

A New Way of Being

Luke 24:1-12

The Resurrection of Our Lord, March 27, 2016

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

Some people believe that the ancients were more gullible than we are. That is how some people explain the record of miracles in the Bible. They say that the ancients were more gullible than we are. They say that the ancients observed natural phenomena with which they were unfamiliar and assigned a supernatural explanation to it. Such people contend that if the ancients had lived nowadays and had observed the exact same phenomena, they would have not called them miracles. Such people contend that the ancients would have seen them as they really are: natural phenomena.

Such people who make this argument are trying to explain why the Bible would have so many accounts of miracles in it. Such people look at the phenomena of our world today and they do not see miracles anywhere. Since they do not see miracles anywhere, they argue that miracles do not in fact happen. If miracles do not in fact happen, they say, then the miracles that are recorded in the Bible did not happen either. If the miracles did not happen in the Bible they have to explain why the Bible records miracles that happened. Their explanation is that the ancients were more gullible than we are. They believe in the supernatural and when something happened that they could not explain, they assigned a supernatural explanation to it and that is what got recorded in the Bible. Or they will say that something natural happened and as the account of the event got retold later ancients who believed in the supernatural added the supernatural element to the account.

This is why you have documentaries on TV giving natural explanations for the miracles in the Scripture. This is why books have been written giving natural explanations for the miracles of the Bible.

Such a position is arrogant. It is arrogant to assume that we are more enlightened and more intelligent than our forebears. It is arrogant for us to assume that we are smarter and more honest than they were. While our technological prowess may have increased, there are still some technologies that the ancients possessed that we have lost. In some areas they were smarter than we are now. We look at the things that they left behind and we cannot figure out how they did it without a crane and a big truck. And when it comes to the enlightenment of mankind little has changed since ancient times. We are still as honest and as dishonest as we always were. We still make mistakes and don't make mistakes as much as we always did. Our testimony is as accurate and inaccurate as it always was. How can we possibly say that we know more about what the ancients say that they saw than the ancients themselves?

And when it comes to the resurrection of our Lord from the dead, the ancients demonstrate that they are no different from us. Luke's account demonstrates this.

Given all of the hoopla and celebration that we Christians assign to this even today, you would think that the apostles would have received the message of the women that the Lord had been raised with a little more enthusiasm than they did. Our Lord had predicted His resurrection on several occasions. They had heard Jesus teach about the resurrection numerous times. You would think that when the women came back and told them that the stone was rolled away from the tomb of the Lord, His body was gone, and that they had seen men in dazzling clothing tell them that He was not among the dead but rather among the living because He had been raised that the apostles would have been a little more joyful than they were. At least they should have been relieved.

After all the resurrection exonerates their devotion to Jesus, doesn't it? They had followed Jesus all over the place. They had left their homes and their livelihoods to follow Him. They had preached in

His Name and even the demons submitted to them in His name. When He was crucified all of that would have been called into question. It would seem now that He is crucified that all of their effort was for nothing. It would seem that they were fools to have left their daily vocation to follow the preacher from Nazareth. They had brought shame upon themselves by believing in this man and that He would bring glory to Israel and now He was dead. Now, you would think that when the women brought them news of His resurrection that they would have received it a little better than they did. After all now their faith is exonerated. Now they can prove that they did not waste their time by leaving their homes and vocations to follow Jesus. Now they can go around and preach in His name again. Now everything that Jesus had preached to them made sense. The predictions of Jesus and the prophets had been fulfilled. Let us have some joy around here, right!

But the apostles do not do that. They are not gullible. They know that people do not rise from the dead. They do not assign a supernatural explanation for what the women were telling them. They assigned a natural one. The words of the women seemed like nonsense to them.

Peter goes out to the tomb to check it out. Luke does not tell us what was going through Peter's mind when he went to the tomb, but it could have easily been to check the women's story to see whether or not they had made a mistake. If one of you had told me, that one of your loved ones rose from the dead, I would check the grave to see whether or not you had lost your mind. I would want to see whether or not you were mistaken. As a modern person I would go to the grave confident that you were wrong. Peter easily could have gone for that reason. The women are mad, let us prove it to them so that they do not bring further shame upon us beyond the shame that we are already enduring.

Peter gets there and sees the linen cloths in which his Lord's body had been wrapped. He marvels at it and that is all. He still does not believe.

The ancients were not gullible. They knew that people do not rise from the dead. They know that people do not rise from the dead as much as we know that people do not rise from the dead. That is why prior to our Lord's death whenever He predicted His own resurrection the disciples and apostles do not understand what He is saying to them. Luke records that the meaning was hidden from them. Of course the meaning is hidden from them! People do not rise from the dead, so when our Lord prophesies about His own resurrection there is no category in which to put those statements. People do not rise, therefore He cannot rise. They must have concluded that Jesus was talking about some deep thing that no one could understand, but that He would explain in due time. They must have concluded that some things that the Lord said did not make sense, but had some deep spiritual meaning that if they tried really hard and studied really hard and thought really hard they could figure it out.

