

**Remnant Life Church**  
040923  
Resurrection Sunday  
“The Power of an Empty Tomb”  
I Corinthians 15:1-14

Tombs can tell us a great deal about the person who occupies them

- Tombstones are often used to provide information about the individual although the cost of them today restrict it primarily to the dates of birth and death
- Archaeologists will tell you that perhaps the greatest tomb discovery was that of King Tut in Egypt.
  - On November 4, 1922, after 10 years of searching, a British Egyptologist named Howard Carter uncovered the tomb of a pharaoh that had been sealed for 3200 years
  - It began by his uncovering just one step that led to a staircase that led to a sealed door
    - King Tutankhamen was the 13<sup>th</sup> pharaoh of the eighteenth dynasty at the beginning of what became known as the New Kingdom
    - He only ruled from 1332-1324 BC beginning at the age of 8 or 9
    - Only a teenager when he died and by all accounts suffering from severe physical disfigurements, still there so much wealth in the tomb it took nearly 2 months to get the treasures out and nearly a decade to catalogue it all
- Yet the most important tomb in all of human history contained no treasure
  - There was no elaborate tombstone or statue
  - There was no grand ornate sarcophagus to hold His body
- It was nothing more than a cave prepared so that the body could lie inside with a large stone blocking the entrance
  - There were only a handful of people who knew its location and even they would have been stopped from approaching it because guards had been placed around it
- And for the later part of day, a full day, and the early morning hours of a third, nothing happened
  - But sometime in that morning, something changed - in fact everything change
  - For the power of God brushed death aside and Jesus was resurrected

Yet there were those then, as there are still today, who insist that the resurrection never happened

- Today, even the most skeptical and devout nonbelievers will admit – begrudgingly - that yes, Jesus was a historical figure who lived in the region of Galilee around the Lake of Tiberias also known as Kinneret in the earliest part of the first-century.
  - His time on earth, albeit brief by any standards of aging, is well documented
  - But surely no thinking, rational, level-headed person believes the story of his resurrection
- And so, several theories were put forth to reconcile the accounts of Jesus reportedly seen alive after having been crucified

One of those was that Jesus did not really die on the cross rather He had passed out – this became known as the Swoon Theory

- Forensic pathologists and medical examiners both secular and Christian have many times been asked to examine the physiological impact of the Roman crucifixion on the human body and was it possible to survive.
- Across the board in every case the answer has been the same – NO, no one survived a crucifixion as described in the Gospels
  - And in the case of Jesus the evidence is even stronger
  - First, he was beaten nearly to the point of death prior to the crucifixion
    - The loss of blood and the trauma inflicted caused Him to stumble unable to bear the weight of the cross beam he was forced to carry to Golgotha
  - Second, it was a common practice for the condemned to be only tied to the cross
    - While it was less painful initially, it also prolonged the process where the individual may hang for days instead of hours before death
    - No – Jesus was nailed through his wrists and his feet with a spike between 6 and 10 inches in length
  - Finally, a spear was driven into the side of Jesus to confirm his death
    - The spear pierced likely between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> rib into the pericardial sac surrounding the heart
    - This is why the Bible says blood and water flowed from the wound
- There is no question that when Jesus was taken down from the cross, He was dead

But one of the most prevalent theories of how Jesus could have been seen by so many following the crucifixion was that those who came to the tomb and found it empty went to the wrong tomb

- This is also just as unlikely
  - That would mean that Joseph did not know where his own tomb was located
  - And those who followed him, specifically those closest to Jesus, including Mary, Martha, and Mary Magdalene would have forgotten, in less than 2 days, the most impactful and important thing they had ever witnessed
  - And if this had, in fact been true, the Romans and Jewish priests could have squashed the rumors of Jesus alive by simply pointing out that they had the real tomb, undisturbed, still under guard

Virtually unthinkable - Peter was able to stand 40 days later in Jerusalem and proclaim the absolute truth and reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ ([Acts 2:14-40](#))

- The Apostle Paul could write of Jesus appearing to over 500 people and even challenged the reader of the day, if they did not believe him, to go and speak to those who were there ([I Cor 15:6](#))
- Each of the disciples would spend the rest of their lives travelling and preaching a risen Jesus Christ
- Then they each retired comfortably satisfied they had fulfilled their purpose...
  - No, they did not!
  - They endured great hardships as evidenced by what we read Paul experienced as the first great missionary

- And every one of them with the exception of John were martyred – some in very horrific ways
- Would they have endured all of that for something they knew to be a lie?

