

“What’s the point of resurrection?” Luke 24:1-12

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, ^awhile he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.” And they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.

Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! Fine, this much we know, and now what? What does this mean for us? What does this mean for you? Isn't that a great question?

Let's do two things, first let's reflect briefly what happened on that morning, even if we know those events, and then we can find an answer to the question 'what does Jesus' resurrection mean for you'.

We just read how Luke the evangelist described the events of that Sunday morning, almost two thousand years ago. You know that on that Friday Jesus was crucified and died, was buried and ... the end of the story.

At least thus it seemed to His disciples. Then on Sunday morning, at early dawn women went to the tomb to take care of the body. And they found the stone rolled away, and the body of Jesus was gone.

And while they were perplexed about this, two men in dazzling apparel stood by them. “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is risen. Remember how He told you many times that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified and on the third day rise.”

And they remembered that ... yes, actually Jesus said something like that. So they went back to the eleven and told them what had happen. But to the apostles these things seemed like a tale. They didn't believe them. Of course!

How could they? They were not stupid. They knew how things work in this world. When someone dies they are dead and they remain dead and that is it, and they don't leave their tomb to run around.

So it was clear to the apostles that something was wrong with this picture. And as we now read their own testimonies, and as you know the four Gospel accounts are eyewitness testimonies, we can see that the apostles acted as we would probably act in their situation.

Sure, they had heard Jesus repeatedly telling them that He was going to Jerusalem to suffer, to die and to rise again. Hadn't they heard it. Of course they had heard it. But, and this is how our mental processes work – we can't believe something that is not consistent with what we know about this world.

The apostles' minds kept rejecting what Jesus was telling them. They couldn't take it in. Many years ago when I was interested in all things paranormal I studied manipulative approach called Neuro Linguistic Programming.

Creators of this approach had studied how our minds work and on that basis had developed a set of tools how to influence people. One of the methods consisted of three steps.

During your conversation you would say something ridiculous, something that doesn't make sense. Then you would tell the other person what you want them to do. You would program them. When you are done with programming, you say this ridiculous thing once more.

What happens with our minds? They can't cope that something strange is said. Even less if the same strange thing is said twice. So they assume that it was said only once, and all that you heard in between, the programming bit, they simply remove from their consciousness.

However, it remains in their sub-consciousness. And they go on following the instructions. Similarly the apostles had heard Jesus speaking about His resurrection many times. However, what He said didn't make to them any sense at that time.

Therefore even after the women had told them what had happened, they didn't say 'sure, this is what Jesus told us', instead they thought that something was wrong with the women.

And then, then as Paul the apostle describes it, Jesus "appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me [Paul]." (1Co 15:5-8)

Then they all were changed. Once they saw the Lord Jesus Christ, risen from the dead exactly as He had foretold it, they rejoiced, they rejoice with divine

overflowing joy and nothing could stop them from sharing what God has done among us.

They all, except John, paid with their lives, for they could not stop sharing the Good News. The truth. When we talk about Christian faith, people sometime think that Christians believe something that is not real. Why would otherwise it be called faith. The thing is, that what we believe are real historical events, as real as they could be, witnessed by the authors of the New Testament.

Why then we call it faith? Because it takes the Holy Spirit to persuade us that what the Gospels describe are accurate records of what the Triune God did among us. We can test it intellectually and historically and it seems correct, but it is still impossible to trust with our hearts that it is true, unless the Holy Spirit helps us.

It is faith not because the events described in the Gospels are not real, but because God's activity among us in Jesus Christ is something that otherwise doesn't fit with our experience. Without the Holy Spirit our minds keep rejecting it, even if the facts and reason tells that it must be true.

God doesn't become a man. God is God and man is man. And once dead, no man rises again. That's why only when risen Jesus appeared to His disciples, and not just once, but several times, they finally begun to comprehend what was going on. And then their joy was complete. What were they rejoicing about?

This is actually our today's key question? What were they rejoicing about, and what does it mean for us, that Jesus Christ is risen? Fine, we know that it is true, but what does it change for us? And this is where we get to why the Gospel about Jesus resurrection is such a good news for us.