They are the same as us. Or to put it another way, we are no different from them. We do not operate with resurrection as a routine part of our lives. We live as if only this life matters and there is nothing to come. We live as if we need to get and accumulate as much as we can so that we can save up for our retirement. After all, don't we have to save up for our retirement? We live as if our retirement is the goal of our existence and there is nothing beyond it. We are desperate to have our medical procedures work. We want as much money and resources devoted to our health care as we can muster. We want to be able to live the way that we want to live and we want to do so without consequences, but when our life is on the line we want an answer. We want the surgery, the pill, the whatever it is that will solve this problem. We are distraught when there is nothing past the problem. We are distraught when the diagnosis is terminal. We live as if there is nothing beyond this life. After all, we can see this life. We can see the cemetery south of the church. We know that no one so far has come back from there or from any other cemetery that we have seen and so we assume that there is nothing past the grave. We assume that

the funeral director is right when he puts it in our funeral notice, "Final resting place," and lists the name of our cemetery.

We despair when something bad happened to us for an extended period of time. We despair when we wasted twenty years of our life on a failed marriage. We despair because we are no longer young looking and we cannot go back and be twenty again. We despair when we have wasted twenty years of our life waiting for a child. We despair we find that we have wasted ten or thirty years of our life in a vocation that went absolutely nowhere. We despair when after working at a place for ten years then suddenly that vocation is taken away. We despair when the investments that we made over the long haul are lost because the economy went bad. We despair over these things because we are mortal. We despair when we cannot get ahead. We despair over these things because we are mortal. We will die and we figure that this is the only life that we have and because we figure that this is the only life that we have we despair over these and similar events which take huge chunks of our life and render them worthless. If we honestly believed in a resurrection and the possibility of our own resurrection, then we would put our faith in the One who was first raised from the dead and not worry about anything that happens to us. Let me say that again, if we honestly believed that we would rise from the dead and live forever then we would despair over nothing, we would worry over nothing, we would have anxiety over nothing, because we would know that we will rise from the dead and all will be well. Because Jesus lives, you are going to live also. You are going to rise from the dead and live forever, it, whatever happens to be, it is going to be ok.

The ancients are not gullible. We are not smarter than they were. They are just like us and we like them. Someone tells us about the resurrection of Jesus and it seems like nonsense to us.

But they wound up believing it anyway! They wound up believing it anyway! They wound up believing it anyway because the Lord Jesus appeared to them. If ever there was a reason to keep going to Divine Service the next few Sundays this is it! In the next few Sundays Luke and John will report to us the accounts of our Lord's appearances to the apostles. He will allow them to touch His hands and side to make sure that it really is Him. In other words He will allow them to examine the evidence of His crucifixion so that they may know that it really is the crucified One that they are beholding. They will be able to examine him to see that He is not a ghost. Our Lord did not rise from the dead some kind of spirit. He bodily returned to life. They will see that death is defeated and conquered in a real way and not in some kind of imaginary, spiritual, or Platonic way. When the undeniable evidence is before them, then they will believe. Jesus will eat with them and converse with them and resume instruction of them. They will know that the creation has been forever altered by His coming and His resurrection. They will know that the final resurrection of the dead and the final restoration of all of the creation is only a matter of time. They will be motivated to proclaim that good news to everyone. They will even give their lives rather than relinquish their confidence in the Lord Jesus and their vocation to preach it. And mark that last bit closely, they gave up their lives rather than relinquish their confidence in the risen Lord Jesus and their vocations to proclaim it to all of the nations.

These men are no different than you except for one thing, they are the eyewitnesses to the evidence of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. They have given their lives to present it to you. It is now yours. The creation has been reorganized Christ is risen from the dead. If they in spite of the fact that they had no category for a risen from the dead guy, believed that He rose because they saw Him, why not you when you receive their testimony?

Jesus is risen from the dead. The creation has been remade. It has been forever altered. People used to die and stay that way and even if one should be raised, they did not stay raised for long. Now we

have a person who died and rose and stayed that way. Death no longer has mastery over Him. He cannot die again. And the creation is forever altered because of it.

The creation used to be one that was permanently cursed by death. No one could escape it. Now it is a place where death has been escaped. Death is now no longer this permanent thing that it once was. And since the curse of death was caused by our unbelieving and doubting hearts, His resurrection means that our unbelief has also been conquered. Our sins have been forgiven. The new creation is now only a matter of time. The final conquest of death is now unavoidable. The final perfection of our nature is already under way by the power of the Spirit and things will only get better from here.

Even in the face of your misery, even in the face of a world that gets worse and worse, even in the face of your own death, the resurrection of Jesus still stands and it stands for you. He promises that you will rise even as He is risen. Your grave is not your final resting place. Being a sinner is not your final lifestyle. You will rise perfected and glorified like He is.

Now, people, as for the miracles that the Bible records, if God can raise the dead, He can do anything. Now that Jesus rose from the dead the miracles of the Bible are easy. Healing the sick and making the blind see, child's play! Commanding the wind and the waves and changing water into wine, piece of cake! Parting the sea in the Old Testament or sending plagues against Pharaoh, we don't need natural explanations for those things, the one who raises the dead can do anything. He can even raise you. He can even forgive you of everything. And He has promised in the resurrection of Jesus that He will do so.

And so now you have a new category to think in. Your Lord has opened a new way of thinking in your hearts and in your minds. He has given a new way of living. It is a way of living where you look forward to your own resurrection and eternal life visibly before the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the New Heaven and the New Earth that the Lord will create for you to inhabit.

You have all of everlasting life to look forward to. When you live this life, look forward to that one. It is real and it is coming. The resurrection of Jesus confirms it.

Jesus has therefore not simply given you a new way of thinking. He has given you a new way of living. Look for the miracles, they are there. Look for the new life. It is coming. Live your life in view of these realities that Jesus has opened for you.

This is the new life that He has given to you. Go live it.

Christ is risen! Amen.