

## The Great Confirmation April 20, 2025

### Luke 24:1-12

1 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they went in, they did not find the body. 4 While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. 5 The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. 6 Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, 7 that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." 8 Then they remembered his words, 9 and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. 10 Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. 11 But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. 12 But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened (NRSV).

Today is the heart of our Christian faith. The resurrection of Jesus Christ! Everything we believe, everything we hope for, everything we live for, hinges on this very moment – this holy moment – when the stone was rolled away. Death lost its sting forever. As we look at the Scripture, let's see what God wants to reveal to us through the empty tomb.

There was the expectation of death. I'll be redundant for a purpose. They expected him to be dead. The women took spices to the tomb. They expected him to be dead. These women loved Jesus. They followed him and supported him. They remained near him in death on the cross. They came to honor Him one last time with spices. They expected him to be dead. They came with mourning, not praise and hope. The problem was their assumptions. Jesus was crucified due to assumptions of the religious leaders that assumed he was not who he said he was. The disciples assume he was buried. Surprise, surprise, surprise, more surprised than Gomer Pyle. They went looking for the living amongst the dead. In reality, we would have too. The question forces re-evaluation "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" This is heavy duty real life stuff here. Jesus was always moving ahead of us, always stepping beyond our boundaries. He isn't where we left him. He isn't confined by human spaces like a grave. We need to be looking for Jesus where he is.

Don't forget his words when life trips you up. It is easy to forget what he told you when you get distracted in life. He is not here, he has risen! Remember what he told you. Oh, I knew that, I am supposed to be remembering what he told us. The resurrection was no surprise to Jesus. He told them repeatedly but their emotions got in the way. There is a valuable lesson in here about how our emotions cloud the thinking. When life is frustrating, challenging, and stressful, we tend to forget what Jesus said. When churches focus on survival, they get out of focus with Jesus. When the people are worried about their issues, they get out of focus with Jesus. When people focus on the sins of others they are out of focus with Jesus. Throughout the centuries our religions morphed into something that struggles to maintain the love and unity that Jesus insisted upon. If we were really tuned in to the love and unity of Jesus, the world would be full of love and

mercy. The women ran to tell the others but the disciples didn't believe them. Peter, being the impulsive man that he was, ran to the tomb, looked in and was bewildered. Today some still have doubt as faith is revealed in unexpected ways.

I'll be absent next week because of the most amazing things that are happening to me. I have been writing songs since I was a child and I confess I have some rated R bar room songs. Now, as a pastor, I wrestle with the integrity of a pastor with secular material. However, with my education, and life experiences, I can write about the dark side of humanity. As a repentant sinner I can give a public confession with no shame. With the songwriting, I can cover the kind of material that others are afraid confess. So, I have been talking with advisors about the conflict of the soul, the tension between the person and the artist. The rated R bar music songs are the ones that are catching attention. I can take that secular audience and give them my testimony. I can sing their songs of confession with the realism and integrity that it deserves. I have prayed about virtually everything. Finally I received the pastoral advice that we all need to hear... quit trying to do it your way and turn it over to God. You know what you need to pray about. Follow that prayer. I have tried to write Christian songs in the past but nothing has worked for me in the past. In life, I prayed for my will to be done. I didn't pray for God's will to be done because I didn't want God's will to interfere with mine. That is the nature of sin, clinging to ray of hope while refusing to let go.

It is a lesson in my own life. I ran to the cave with my assumptions. I ran to Jesus with my expectations. Creating songs from the hidden part of the heart and soul of humanity has been my passion of life. It was too passionate for me to pray to God for guidance in my life because I wanted it my way. This time I prayed for God's guidance with my songwriting. In doing so, I was praying to God for guidance with the one thing that was holding me back. The man that provided me this advice is not a preacher, he is a Christian. His life is his testimony. Maybe the world has gone astray because not enough Christians are living according to our testimonies of faith.