



**Sermon:** April 4, 2021

**Scripture Reading:** Luke 24.1-12

**The Message:**

Maybe resurrection needs to be practiced more than believed.

[Video Version](#)



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I remember well my first death of a young adult. He died of cancer in his 30s. Leaving a wife and two small children. A few months later, she told me, “all of the people who saw us as a couple seem to have deserted me. I feel like I was buried with him.”

I wonder if that’s what it felt like for the women who followed Jesus. They were consumed with death. Their only reality was the death of their beloved Jesus. And so, they could only think to complete the burial rituals. Instead they are confronted by two angels who ask, “Why do you seek the living among the dead?” Luke 24.5

“Where is he?” the women ask. They can’t imagine any other reality than the reality of the death they had witnessed on that horrible cross.

They lived at a time when death seemed more in control than life. It was only an experience of the living Christ that shook that power.

The women at the tomb are reminded of the words of Jesus about suffering, their story dismissed as nonsense. But now that they have encountered the possibility of a resurrected Christ, they go out of the tomb and into the world to tell their story.

They are reminded of the words and deeds of Jesus, of how he taught them that he would die, but be raised to new life. These angels, messengers of God, confronted their preoccupation with death and reintroduced the abundant life that Jesus promised them.

Freed from their preoccupation with death, the women begin to practice resurrection.

They make the announcement to the others, but their news is dismissed as nonsense by the men, for they too are consumed by death. It has gained control over them and even the memory of Jesus’ words is not enough to convince them otherwise. Death is in the driver’s seat.

Until Peter runs to see for himself. Until the risen Jesus appears to the Emmaus walkers. Until Jesus allows Thomas to touch his side.

Then they too practice resurrection. They went into hiding after the crucifixion, but after the resurrection appearances they walk back into the world.

Perhaps what happened when Jesus died was similar to what happened to the young widow I began with -- feeling buried with her husband before she was thirty.

Jesus' followers felt that they had died too. Perhaps that's why they hid themselves away after the crucifixion and only reappeared when something amazing happened.

They became braver and stronger; they visited strangers and healed the sick. It was not just what they saw in Jesus, but what was set free in them.

Maybe resurrection, like everything else, needs to be practiced.

In so many ways so many people are longing for new life for the practice of resurrection.

In Jim Wallace's book **God's Politics**, he tells of attending the cathedral where Desmond Tutu was Archbishop. Apartheid held a firm grip on the people and Nelson Mandela was still in prison.

In the middle of worship, a group of the South African security police broke into the service. Wallace writes,

"Tutu stopped preaching and just looked at the intruders as they lined the walls of his cathedral wielding writing pads and tape recorders. They had already arrested Tutu and other church leaders just a few weeks before and kept them in jail for several days.

After meeting their eyes with his in a steely gaze, the church leader acknowledged their power, but reminded them that he served a higher power than their political authority.

Then in the most extraordinary challenge to political tyranny I have ever witnessed, Archbishop Desmond Tutu told the representatives of South African apartheid, "since you have already lost, I invite you today to come and join the winning side!"

He said it with a smile on his face and an enticing warmth in his invitation, but with the clarity in a boldness that took everyone's breath away.

The congregation's response was electric. The crowd was literally transformed by the bishop's challenge to power.

From a cowering fear of the heavily armed security forces that surrounded the cathedral and greatly outnumbered The band of worshipers, we literally jumped to our feet, shouted the praises of God and began dancing.

We danced out of the cathedral to meet the awaiting police and military forces who, not knowing what else to do, backed up to provide the space for the people of faith to dance for freedom in the streets of South Africa.

10 years later Wallace attended the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as president. Wallace spoke to Archbishop Tutu and asked him if he remembered that day when they danced out of the cathedral onto the streets.

Tutu said that indeed he did remember.

Wallace reflects that apartheid did not die on the day Mandela was released or inaugurated. It died on the day of the celebration in the church when they danced for freedom in the streets of South Africa. Practicing resurrection even in the midst of death.

Is it possible to practice resurrection in our own lives? The truth of Easter is that the promise of new life doesn't just await us in the future but that we are able to live new lives here, now by the power of the resurrection.

Maybe resurrection, like everything else, really does need to be practiced.