

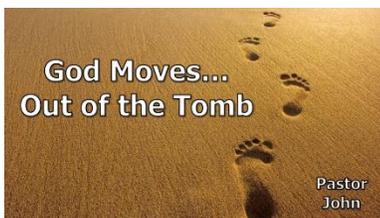
**God Moves... Out of the Tomb**

EASTER

April 21, 2019

Scripture: Luke 24: 1-12

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



A bank opened a new, big building. Another bank, a competitor, sent flowers to congratulate them nonetheless. There was a mix-up at the flower shop and the card that arrived at the new bank's opening read, "with our deepest sympathies". When informed of the error, the florist apologized profusely. It was only later in the day that he realized that at some funeral, a card was opened that read, "Congratulations on your new location"! Let us pray...

Today we come to the first day of the week. Before this little incident at the tomb, the first day of the week for all of Jesus' followers used to be Saturday, the Sabbath. And just to refresh our memories, the women arrive at the tomb early on a Sunday morning because the Sabbath – the day of rest and worship – has ended and they can now come and properly prepare Jesus' body for burial. As such, the women approached tomb with grief and devastation overwhelming their hearts. They were bringing spices and oils to anoint a body – the dead body of their friend and Savior.

Those who opposed Jesus had worked hard to stop Him, to silence His message. They saw man who sparked a movement – a man with power and authority – and knew they had to stop this fledgling movement. Jesus was a threat to their places of authority, to their way of life. The religious leaders worked the system and the Romans played their part, beating and crucifying Jesus. Story over. Move on to the next one who challenges their authority, the next one who tries to gain some followers. The religious leaders took a couple of steps to make sure that the dead stayed dead. They went so far as to roll a big stone over the entrance to the tomb and to have some Roman guards posted there. They feared that Jesus' followers would come and steal the body. These measures would insure that the followers would just fade away and all would return to normal for the religious authorities. They did not know that death would not work – that it would not end the kingdom that Jesus had been building.

*"But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking 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."*  
- Luke 24: 1-3

*"But 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".* The women arrived at the tomb expecting to offer one last act of love and service to Jesus. They would cry and weep as they prepared the body for its eternal rest. They would work slowly, prolonging the final good-bye. But it was not to be so. They found the stone rolled away and when they went in, they found that the body of Jesus was no longer in the tomb. What they did not know was that even death could not stop Jesus, that God was once again on the move amongst them.

*"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..."*  
- Luke 24: 4-5

*"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'".* The

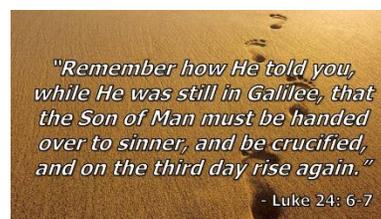
*"Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen".*  
- Luke 24:5

women must have been stunned. They would have left the huddled, scared gathering of followers hiding in

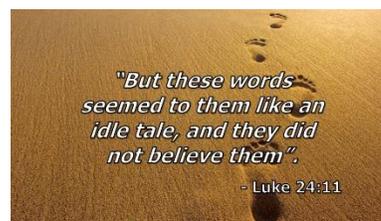
some secret location – the first to venture out since what had happened on Friday. They were bravely going to do what should be done, to do what was proper. And then two men in dazzling clothes – angels – appear. The women are terrified and they bow out of both fear and respect. Then the angels ask the million-dollar question: why do you look for the living among the dead? Well, they are here because this is where the body of Jesus was laid.

Where else would they come to prepare the body? And then the bombshell: He is not here but has risen.

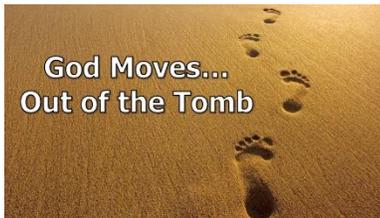
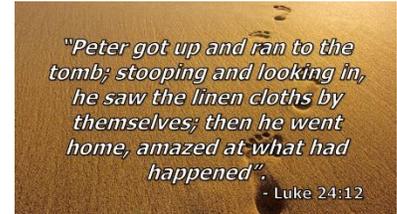
The women came to the tomb expecting to hear a “with our deepest sympathy” message, but instead heard a “congratulations on your new location” message. They were beginning to understand that they followed a Savior who could not be contained by one location or time or place. The angels went on to remind them of what they really already knew. They said to the women, *“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”*. Ah yes, the events of the past few days unfolded just as Jesus Himself had said they would. From here the women left the tomb and returned back and told the apostles and *“all the rest”* that Jesus had risen. He was alive!



