

Resurrection Surprise – *Luke 24:1-12*

Introduction – The story of the empty tomb teaches us, among other things, to never give up. There is a kind of philosophy that teaches you to embrace death, welcome defeat, give in to your loss. We are instructed in Christ to never listen to this. We believe in the craziest story of all. We believe in life after death. We believe in eternal life, glorified life, resurrected life, Spirit-imparted life. We believe in the God who raises the dead.

The Surprise of the Resurrection – Many people are surprised over the story of Easter. Many people are offended at the story of Easter. Easter is surprising and offensive for us moderns because *we know* that this can't happen. Men only come back from graves in horror stories. The scientists all teach us that life only leads to death. The resurrection, of course, could never happen.

Surprised Enemies – Christ's enemies did not expect a resurrection, but they did expect an attempt at a hoax (Matt 27:62-66). Those guards were surprised (Matt 28:4). The enemies of God, both Jew and Gentile, had expected the end of Jesus, but their plans could not thwart Him (Acts 4:10-12, 27-28).

Surprised Principalities – Satan entered Judas, joining in the conspiracy to kill Jesus of Nazareth (Luke 22:3). Satan, who knew the scriptures well, found that his own actions brought upon himself his own downfall (Col 2:15).

Surprised Friends – In our text, the women find the Lord's body gone (v3) and this perplexed them (v4). Two men (angels) ask them, "*why do you seek the living among the dead?*" (v5). When the women return to tell the eleven, "*their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them*" (v11). Peter has to go see for himself (v12). It was not that these did not believe that Jesus would be resurrected, nor that they didn't believe in resurrections (John 11:24). Jews looked forward to a resurrection which would mean the full restoration of Israel. However, they did not expect that the resurrection would come in two stages – first the head, and then the body. Years later, Paul would clarify what had happened (1 Cor 15:20-26). One Man would be raised as the firstfruits, and for a time, everything else remained.

The resurrection surprised everyone. The work of the resurrection continues to surprise – everyone.

The Resurrection Surprises the Friends of God – We believe in the resurrection, but those who are granted faith never truly get over what this means for the friends of God. We are justified in Jesus Christ (Rom 1:4, 4:23-25). We were children of wrath, but God's wrath has been turned away; we were dead, but we have been made alive. We were prisoners of the prince of the power of the air, but now we have been redeemed and raised up into the reign of the New King (Eph 2:1-10). He constantly washes us of our sin as we come to Him time and again (1 John 1:9) and promises that we will finally be perfected in the end (Rom 8:31-39). He also promises that the work of His church will bring about the manifestation of all He redeemed – the world (Matt 13:31-33, Rev 7:9-10).

The Resurrection Surprises/Offends the Enemies of God – The resurrection not only declares Jesus to be the Son of God; it declares that His death is the only way to salvation (1 Cor 15:12-19). But the idea of resurrection is so offensive to modern (and ancient) minds (Acts 17:32). And the idea of only one way sounds so arrogant in these days of toleration (Acts 4:12, John 14:6). Ultimately, the story of Jesus is so offensive because the enemies of God love their sin; they love the darkness (John 3:19-20). Ultimately, what is surprising, and horrifying, about the resurrection, is that no one will escape their own hypocrisy – Jesus knows and will judge every heart (Matt 7:21-23, Rev 20:15).

The Resurrection Surprises the Sufferers of God – Jesus, then, is the firstfruits of the final resurrection, a true day that will come in this story of mankind. But what about today? Today, you are promised life in the Spirit because of the resurrection (Rom 8:10-11). You are not promised that your sufferings will end, because you are a follower of Jesus, who suffered. But you, like your Head, have been promised more glory than you can imagine for the sufferings you bear in His name (Rom 8:18). And, just as Jesus was comforted and encouraged in His sufferings, so you will receive grace sufficient for every trial (2 Cor 12:7-10). Resurrection surprises abound day by day. Boxed in by the trials, sufferings, and temptations of this day, often with no answers, no way of making sense, we find ourselves wandering without understanding, like the women who went to the tomb. Why are we, though, looking for the living among the dead? We are the people who believe in the God who raises the dead. Or as the Psalmist wrote, "*Why are you cast down, O my soul –hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him*" (Psalm 42:11).

Always be ready to be surprised.