

Easter  
April 16, 2017

Tom Kraft: Introduce Stations of the Cross

**Congregational Prayer: Identify with the sufferings of Christ.**

**Sermon: “Why do you look for the living among the dead?”**

Thankful for baseball season, very thankful the Caps are in the playoffs but I grew up with mainly football and I am Kind of missing football. In the 9<sup>th</sup> grade I was the worst football player on the team. Never got in one play all year. That terrible season, served as the catalyst for a lifetime of exercise.

but it reminds me of another story regarding the worst player on a team. Once you have been the worst and clueless player, you never want to, be that person again.

Once in desperation a coach, asked the worst player to go out there and get mean and tough.

The worst player who was also a bit clueless, said, Yes Sir, but which one is mean and which one is tough.

Clueless Football players can misunderstand coach’s instructions, and if we are honest we are sometimes clueless followers of Jesus and we can also.

We know Jesus is risen, but we seek him among the dead.  
We know he has risen, but we remain depressed about our lives.

We know God raised Jesus from the dead, and we are saved, but we misunderstand his commands.

To go out and get bold and preach the gospel,

We may be praying, and saying, okay, but who is bold and who is preach.

Today is less about being instructed as being asked a question.

Questions promote self-discovery and will move us from being clueless to being full of wisdom.

Very few of us enjoy having others tell us what to do or how to believe.

Knowing this, today's message will be repeating the question the angels asked the first human beings to witness the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Let us stand for the reading, and open your heart and mind, not to be told how to think and believe, but be asked a question and for your own mind to come to its conclusion.

“Why do you look for the living among the dead?”

### **Scripture:**

Luke 24:

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. 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. 5 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? 6 He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 7 **‘The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’**” 8 Then they remembered his words.

9 When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. 10 It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the

apostles. 11But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. 12Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

Pastor: The word of the Lord

Congregation: Thanks be to God

Prayer: Lord, awaken us, for it is time for us to stop looking for the living among the dead. Forgive us of wandering around in the cemetery of sin, sickness, and failure. Help us step into your resurrection life. May the angels question stir in us, our own self-discovery of the way to eternal life.

It is time for us to ponder to ourselves what happened, and conclude that each of us has a specific mission from God.

It is time for us to live, and live out that mission in resurrection power.

It is time for us to listen to one another as equals and give voice to the resurrection.

Help us turn our attention from the cemeteries of this life. Those place that the devil would want our attention to focus upon. Help us focus no longer on problems, and to focus on the living Word of God, that has revealed the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In Jesus name, amen.

Here is the question, followed by a direct communication.

**“Why do you look for the living among the dead? 6He is not here; he has risen!**

Truly, it’s time for us to stop looking for the living among the dead. It’s time for us to stop wandering around in the cemetery of sin, sickness and failure and to step into resurrection life!

The Sabbath was, of course, the seventh day so that *the first day of the week* was our Sunday. This is why we worship on Sunday. Jesus resurrection on Sunday, for us, is the key to knowing when is the best day to worship. But also, because he rose on the first day, sanctified every day, so any and every day is good.

The Sabbath would have ended at sunset on the Saturday, but little could be done during the hours of darkness. So the women were astir early on Sunday and they set off for the tomb 'at the crack of dawn. 30 minutes before actual dawn there is plenty of light to navigate. My guess is they got up way before dawn, had their breakfast, drank their coffee, prepared for the day, met at a pre-arranged location and were on their way at least 30 minutes before dawn. They had to swallow their fear, as defenseless women going out to a contingent of unredeemed, Roman Male Soldiers who had little regard for the rights of Israeli women, and they treated them as potential slaves.

Let us realize how much fear the ladies had to overcome and to boldly go face a contingent of male Roman soldiers.

That they took with them *the spices* shows that they had in mind the completion of Jesus' burial.

### **What are the ladies talking about on their way at the crack of dawn?**

It wasn't the Roman men that were their concerns. The bible says they discussed the problem of moving the heavy stone from the mouth of the tomb. It is not correct to say, that problem solving is only a male thing. Women have been solving problems a very long time.

What they didn't know is, the problem of moving the heavy stone away from the mouth of the tomb had already been solved.

Think about how many times you are thinking about problems that have already been solved.

**“Why do you look for the living among the dead problems? 6He is not there; he has risen!**

When they arrived they found it already *rolled away*.

