

Special Focus

April 1, 2018

GOD IS FAITHFUL

Luke 24:1-12

I have little doubt that women outnumber men in our churches. And I have even less doubt that women do most of the work! When I think back over my ministry journey, I remember countless faithful women who may not have shared the spotlight, but certainly shared in service to our Lord. The ladies of Resurrection Sunday are heroes of the faith. While the disciples of Jesus essentially scattered at His arrest, the ladies remained close by. They accompanied Him through the city streets as He bore the cross. They hovered at His feet as He hung dying. Accordingly, they were the first to hear the news of Jesus' resurrection, and the first to share it with others. The Resurrection Day drama is filled with twists and turns. But the one steady feature throughout is the faithfulness of these ladies. In Luke's text, three features are clear.

First, there was reverence (vv. 1-5). The previous chapter sets the stage. After His death, Jesus' body was removed from the cross and placed in a tomb donated by Joseph of Arimathea. Luke, the historian, is careful to note the details. The women, who had been acquainted with Jesus since His Galilean ministry, followed the body to the garden and observed "how His body was placed" (Luke 23:55). They then set about preparing spices to anoint His body, an act interrupted by the Sabbath observance. The immense reverence the ladies held for their Lord is revealed throughout the story. John's gospel reports that a large quantity of spices had already been used in Jesus' initial preparation (John 19:38ff). But that did not stop these dear ladies from showing their devotion. The additional spices were prepared either to complete the burial, or as an added gesture of affection. Their "very early" morning trek to the garden tomb highlights even further their reverence for the Lord, even after His awful death.

Second, there was remembrance (vv. 5-8). Here, the ladies are met by the dazzling angels who pose one of the most profound questions uttered in all of Scripture: "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" Without awaiting their reply, the angels declared the good news: "He is not here but is risen." With a bit of prodding they remembered His words. It's notable how often Jesus told His followers to "remember." The Lord's Supper was instituted just prior to His death. "This do, in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19). Upon their departure from the upper room, Jesus told them to "Remember the word I spoke to you" (John 15:20), then warned of coming persecution with the words, "But I have told you these things so that when their time comes you may remember I told them to you" (John 16:4). This encouragement "to remember" was somewhat lost among the disciples, who, upon hearing of the angelic encounter and explanation, dismissed it as nonsense (v. 11). Praise the Lord for faithful ladies who hear the word of the Lord and remember it.

Third, there was reporting (vv. 9-12). The miraculous events of that morning propelled the women to find the disciples and share the good news. They raced back into the city and told the "Eleven," but shared with "the rest" as well. No doubt, any and all who had an interest in the events of that weekend heard the latest news...He is alive! Luke then took the opportunity to name those faithful women who tracked down and informed the fearful men. The contrast in faith is again displayed, as the excitement of the women is brushed aside by the skepticism of the men. Only Peter responds (in Luke's account); how ironic that the one who denied Him would be the one now running to Him! Yes, the risen Lord would soon appear to all the disciples. But how sad that He had to go find them! They would have done well to follow the example of those faithful ladies on that blessed morning.