

TEXT: Luke 24:1-12  
THEME: He is risen  
SUBJECT: Resurrection  
TITLE: He Went Home

Easter  
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Messiah Moravian  
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Mary Magdalene, one of the most prominent of the Galilean women who followed Jesus; Joanna, the wife of one of Herod Anitpas' estate managers; Mary, the mother of James; and the other women (how many?) with them told the men that Jesus was no longer in the tomb but risen.

I am fascinated by Peter's response. He runs to the tomb, looks around and goes home. If he went to his home it was an 80 mile trip on foot. Jesus is risen. Peter goes home, back to his fishing boat.

Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and the other women with them are *sent* to the men to deliver the message of Easter. The word "apostle" means "sent one." An apostle is one sent to deliver a message. So, why aren't the women called apostles and why isn't the "Chair of Peter" the "Chair of Mary Magdalene"?

Around 180 CE, the Greek philosopher Celsus, wrote a systematic and searing critique of Christian faith. He accused Christians of basing the truth of their doctrine on the weak shoulders of delirious women.

Perhaps Celsus read the Gospel of Luke. The witness of the women seemed to the men an idle tale. "Idle tale" is a translation of the Greek word *leros*, the root word for delirious.

Mary Magdalene appears in all four Gospels, most significantly as a witness to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Mary was healed by Jesus and provided financial support for his itinerant preaching and teaching.

Joanna provided monetary and material aid to support Jesus' ministry. She is known to the post-Easter community as a witness to the life, death, and empty tomb. She is mentioned by name only in Luke. She may have been one of Luke's sources for material that is unique to his gospel.

Mary, the mother of James, also followed Jesus during his Galilean ministry and witnessed his crucifixion. She provided financial support for his itinerant ministry. She was one of the first witnesses to the empty tomb and to the angelic message about the resurrection.

In the society of Jesus' day, women were not allowed to be disciples of a prominent Jewish teacher, much less part of his traveling entourage. Such behavior would have been considered scandalous for any woman, but especially so for a married woman.

It is probable that the participation of these women in Jesus ministry was important in early Christianity and that these female voices were later silenced in the developing church.

When the early church meets to replace Judas as one of the original twelve, two qualifications are established: the candidate must have accompanied Jesus during his ministry and must have been a witness to the resurrection. Two men are nominated.

Funny thing is, only the women stuck around during the crucifixion, saw where Jesus was buried and went to the tomb to discover it empty. Yet their “fragile testimony” receives a “more reliable” confirmation through a man, a man who didn’t know where the tomb was, a man who went home after discovering it empty.

I think one reason we have trouble believing the message of Easter is the church itself has silenced the witnesses and buried the radical, revolutionary implications of Easter. The church looked for resurrection life in the tombs of patriarchy, ethnic pride, and nationalism.

Flashes of resurrection light grant us glimpses of Easter, but our eyes cannot adjust to the brightness of the vision. As challenging as the resurrection is to believe because it does not conform to the natural order, it has proven even more difficult to believe because it threatens the social order.

The Gospels do not explain Easter; Easter explains the Gospels. Without Easter we have no Gospels, no epistles, no Jesus. The Gospels proclaim: He is risen. They don’t explain how this can be. They give us glimpses, hints, a few open windows onto how different life looks in the light of Easter.

Did the men think the women delirious for believing Jesus is risen, or did they think the women delirious for believing they were the *sent ones*, apostles. God called Abraham, gave the ten commandments to Moses, called Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Hosea. Since when were women entrusted with a word from God? Maybe when a woman becomes Pope we will find it easier to believe in resurrection life.

According to Luke, all the men dismiss the women’s message as an idle tale. But one, Peter, runs to the tomb, takes a look around, is amazed. Amazed by what? The empty tomb? The women being entrusted with such a message? In any case, he is so amazed he goes home.

I find this strangely comforting. If all we think we know about life, about how life works, about the world, is suddenly cast in a new light challenging our assumptions and prejudices, our certainties about God, life and the world, what better place to go than home? Home is a safe place for the bright light of resurrection life to filter into the dark recesses of our souls, opening our minds, warming our hearts into a larger hospitality.

The God who gives us life, who will not let us go, is trustworthy. The God whose love is stronger than death is our hope. This God has no favorites, even though we do. Why we insist on looking for life in the tombs built by our prejudice is testament to how threatened we are by resurrection life.

Perhaps we should go home, knowing the coal dust of our lives is not shaken out of the folds of our souls all at once or once-for-all, but transformed over time by the love of God into immortal diamonds.