When later on the beloved disciple came to the tomb he was very hesitant about entering it (John 20:5), but the women had no such hesitation.

Why hesitate any longer to fully embrace the resurrection life of Jesus. Enter in.

When the ladies went in, however, *they did not find the body*.

On these ladies, let us pause and think a bit. They are also mentioned in Luke 8:2

**and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.**

The rabbis refused to teach women and generally assigned them a very inferior place. But Jesus freely admitted them into fellowship, as on this occasion, and accepted their service.

First to be mentioned in Lu. 8:2 and in the resurrection account is *Mary, called Magdalene* (a place-name, meaning 'of Magdala', i.e. 'The Tower').

The Christian imagination has made free with Mary Magdalene, mostly seeing her as a beautiful woman whom Jesus had saved from an immoral life. The very popular book and movie, the Da Vinci Code wrongly asserts that she was the girlfriend and wife of Jesus, whom together bore a child.

There is nothing whatever in the sources to indicate this.

**“Why do you look for the living among the dead imaginations of one's mind? He is not there; he has risen!**

The women at the tomb was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others.

*Mary Magdalene*, according to Mk 16:9 was the first to see the risen Lord and is mentioned in each of the four Gospels in the resurrection narrative. But apart from her connection with the crucifixion and resurrection we hear of her only in Luke 8:2 as noted.

They, as representations of the female gender are to be imagined as the first preachers, the first proclaimers of the good news of Jesus.

My own sense of the gift of prophecy is:

**Women will be the catalyst for the next great awakening.**

Hear me, ladies; you may be being called upon to lead us into the next great awakening. Men, we may need to decrease, we may need to get out of the way, and give space to our ladies.

Men, if you struggle with imaginations of women, that are less than exemplary, you will miss the next great awakening.

**“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!**

Women, if you look upon other women in a less than exemplary way, you will miss the great awakening to come.

May you not be the woman who puts down other women who are arising as leaders.

Our own District Supt., had a dream, in which he felt the Lord say,

Everything changed when the women prayed. It is forming the catalyst for the Everything Changed Prayer tour of which Brenda was like, the Apostle who started and led the first one.

Instead of talking about things changing, why don't we start praying for change?

Could it be the Holy Spirit is calling the women of this congregation, to pray

and study the Word, and become the proclaimers of the good news of Jesus?

I think so. Men, make space for the women in your life to pray and study the Word so they may proclaim the good news of Jesus.

Even if that means, you do those things that the traditional male dominated household typically delegates to the women.

Men, we may be called upon to decrease, so that our ladies can increase.

Even if that means, empowering the women in your household, to do all the things you do. To literally bring her out of the dark on everything that relates to ones marriage partnership.

Men, treat your wife as the equal she is, and bring her out of any darkness about anything in your household, your vehicles, your finances, anything, and everything.

May everyone lay to rest in a grave the false notion that women are less than men.

That women are objects.

That women are servants to male passions.

That women deserve whatever mistreatment they get.

That is dead, and why seek the living among the dead.

**“Why do you look for the living among the dead? 6He is not here; he has risen!**

The women at the tomb are described as being ‘utterly at a loss’ (NEB) the NIV says they were wondering about this. The wondering was negative, and went to a dark place. They saw the empty tomb, but could only wonder in the negative.

**They were seeing good news, but could only see bad news.**

Think about it. They were seeing good news, but could only see bad news.

Everything had changed for the good, but they could only see and wonder in a negative way.

It is a dead form of thinking to automatically go negative with one's wondering. The good news is that in a relationship with God, God can work even something bad for your good.

May God help us have eyes that don't automatically default to something negative. They were seeing the empty tomb, but didn't have a renewed mind of the possibility of a resurrection.

Grade yourself. If over half the times of life when you see something, and you go negative, maybe, just maybe you need to hear the angels ask you the question.

**“Why do you look for the living among the dead imaginations that go negative? He is not here; he has risen!”**

The *two men* who now stood there *in* clothes that gleamed like lightning are evidently to be understood as angels.

Matthew's gospel speaks of one angel who rolled the stone away and also spoke to the women.

Mark's gospel refers to a young man in a white robe whom they saw after they entered the tomb.

John's gospel mentions two angels in white who spoke to Mary Magdalene.

