

GETTING INTO GEAR

April 21, 2019 (10:30am)

Easter Sunday

[Luke 24:1-12](#)

(prayer)

Mary, Joanna, Mary told the other disciples what the tomb angels had said: *You won't find the living among the dead: Jesus has risen. Didn't Jesus say that "the son of man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again."*

Peter ran and confirmed that Jesus' body was indeed missing, but no angels spoke to *him*

The disciples' grief was too strong and their minds too rational: they heard the women's words as just an **idle tale**.

The hope that they knew had died two days ago. You can't flip *hope* on and off like a light switch.

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lay-dos ray-ma-ta is the greek: silly words.

Discourse with no purpose or useful meaning.

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A few modern english versions of the bible translate [Luke 24:11](#) as *their words seemed to them like nonsense* but most follow the lead of the King James Version: *their words seemed to them as idle tales*.

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As an adjective, "idle" can mean "pointless".

In english, "idle" can also be a verb.

Since I am preaching in english, I claim the right to play a bit loose with the words from Luke today.

As a verb, "idle" can mean "run slowly while out of gear".

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I know that Thomas, Peter and the others saw no point to embracing what Mary and Joanna had told them.

The women's words may have appeared to be uselessly taking up conversation space, but - as we continue on the biblical narrative we can see them as holding *potential energy*.

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Like a car engine with its transmission set in park, the angels' promise (from inside the empty tomb) was simply waiting to take off.

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As my teachers and professor knew years ago... sometimes, we need to hear things more than once before it sinks in.

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If we had read further in Luke 24 today, we would have heard that, later that night, Cleopas came bursting through door where the other disciples were still staying in Jerusalem excitedly professing that he and his partner now believed what the women had said.

Jesus was indeed alive. He had appeared to them as a stranger on the road. They didn't

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recognizing him until much later while eating supper.

All of a sudden we could see it clearly; this stranger broke the bread just like Jesus had done on Thursday night. It had to be him.

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The promise of Easter was not an idle tale... it was an idling tale.

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Slowly but surely, a belief in the resurrection of Jesus began to gain traction among the disciples.

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Some of them claimed, to have seen the Risen Jesus with their own eyes -- not as a ghost or in a vision -- physical: they could touch him, and he consumed food.

For others it was less obvious -- like Cleopas, it wasn't until later that they realized Jesus had been with them.

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But... Easter is more than a few disciples having a personal experience with a physically resurrected Jesus.

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Eventually, other disciples would be so inspired by the fortunate few who had these unique mystical encounters, that they trusted that the death of Jesus was not the end of their work together.

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The early church was so much more than a collection of people retelling an idle tale of resurrection.

They reached back into the life of Jesus.

They remembered his take on morality and the need for a just and fair society.

They continued to live out the high call to be embodied compassion in the world.

Jesus was raised on Easter morning, but the disciples kept him alive in the world long after the final resurrection appearance. They did this by following his examples and showing how the Kingdom of God, itself, was as possible on earth as it is in heaven.

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There is value in remembering the story of the first easter: to read Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24 and John 20. It is good to hear the "glory, hallelujahs" sung by the choirs this morning; and try to imagine how Mary felt when she heard the gardener speak her name and how Cleopas' heart leapt when the traveller broke the bread.

But if all that we do is hear this good news, Easter remains an idling tale.

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It is when we take up the call to live out the good news, the power of Easter becomes a present reality.

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Easter is embraced -- not by proclaiming that *Jesus **was** risen* -- but by showing that *Jesus **IS** risen*.

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Let's live as if we are Cleopas, who refused to leave the curious stranger hungry and alone on the dark road.

Let's live out Jesus' best hope for his disciples: that we would, indiscriminately, feed the hungry,

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refresh the thirsty, clothe the naked, help the sick, and seek out the isolated... paying particular attention to the ones whom the world might define as low and unworthy. *Do this for the least of these with the same vigour you would do it for me*, Jesus said.

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We are called to be Easter People, not just people on Easter.

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With that in mind, I draw your attention to these beautifully and graciously-made blankets. There are a number of people connected to this church of make these with the intent that they be given to someone who might especially benefit from a reminder that they are held in the loving warmth of God's love.

blessing of prayer shawls

Let us pray:

Holy One, we are grateful for the skills of the knitters and crocheters who prayerfully created these practical symbols of your care. We pray that those they are given to will find warmth for their bodies and comfort for their souls. May these stitches hold our deepest prayers of hope and comfort. Loving God, give life to our wonder and open our hearts to Jesus' ministry in the world. Amen.

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Let us go where Jesus would go.

Let us love who Jesus would love.

Let us do what Jesus would do.

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In that way, the Risen Christ will truly be in the world.

Amen!

offering

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