

Lectionary Gospel Commentaries

By the Rev. Dr. Harry Wendt, Founder of Crossways International

(Sola Publishing, Edited Version © 2023 H. Wendt)



Based on the Lectionary Pericope Covering:

Luke 24:1-12

SOLA-LSB (Lutheran Service Book):
RCL (Revised Common Lectionary):

Year C - Easter Day Service, Text: Luke 24:1-12
Year C - Easter Day Service, Text: Luke 24:1-12

Editor's Note: The following commentary and exposition was written by John B. King, Jr.

To preach on the resurrection account of a particular gospel, we should know how its particular emphasis differs from that of the other accounts. To this end, we will construct a table of the parallel accounts in order to discern the emphasis of Luke's account as a prelude to preaching it. For brevity Mary Magdalene = Mary M.

Table 1. Parallel Resurrection Accounts

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Day and time.	Dawn of 1st day.	Early on 1st day. Sun had arisen.	Early dawn of 1st day.	Predawn of 1st day. Still dark.
Women going to the tomb.	Mary M. and the other Mary.	Mary M., Mary the mother of James, Salome.	Mary M., Mary the mother of James, Joanna, other women.	Mary M.
Moving the stone away.	Earthquake, an angel descends, rolls back stone, sits on stone.	The stone was already rolled away when they arrived.	The stone was already rolled away when they arrived.	The stone was already rolled away when she arrived.
Number of angels.	One	One	Two	Two
Appearance of angels.	Like lightening, clothes white as snow.	Young man in a white robe.	Two young men in dazzling apparel.	Two angels in white.
Location of angels.	On the stone.	In the tomb.	In the tomb.	In the tomb.
Reaction to angels.	Women afraid and joyful. Guards fear.	Women afraid and astonished.	Women afraid.	Mary is sad, not afraid.
Message of angels.	Don't be afraid. Christ is risen as He already told you. See where He lay. He is going to Galilee.	Don't be afraid. Christ is risen. See where they laid Him. He is going to Galilee.	He is risen. Why seek the living among the dead? He told you He would die and then rise on the 3rd day.	Why are you weeping?
Reaction to the women's story.	Matthew does not say.	Women tell no one. So there is no reaction.	The men dismiss the story, but Peter goes to the tomb to see.	Mary reports a theft of Jesus' body. Peter and John go to see.
Evidence of resurrection.	Empty tomb, Jesus' presence with the women.	Empty tomb.	Empty tomb, linen clothes	Empty tomb, linen clothes, Jesus' presence.

From Table 1 we see three primary emphases in Luke's account. First, there are more women as original witnesses to the resurrection. Second, the message of the angels is not only more extensive but also differs in quality. Whereas the angels in Matthew and Mark refer to the *fact* of the resurrection, the angels in Luke also refer to its *theological framework* of meaning. Third, due to their hardness of heart, the disciples dismiss the message of the resurrection given to the women.

The centrality of these themes is witnessed by the fact that the theological framework of Jesus' death and resurrection together with the disciples' skepticism is repeated three times in Luke 24. These repetitions occur in 1) the resurrection account itself, 2) on the road to Emmaus, 3) and in Jesus' appearance to His disciples. We list these repetitions in Table 2.

Table 2. Repetition of Kerygma vs. Doubt in Luke 24

Resurrection Account	Road to Emmaus	Appearance to His Disciples
<p>And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "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 delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." And they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them (Luke 24:5-11).</p>	<p>"Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see." And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself (Luke 24:22-27).</p>	<p>And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have... These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things (v.38-48)."</p>

From Table 2 we see that there are three interacting issues in Luke 24. These are: 1) the fact of the resurrection, 2) its theological framework of meaning, and 3) hardness of heart. In general, there is a reciprocal relationship between facts (or data) and their frameworks (or paradigms) of meaning. On the one hand, contradictory data invalidate frameworks. On the other hand, frameworks give data their meaning. Thus, for Christians the resurrection is a redemptive event, but for those who believe in a chance universe, the resurrection is a random event at best, assuming that they even accept it as a fact.

Prior to Jesus' death and resurrection, it was impossible to understand the Messiah's role in history due to the absence of both crucial data (the resurrection) and its proper framework. For instance, in Isaiah there are two messianic figures: 1) the Davidic Messiah (Isaiah 9:2-7) and 2) the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53:1-6). Prior to Jesus' death and resurrection, it was impossible to know if these two figures were different people or one and the same. If different, which one came first? And if one and the same, how did the suffering square with the ruling and reigning? However, with Jesus' death and resurrection, the interpretive problems were reciprocally solved. The fact of His death and resurrection narrowed the interpretive possibilities to a single framework. And this framework, in turn, gave meaning to Jesus' death and resurrection, showing it to be the central event of redemptive history.

Yet, the reciprocal problems of fact and framework are compounded by a third factor, hardness heart. Since the mind will not believe what the heart refuses to accept, facts

and frameworks are powerless against a heart hardened by sin. Thus, intellectual argument alone will not do. For the truth to prevail, one's heart must be softened by divine grace.

Yet, Luke 24:31, 32 shows us that this softening occurs by the Spirit working through the word. On the road to Emmaus, Jesus opened the Scriptures to His disciples. They later declared, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures (Luke 24:31, 32)?" Later that evening, Jesus suddenly appeared to His disciples, emerging out of thin air. And once again, He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, saying to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead" (Luke 24:45, 46).

The development of these themes in Luke 24 puts the resurrection account of verses 1-12 in its proper context. And this allows us to discern the particular emphasis of Luke's resurrection account. Essentially, these initial verses pose the problem for which the rest of the chapter is the solution. On an intellectual level, they show that it is difficult to embrace the resurrection as a fact apart from its theological framework of meaning. On a spiritual level, they show that it is impossible to accept the fact and the framework of the resurrection until one's heart has been softened by God's grace. The epochal nature of the resurrection is set forth in the rest of Luke 24, but these initial verses underscore the confusion, disorientation, and doubt that arose in dealing with this unexpected event in the immediate aftermath of its occurrence.