

## The Holy Gospel

Luke 24:1-12

*Deacon* The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke.

*All* *Glory to you, Lord Christ*

On the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly 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, 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, and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. 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.

*Deacon* The Gospel of the Lord

*All* *Praise to you, Lord Christ*

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The only invincible evidence of the Truth is its own truth: the more we penetrate into the truth of the Resurrection the more we know that it is true. On the contrary, the more we linger among the mere details of the [facts] of the account of the Resurrection the more we make it impossible to believe it. – William Porcher DuBose

“I can’t do church anymore,” he said. “I don’t believe all that stuff we say every Sunday.”

*Why do you look for the living among the dead?*

In explaining why she was turning down an invitation to church on Easter, she said: “I don’t know. I don’t get it.” “If he was dead for three days, and he died on Friday, shouldn’t Easter be on Monday? And plus the fact why do they move it around? You never know when Easter is. Who ever heard of Easter in March?”

*Why do you look for the living among the dead?*

I read an article that said “A California man who believes in the literal interpretation of the Bible was offering \$10,000 to anyone who can successfully debunk claims made in the book of Genesis in front of a judge...” The report explained that his “plan was to put \$10,000 of his own money into an escrow account. His debate opponent would be asked

to do the same. They would then jointly agree on a judge ... [and] any evidence presented in the trial must be 'scientific, objective, valid, reliable and calibrated.'"

*Why do you look for the living among the dead?*

Our collect this morning points us to something entirely different than dead literal facts. According to our opening prayer, what we are doing here this morning, what Easter is about, what life and resurrection are about, what church is about is "that we may evermore live with [Jesus]." We prayed: "Grant us so to die daily to sin, that we may evermore live with him in the joy of his resurrection;"

We are created to live with God. That is what life is all about. We are created to live with God, not believe in God. In the name of believing in God we have turned God into an object to be debated and tried in front of a judge. We have made God a some-thing, an object to accept or deny or (to dress it up in religious terms): God, an object to be worshiped.

God is not an object to be worshiped. An object to be worshiped is an idol. And that is exactly what we make God when we see God as only something to be worshiped and believed in. When God is only an object to be tried and proved, we have succumbed once again "to looking for the living among the dead."

God is not a dead object. God is living subject – a subject who chooses to love us, a living subject who believes in us, and you might even say, worships us by valuing us enough to come and live with us.

God living with us is fundamentally what resurrection is. Resurrection is not primarily about saving us (or even Jesus for that matter) *from* death. Resurrection is about saving us *to* "live with God." Resurrection is not about saving us from hell and getting us into heaven. Resurrection is about living with God now, and living with God, and living with God, and living with God.

If I am living with God, I am resurrected. If I am living with God, I am in heaven. Resurrection and heaven are means. They are means to living with God.

Anytime we take the means (resurrection, heaven, Genesis, church, Easter Sunday) and make them the end we are doing it again. We are looking for the living among the dead.

The gospel, good news, though, is that when I do this, when I turn God into an dead objective fact to be manipulated by me, and my life becomes sterile and wooden, and righteous or unrighteous and black and white, two guys always show up in dazzling white clothes and say, “Why? Why? Why are you doing it again? Why are you looking for the living among the dead.”

Yes, I believe in angels, but not objective factual angels to drag before a judge (though I would not put angels past God). I am talking about that angel that sounds like your inner voice, or the circumstances of your life that are not working out, or a good friend or your partner, that voice that says, “Why? Why are you looking here? Why do you so desperately need to know the facts? Why do you need to be right, to be in control?”

God the dead object can do nothing for you. God the living subject already has. *God has raised us up with Christ and seated us in with Christ in the heavenly places.* (Try that one in front of a judge.)

An idle tale – that's what we get when we reduce our life and God and faith to only objective facts. It is what the Apostles got when the women reported their encounter with resurrected life. *But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.*

It is not an idle tale that brings me here this morning. True the ‘scientific, objective, valid, reliable and calibrated’ facts don’t add up. But I am not looking for those facts. I am not looking for the living among the dead. I am not even really looking for the living among the living – though I do find the living here and in you.

I am here this morning because I have discovered the amazing, astounding, wonderful Truth that the Living is looking for me – to live with me, to be my Life and Resurrection.

In God’s name. Amen.