

Easter Sunday  
Wicker Park Lutheran Church  
The Rev. Jason S. Glombicki  
April 21, 2019

It all began with an investigation – an investigation into what *really* happened. It explored interference, witnesses, and the results. In the end, we received a report; in fact, we receive multiple reports. But, today we'll talk about just one of those reports – the Lukan Report.

In this report from Luke, we get an overview of what happened. It alludes to historic happenings and, like all reports; it also presents the information with specific emphases. The Lukan Report, details countless unbelievable stories. Stories of a mother, named Mary, who raised a son, named Jesus. She taught this boy about their people's history where the Source of all that is, a.k.a. God, brings down the powerful and sends them away with nothing. The Source pays most attention to those in need – those who are hungry, poor, and vulnerable (Luke 1). The Lukan Story tells how Jesus embraced this ideology and was almost killed in his home town of Nazareth (Luke 4:16-30). But, this didn't stop this thirty-year-old; for, Jesus engaged in story-after-story of turning ordinary situations into something extraordinarily different – a mostly-dead twelve-year-old was restored to life (Luke 8:40-56), a differently-abled man was healed on a day when no work should have been done (Luke 6:6-11), a military man's beloved slave was restored to health (Luke 7:1-10), and a widow's son was brought back to life to help care for his mother (Luke 7:11-17). So, after reading the full Lukan Report, I don't understand the incident we read today in the gospel.

Let's take a quick poll: Who had heard about today's incident before I read it? We heard that a group of women went to help Jesus's rotting body smell a wee-bit better. After having seen where it was laid two days earlier, they couldn't find the body. Instead, two men were there, and they told the ladies to *remember* what Jesus said. Then, the ladies remembered. They remembered all of the out-of-the-ordinary things Jesus said and did. So, they went to tell the disciples, but the disciples were dismissive. Luke reports that, to the disciples, the women's words seemed an "idle tale, and they did not believe them."

I can imagine one disciple rolling his eyes at the women and, with *that* condescending tone with a dash of mansplaining, saying "Sweetie, let me tell you about how death works." But, it gets worse if we translate the phrase "idle tale" more directly from Greek, because then we'd discover that the women are called crazy, nuts, and full of utter nonsense.<sup>1</sup> On top of that, the phrase "idle tale" is typically a descriptor for the rantings of a person suffering from delirium.<sup>2</sup> Even if the disciples didn't believe the women, did they need to be so harsh to a whole group of women reporting the same experience?

Let's not forget that Luke stated that these women financially supported Jesus's ministry (Luke 8), these women saw Jesus's crucifixion (23:49), and they watched the disposal of his corpse (23:55). These women *knew* Jesus's ministry, and were trusted disciples. So, when the women were asked by two strange men to remember, they vividly recalled how Jesus consistently took the status quo and inverted it. Then, they applied that inversion to what we often think is the only sure thing in life, namely death. So, when the disciples heard this story, why didn't they take the women's

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?post=2498>

<sup>2</sup> Robbins, Gregory A. "Luke 24:1-12 – Exegetical Perspective." *Feasting on the Word: Year C Vol 2*. p 351.

experience seriously? I don't fully understand the disciples' response, but at the same time, I entirely get it.

How often do we ignore or forget the long history of our God favoring the poor, the powerless, and the vulnerable? How many times has God done something new but we dismiss it as an "idle tale?" How often do we act like those disciples – rejecting the experiences of vulnerable groups?

How about when we dismiss women's accounts of sexual harassment as simply "locker room talk?"<sup>3</sup> How about when we limit God's activity and leadership within the church solely to straight men? How about when we tell People of Color that they overreact and spin "idle tales" when speaking of systemic racism and unjust power dynamics? How about the many direct and indirect ways we participate in victim shaming, sexism, child abuse, heterosexism, xenophobia, racism, nationalism, ableism, and any number of ways that devalues God's beloved creation?

But here's the thing: resurrection happens each day that we partner with God to take the "idle tale" of God's impossible love and work with God to embrace that it is a "tale of truth." So, when the church acknowledges the "idle tale" of Christianity's harmful history of colonialism and the crusades, we help to sow the seeds of resurrection as we work toward healing.<sup>4</sup> When we accept the "idle tale" that nationalism is harmful to all of God's humanity, we nurture the seeds of resurrection in our care for all humanity. When we embrace that "idle tale" that our political views are not the only "right way," then we fertilize the seeds of resurrection in our work

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<sup>3</sup> See the ELCA Social Statement on Gender-based Violence [http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Gender Based Violence SM.pdf? ga=2.70725008.1868627169.1555545032-1713851513.1524423713](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Gender%20Based%20Violence%20SM.pdf?ga=2.70725008.1868627169.1555545032-1713851513.1524423713)

<sup>4</sup> See some examples of the harm done in the name of Christianity: <https://christianhegemony.org/the-doctrine-of-discovery-manifest-destiny-and-american-exceptionalism> and <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/wwjtd/2014/05/40-harmful-effects-of-christianity/>

for the good of all. And, when we accept the “idle tale” that hunger is caused by inequality and not scarcity, then resurrection will bloom as we share our abundance.<sup>5</sup>

For, you and I would not be here today if people didn’t give those women’s “idle tale” a real chance. And that’s the thing about how our God works, it’s often in those unexpected nooks and crannies with the least likely of people. Our God will work with or without you, because that is the powerful story of God’s resurrection. Because, even when political might and popular opinion were conclusive in crucifying an ideology of love for all people, God’s vision for the world could not and will not be held back, even by the one thing we believe to be absolutely certain, that is death.

So, there it is: the Lukan Report gives us a hearty meal, and we haven’t even eaten brunch yet! The Lukan Report doesn’t ask us to binge on fake news and false reports, but maybe, just maybe, the Lukan Report invites us to recall God’s nature, to acknowledge the divinity in all of creation, and to seek God in the unexpected. Because resurrection is not only about what happened 2,000 years ago, but it’s much more about the ways we partner with God to experience resurrection today.<sup>6</sup> <sup>7</sup> For, when we are open to experiencing another’s truth and hold it with God’s focus to care for all of creation, then we too might experience eternal life. For, Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.globalhungerindex.org/issues-in-focus/2017.html> and [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/world-hunger\\_n\\_1463429](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/world-hunger_n_1463429)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/carlgregg/2012/03/practice-resurrection-progressive-christian-theology-for-easter/>

<sup>7</sup> For more examples of resurrection practices, see: <https://www.beliefnet.com/faiths/galleries/12-ways-to-practice-resurrection-now.aspx>