

Sunday's Sermon

The Resurrection of Our Lord

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

250 Fox Hill Road ■ Hampton, Virginia 23669

April 20, 2025

The Reverend David E. Fox

Resurrection of Our Lord (Year C) 2025

Luke 24.1-12

Hallelujah! Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen, indeed! Hallelujah!

Jesus Christ is risen from the dead! The tomb is empty! Because Christ lives, we too can live! And now, I could just go and sit down and all would be well, the Good News has been proclaimed, and we get to beat the Baptist to lunch. Amen? Amen.

The music, the flowers, the paraments, the vibrant colors in your clothing, the crowd of people, the sacrament, the Scripture readings all tell us the Good News that Jesus Christ is Risen and so there is not much I can say to make this day anymore grand. But if I were to do a sermon on this day, I think the theme would be: Jesus Christ is risen, and now what does that mean for us today?

And, only hypothetically, if I were to do a sermon that pointed to Jesus on this day that is so full of the Good News of Jesus' resurrection, I would begin by recapping the story from the gospel, adding a few notes here and there and it would sound something like this:

It was an early Sunday morning, and a group of women came to the tomb, where Jesus was placed after he had died. They were bringing spices to the tomb, for the dead body they were expecting to see, in order to do a first century embalming. The spices for the embalming were usually bought and brought by the family. So, the fact that this group of women bring these spices to the tomb, is a sign for us that they considered themselves a part of Jesus' family – the same is true for Joseph of Arimathea, who donated the tomb where Jesus' body was laid.

When the women reached the tomb, the stone was already rolled away. It's important to note that in Luke, this is the first the stone has even been mentioned. Fred Craddock raises the question, "Is the stone rolled away from the tomb for Jesus to get out or for the group of women to get in?"

Two angels are waiting for the women to ask, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" They go on to say, "He is not here, but has risen. [Remember.] 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." After the angels pointed this out to the women, they did remember.

So, they went to tell the eleven disciples, that is the twelve minus Judas; but the disciples had obviously not remembered, because they called the women's story an idle tale. An idle tale. If we go back to the original writing, this translates into a harsher word – calling the women delusional.

This remembering that these messengers callout for the women to do grabs my attention. The Greek word is not the same as just remembering a date on your calendar. This remembering is a connection of the past that has become part of one's life in the present. They didn't just remember Jesus' words, they remembered things about Jesus and things that he did. They remembered Jesus in his entirety. In their remembering they recognized that Jesus was still a part of them, there and then. This remembering is more than just "thinking about," rather it is a "re-presenting" of the historical events of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, so that we, in the present, may also participate.

These women do more than just recognize that Jesus had been raised from the dead. They also go to work re-presenting and representing Jesus, through words and deeds. Because these women were empowered by the risen Jesus to re-present and represent him, others began to do the same. We too can join in the re-presenting and representing Jesus to the world, by not only retelling the story, but also by living into that story of the risen Jesus, his victory over death, and of his unconditional love.

Yes, I would say all of that, but like I said before everything that is happening today already points to the risen Jesus and there's not much more I can say to make this day anymore grand.

Just thinking out loud here, if I were to go on in that sermon, I would stress the importance of re-presenting Jesus to the world. I would say something like this:

Jesus Christ is risen and alive! Therefore, we get to re-present him to the world, because the risen Jesus lives in each of us, and we the church are the body of Christ – the hands and feet of Jesus in this world.

It is important that we are re-presenting Jesus in a correct manner. We, Christians, have made Jesus, as Father Richard Rhor says, "into a churchy icon that any priestly or controlling establishment could gather around without even blushingⁱ." We have not remembered that Jesus "comes as a homeless baby in a poor family, then a refugee in a foreign country, then an invisible carpenter in his own country which is colonized and occupied by an imperial power, ending as a "criminal," accused and tortured by heads of both systems of power, temple and empire, abandoned by most of his inner circle, subjected to the death penalty by a most humiliating and bizarre public ritual, and finally buried quickly in an unmarked graveⁱⁱ."

