



## Sermon by Rev Ross Pearce Highfield Road Uniting Church Holy Saturday, March 26, 2016

### Luke 24: 1-12

---

Time and again during that last journey to Jerusalem, Jesus told His disciples that He would be handed over to the authorities, be put to death and be raised again in three days. Why then was it such a surprise to the disciples when it happened? Was it because the disciples just didn't want to hear that their master would die? Was it because it was so unbelievable? Was it the fog of grief that stopped them remembering the words of promise? Or did the cryptic way that Jesus gave the message set the disciples thinking that it was another parable to decipher? Whatever the reason, the resurrection came as a complete surprise. In the question of the angels to the women who went to the tomb early, you can hear that same wonder at their stubborn unbelief; "Why are you looking in the place of the dead for someone who is alive?" From our safe vantage point we can look at the disciples and scoff at their slowness to accept and believe. However, are we any better? The question of the angels still follows the church today. "Why are you looking in the place of the dead for someone who is alive?"

The angels question to the women still rings for us because so many continue to look for Jesus in the place of the dead, the ideas and culture of the dead and the ways and means of old unchanged lives. If we can see the error of the women, in expecting to find Jesus still in the tomb, then why do we continue to seek Jesus in the modes and ideas where He no longer is? So many continue to seek Jesus only as a great teacher who gave us such important life and spiritual lessons but who is now dead. Others continue to seek Jesus as one who lived the perfect life as an example for us, but who died because that sort of life is unacceptable to the powers and authorities. Both these approaches to Jesus are like the women who went to the tomb early in the morning; seeking to honour a dead prophet. Don't seek Him among the dead, Jesus is alive. The teachings He taught are not just dead words in a book to be studied. They are living words to be sought in prayer and contemplation with the living teacher. The life He lived is not just an example of a dead person from the past but a continuing life in the world today, to be sought and followed.

Some seek Jesus through religious practice, following a set of rules and guides or offerings and fasting. Don't seek Him among the dead, Jesus is alive. Implicit in the message of new life is a renewal of worship and devotion; in the Risen Lord Jesus all is made new. Christian worship, as expressed in the Lord's Supper and assembly on the Lord's Day, that is Sunday instead of Saturday, was new and unique even if the worshippers still referred

back to Psalms and scripture. That calls to us to be seeking Him now. Seeking Him in relevant forms of language and worship; seeking Him in active service to the outcasts of this generation, and seeking Him in Word and Sacrament released from the wrappings of culture.

The resurrection was such a surprise to the disciples, and so hard to believe because they were locked into their ideas of God, worship and faith. That remains true to today; the resurrection was and is surprising and unbelievable. We become locked into our ideas of God, worship and faith and don't expect new life. Isaiah told the people "do not consider the things of old; look, I am about to do a new thing." The truth of Jesus as Lord and Christ remains to be found not among the dead; for He is alive!