And there are scholars who set out to disprove the truth of the resurrection only to have their hearts and minds take an unexpected turn.

- Josh McDowell, a man who as an agnostic was pursuing legal studies to enter politics, set out to publish an academic paper that would disprove Christianity through historical evidence.
  - He was later asked by a student, “Prof., why couldn’t you refute Christianity?” “For one simple reason,” he replied, “the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” After more than seven hundred hours of study and investigation the evidence would only lead him to God.
- Thomas Arnold was a late 1700 to mid-1800’s English professor and historian.
  - He was the holder of the chair of modern history at Oxford, authored a history of the Roman empire and was a leader in examining and determining the validity of evidence
  - This great scholar said, “I have been used for many years to study the histories of other times, and to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them, and I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort, than the great sign which God has given us that Christ died and rose again from the dead.”
- The literary scholar, C. S. Lewis, was a professor of Medieval and Renaissance literature at Cambridge University
  - Authored the Chronicles of Narnia books, the Screwtape Letters and Mere Christianity among many others
  - When writing about his conversion to Christianity, indicated that he had always believed Christians simply “to be wrong.” And the last thing Lewis ever wanted was to embrace Christianity.
  - Finally, contrary to his life-long strong stand against Christianity, Professor Lewis was forced to make a decision:
  - “You must picture me alone in my private study, night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet was there. That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the third term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and I knelt and I prayed: perhaps, that night, the most reluctant convert in all of England.”

Each of these men were faced with the undeniable, indisputable fact of the power, the presence, and the love of God

The power of the empty tomb this morning speaks in a different way to each of us

- For some it is the assurance of victory over sin, death, and hell
- For others it is the peace that passes our comprehension even in the midst of the greatest storms of our lives

- And still for others it is the knowledge that our lives have been changed forever by the selfless act of Jesus Christ paying the penalty for my sin reuniting me with God the Father
1. That empty tomb speaks to the ultimate power of God
    - a. The pyramids of Egypt are known for the mummified bodies of the ancient pharaohs
      - i. Westminster Abbey in London is revered because in it rests the body of English nobles
      - ii. Mohammed's tomb is a noted stone sarcophagus where his bones remain
      - iii. And Arlington Cemetery in Washington, DC is visited by thousands each year to see the final resting place of many outstanding Americans
      - iv. But the Garden Tomb of Jesus Christ is famous because it is empty
    - b. And the power that restored the physical life of Jesus Christ is the same power that created the heavens and earth, the same power that parted the Red Sea, made the blind to see and the lame to walk, it is that same power to forgive you of your sins this morning
  2. That empty tomb speaks to the love of God for His creation – people
    - a. The tomb of King Tut was filled with the possessions of this world
      - i. Jesus' tomb was empty because the treasure of God is not found in the temporal but the eternal
      - ii. It was God's design, His plan, seen all the way back in the Garden of Eden, to restore His relationship with us
        1. A relationship that had been severed by sin
        2. Where sin was atoned for by the blood sacrifice
        3. Until Jesus, the spotless lamb of God, gave His life as the final blood sacrifice in our place
    - b. Jesus is described in [Luke 15:4-7](#) as the shepherd who leaves the 99 sheep to go and find the 1 that is lost
      - i. Each of us was lost before Jesus was in our lives
      - ii. And when that one that was lost is found
      - iii. All of heaven rejoices
    - c. And not only are we, His creation, His priority, but God knows your value and your worth and pursues your heart
      - i. A gem dealer was strolling the aisles at the Tucson Gem and Mineral Show when he noticed a very ordinary looking blue-violet stone the size and shape of a potato. He looked it over, then, as calmly as possible, asked the vendor, "You want \$15 for this?" The seller, realizing the rock wasn't as pretty as others in the bin, immediately offered it to the man for \$10. The stone has since been certified as a 1,905-carat natural star sapphire, about 800 carats larger than the previous largest stone of its kind. It was appraised at \$2.28 million.
      - ii. Because it took a lover of stones to recognize the sapphire's worth.
      - iii. And it takes the Lover of Souls to recognize the true value of ordinary looking people like me and like you.

