

3.31.24 Easter**Remember****Luke 24.1-11****Doug Scalise, Brewster Baptist Church**

Has anyone ever asked you to remember something? When we're students in school we're supposed to remember a lot of things to learn different subjects and we get tested on what we remember. Remembering is important in life. Did you remember to pick up the kids from school? Did you remember to take the dog out before you left the house? Did you remember to take dinner out of the oven? Did you remember to turn off the iron? Did you remember your keys, wallet, and phone? There are some things it's important to remember, and other things we don't remember. No one remembers phone numbers anymore. I remember some of my childhood friends' phone numbers 50 years later because I called them so many times, but I don't know the numbers of many close friends today because my phone does it for me.

What if someone told you something important, not once, not twice, but three times, do you think you'd remember it? Even if you were under a great deal of emotional stress, like at a time when someone you loved had died? The Easter story begins with people going to a tomb to grieve and **remember** a loved one who has died. For some of us, including myself, this is the first Easter since a member of our family, or a dear friend has died. There are moments that lead us to **remember** our loved ones that are unique for each of us. Because my dad loved baseball and this past Thursday was Opening Day of the baseball season, my emotions have been closer to the surface this week because my dad and I talked about baseball so much. Especially with the Red Sox opening their season in Seattle where my dad lived the last thirteen years of his life, I got a bit emotional thinking about Jill and I being in Seattle five years ago when the Red Sox also began the season playing the Mariners and we visited with my dad and his wife and went to games together. If someone you love has died since last Easter, what causes you to **remember them**?

This year, **Remembering Our Past** is one aspect of celebrating our church's Bicentennial. It's important to remember what God has done in and through the people of this church and all the love, faithfulness, service, and generosity of the generations

that preceded us here at BBC. **To remember means to become aware of again; to bring back to one's consciousness; to recall or retain in one's conscious mind.**

Have you noticed that it's hard to forget what's less than useless to remember, like commercials. *"I could have had a V-8!"* **It's hard to forget what's less than useless to remember, and it's easy to forget what's crucial to remember. Psalm 105:5** says about God, ***"Remember the wonderful works he has done."***

The word **remember** is important in Luke's Gospel and it's at the center of his Easter story, especially **remembering Jesus** and his words. Listen to **Luke 24:1-11**.

"But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, **they** came to **the tomb**, taking the spices that they had prepared. ² They found the stone rolled away from **the tomb**, ³ but when they went in, they did not find the body. ⁴ While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. ⁵ **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."*** ⁶ **Remember** how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷ that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." ⁸ **Then they remembered his words**, ⁹ and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰ Now it was **Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women** with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹ But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them." Luke 24:1-11

In Luke's description of the first Easter Sunday the person many of us expect to see, Jesus, never appears. Luke's account begins with the women who had accompanied Jesus from Galilee coming to the tomb. Jesus, their friend, teacher, and leader had just died a terrible death. None of the women foresees what's going to happen. At the end of **Luke 23:55-56a** it says, *"The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid."* ⁵⁶ **Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment."** *They returned, and prepared spices and ointments.* The women are coming to tend to Jesus' dead body. For them, the empty tomb isn't expected – it's **a surprise**.

Luke says God sends two messengers in dazzling clothes in response to the women's lack of understanding at seeing the empty tomb. An empty tomb simply means the body isn't there; that alone isn't a convincing argument for resurrection. The women at the tomb - Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James were all part of the group who followed Jesus from Galilee. They heard Jesus speak, but it's clear from their response that they didn't expect anything unusual to happen at the tomb. It's one thing to love or admire Jesus for who he is and what he does. It's another **to remember and believe what he said** – including what he taught about living as his follower, and what he said about himself, ***“that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.”***

In the face of pain, suffering, loss, and the reality of evil, which the women were coping with that morning, we can **remember the bad that has happened and doubt, or we can remember the good and believe. Easter encourages us to remember and believe.** Like the women at the tomb, you may admire Jesus at some level, but some event, some personal tragedy or evil may cause us not to remember what he said or not to believe his words. A disease or illness strikes a member of our family and our loved one dies. There's an accident. Someone gets into trouble because of alcohol or drugs and spends time in prison. A job is lost. We're unable to manage our finances. A family is fractured. Our prayers seem to go unanswered. The reality of our own mortality becomes clearer each day, and it frightens or depresses us. Events such as these can cause us to forget and doubt what Jesus said about faith or trust or God being with us or God's love for us, or even God's power to overcome death and raise Jesus from the dead. This seems to be what happened to Mary and Joanna and the other women.

When the women enter the tomb, and find it empty, none of them is portrayed as remembering what Jesus had said about rising from the dead. Mary didn't say, *“Joanna, do you remember the Lord saying something about rising from the dead?”* Joanna didn't reply, *“Yes, I seem to remember him mentioning that once or twice, but he was kind of brief about it.”* While they're perplexed and wondering, God sends two messengers with the explanation. **Luke believes this is the way God works. In Luke's Gospel, God sent a messenger to Mary before she married Joseph and explained she was going to**

have a son. God sent messengers to shepherds the night Jesus was born so people would know who this child was to become. Now that Jesus has taught about living as children of God, healed, preached, and died on the cross, God sends messengers again to explain what's taking place.

