



Week of April 22, 2019: Sunday – A Day of Confusion ... and Faith!

Up from the grave He arose,
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes
He arose a Victor from the dark domain,
And He lives forever with His saints to reign.
He arose! He arose!
Hallelujah! Christ arose!

Christ Arose! (Low in the Grave He Lay) by Robert Lowry

Discussion Questions Set #1

“On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. 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 men 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 over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’ ” Then they remembered his words. When [Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them] came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others” ... but the disciples “did not believe the women, because their words seemed like nonsense” (Luke 24:1-11).

The narrative that we are playing with this year was to consider the events of Easter according to a traditional Jewish way of understanding the passing of the day. Because the day was seen as running from sundown to sundown, this likely means that the first Easter Sunday closed with the early followers of Jesus left with an empty tomb, a folded cloth and some strips of linen, and a couple outrageous tales of resurrection from the sketchiest of sources.

1. What has been your common experience of Easter Sunday? Has it been a day of confidence or a day of questioning?
2. How might viewing Easter Sunday as a day of confusion and outrageous resurrection reports change your understanding of the day?
3. How might recognizing doubt and confusion in the earliest followers of Jesus help us interpret our own understanding of the resurrection of Jesus?
4. The Gospel writers take special concern to present a factual account of the resurrection, including offering explanation for contrary reports (the paid testimony of the frightened Roman guards found in Matthew 28:11-15). Why do you think they paid such attention to facts in their record of the events of the resurrection?
5. Though it seems like poetic imagery, the Scriptures reveal that as the sun rose on that ancient Sunday, the Son of Man arose from the dead. What does the resurrection of Jesus mean to your faith?
6. Why does the Apostle Paul say “if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:17)? How does the empty tomb connect with the empty cross?



Discussion Questions Set #2

“Finally, the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)” (John 20:8)

“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” (Hebrews 11:1)

Often Easter Sunday is presented as a day of rock solid conviction and absolute certainty. Nearly 2,000 years later, we can experience it as such, but the first followers of Jesus did not have the luxury we are afforded. Yet Easter Sunday requires a response of faith in both them and us.

1. John entered the tomb, saw the missing body of Jesus and the abandoned strips of linen and believed. Discuss how this scant evidence led to belief.
2. Though we know of the numerous eyewitness accounts of the Risen Christ (more than 500 people in total for context), the incredible historical record of God’s work through the church and we can also understand from Scripture that Christ had to rise from the dead, we still often struggle to believe in the resurrection. Why do you think the resurrection still stands as a questionable reality in our world?
3. If we maintain the resurrection as fact, what necessarily follows from this in terms of our lifestyle?
4. How might an openness to those in the middle of doubt and confusion in regards to the resurrection of Jesus benefit us as a people in Mount Albert?