3. Finally, the empty tomb speaks to a peace that is without reason
  - a. When Jesus first appeared to His disciples, they were in a room with the door locked, in hiding
    - i. Do you recall the first words He said to them?
    - ii. They were not words of rebuke
      1. He did not say, “Thanks for the support in the Garden fellas !”
      2. He did not say, “Why are you hiding? I told you what was going to happen. Why did you not believe me?”
      3. No – it was nothing like that
    - iii. **Luke 24:36** tells us that His first words to them were, “*Peace be with you.*”
      1. In the midst of their fear, their weakness, their confusion...
      2. Jesus said PEACE
        - a. Paul later describes that type of peace as one that passes our understanding (**Phi 4:7**)
        - b. IOW to have peace right now doesn’t make any sense
        - c. But I have it...because of Jesus
  - b. That peace is given to us by the presence of God
    - i. The tomb may have been empty that first morning but the presence of God, in the person of the Holy Spirit, remains here today for each of us
    - ii. I read once that trying to get rid of Jesus by killing Him was like trying to rid your lawn of dandelions by blowing on the white furry ball of seeds

The tomb spoke loudly on that first morning and it continues to speak to us with that same forcefulness of truth today

- And it was the angel sitting on the stone who spoke the first words of comfort
- The angel said to the women, *Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.* (**Matt 28:5-6**)

As I bring this Resurrection Sunday 2023 message to a close, let’s once again consider the discovery of that other tomb in Egypt

- On November 4, 1922, Howard Carter’s team discovers that first step. He quickly covered it up, secured the area and then prepared for the fulfillment of his life’s work.
  - It had taken 10 years of digging to find this tomb... and a vast sum of money in the effort.
  - Returned with his entire crew...all gathered around...dug along the steps to the door...the diggers called for Carter so that he could be the first to look in
  - And as he looked in on an space that had been sealed for over 3 millennia he said nothing until finally, someone called out, “What do you see?” He answered with just 2 words, “Marvelous things.”
  - He then ascended to the top of steps, sat down, put his head in his hands and began to weep. (They assumed he was simply overtaken by the joy and enormity of the moment)
  - Finally, after some time had passed they gathered round him, perhaps expecting him to share some profound word of accomplishment

- Instead, he said, “I’ve just come to the realization that close to 10 years ago I was digging in this very area not 18” from the location of that first step. And I missed it!”
- Carter’s tears were of relief and certainly joy but also for the 10 needless years of his life that had been spent ...because he missed what was so close.

I implore you, don’t miss Jesus this morning.

- God is speaking to you, to each of us through an empty tomb
  - To know His ultimate power to overcome death and the sin of the world
  - To know that you are known and loved by Him
  - To know that His peace extends beyond your ability to understand
- Jesus said, as recorded by John in **Rev. 3:20** - *Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.*
- Jesus is still knocking on every heart this morning
  - For some it is draw closer to Him
    - To put away the things that take your time, attention, and affections away from Him to focus on yourself
    - To live a life more modeled by Jesus than on the world
  - For some it may be for you to let Him in to your heart for the first time
    - This is not about how good you are
    - It is not about how nice you are to other people
    - It is about every one of us acknowledging our need for Him to forgive us of our sins and be the Lord of our life.