



Saint Thomas Church Fifth Avenue
in the City of New York

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Sunday, March 28, 2010

The Sunday of the Resurrection: Easter Day

*Solemn Eucharist
at 8am and 11am*

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A Sermon by
The Reverend Andrew C. Mead, Rector
on
Saint Luke 24:1-12

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EASTER DAY 2010

“Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen.” St. Luke 24:1-12

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

In the Name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. Amen.

The women who came to the tomb very early in the morning on that first Easter were expecting to finish the embalming of Jesus' body. Jesus had died on Friday afternoon. His body had to be hastily wrapped in linen and buried because of the onset of the Sabbath at sundown Friday. The women, like all Jews, rested according to the Commandment from sundown Friday through sundown Saturday.

Bringing embalming spices with them, the women did not find what they expected. They did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

However, the women did find what they were not expecting: First of all, they found the stone rolled away from the opening of the tomb. Second, two “men” were standing by them in shining garments. Afraid, the women bowed their faces down to the ground, and the men (angels) spoke these words, “Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and crucified, and on the third day rise.” Jesus had said these things to his disciples several times, but either the disciples did not want to hear them, or did not understand them. Now the women, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and others, remembered.

The women reported all this to the apostles, who thought it was “an idle tale” and did not believe them. But Peter, to whom Jesus had particularly predicted his death and resurrection on the third day, ran to the tomb, stooped and looked in, and saw the linen cloths lying by themselves. He went home and wondered what had happened.

There would be no Church, no Christianity, without the Resurrection of Jesus. Yet ever since Peter, people have been wondering, amazed, or even put off by it. From the first there have been attempts to explain it away, to modify, to soften it. It is the *spiritual physicality* of Christ's resurrection that knocks people back on their heels. The Resurrection was not the revival of a corpse back to life, back into this life of space and time, back into a life that still must die again. Nor was the Resurrection a ghost story. Nor was Jesus' life after his death a matter of his immortal soul living on, surviving the destruction of his flesh. Nor was the Resurrection a public relations project, a pious fraud of his followers, determined that his message and mission should continue beyond his tragic end. All these explanations, and more, are notions that we can get our arms around.

The Resurrection does not fit into our notions. The risen Lord was not impeded by space or time, by such things as locked doors. He revealed himself, awesomely present, manifesting life from an entirely new dimension, in a new world. He ate and drank several times with the disciples. He showed them the wounds in his hands and side. He breathed the Holy Spirit, the power of his Father, upon them. He vanished when his meetings with them were finished.

That Good News created the Church, not the other way around. Christ's Resurrection surged through the Church like an electric charge: to Mary Magdalene and the women, to Peter and the apostles, including Thomas a week later. To James the Lord's brother and to his mother Mary. To as many as 500 disciples at one time. Finally, Christ revealed himself to Paul, the persecutor of the Church, who wrote, "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ." Paul went on to say that what happened to Jesus is the "first fruits" of what will in the end happen to us all in the resurrection: "What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body." (I Cor 15:1-58)

Welcome to the festival of eternal life! What happened in Jesus Christ is a gift for all who love his appearing and put their trust in him. The fact that Jesus Christ is risen is hope not only for the other side of death, but for this side as well. Our life is hid with Christ in God! We need not fear the grave, and have reason to get up gladly every morning. Each day, this day, is made by the Lord for us to live and do his will. This is the Day which the Lord hath made: let us rejoice and be glad in it!

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

In the Name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. Amen.