

“Looking for the Living Among the Dead”

Rev. Lee F. Veazey

It's been said and sung that “everybody's looking for something”, and we know from personal experience that this statement is true. Everyone you meet on the street and the person you meet each day in the mirror is looking for significance, purpose, and meaning in life. The world's great philosophies and literature detail the various features of this life-long quest. We all know that finding what we're looking for is most often a cause for great celebration. Yet, could it be possible that not finding what you're looking for is cause for an even greater celebration?

Well, there's been an event in world history, well-documented by hundreds of eyewitnesses, in which not finding what was looked for resulted in an even greater celebration, one with wide ranging and long lasting consequences. In fact, the celebration of this event continues to this day. To what event am I referring? I'm talking about the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth from the dead.

One account of the resurrection of Jesus Christ comes from the physician turned missionary Luke, who wrote “*an orderly account*” so that his readers “*may have certainty concerning the things [they] have been taught*” about Jesus (Luke 1:3-4). In Luke 24:1-12, Luke tells the story of how several women didn't find what they were looking for, the body of Jesus. Rather, what they found instead was an empty tomb.

In Luke's account of the resurrection of Jesus, we see three things: a great question being asked, a simple command being given, and a faithful response being demonstrated.

According to Scripture, women were the last to leave the scene of the crucifixion of Jesus and the first to arrive at the scene of his resurrection. Is it any wonder then that these faithful and loyal women who stayed with Jesus to the end would be the first ones to receive the news of his resurrection? There at the empty tomb, they are asked this question: “*Why do you seek the living among the dead?*” (v. 5) They're asked why they're looking for Jesus where he can't be found, in a graveyard. In other words, you're looking in the wrong place, because “*He is not here, but has risen.*” (v. 6)

Because they have been operating on a faulty assumption, they needed a mild and gentle rebuke. They are told to remember what Jesus had said. How did they respond? They responded by remembering the words of Jesus. And once they remembered they ran off to tell others of what they had been told and what they had not found. Interestingly, alongside the faithful response of the woman Luke presents the initial unbelieving response of the remaining eleven apostles. Indeed, there are two responses to the news of the resurrection of Jesus Christ then as well as now: belief or unbelief.

In a manner similar to how the women were looking for the body of Jesus where it couldn't be found (in a tomb), many people are looking for life in things that are empty at best or dangerous at worst. In particular, for those who desire to be in a right relationship with God, many look for what they have to do. And so when they think they have done it (whatever it is), they are filled with pride. But when they believe they have failed to do it (whatever it is), they are paralyzed with fear. But the gospel is good news not of what we have to do but rather of what Jesus Christ has done through his obedient life and sin-atonement death in our place and on our behalf.

As important as the call to remember is, our hope doesn't ultimately rest in our ability to remember. Rather, our hope rests in God's ability and commitment to remember his promise that all who come to Jesus Christ by faith find life. The women were looking for a dead body where it couldn't be found. Not surprisingly, they were asked this question: “*Why do you seek the living among the dead?*” The good news of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone is that Jesus goes looking for the dead, and when he finds them, he raises them to new life, a life full of meaning, purpose, and significance. Jesus finds what he is looking for. Has he found you?

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