It is clear that all these refer to angels. The fact that sometimes we hear of one and sometimes of two need not concern us.

One explanation is that a spokesman is more prominent than his associates and may be referred to without mention of others.

Neither should we be greatly concerned that the angels may be sitting (in John) or standing in Luke, nor that their words are not identical in the various accounts.

It is hypercriticism that does not allow angels to change their position, and there is no reason for thinking that they spoke once only.

Moreover John's gospel speaks of them in connection with a different incident.

The accounts of the angels are independent.

Further, with angels spiritual perception is presumably required and all may not have seen the same thing.

The reaction of the women was fear. Bowing *their faces to the ground* was a mark of respect in the presence of such great ones.

The angels first asked, *Why do you seek the living among the dead?* This startling question gets to the root of the matter immediately. Jesus is not to be thought of as dead: therefore he is not to be sought among the dead.

The NIV, though very great in many ways, makes it sound a bit different than the original intent.

“he has risen! Is passive, and is better understood as ‘has been raised’ (*ēgerthē*), points to the truth that the Father raised him.

Romans 10:9 emphasizes how important this is.

**If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.**

Here is a dead thought to let die.

Jesus in his own power raised himself up.

Another thought is, we, in our own power should raise ourselves up.

The American cliché, pull yourselves up by your bootstraps, is counter to this.

When we are beat down, and we will be beat down. Jesus promised we would face persecution, and trouble and distress. Let it not trouble you

when trouble comes.

Prepare yourself for trouble by the same way Jesus prepared himself, Prayer, agonizing, gut wrenching, blood producing prayer, like the garden of Gethsemane prayer.

Let God raise you up, and when God raises you up, you will truly be resurrected.

We all have this strong will thing, going, and it's a good thing, but it like all good things can become corrupted.

Every now and then, put yourself willingly on various fasts, including fasting your good and strong will, and surrender to it, and yield to the resurrection power of God's will.

Once you do, it is almost with reluctance that you are raised up.

You die so much to an issue, that it is okay. Once God raises you up from that dead issue, it is with hesitation, and a bit of reluctance to go with it.

Listen, we don't believe Jesus, exercised his divinity on earth, or in death, or at his resurrection, nor will he exercise it to choose when he returns to earth in power and glory.

It is the Father, who raised Jesus from the dead.

It is the Father who will raise us up for that which we die to.

It is the Father who will send Jesus back to planet earth, to bring all wrong into right, and the execute justice to all injustice.

Ephesians 1 backs this up.

**that power is the same as the mighty strength 20he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22And God placed all things**

**under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, <sup>23</sup>which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.**

We are his body, and we are raised with Christ, far above all rule and authority of this earth.

**“Why do you look for the living among the dead? <sup>6</sup>He is not here; he has risen!**

The angels go on to remind the women that this was in accordance with Jesus’ prediction while he was still in Galilee.

The women at the tomb had their ah-hah moment.

They remembered and evidently this brought some measure of conviction to them. They had heard the words before, but Jesus had often spoken metaphorically and they had probably taken the strange words about resurrection in some such way. Now they saw that Jesus had intended them to be taken literally. The women went off to *the eleven* with their news and they told it also to *all the rest*, i.e. the other followers of Jesus in the locality.

But the lordly males were not impressed. Men, let us not be lordly. Pride precedes a fall.

They thought the story ‘nonsense’ (NEB), *and they did not believe them*. The apostles were not men poised on the brink of belief and needing only the shadow of an excuse before launching forth into a proclamation of resurrection. They were utterly skeptical.

Even when women they knew well told them of their experiences, they refused to believe.

Let it not detract us from sharing the good news of Jesus’ resurrection when lordly males are not impressed.

There is hope, so let us keep sharing.

**11But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. 12Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb.**

We can be certain, that others will also not believe, because our words seem to be like nonsense.

But there is always hope for the one, who like Peter,

**“got up and ran to the tomb”**

Let us get up, and worship at the empty tomb, for he is risen.

Are you ready to get up and worship?

**Are you ready to stop looking for the living among the dead? 6He is not there; he has risen!**

**We are raised, also, and sit with him in the heavenly places.**

**You have been asked a question, and if you have an ah hah moment, a self discovery of something dead you need to stop seeking, and stop serving, then as you worship, make the choice and make the change.**

**In Jesus name.**

**Worship Team:**