This is the Jesus that we are called to re-present: the Jesus who said blessed are the poor and blessed are the meek; the Jesus who said love the Lord your God with all you heart, with your soul and with all your mind; and love your neighbor as yourself; the Jesus who said, "Love your enemies;" the Jesus who forgave the sinful woman; the Jesus who said, "just as you did it or did not do it to one of the least of these you have done it or not done it to me;" the Jesus who hung out

with the outcasts; the Jesus who healed the sick, even if they were considered “unclean;” this is the Jesus that we all know through Holy Scripture; and this is who we are to re-present to the world.

Yes, if I were going to preach a sermon on this day that so fully points to the risen Jesus, I would share some concrete ways of how we can go about re-presenting our risen savior, by saying something along these lines:

Sisters and brothers, we have nothing to fear, not even death itself. Why? Because Jesus paid it all. Christ, through his death and resurrection has empowered us to live without any fears; and that life that we are to live is to be one of service to others. The risen Christ is calling us to serve the homeless, even if that makes us uncomfortable. Our risen Savior is empowering us to feed the hungry, even if it means that we have to sacrifice our time and resources to do so. The resurrected Jesus is telling us to take a bold step in re-presenting Jesus to the world and to our community.

People of Gloria Dei, here is where the rubber meets the road – we have nothing to fear, not our image, not our reputation, not our wellbeing, not even our deaths; and with nothing to fear we should want to be a daring and passionate people that point the world to Jesus. It is time that we quit talking about wanting to do great things and to just do the great things.

It’s time those of us who aren’t involved with anything to start asking the question, “How can I better re-present the risen Jesus?” Jesus is calling all of us into something new, something exciting, something that is life-giving. It’s time that we stop saying, “I wish my church did this or that;” and start being a people who creatively work together to make this place full of life, risen life, life in Christ Jesus.

There are so many of us that want to jump in and start living this Risen Christ life. Just jump. Start showing up every Sunday. If you’re running late, we’ve got you covered there is cereal here and plenty of coffee or tea. Afraid your kids are making too much noise? We believe that to be the sound of life in our congregation. There are many a people here who would love to give you a helping hand if you want it or need it. Sign up for one thing that’s in our announcements – just one – truly for Vacation Bible School we would welcome a smiling face and your willingness to serve our one-hundred Vacation-Bible-Schoolers. Don’t feel like you know anybody? Come and have a cup of coffee before or after worship – we can have light conversations about whether banana bread should have nuts or not and whether a chocolate milk shake should be made with vanilla or chocolate ice cream – that has literally been the conversations the past two weeks.

Look folks, this is a beautiful community of faith – and as its pastor, I want all of you, even those of you who just decided to give us a try today for Easter, I want all of you to have the opportunity to experience the Risen Jesus through the ministries of Gloria Dei.

Oh man, if I were to preach that sermon for today, I might inspire this congregation to do some electrifying ministry. But again there is no need for me to say anything, because everything about today, points to the risen Jesus. However, if I were to tie everything together in that sermon conjecturally I would say something along these lines:

Brothers and sisters, when the women entered the tomb, the angels asked them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead?” It’s time that we stop focusing on the tomb and the folded cloths; and start focusing on the risen Jesus who is with the poor, the hungry, the oppressed, the orphans, the widows, the children, the lost, and the forgotten. Church, it’s time that we start looking for the living among the living. It’s time that we start re-presenting Jesus the way Jesus presented himself.

And of course if I were to preach a sermon on this day that is so full of the message of Jesus’ resurrection, I would close with these words: Hallelujah! Christ Is Risen! He is Risen, indeed! Hallelujah!

Like I said, there’s no need for a sermon, so I’m just going to sit down and let the celebration of this day do all of the talking.

ⁱ Center for Action Completion, Richard Rhor’s Daily Medidation 3.23.2016.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.