It isn't a surprise that the apostles don't believe the women's words, even though the women are known and respected. Mary Magdalene and Joanna were both listed by Luke (8:2-3) among the women who followed Jesus and who selflessly and generously served Jesus and the apostles. Together they related something to the other disciples that they personally experienced yet regardless of their credibility, the disciples had difficulty believing them. Would we have responded any differently? Any of us who have stood in a cemetery and said goodbye to a loved one as final words of faith and prayer were said would react with similar disbelief if friends were to come banging on our door a day or so later breathlessly announcing that our loved one was not dead, not in the tomb, but had risen.

All four Gospels report the discovery of the empty tomb and the presence of doubt among the disciples. What's most distinctive in Luke's account is the announcement of the two messengers in verses 5-7. ***“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.”*** The key word to remember is **“Remember.”** Passover, which Jesus, and his fellow Jews came to Jerusalem to celebrate, is a holy day of *remembering* what God had done in the delivering the people from enslavement in Egypt. Luke's account of the Last Supper states (22:19-20), Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, *“This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”* 20 And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.” Luke is the only Gospel that includes the phrase, ***“Do this in remembrance of me.”***

It's often when we fail to remember and we forget the Lord and what God has done and told us to do that we get in trouble. Judges 8:34 says, *"The Israelites **did not remember** the Lord their God, who had rescued them from the hand of their enemies on every side."* The night of Jesus' arrest, after he shared the Passover meal with his disciples, Peter said he was ready to go with Jesus even to prison and death. Jesus told Peter he would deny knowing him three times that very night. After Peter denied the Lord the third time, the cock crowed, the Lord turned and looked at Peter (Luke 22:61-62), *"Then Peter **remembered** the word of the Lord...and he went out and wept bitterly."*

It's in Luke's Gospel (23:42-43) that the penitent thief on the cross says to the Lord, *"**Jesus, remember me** when you come into your kingdom."* Jesus replied, *"Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."* **Luke is telling us remembering is important to Holy Week, the Easter story, and being a disciple of Jesus.** How painful is it when we forget the word of the Lord and what God has done for us and said to us? What difference does it make? In Judges, the Israelites were overcome by their enemies; Peter wept in shame and self-loathing; the women at the tomb were shocked and surprised: **all because they did not remember the word of the Lord.**

The ability to remember is such a defining and vital part of who we are as human beings, that's why Alzheimer's disease or any affliction that robs a person of the ability to remember is so painful and heartbreaking. Yet even if our memory or the memory of our loved one may fail, we stand on the promise that **though we may forget those around us, our loving God will always remember us.** In Matthew 28:20, the resurrected Jesus promises all who choose to follow him, *"**Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.**"* Even if you're physically unable to remember the Lord Jesus, the Lord Jesus will never forget you; he will remain faithful to you. In **2 Timothy 2:8-12a**, the apostle Paul writes *"**Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendent of David – that is my gospel...The saying is sure: If we have died with him, we will also live with him.**"*

Jesus didn't die and rise for perfect people who had life all figured out. Jesus died and rose for the people who would betray him, ignore his word, forget his

promises, and doubt his messengers. Jesus died for the people who put him to death. Jesus rose for people whose minds rejected the idea of a resurrection. If Jesus died and rose for all these kinds of people, he did it for you and me too.

As we celebrate Easter our hope is not just that Christ died and rose again – our hope is that one day those of us who trust in Jesus will rise again after we die. If you're truly trying to live as Jesus would if he were living your life, it will make you a better family member, a better friend, and it will bring you joy, peace, and contentment. We don't follow Jesus just for what he can do for us when we die, but when you do find yourself standing before God or a heavenly gatekeeper asking why you should be allowed in, **remember** the experience of the penitent thief on the cross. He didn't know anything about faith alone, he may not have known a single Bible verse, he wasn't baptized, he hadn't devoted himself to helping others, he was a convicted criminal. He couldn't say, *"I had faith, I believed, I was good, I deserve."* The only thing he had going for him was the man on the middle cross said he could come. That's the best answer for all of us. The man on the middle cross said I could come. ***"Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."***

Being a follower of Jesus means **believing and remembering** that out of death can come new life. My prayer for all of us this Easter is that as we celebrate the **empty** tomb, our minds will be **full** of the words of the Lord, that we will **remember** Jesus and what he said and make our relationship with him a priority throughout the year; that we will **believe** Jesus is not dead, but is alive today and that makes all the difference in the world. Easter is a day to **remember** the word of the Lord.

Albert Einstein said, *"There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle."* That's a significant part of the Easter message. How are you going to live your life? As if nothing is a miracle; or as if everything is a miracle? What will you remember? What will you do about what you remember? Place your trust in Jesus and seek to live as his follower. Remember and believe. Don't ***"look for the living among the dead. He is not here, but has risen!"***

Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. Imagine yourself accompanying the group of women going to the place of Jesus' burial. What do you think you'd be feeling, thinking, and talking about on the way?
2. How do you think you'd respond walking into a tomb at dawn and not seeing the body of your loved one as you expect, but rather two men in dazzling clothes? How do the women respond?
3. What do the men in dazzling clothes tell the women to remember?
4. Why is remembering the words of Jesus important for the women at the tomb and for us? Why do you think remembering is so important in Luke's Gospel?
5. The women who are named in Luke 24, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, had been with Jesus since he was in Galilee and were well known to the apostles. Why do you think the apostles didn't believe them? Do you think you would have? Why or why not?
6. Based on all that takes place in Luke 24:1-11, what does this passage call and challenge us to do as Christ followers today?