

## “No Idle Tale”

Luke 24: 1-12

April 11, 2004

(Easter Service 10:30 a.m.; New Members, Baptisms and Communion)

Rev. Deborah Dail

Denbigh Presbyterian Church

The women were the first witnesses to the resurrection. They went to the tomb. The stone was rolled away. There was no body. There was no Jesus. Angels greeted them and told them that Jesus had risen from the dead. “Remember,” the angels said. “Remember what he told you?” And with that they went to the 11 disciples and to all the rest of the followers of Jesus. Mary Magdalene tells them the good news. “But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.”

Years later, we might think “How could they be so slow to believe? How could they possibly think this was an idle tale?”

Yet, when we really look at ourselves, how different are we? We may say we believe in the resurrection. We may even truly believe in the resurrection. But to what degree do our daily lives reflect that belief in the miraculous, mysterious central tenet of the Christian faith?

Because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ we believe **we do not have to be consumed by guilt**. God in Christ can free us “from a past we cannot change and lead us into a future in which we can be changed.” But to what degree do you and I live that truth? To what degree do we allow others to embrace that truth? When we cannot or will not receive God’s gift of release and freedom from a past we cannot change that may suggest to others that we believe the death and resurrection of Jesus is just some idle tale. And when we refuse to release others from a past they cannot change, we may say to the world: “Resurrection—it’s just an idle tale.”

**And what about hope?** Because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ we have hope for today and hope for our future beyond the grave. Yet I sometimes hear myself and other Christians reflecting on life and the world and the state of the nation as if there is no hope. We are sometimes like Eeyore from Winnie the Pooh.

Life is filled with many seemingly hopeless situations. Maybe you have a hopeless marriage or a hopeless relationship with your kid. Maybe you look at this world—the poverty, the injustice, the violence—and say, “there is no hope.” Maybe you look at your life and say “I’m hopeless. I’ve walked down the same road over and over again. I never seem to learn. I can’t overcome this addiction in my life. I can’t get myself squared away. There is no hope.”

As hard and as hopeless as life sometimes is, the power of Christ’s death and resurrection is that there is always hope. Even as believers breathe their last breaths of life there is hope—hope of life eternal!

Many years ago a rabbi asked his pupils how they could tell when the night had ended and the day was on its way back.

One student responded: “When you can see an animal in the distance and tell whether it is a sheep or a dog?” The rabbi replied: “No.”

Another student said: “Perhaps it is when you look at a tree in the distance and can tell whether it is a fig tree or a peach tree.” “No,” the rabbi said, “that is not the answer.”

Then the rabbi gave them the answer: “You can tell when the night has ended and the day is on its way back when you can look on the face of any person and can see your brother or sister. Because if you cannot do this, then no matter what time it is, it is still night.”

With the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the night has ended, day has arrived. The darkness is over, the light has come. Easter is not just one day, one season. For the Christian, Easter is a lifestyle—a lifestyle that shows that the night has ended and day has come. Easter people come in all shapes and sizes, Easter people live out their faith in a variety of ways. But perhaps Easter people look most like Easter people when “they look on the face of any person and see a brother or sister” and respond accordingly. When we don’t, others may believe it is still night, no matter what time it is. Others may conclude that the resurrection is nothing but an “idle tale.”

I believe that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is far from an “idle tale.” I believe it is true. I believe it is transforming right now in our daily lives. I believe it is life-giving right now in our daily lives. And I believe that because Christ was raised from the dead those who believe in him will also be raised from the dead. This is no idle tale. This is a truth to be lived and proclaimed.

Today as we come to the Lord’s Table, I pray that you and I will come believing in the power of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for us—here and now, for us in the life to come, and for our broken world today and forevermore. I pray we will be nourished and empowered anew to live and proclaim Christ’s death and resurrection. I pray when people see us and know we are Easter people our lives will show that the night has ended and the day has come—darkness has been overcome by the Light. Come to the table to remember Jesus—his death and resurrection. It is not just an idle tale.