

SERMON – April 8, 2007  
Luke 24 “He has Risen”

G&P....

My 5-year-old daughter, Kayse, grew more and more excited about her first day of kindergarten, and her 3-year-old sister, Jayme, watched her with great fascination. On the Sunday before the first day of school, Kayse fell and skinned her knee.

Tears began to flow, and Jayme, seeing the blood on her big sister's knee, tried to comfort her by saying: "Don't worry, Kayse, if you die, you'll go to heaven."

Buy Kayse wailed even more. "I don't want to go to heaven," she said. "I want to go to kindergarten!"

Hugh Poland, "Kids of the Kingdom," Today's Christian (July/August 2005)

**I was wearing a T-shirt with the words: BE NICE TO ME. I HAD A HARD DAY. Little Eric looked at the words and said, "How can you tell this early in the morning?"**

Verna Chambers, Willcox, Arizona. Christian Reader, "Kids of the Kingdom"

That certainly could have been the message that Mary and the others could have worn on that first Easter morning. Because the events of the previous week. Thursday had been confusing. The passover had started out as it had always started out, with the story of the flight from Egypt and how God had freed them from slavery. Then Jesus changed the whole night when he shared the bread and the wine as his body and blood. A new teaching, a new covenant, a new promise of Jesus being with them always in the meal, and the forgiveness of sins for the relationships in the lives of God's people.

**Friday had left them numb and terrified in grief. Then Saturday trying to hide from the authorities. Now Sunday, the women had gone to annoint the body, wondering who would roll the stone away so that they could get in. As they stood there, their lives changed forever. For God had done a new thing.**

For the angels had rolled the stone away, and God raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus in his resurrection body was not there.

They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the

ground, but the angels said to them, **"Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' "** Then they remembered his words.

The angels were trying to tell them that Jesus had been raised from the dead, just as he said he would.

They ran with all fury and fear to the others.

What do you do when the things of nature have been sidestepped by God? It is simple, when you die, you stay dead. Air leaves the lungs, the heart stops beating, the brain ceases its functions, and you die. No amount of technology is going to raise you up. Then add into that being whipped and beaten for hours before you carry your cross up to the top of the hill. Nails have been pounded into your hands and feet. You die. You are laid in a tomb that is sealed with no air for 3 days. I am sorry the prognosis for new life just are not in the cards.

Except that the death of Jesus is not the last word. For death was once the separation from God, now death is the gate to eternal life. For Jesus did not stay dead. He was raised to new life. He defeated death. Death no longer was a factor. No stone could hold him. No cross could defeat him. This wasn't a thing that Jesus did for himself, but for you and me he dies and is resurrected.

In many ways, it would be easier for us all to have the tomb remained sealed and everything goes back to how it was. Dead is dead. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Don't get mad get even, early and often. Death and taxes.

But I don't think God is happy with the way things were and are. God wanted to change things for all time. SO that forgiveness would be life giving. That grief would give way to joy. Sorrow would give way to dancing. This is truly God's weekend and God gladly gives it to us for life. For Jesus did not stay dead, the stone did not stay in place. The angels moved it so that the world could see that the tomb was empty. And that grace was on the loose.

Grace is on the loose. Grace is going to touch the world, one person at a time. But we do find comfort in playing the pity party. We like to wear t-shirts with the words:

**“Be nice to me, I had a hard day.”**

There are days like that, when nothing seems to go the way that you want it to go. Whether it be a dispute with a friend, just being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Maybe your boss is trying to push you to be more creative and all you can think about is the next job and how great that will be. Maybe you are tired beyond measure. We all have days and weeks like that.

But like the disciples we can not live there in those words, because there is no life there. We do get stuck living in Holy Saturday when the Lord remains in the grave. We do get stuck thinking that if we could only do things the right way, then maybe... If we only had said the right words when the phone call came.

I missed an opportunity on Good Friday. It was a telemarketer who called. I answered like I always do:

**“Augustana!”**

The voice on the other end said: **“Can I speak to Mr. Church?”**

I was taken a back for a moment **“Excuse me, who are you looking for?”**

**“I am looking for Mr. Church, is he there?”**

I started to laugh. And I said, **“I am sorry, but he is not here today, thank you.”**

It was only after I hung up that I realized that maybe I had missed a chance to share Jesus with one who didn't know who Jesus is.

Left to ourselves the Lord will always remain in the grave. The cross will be the last word for the evil in this world.

But by the grace of God we are not left to ourselves and Holy Saturday is simply that day that comes before resurrection. Jesus does not stay dead and refuses to leave us alone. He comes to us in those words of the child:

**“How can you tell this early in the morning?”**

In other words, there is a new day a coming. The stone has been rolled away and with it all of the sins and all of the brokenness that we have known in our life. The stone that had gotten between us and Jesus has been rolled away and grace has embraced us for life.

**We decided to let our three-year-old son record the message for our home answering machine. The rehearsals went smoothly: "Mommy and Daddy can't come to the phone right now. If you'll leave your name, phone number, and a brief message, they'll get back to you as soon as possible."**

**Then came the test. I pressed the record button and our son said sweetly, "Mommy and Daddy can't come to the phone right now. If you'll leave your name, phone number, and a brief message, they'll get back to you as soon as Jesus comes."**

The good news is that Jesus is here now in this place and where ever people have gathered in his name. That is the power of resurrection, grace that heals us and brings us together as one family of God whether we are single or married, a son or daughter. God in Jesus Christ loves us simply.

**“The Big Things... Like Lego's”** by Jan Northington , Los Osos, California. IN the book: God Allows U-Turns Promise Press, 2001

Taking our hard days to Jesus is resurrection stuff. It is turning bad days into resurrection days as the stones that separate us are rolled away by the One who conquered death for our sake. By the One who gives us life and forgiveness the ability to live that life in his name.

AMEN