The women’s wonderful news pretty much falls on deaf ears. In verse 11 we read, *“But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them”*. The disciples were still mostly in shock. Most of them were still reeling from the stunning events of the past couple days. It is hard to have such wonderful news to share and to have it fall on deaf ears. To me this would feel like walking into our own house, announcing that we had won the \$10 billion lottery, and our spouses and children saying, “that’s nice” before returning to whatever they had been doing.



But one of them heard the news and had to find out for himself. The one who was always acting without thinking, the one who had boasted about never denying Jesus, the one who had denied Jesus three times – he was the one who ran to the tomb. It makes sense that the one who probably feels the most guilt about what has unfolded to be the one who bolts from the room. We read, *"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"*. Peter sees firsthand that the tomb is empty. He is amazed. Peter heads home to consider what this all might mean. Suddenly Peter, the impulsive one, turns introspective as he heads back home.



When we consider Jesus' ministry, what happened at the tomb makes perfect sense. Throughout His ministry Jesus encountered brokenness and went about reversing or healing that brokenness. Where Jesus found sickness, He healed people. Where Jesus found hunger, He fed people. Where He found sin, He brought forgiveness. Where Jesus found death, He brought life. In the gospels we see a Jesus that was over and over moving out into the messiness and brokenness of the world to bring hope and restoration and redemption. This is what the tiles on the table at the back of the sanctuary represent. On Good Friday, we named a sin or struggle and wrote it on a tile. During the offering we were invited to come forward and place the tile in the water, giving that thing up to Jesus, surrendering, asking Him to take it away. By the end of the service the tiles were all clean, made new again, our sins and struggles washed away.

When we turn to the bigger picture of scripture, we too see that God has always been in the business of stopping evil, of bringing wholeness, of defying death, of drawing people to Himself. Healing the hurt that all of the evil of the world had placed upon His Son was the ultimate occasion to prove that mission. As God accomplished this mission, raising Jesus from the dead, it makes perfect sense that Jesus would continue to move out from the tomb and into the world.

In the continuing story in the gospel of Luke, he wastes no time demonstrating how Jesus gets on with the mission. The story in Luke 24 continues with what is known as the "Walk to Emmaus" passage. The risen Savior moves on to the Emmaus road. Starting in verse 13 we see that Jesus is on the move again, walking once again with His followers. Along the road Jesus finds two disciples who are broken by their grief, confused and hurting and lost. In the story that unfolds in verses 13 through 35, Jesus teaches them and walks alongside them on their journey of faith. Towards the end of this passage, when Jesus breaks the bread, they realize that it is Jesus who is there with them. Cleopas and the other disciple run back to Jerusalem to tell growing story – He is alive!

As the New Testament story continues to unfold, Jesus remains on the move, appearing to many people, teaching them and calling them to continue the building of the kingdom. Before ascending into heaven, Jesus promises the gift of the Holy Spirit. This indwelling spirit is the continued presence of Jesus in each of the disciples' lives. The Holy Spirit became and continues to be one of the ways that Jesus still moves in the world. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of all believers keeps us constantly connected to our Lord and Savior,

Jesus Christ. Today's passage – the empty tomb and the stone that was rolled away – is just the first instance of the Savior breaking the chains of sin and death to move His followers.

When we encounter hurt and brokenness in the world, it is the power of the Holy Spirit in us that leads us to reach out to be the physical hands and feet of Jesus in the world. When we act as the hands and feet of Jesus to the one in need, we are sharing the love of Jesus with the other. When we ourselves feel stuck, trapped in our sin, when it is our past that challenges us, when grief and pain seem overwhelming, Jesus remains on the move. The Spirit once again goes to work in us, bringing us the conviction that leads to repentance and back into right relationship. Jesus continues to move in and through us – bringing healing and restoration, new hopes, new dreams, and new life. Jesus is alive - moving in our world and in our lives. Hallelujah! Jesus has risen!! Jesus is alive!! Amen and amen.

### **GPS – Grow, Pray, Serve**

- 1) Grow. Easter reminds us that we too are resurrection people. How can your understanding of this truth help to deepen your faith?
- 2) Pray. Where do you most need Jesus to move in your life? Spend some time in reflection and then turn to the Savior in prayer.
- 3) Serve. We are called to be the hands and feet of Jesus in the world. Who or where can you serve this week to share Jesus' light and love?