

# **LifeWay Explore the Bible Series for April 4: Resurrection hope**

March 23, 2010

## **The Lord has risen (Luke 24:1-8)**

This lesson is about Jesus' resurrection and his following appearance to his followers. The first verses in Luke 24 take place very early in the morning. The night before, I imagine they lay awake all night waiting for the dawn. They longed to see the sun emerge on the horizon.

The women wanted to go to Jesus. They had been at the cross where he was crucified; they had seen Joseph of Arimathea claim his body from Pilate. They had watched Joseph hurriedly wrap his body in linen cloth and then, bury him in a tomb. The women had watched carefully because they wanted to know exactly where his body was placed. They longed to return and give him a proper burial. They thought anointing his body with spices would be their last act of love and devotion for Jesus.

But they had to wait. It was the Sabbath and Jewish law forbid them from working or even grieving for Jesus. For a full day, they had to wait. They could not even speak his name aloud. By law, the Sabbath was a day of honor to God and not even grief was allowed to intervene. So, they waited. But the Gospel of Luke tells us that at the crack of dawn, the moment they could, the women went to the tomb.

## **Doubts can be let go (Luke 24:36-43)**

When the tomb came into view and they saw the stone had been rolled

away, I imagine it stopped them in their tracks. They probably stood holding their breaths for a moment. When their legs began to work again, they went inside and were puzzled by what they saw.

Where could his body be? Thankfully, the mystery quickly was resolved by two figures that appeared engulfed in dazzling light who asked them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen” (Luke 24:5-6).

With those simple words, Scripture lets us know the whole world has changed. Nothing remained the same. The heavenly messengers told the women what they already should have known. Jesus had let them know that this would happen. In fact, the Gospel of Luke records three instances where Jesus tried to plainly spell it out to them.

And he said, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life” (Luke 9:22).

“Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men” (Luke 9:44).

Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, “We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. On the third day, he will rise again” (Luke 18:31-33).

These Scriptures assure us this was God’s plan all along. This was the moment Christ had prepared them for. Through the resurrection, God rectified Jesus’ death and validated all the work Jesus had done while he was here on earth. God raised Jesus from the dead and with that one act everything was changed. Jesus became the bridge whereby humans could

come into relationship with God.

For us, the good news of Easter is that the very same God, who had the power to raise Jesus from the tomb, offers us the chance to be raised from our dead life in sin, into a new life with Christ.

### **Forgiveness is available to all (Luke 24:44-49)**

To receive this new life, we must be willing to admit that left to our own devices, we are inclined toward sin. Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* vividly illustrates these personal consequences of sin through allegory.

In the novel, handsome, young Dorian Gray sits for a portrait of himself. Afterward, he studies the portrait and regrets he will continue to age, while the portrait will stay the same. He thinks, if only the roles could be reversed. Gray gets his wish and remains handsome and youthful while the portrait in the attic begins to grow old.

The unexpected consequence of Gray's wish is that soon the portrait also begins to show signs of his behavior. Gray makes a cruel comment and the portrait's mouth twists into a cruel grin. As anger in his heart toward a rival grows, the eyes of the portrait narrow with rage. Finally, Gray commits murder, and the hands on the portrait drip with blood.

At the end of the book, Gray despises the visible image of his inner character so much he slashes the portrait with a knife. When his servants finally find him, Gray is lying on the floor of the attic with a knife through his heart.

When we hear the story of Dorian Gray, we do not think we would ever be capable of the horrors he did, and truthfully, most of us would never commit murder. But imagine for a moment if our own family portraits

began to visibly reflect our inner thoughts and sinful actions. Surely, with that image in mind, we must admit that when left to our own devices, “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure” (Jeremiah 17:9).

The salvation we are offered through Christ is the act of God in which we are rescued from the consequences of our sin and put in a position to live in a loving relationship with God and with our neighbors.

For the disciples, Jesus’ resurrection took some getting used to. He tried to reassure them. He made sure they understood he was really alive. He let them see and touch him. He asked for some fish to eat. He wanted them to know the world had done its worst to him, but he had come through it and was very much alive.

The women went to the tomb to prepare Jesus’ body for burial. They thought it was over. But they found out their life with Jesus really was just beginning. Ultimately, they were invited along with all those who experience God’s forgiveness to tell others how they can be forgiven too.