



# SERMON RECAP FROM APRIL 20, 2025

## EASTER SUNDAY - LUKE 24:1-12

### Fear, confusion, and an empty tomb, Sermon by Robb McCoy

Easter is supposed to be a grand celebration. We shout "He is risen," for others to respond, "He is risen indeed!" The Easter lilies fill the sanctuary with brightness and a distinct aroma of Spring and new life. The choir is full, the organ is loud, the smiles are wide. "Joy to the World," should probably be an Easter hymn, and we almost always sing "Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!"

Yet today we read the story of the first Easter morning and we are reminded that the main emotion expressed by the women at the tomb is not joy. There are no alleluias. There is confusion. There is fear. There is disbelief. There is Peter running to the tomb to see for himself and all he is left with is him "wondering what happened."

Is it okay, on Easter morning, to "wonder what happened"? Is there room for questions on a day that is supposed to be full of joyful proclamation? I can tell you this year, it has been difficult to get there for me. In the midst of a polarized and turbulent world, and rising anxiety over things I have done and left undone, it has been difficult to get beyond the confusion.

Russell, our accompanist, helped me remember something. A few weeks ago he posted a video of himself practicing today's prelude. It was a beautiful arrangement of the hymn, "Because He Lives." It is one of my favorite hymns, it is one that is engrained on my heart, and as I read today's Scripture one more time I realized the key to unlocking the joy. The men at the tomb that met the women said, "Remember what he told you while he was still in Galilee."

Remember. That is the key to Easter joy. And when I say *remember* I don't mean some nostalgic longing for a the past that never was. I don't mean pining over the "good old days," or complaining about "kids these days." I mean bold, truthful, prophetic remembering. Remembering the power of God to triumph over evil. Remembering the stories of the Gospel that turned the world upside-down. Remembering the radical, power-challenging stories of healing, meal-sharing, and providing.

For me, "Because He Lives," helped unlock memories. It unlocked the memory of standing next to my Mom in the pews at Our Redeemers UMC in Schaumburg as a little boy. I remember her singing - and I wish I could say I remember the lovely sound of her beautiful voice. I can't. She couldn't carry a tune in a bucket. But she didn't care. She sang loudly, boldly, and with a joy that comes with knowing "I can face the future just because he lives."

"Because He Lives" was my Mom's favorite hymn. I remember the day she told me her dad, my grandpa, would die soon. But she told me with joy and tears that though he was going to die, she knew that he would live. And I remember her singing that song at his funeral and understanding what Resurrection hope really looks and feels like. I remember, a few years ago, when my mother lay dying slowly in her bed. The cancer in her brain had taken away her ability to communicate, so I just lay next to her and held her hand. Not sure of what I could say or do, I started to sing: "Because he lives, I can face tomorrow. Because he lives, all fear is gone..."

I remember those moments and know that life is worth the living just because he lives. I remember the grief, but also the incredible joy to have loved someone so deeply, and to be loved by someone so completely.

I remember holding my nephew's new baby. Just a few months ago I was able to hold the child that made me a Great-Uncle. I held him to my chest and felt a surge of love that I could barely contain, and remembering became more than thinking about the past. I remembered the love that will carry him into the future, as the song says "how sweet to hold a newborn baby... and know the child can face uncertain days because he lives."

Remember the moments that you have been truly alive. Remember the love that has lifted you up. Remember Jesus - what he said and what he did - and remember that because he lives, all fear is gone.

Today we break bread and share the cup and remember Jesus. It is not some mental exercise or symbolic gesture. We remember him and enter into the love and ministry that transcends time. We remember the love that has carried us in the past and will carry us into the future. Remember... He lives!