.

These qualities can help us to understand this story and also guide us in our faith journey — from the darkness of Holy Saturday to the Dawn of Resurrection Sunday.

I want to walk with these women through the incredible morning they experienced. But first, we have to imagine how dark that Sabbath day was for them. They loved Jesus. They knew him well and were witnesses to his ministry and miracles. They had hope in him. He was their Messiah. Then they watched him die, horribly, publicly. They watched his body being wrapped and placed into the tomb. Beyond the horror, there was despair.

Have you ever been deeply troubled, in mourning or grief? What a relief it is to just be busy at times like that. It can be a relief to go to work or bake or chop wood or go for a drive. Sometimes we can use busyness to mask or cope with our grief. Mary and Joana and the other women were not able to work on the Sabbath. There was nothing to distract them from their grief and suffering. How dark must have been that Sabbath day. And in their grief they arose on Sunday morning before dawn.

The Journey of the Women

Let us journey with these faithful women on the first day of the week.

The Approach at Dawn

- They were **awake** early. Maybe they hadn't slept at all before they set out together. Imagine the grey light of early dawn. It is a cold, sad, mournful dawn light. Their feet must have felt heavy. They walked out of the city gates and up the dusty hill. But they

were awake and ready to act. Jesus told us to stay awake and ready. (Mark 12:32-37)
That is what these women were - awake and ready.

- The women traveled **together** in a group. Perhaps Mary the mother of James was leaning on Joana for comfort and support. Perhaps Joana was leaning on the older woman for comfort. This group, although it was in mourning, was consoling company. They all shared a love for Jesus and they went together. How comforting it is to know we are not alone when we walk through the dark. Jesus called us to do this for one another, to be present to one another with love. Jesus said, **“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”** (Matthew 5:4)
- The women came **prepared**. They bore spices and perfumes to anoint Jesus’ body. A body that wasn’t attended immediately, might have begun to smell of decay. It would have been very physical, touching Jesus’ cold skin, touching his wounds, unwrapping, bathing and rewrapping his limbs. Whether or not you have attended the body of a loved one, you can perhaps imagine this process. This is what the women were anticipating. And they came prepared. Jesus said, be ready, and these women were as ready as they could be. (Luke 12:40)
- The women were seeking Jesus. That is a key to this passage as well. Jesus told us to seek him. (Mt. 6:33, 7:7) They didn’t know that they were looking in the wrong place, but they were earnest in their search.

The Empty Tomb

5. When the women arrived at the tomb, they found it open and empty. Translations say they were **“perplexed”** or they “wondered.” Imagine going to a funeral or a wake and the body is gone. The casket is empty. Perplexity may be the first response. They’re thinking, “What is going on? I didn’t expect this.” They have gone from an emotion of deep mourning to a state of mental confusion. They are drawn out of their certainty of what they would find and are now in uncharted territory. They were prepared for one kind of day and now they are faced with something out of the blue. (24:3-4)
6. But before they can get their bearings, ask any questions, or come up with their own reasons for the unaccountable change in events, they are taken from their state of confusion right back to a new and powerful emotion. Two men are standing there in dazzling white clothing. The women are shocked, frightened, they bow their faces to the ground. Their wondering turns to trembling. (4,5) In the space of a few short moments they’ve gone from mourning to bafflement, to fear. What a roller coaster.

Activity of Resurrection

7. Then something wonderful happens. A third unexpected event. The two men, later recognized as angels, say to the women, **“Why do you seek the living among the dead? ⁶Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷that the Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise.”(5-7)** These strange figures ask them to remember something they had forgotten. This is such an important point of the story. The angels told them nothing they hadn't heard before, but ask them to engage their memories. So from emotions, they turn back to thought and **memory**. And they remembered Jesus words. And immediately that sparks something in them. Jesus told us to remember him. (Eucharist)
8. Luke tells us, **“⁸And they remembered [Jesus'] words, ⁹and returning from the tomb they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest.”** Remembrance causes the women to leave the tomb and go to the eleven disciples and the rest of the people who loved and followed Jesus. How different that **return** journey was. A mourning procession had become a group that hurried with good news. How amazing a transformation overcame them and they went with joy and amazement, their burial perfumes forgotten.
9. And they go right away to **tell** the story. The telling is the final part of their journey. They don't just carry the good news, they share it with the others who, for whatever reason, have not yet ventured out. Jesus sent out the disciples and told them to spread the good news.

Seeking the Living One among the Living

One of the great lessons for us is that the women were not just seeking, but following Christ all along, even when they thought he was dead. The only mistake they made was looking for him in the wrong place. He was alive, among the living. All along, he was with them and within them.

This journey of the women, that Easter morning, is a model for all of us as we go through life. There may be times we forget the resurrection. There may be days that darkness of death presses in around us. There will be days that we suffer and mourn. But look at these women:

- They were awake, alert, faithful and prepared, even in the darkness of mourning.
- They didn't travel alone, but stayed in fellowship with a caring community.
- They sought Jesus, even though they thought he was dead.
- They passed through confusion and fear into a state of remembering Jesus.
- They returned to the group to tell their story and offer comfort and truth to us all.

This is a model of the Christian life — the life that practices resurrection!

New Creation

John 1:1-5 - New International Version

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

The living Christ is with us now. The living Christ is Alive, within us now.

He is Risen.

Thanks be to God.