We read today this passage from Isaiah the prophet, about the new heavens and the new earth. "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness. I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress." (Isa 65:17-19)

Did you like it? It described quite marvellous a place, where everything will be not only as good as we could imagine, and even much, much better. When Jesus spoke with His disciples, He spoke about His return in glory to bring His chosen people to Himself.

On the last evening, before He was betrayed He said that He is going to prepare a place for His disciples. A place in His Father's house. Then He said: "I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." (John 14:3)

Then, of course, we also have the description of this new heaven and new earth in the book of Revelation. And, of course, there is something so, so significant that we say every time as we say the Apostles' creed.

"We believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting." You see, this is the reason for our joy. This is why Jesus' resurrection is such a joyful event. As Paul the apostle wrote it:

"If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied." (1Co 15:19) Why? Because then we miss the whole point of Jesus' resurrection. As the New Testament states it again and again. Jesus was the first-fruits, the firstborn from the dead.

Can you believe this? Can you see what it means? The apostles couldn't believe that Jesus will rise from the dead. Even if they had the Scriptures which told them that the Almighty God has prepared for His beloved children new heavens and new earth, even if Jesus was teaching that we will have new resurrected bodies, the apostles couldn't believe it. It didn't make much sense.

Up to the moment when they met the risen Lord, in new resurrected body, they were only hoping to benefit from Him in this life. But when they saw the risen Jesus, the penny finally dropped. The beautiful truth finally kicked in.

The resurrection of the body is real, even if we can't understand it. New heavens and new earth are real, even if we can't imagine what they will be like. We are here really for just a short while, so that we could hear about the Triune God and receive His Spirit as a guarantee of eternal inheritance in God's Kingdom. In these new heavens and new earth.

This is why Jesus resurrection is such a big deal. This is how the Triune God assures us that the best is still to come, and that we can trust His promises, even if we can't fully understand them.

Once the apostles had seen their risen Lord, all fear, all anxiety, all insecurity was gone. We spend our days worrying. We are worried about our life, we are worried that we may not have enough.

Even if we know that all that we have and all that we are belongs to the Lord and are His gifts to us, we still cling too often cling to our possessions as our rock and foundation of security.

Even if we know that we are to serve others with all that we have, that we need to continue Jesus' mission to save as many people as we can from eternal destruction, we are too often too concerned with our lives here and too often we really hope on Christ only in this world.

And, of course, we need Jesus' help in this life as well, and He gives it to us abundantly, He has commanded us to pray for our daily bread and has promised that our prayers will be heard and our needs taken care of. But that's only this life.

Jesus' resurrection shows us the big picture. Brothers and sisters in Christ, don't hope for small things only, know that your Lord has prepared for you something that eye hasn't seen and that words can't describe. Something that will surpass all your dreams and imagination.

We rob ourselves of true freedom, we rob ourselves of true joy, we rob ourselves of trust and peace if we live as if this world was all that there is. This is not our true home. We are here only for a little while, to serve others, and to bring them to Christ.

Once this truth sunk in in the apostles' hearts, they were free. They were free to do the Lord's will. As Paul put it, they were "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything." (2Co 6:10)

This is what the resurrection of Jesus means for you. As He rose from the dead in new resurrected, perfect and eternal body, so will you. I know that this is not an easy thing to comprehend. This is why we call it faith, the gift of the Holy Spirit.

We know that our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead, hundreds and hundreds witnessed it with their own eyes. Many of them not just saw Him, but ate and drank with their risen Lord. But the greatest thing about it is, it means that all that God has promised to you is true.

New resurrected body. Life eternal. Life with our risen Lord Jesus Christ. Seeing Him face to face. Living with Him and countless numbers of His saints in His Kingdom, in the new heavens and the new earth. Living life without sin, sorrow or death, full of joy and praise. Much better than we can ever imagine.

Yes, we are still here, our time has not yet come, but you already have received God's guarantee, the Holy Spirit. This Spirit raised Jesus from the dead. You have the same Spirit given to you. And as He raised Jesus, He will also raise you.

This is our hope. This is our ultimate hope. This is our joy. This is what Jesus' resurrection means for you. This is why we are free to live for our Lord and for others, for we know what awaits us. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! And He will raise you to be with Him! Alleluia.

Amen.