

## **Nonsense!**

Luke 24:1-11

April 4, 2010

Nonsense! That's what the apostles thought of the report Mary and Joanna and the other women brought them. Nonsense!

After all, they were ... men! Battle-tested, clear-headed, feet-on-the-ground men! They were Jesus' hand-picked men, men who had left homes and families and livelihoods to go with him, traveling the countryside of Galilee with him, ministering to needs of the poor and the sick with him, standing shoulder-to-shoulder with him in the face of the bitter antagonism of the religious establishment.

They knew him. They knew his message. They were there! They had pinned all their hopes on him. They had put themselves -- all they were and all they had -- at his disposal for the sake of the future he promised them. And now he was gone and it was all in shambles.

They could not understand why he insisted on going to Jerusalem for Passover in the first place. Not this year! Not now! They knew what would happen.

They were encouraged by the exuberant reception he received when they first entered the city. At least he had the backing of the people. But how quickly things changed. How quickly public opinion soured. How quickly the Temple officials seized their opportunity, railroading him through the courts until they got the death sentence they wanted. How quickly they, his apostles, were relegated to the sidelines, mere onlookers to the drama unfolding before them, watchful too lest they be caught up in the purge.

They were grieving his death and probably feeling more than a little sorry for themselves. But they were surely filled with other feelings, too: anger, directed at those who had conspired to kill Jesus and at those who failed to show him support; shame, at their own failures, their own cowardice, when Jesus needed them most; perhaps even bitterness, bitterness directed at Jesus. They may have abandoned him, but just as surely he had abandoned them!

And now, these women, rubbing salt in their wounds, running to them with this preposterous story! OK, what did you say you found? Nothing? You found nothing? And what did you see? Two men -- you are sure they were men? Two men in bright shining clothes? Bright shining clothes? Really!

And what did you say you were told? He is not here. He has been raised. Raised to life? What does that mean? Did you see him? No? All you have to go on is what you say you heard from two men in shiny clothes? Are you making this up?

They are just women, impressionable women, hearing what they want to hear, believing what they want to believe. What is is and no amount of wishing is going to change the facts. This is nonsense!

That was the judgment of the apostles. And that might have been the end of it. Those who had most reason to wish the story were true disbelieved it. They were not looking for signs, hoping for a miracle, expecting any ending to Jesus' story different from the horrible death they had just witnessed. History might have remembered the story of a resurrected Jesus, if at all, as a silly wife's tale, a rumor run wild, an hallucination borne out of great emotional distress.

That might have been the end of it ... were it not true!

*He is not here; he has been raised.*

It's true! It's true. Because it is true, the story didn't go away. Because it is true, the story could not be disproved or suppressed. Because it is true, the slow to believe apostles became its staunchest defenders. Because it is true, the living Jesus continues to change hearts and minds and make us into people fit for heaven, fit for a heaven that is not nonsense, not an ethereal place out there somewhere, not a imaginative projection of wishful thinking, but a heaven that is real, tangible, desirable, here, a heaven on earth, an earth made new, a humanity made new, us, raised to life with Jesus, made to be like Jesus.

He is risen! Risen indeed! Alleluia! Praise be to God!