

Luke 24:1-12
St. Andrew's, Nogales

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Alleluia! Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Today we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sins, and not only us as individuals, but of us as communities, as nations, and as the people of the whole world.

We don't know how Jesus' resurrection happened, we just know that it did. We know because of the many accounts of the resurrection we find in the gospels, starting with the women who go to the tomb and find it empty.

All of the Gospel writers agree that it was the women who first went to the tomb, although each gospel has a slightly different list of how many women went and who exactly they were.

The Gospel of Luke tells us what happened on that incredible morning this way. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and some other women went to the tomb and found it empty. Two men in dazzling clothes appeared to them and told them Jesus had risen. They returned from the tomb and told the eleven remaining disciples and the others who were with them about what had happened, but they did not believe them. However, Peter ran to the tomb and returned confirming their story.

And then we have the accounts of the men, who went to double check, of course, including Peter and another disciple, according to the Gospel of John.

And as these men and women told others the word began to quickly spread that Jesus had risen from the dead.

And then, even more exciting, we have a number of eyewitness accounts of people who saw Jesus following his resurrection.

These accounts of Jesus' appearances include that of Cleopas and another man who met and walked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus

and then ate with him. Jesus also appeared to his disciples twice in the upper room, another time while they were eating together, again on a mountain in Galilee, and at the Sea of Tiberius where they ate a catch of fish with him.

The writer of the Gospel of John sums it up this way, “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book, but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.”

Can we post scientific revolution people of the 21st century explain how Jesus’ resurrection happened? No! We have no scientific explanation of it, although many attempts have been made throughout the centuries.

But here’s the one thing we must always remember. Are you listening? Here’s the important point: If Jesus’ resurrection hadn’t happened, we would not be gathered here today to celebrate his life..

If Jesus’ had not been resurrected from the dead he would most likely have been counted as an ordinary criminal like those who died on the crosses near him. Or perhaps he might have been remembered for a time as a leader of a failed insurrection against Roman authority. And his name would most likely have been lost to history a long, long time ago.

But Jesus died on the cross, was three days in the tomb, and then was resurrected from the dead. Many eyewitnesses found the encounters with him so powerful that they could hardly contain themselves and began to tell his story to others saw him.

And we’ve been telling the story of Jesus ever since.

And Jesus continues to be present with us today. Many of you here this morning have shared your stories of Jesus being present with you.

Let’s listen a minute to the words of the Apostle Peter as recorded in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, which was also written by the

author of the Gospel of Luke. You may remember that traveled to many regions of the Mediterranean world to tell the story of Jesus to Jews and non-Jews alike. Peter helped to establish the church in Antioch and then preached in places throughout what is modern day Turkey, and, then he eventually ended up in Rome.

Peter said: “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ--he is Lord of all....They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear...to us who were chosen as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead....everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

Peter, Paul and other early apostles preached that the Good News of Jesus is meant for all people, no matter who they are. The message they preached is for every one of us here today, even those of you who may have been reluctantly dragged along by family members this morning.

But here is my last point. We Christians do not own the resurrected Jesus. As Alexander McKelway says, Jesus Christ “lives as God lives—free from any constraints or limits we might set to his work of salvation. The church witnesses to that grace, but neither the church, nor its scriptures, nor its confessions can contain, control or own it.”

We Christians do not control God’s saving grace. We can only be thankful for it.

This is what we do know:

Jesus makes all the difference in our lives. Our sins are forgiven and our lives are forever changed. Jesus gives us new life. Jesus gives us hope for the future.

Alleluia! Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Amen.