

## Luke 24:1-12

Two children were playing together and half-watching a movie about the life of Jesus on television in the background. One of the children had never heard the story of Jesus, and when it came to the crucifixion scene he became more and more engrossed in the film. His playmate, anxious to resume their game, said matter-of-factly, "Oh, never mind about that. He gets out of it in the end."

He's right, of course. And that is why we are here so early on this Easter morning. That's why white has replaced the black of Good Friday. That's why we are singing "Alleluia's" again. We do not hold our breath through Lent hoping everything turns out okay. We know it does. We've heard the story many times, and the story does not change. So if you want drama, mystery, excitement, Lent and Easter are not for you; there are no surprises here. Jesus suffers, He dies, He rises. There are no twists to the plot here, no breaking news which may alter the outcome. The story is set in stone. The boy was correct..."He gets out of it in the end."

But hasn't that always been the case with God's people? The Israelites were trapped between Pharaoh's army on one side and the Red Sea on the other side. There was no way out of their hopeless situation...no escape. But in the end they get out of it. God parts the waters for them and they walk through on dry ground. When the Philistines come up to conquer Jerusalem with Goliath, their giant of a champion, out in front, again it looks hopeless for God's people. But then young David shows up, takes a stone and slings it into the forehead of the giant and the Philistines run away in defeat. When Daniel is in the den of lions, there appears to be no escape for him, but God's angel closes the lion's mouths and Daniel comes out unharmed.

Story after story in the Bible all tell us the same thing. God's people are threatened; it looks like there is no way out of their desperation; yet, by the hand of God, they get out of it in the end. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace. Jesus' disciples in a boat within the midst of a furious storm. Five thousand hungry people with the only food being five loaves and two fish. And so on, and so on.

Based upon God's track record, it's a wonder those women went to the tomb on that Easter morning with any sadness at all. When had God ever let His people down? In the end He always came through. So why would He fail them now? Why would Jesus' death be the end of everything? Why would God, who had always gotten His people out of the most desperate situations in the past, have no answer for the seeming victory of sin, death, and hell? Those three women should have been skipping all the way to the tomb on Easter morning. For one thing, Jesus had said He would rise. For another, they were God's people, and He makes certain that His people always get out of it in the end.

Aren't you also God's people? Didn't He also bring you out from under Pharaoh by taking you through the Red Sea waters in your baptism? Hasn't He been slaying for you all the Goliaths in your life when they rise up to conquer you? Hasn't He kept the great lion, Satan, at bay and not allowed him to devour you with his lies and temptations? So why did you come here this morning with any worry in the back of your mind at all? Why are the problems in your life gaining the upper hand? Why is sin having its way with you? Friend, God will never let you down. And if the story of Easter does not prove this to you, then look at any story in the history of God's people. They're all the same. It looks hopeless; there's no way out; but God gets His people out of it in the end.

And yet, amazing to say, it wasn't just those three women who seemed to have forgotten this...the men whom Jesus called to be His apostles did too. When the women ran back and told them what the

angels had said, that Jesus had risen, "their words seemed to them an idle tale." Hansel and Gretel, now that's an idle tale. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Cinderella...we call them fairy tales today. And as far as I know there are no churches founded upon these idle tales. There is no Church of Cinderella. No Church of Mary Poppins. Not even a church sporting a big Easter Bunny up high on its steeple. But according to Jesus' disciples, because they reacted to the news of Jesus' resurrection as nothing but a foolish, idle tale, even our church which proclaims the risen Savior would be, to them, just as foolish as a Church of Hansel and Gretel. And based upon this logic, the stories of Moses and the Red Sea, David and Goliath, Daniel in the Lion's Den, and all such stories in the Bible where God's people are victorious in the end, are nothing but idle tales as well.

Why is it that it's so easy to believe bad news, but so very difficult to accept good news? "You have cancer;" "Oh, no, how bad is it?" "Your cancer is gone, you're completely cured;" "No way! I don't believe you!" None of the disciples, except John, were there at the cross when Jesus died. Yet they all accepted the news of His death as true. But when they hear the news that He is alive again, "Nope, nope, it's just an idle tale; I don't believe it."

Now we may be able to believe that God helped His people long ago; that He led the Israelites through the Red Sea; that He saved Daniel from the lions; that all these stories are not idle tales, but we may struggle in believing that we will get out of our own troubles in the end. Hasn't God already played all His trump cards? He may have nothing left in His hand for me. We can even believe that Jesus died and rose again. It may not be an idle tale to us, yet our struggle is with what this means for me. Because we see people who live all around us and they do not get out of it in the end. Friends who die of cancer. Loved ones killed in a car wreck. Our neighbor whose family has fallen apart. Someone dear to us who lost their job and their life's savings. And these are not idle tales. These are the tales of bad news today.

And so how can yesterday's good news affect our lives in a positive way? How can Jesus' resurrection have real meaning for us now? How can the fact that God, in the past, has gotten His people out of it in the end, give us hope for the future? Because He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Whatever situation is in your life right now; whatever your desperation, the truth of Easter is for you and it changes everything. Easter means that the path through the Red Sea to the Promised Land is open for you in Christ. Easter means that no goliath problems in life can overwhelm you and defeat you; Christ is your strength. Easter means that whatever storm you are enduring, there is calmness ahead in Christ Jesus. Easter means that your sins are not able to keep you out of heaven; they are forgiven. Easter means that death and the grave cannot defeat you in the end; Jesus lives for you.

Yes, there are people, those who were God's people, who did not get out of it in the end. Judas ended badly. So did many Israelites who perished in the desert. So did others. But it's not because God was not for them. It's not because He was not on their side. Rather, they left His side. They stopped trusting, stopped listening, stopped believing. For them, God's love and forgiveness became just an idle tale.

But not for you, friend, not for you. Do not leave this Easter message in church today. Take it with you into your life. It's no idle tale. It's your hope and salvation. Believe it, live it, share it. It is good news that you can accept because God is at work in you. You believe because of Him. You live as His people because His Word is in your ears and heart.

One thing I know, everyone of us is facing at least one challenge in life right now. Many of these we cause by our own sinfulness. Many come through no fault of our own. But friend, you're not at the end of your rope yet. The end is found at the empty tomb. Jesus rose again for you. You are forgiven, God says so. Heaven is yours in Christ. In the end you will get out of it. In the end Jesus will call you forth from your grave. In the end your problems today will all be forgotten. You who are God's people, who hear, believe, and live not idle tales, but the truth of Jesus--you are the ones, who for Christ's sake, God will get out of it in the end. Amen. Christ is risen, Alleluia!