

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Resurrection of our Lord - Year C

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Isaiah 65:17-25

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

Acts 10:34-43

Luke 24:1-12

04/21/2019

### Gospel

The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke:

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

The Gospel of our Lord

### **Prayer**

Christ is Risen! He is Risen indeed, Alleluia, Amen

### **An Empty Grave**

Good morning! As many of you know, I love cars. And what I love about cars is the speed, so it makes sense that I've always liked auto racing. Now, I'm not talking about Nascar, I'm talking about circuit racing that makes turns in BOTH directions. The sad reality of auto racing is that it's a dangerous sport. The Brickyard, Indianapolis Motor Speedway has claimed the lives of 57 drivers through out the years.<sup>1</sup> The early days of motorsports were especially dangerous. In an attempt to develop a lighter car, a Formula One car was made entirely of magnesium, which is flammable, and not possible to extinguish. In 1955 we had what is now called the "1955 Le Mans Disaster." A major crash of the cars racing caused debris to fly into the crowd, killing 83 spectators and injuring 180 more. In fact, Mercedes Benz pulled out of racing because of the incident until 1989.<sup>2</sup> Jackie Stewart, one of the all time best drivers, was instrumental in helping to push for more safety regulations in the sport. Things were so bad in the 60's that Jackie taped a wrench to his steering wheel so he could get out if he crashed. Race

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<sup>1</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Driver\\_deaths\\_in\\_motorsport](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Driver_deaths_in_motorsport)

<sup>2</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1955\\_Le\\_Mans\\_disaster](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1955_Le_Mans_disaster)

Marshalls were poorly trained, and ambulances were too few and far between. Between 1963 and 1973 Jackie Stewart lost 57 of his friends to crashes.<sup>3</sup> Things got a little better, but by the late 1980's and early 1990's the speed of Formula One cars had increased and on one weekend in 1994 at the same track we saw Roland Ratzenberger die during qualifying and my all-time favorite driver, Ayrton Senna, who is considered by most to be the greatest driver of all time, die during the race the next day. Like I said, it's not a sport to be taken lightly, many Americans still remember the crash that claimed the life of Dale Earnhardt Sr. We saw something horrifying in a practice at the Chinese Grand Prix in 2010 when Sebastien Buemi came down the main straight at 198 mph, hit his brakes, and watched the front end explode as the suspension failed and both front wheels broke off. He kept going, crashing into the wall. But miraculously, he walked away completely fine.<sup>4</sup> In a crash that would have killed the driver 20 years before, he walked away unharmed! It messes with your brain, you see all the signs of death, only to be surprised by life.

This is just a glimmer of the surprise that would have swept up the women at the tomb who found it empty. The story seems pedestrian to us now, we've been telling this tale every Sunday for the past 2,000 years, so we forgot just how amazing it is! The women and the disciples have just lost the person that they had put all their faith and belief in, they watched him change the world with healings, miracles, and teachings, and three days ago they watched him die brutally. I cannot stress it enough, but they had no more hope. They arrive early on that fateful morning to finish the burial customs, to

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<sup>3</sup><https://www.roadandtrack.com/motorsports/news/a29613/the-golden-age-of-f1-was-also-its-deadliest/>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwoCLiyzdgU>

wrap the body and grieve. Nancy Claire Pittman does a good job of capturing the moment the women discover the tomb and bow in fear to the figure they discover: *“In the face of totally unexpected mystery that confronts them... the stone rolled away from the doorway, the body of their teacher gone, the appearance of two strangely bright men — all these things cannot help but elicit their terrified awe. Yet we who are accustomed to this story, who are used to thinking of Jesus as our good buddy... hardly linger at the dreadful silence of these women with their faces in the dirt. Our efforts to tame the holy inure us to their fear... God’s ways are not our ways. They are beyond human comprehension; they subvert what we expect; they demand the impossible. They are holy precisely because they are not of our own making.”*<sup>5</sup>

God’s ways demand the impossible... I think that’s the lesson for us today. It’s now been officially three years since we all met, and I promise you, God has impossible expectations and plans for this congregation, we just need to stop looking for the living among the dead. Pittman continues: *“The words of the unworldly messengers are a challenge to stop hanging on to the dead and to move into new life. They are reminders that the Holy One dwells wherever new life bursts forth.”*<sup>6</sup>

I’ll be honest folks, I’m tired of Christians everywhere lamenting and complaining. The amount of times I’ve heard people talk about the “glory days” of the church, and how things just aren’t the same... Stop looking for the living among the dead! In Isaiah we hear God telling us *“Behold! I am about to do a new thing; now it*

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<sup>5</sup>Bartlett, David L., and Barbara B. Taylor. *Feasting on the Word Year C, Volume 2*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008. p. 351.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

*springs forth, do you not perceive it?*<sup>7</sup> We need to let go of the past, we need to let go of the fear that our best days are behind us. The church is stronger now than it's ever been, not because of anything we've done or not done, but because God has always been in control.

Stop looking for the living among the dead. *"He is not here, but has risen."* "Christendom" has fallen, if it was ever really a thing in the first place. Do you know what this means? God has made the impossible possible! The future of the church is safely in God's hands and in the face of that reality we should probably do the same thing that the women at the tomb did, fall to the ground in terror. You know why? Because if it's up to us, we'll most certainly mess it up, we'll think too small, and we'll never reach our full potential. We'll operate out of our scarcity, thinking of our limits, never seeing the big picture. But with God in charge, MY GOD! Quite literally! Anything could happen. There is no limit to what might happen! Out of scarcity we'll see God's abundance, instead of limitations we'll see only opportunities, nothing will be too big! All because of a man who died on the cross, who was laid to rest, and who three days later had risen from the dead.

This is the day that the Lord has made. You know what I love about the Gospel lesson today? Jesus doesn't even show up. The tomb is empty, he's gone! It's like he couldn't wait to get back to work, Jesus is off doing the ministry that God has entrusted to him. He doesn't have time to wait for us, Jesus has things to do! God has amazing plans for St. Paul's, are you ready to go and see what they are? Christ is Risen! He is Risen indeed! Alleluia, Amen.

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<sup>7</sup> Isaiah 43:19 NRSV