

Remnant Life Church
April 5, 2026
Resurrection Sunday
The Lesson of an Empty Tomb
Luke 24:13-35

It has been three days since the mother, disciples, and friends of Jesus had been forced to admit that their rabbi, their friend, and their great hope was, in fact, dead

A massive stone had been rolled in front of the entrance of the tomb to prevent it from being easily opened

- The seal of Herod had been placed on it
- And there were 4 heavily-armed Roman soldiers standing guard
- You see, the Pharisees had also heard the stories about Jesus rising from the dead
- They were taking no chances

But then it happened

- The stone was rolled away from the entrance
- The grave clothes were in place, but Jesus was not in them
- Some of Jesus followers and even 2 of His disciples had seen the empty tomb with their own eyes
- And now reports were beginning to come in that Jesus had been seen around the region – alive and healthy

Tombs will often tell us a great deal about the person who occupies them.

- Tombstones or headstones give us some information although now the whole burial experience is so expensive that we can barely afford the dates of our birth and death
- Archaeologists will tell you that perhaps the greatest historical tomb discovery was that of King Tut in Egypt.
- King Tutankhamen was the 13th pharaoh of the eighteenth dynasty at the beginning of what became known as the New Kingdom era
 - He ruled from 1332-1324 BC beginning at the age of 8 or 9
 - He was only on throne for about 8 years meaning he was only a teenager when he died
 - But after his tomb was discovered, there was so much wealth found inside that it took nearly 2 months to remove and catalogue every piece!
 - It was called the tomb of all tombs
 - Yet its significance and importance can only be measured in numerical value
 - A value set by objects that will one day dissolve into nothing
- The pyramids of Egypt are famous because they contained the mummified bodies of ancient Egyptian Kings.
 - Westminster Abbey in London is revered, because in it rests the bodies of Kings, Queens, English nobles as well as Isaac Newton, Charles Dickens and George Frederick Handel the composer of The Messiah which includes the magnificent Hallelujah Chorus.

- Mohammed's tomb is a noted stone sarcophagus where, by the way, his bones remain.
- Arlington cemetery in Washington, D.C. is revered for it is the honored resting place of many outstanding Americans including 2 US presidents.
- But the Garden Tomb of Jesus is known as a place that changed the world because it is empty.
- The empty tomb of Jesus is the ultimate demonstration of God's power in Christ.
 - It was also the final fulfillment of hundreds of prophecies of Jesus including not only how He would be born but how he would die...where he would be buried...the type of grave that would be used...and his resurrection.
 - One of which we read **Isaiah 53**
 - Written 1,000 years before Jesus was born
 - And 600 years before crucifixion was even developed as a means of execution.
 - Yet it accurately presents what Jesus would endure on our behalf
 - And it was that power that transformed fearful lives
 - It began in those 11 men hiding following the crucifixion infusing them with courage and hope
 - 12 men, following the election of Matthias to replace Judas, who took a singular message to the furthest parts of the then-known world
 - And every one of them but one martyred for what they now knew to be true, proclaiming a living, risen Savior...and it changed the world.
- Yes, there were those who almost immediately disputed the claims of Jesus resurrection
 - They claimed He was not really dead
 - That the disciples stole the body
 - That all of His followers went to the wrong tomb
 - Never mind the eye witnesses to His confirmed death and burial
 - Or the massive, sealed stone in front of the opening
 - Or the soldiers on guard
 - Never let the truth disrupt a twisted narrative
- Because that truth was becoming evident
 - Jesus appeared on at least 9 separate occasions following that Sunday morning
 - It was in different locations so no one could say it was a manufactured single event
 - It was to over 500 people in total so it could not be disputed as the lies of just a few
 - It was a truth that enabled Peter to stand later at the time of Pentecost and proclaim the now undisputed truth of the reality of the resurrection. (**Acts 2:14-40**)
 - And that same truth enabled the apostle Paul to later speak of Jesus' appearance to over 500 of which many were still alive at that time and could confirm what was being reported (**I Cor 15:6**)

But the truth of the resurrection is so powerful that it has also changed the minds of modern man as well...

- Josh McDowell, a man who, as an agnostic pursuing legal studies to enter politics, set out to publish an academic paper that would disprove Christianity through historical evidence. He was sometime later asked by a student, “Professor, 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’s to mid-1800 English professor and historian.

- He was the holder of the chair of modern history at Oxford, authored a full history of the Roman empire and was a leader in examining and determining the validity of all types of physical and researched evidence
- He was quoted as saying, “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 empty tomb tells us of God’s ultimate power to change the hearts and minds of man no matter the time of history.

Do you remember the very first words Jesus spoke to His disciples following His resurrection?

- They weren’t words of admonishment or rebuke
 - His first words were, *Peace be with you.* (Luke 24:36)
 - It is, as Paul writes, a peace that passes all understanding (Phil 4:7)
 - Because it is a peace that is present in the face of tragedy, sorrow, confusion, anger, despair, and hopelessness
- We know and have that peace because of God’s presence
 - The tomb may have been empty but the presence of God, in the person of the Holy Spirit, remains here today for each of us.
 - And God knows full well the value and worth of each of us here this morning
 - Even if you are feeling less than valuable
 - Even if you are not walking with the Lord right now
 - He knows your worth because He sees you in a way that no one else does or possibly can

Let me share with you a true story that so perfectly illustrates this truth

- In February of 1986, a gem-stone broker by the name of Roy Whetstine 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 large potato. He looked it over, thoughtfully and then, as calmly as he could, asked the vendor, “So, you want \$15 for this?” The seller, realizing the rock wasn’t as pretty as others in the bin, lowered the price to \$10. Several months later, Whetstine reported that the stone had since been certified as a 1,905-carat natural star sapphire, about 800 carats more than the largest stone of its kind to date. He claims that it was appraised at \$2.28 million. Those numbers have, of course, been challenged as most discoveries of this type are. But it does not change the fact that it took a lover of stones to recognize the sapphire’s true worth. Just as it took the Lover of Souls to recognize the true value of ordinary looking people like you and like me.

- As I bring our time together this morning to a close, consider again the discovery of that other tomb in Egypt.
 - Howard Carter, on November 4, 1922, finds the first step after he began to expand several earlier dig sites.
 - He quickly covers it up, secures the area and prepares for the possibility of the fulfillment of his life's work.
 - He had been searching and digging for 10 years to find this one step leading to the tomb
 - And along with the time he had spent a vast sum of money in the effort.
 - Not long after, he returned with teams who began to dig out the steps that led to the door of the vaulted tomb
 - The diggers managed to open the door slightly and called for Carter to be the first to look in
 - He looked in but said nothing until finally, someone called out, "What do you see?"
 - His response was just 2 words, "Marvelous things."
 - It was reported that Carter then turned and walked up to the top of steps
 - He sat, put his head in his hands and began to weep.
 - Those with him assumed he was simply overtaken by the joy and enormity of the moment
 - When he finally composed himself enough to speak he said, "10 years ago I dug 18" from this very step. But somehow, I missed it"
 - Ten years of his life had been spent searching in vain because he missed what was so close.
- My friends on this Resurrection Sunday morning, don't miss Jesus.
 - God is speaking to you, to each of us through an empty tomb
 - To know His ultimate power to overcome the world
 - To know that you are known and loved by Him
 - To know that His peace is beyond your circumstances
 - 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.*