King of Glory Lutheran Pastor Ruth Ann Loughry April 19-20, 2025 Easter: Year C: Luke 24:1-12

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Then Jesus said to him, "Stand up! Take your mat and walk!" (John 5:1-9) In other words, "Leave it at the tomb, **for Jesus is Alive!**"

Those are stories of people that Jesus interacted with. What's your story? If the Risen Jesus were to ask you this morning, what might you leave at the tomb? Remember He has already chosen to be in relationship with you. He knows your life: the good, the bad and the ugly. He still loves you.

Need to ask forgiveness?

Living with self-doubt?

Is it the pain of a broken relationship?

Maybe it is anger, fear, and worry. Oh, how easy it is to take those emotions out of the closet and massage them, admire them, keep them close. They make us feel safe.

Each of you are holding a rock. A few minutes ago, I asked what Jesus might invite you to leave at the empty tomb so that God can bring you a life full to the brim, saturated in hope. During the next hymn, or offering, or after you've received Holy Communion, you are invited to leave your rock and whatever it symbolizes, at the open tomb this morning.

Leave there what is dead inside of you. That thing you keep doing even though it brings you no life. Leave your rock at the tomb, even if you can only let go of it for a little while. Lay it down. Release it so you can be renewed in the power of the resurrected Christ – our Savior.

And...there is grace. Always there is grace. If you and God need to hold onto your rock, that is perfectly fine. Your spirit knows what you need. Simply listen.

Perhaps one day, when we are all ready, we can "Leave everything at the tomb, for Jesus is Risen!"

ⁱ https://www.livinglutheran.org/2019/11/repairing-whats-broken/

King of Glory Lutheran Pastor Ruth Ann Loughry April 19-20, 2025 Easter: Year C: Luke 24:1-12

¹ On the first day of the week, at early dawn, [the women] 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.

"Why do you look for the living among the dead?" the men ask. We too, can get stuck looking for and then doing things that don't bring us life. Jesus – the Risen Christ – is the one who brings us real Life. We belong to Christ (through His death and resurrection) and God is already in relationship with us. Today, if even for a little while, leave at the tomb what is draining life from you. For He is a living Lord, ready to bring you new life!

Today is such a celebratory day that we all get to be preachers this morning. When I say, "Leave it at the tomb," I'm inviting you to respond, "for Jesus is Alive!"

Let's try that together..."Leave it at the tomb, for Jesus is Alive!"

That's good – really good. You sound like you believe Jesus is alive. And I'm not seeing any of you carrying the spices and ointments to do the last rites of preparing Jesus' body for burial. Therefore, I think you do believe Jesus is alive.

Why do you look for the living among the dead? None of us go to the cemetery expecting our loved one to be sitting there alive. The cemetery with all the tombstones is the place of the dead. Yet these men are adamant that Jesus was dead but is now very much alive. That means Jesus is not only alive, but fully the spiritual teacher and the intimate confidant He always was! It also means our grief at seeing Him on the cross – well we can "Leave it at the tomb, **for Jesus is Alive!**"

The two men in the tomb weren't talking to us, but they could have been. In our stressful and fast-paced lives, it's very normal that at times we do things to numb ourselves. We scroll to pass the time, just because. Or we hop on Amazon and buy the latest and greatest of whatever is the hot deal for the day.

But when we tire of Facebook and the excitement of opening the Amazon box is over, these momentary fixes aren't truly life-giving. We pretend they make us feel alive. Yet, the stressful hamster wheel is still-a-turning. Life is still really messy. People are in pain. We need look no farther than two more school tragedies this week.

<u>Listen carefully</u>...no matter what we do – no matter what we've done ...God has already decided to love us. God has already decided to love you.

Because for God, it is not about behavior. It is about a relationship. We belong to Christ through His life, death and resurrection. God is in relationship with us. That was already decided on Good Friday when Christ was crucified. As St. Paul wrote, 'If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? (Romans 8:31-32) If today you doubt that God loves you or wants to be in a relationship with you, just look at the resurrected Christ and, "Leave it at the tomb, **for Jesus is Alive!**"

It's true! Jesus was always inviting people to leave things at their tombs. There was a woman caught in adultery. The religious leaders were ready to stone her. Jesus said, 'Whoever is without sin, throw the first stone.' They all left! They all left! Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you? Neither do I. Go and sin no more." (John 8:1-11)

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