

Luke 24:1-11

Easter

April 19, 1992

*But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. 2They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3but when they went in, they did not find the body. 4While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. 5The women were terrified and bowed 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, but has risen. 6Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, 7that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." 8Then they remembered his words, 9and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. 10Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. 11But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. 12But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.*

He came on the wrong day. He came to help the poor on the wrong day. Karen, our church secretary said to him, "You still get points for showing up!"

And he said, "No one's watching."

I heard her say, "I believe God is watching."

And he responded, "I've seen too much in this world to believe that. How people treat people, the kind of things that have been done in the church. No one's watching."

Friday it had turned dark. For three hours there was no light at all the scriptures say. Friday as Jesus was suffering mocking voices cried, "He trusts in God, let God deliver him now, if he wants to, for he said, I am God's Son." Their killing him, their mocking him proclaimed, "No one is watching, Jesus. No one."

But Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

To a robber, crucified with him he had said, "Today you will be with me in paradise."

And as he died he cried out, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."

Though crucifiers and mockers and even all the world might believe no one was watching, Jesus spoke to the watching one in faith.

A night and a day and a night had passed. Now the crosses were no longer standing there on Golgotha. The crowds who had returned home and had taken their sabbath rest. While the world was still asleep, women who had watched Jesus' crucifixion from afar, came to the tomb. They came to lovingly care for a corpse.

But the stone was rolled away from the tomb, and in the tomb there was no body. The sight of angels greeted their eyes; their ears heard the words, "*Why do you seek the living*

*among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." And the women remembered his words.*

Someone is watching and hearing and raising Jesus from the dead.

The one Jesus calls Father was watching and heard Jesus every word and raised Jesus from the dead.

At first many did not believe. Peter and the other apostles thought it an idle tale, at first. And two men walking on the road to Emmaus were perplexed as they heard of the tomb being empty. And a man named Saul greeted this news of Jesus being raised from the dead by seeking to silence everyone who spoke it.

Their doubt is not hard to understand. Wars and floods and earthquakes, the good dying young while liars and cheats and adulterers live to a ripe old age, deceivers rising to the top while simple honest folks are crushed, all of that is a lot of evidence against the watchful care of God. And Jesus' dying: the most telling evidence of all.

He had done nothing but love - where Jesus went the lame walked, the hungry were fed, the outcasts were welcomed. Yet Jesus suffered and died.

But one by one the doubters became believers. Peter and Thomas and Paul. Jesus is alive became their word. Jesus is Lord, my Lord, our Lord.

As I heard the words, "No one is watching," suddenly I was the one in the empty tomb. Is Jesus alive? Does he hear my every prayer? Does he endlessly plead for me, and guard me from temptation? Do I believe that he is watching, when I am awake, or asleep, hearing my every word, seeing my every deed?

I believe God did raise Jesus from the dead. I believe that every word and every deed and every moment is tenderly watched by him. I believe that neither sin, nor death nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from his eternal love for us.

I hope you believe that too, with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your life.

Once Jesus told a story: A man had two sons: he went to the first and said, "Son, go work in the vineyard today." He answered: "I will not." but later he changed his mind and went. The father went to the second and said the same, and he answered, "I go sir," but did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?

I think of the man whose words said, “No one is watching,” but whose deed was an act of faith: helping the poor.

I think of the times we in the church have cried, “He is risen,” and then have lived as if he is not.

Jesus is risen. Faith began there. “Jesus is Lord,” the first witnesses of the resurrection confessed. “Jesus is my Lord,” they lived with their lives.

He is risen, he is Lord, now! Let him be the Lord of your days and your deeds.

He is watching.