



Kirknewton and East Calder Parish Church of Scotland

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Sermon **Rev Dr André J Groenewald**

Reading: **Luke 23: 50 – 24:12**

The text verses for the sermon:

⁵ In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? ⁶ He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ⁷ ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’”

[According to Luke chapter 8 the women were Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; ³ Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod’s household and Mary the mother of James, Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.]

Jesus was missing! Gone! I can just imagine how devastated the women must have felt.

They were not considered as truthful and reliable witnesses in their society because they were women. Now they come to the tomb to find it empty. They knew for certain that no-one would believe them. I can just imagine what must have gone through their heads. Where can Jesus’ body be?

I am sure the same is true today for families of people that go missing. In all the stories that people tell about their “missing” relatives it seems as if the absence of a dead body emphasize the loss, trauma and the unanswered questions. I was so emotional when I watched the television programme on BBC1 on missing people. There was one particular story that really made me feel so sad for the family. It was about a young successful businessman in London who had a stroke and struggled to recover. But he was never the same again and at times he would travel but always keep his parents, especially his mother, informed about his exact whereabouts. One day he went camping at a seaside resort. On the morning of his disappearance he phoned his mother to tell her about his wonderful holiday. She was at work and very busy. She interrupted him and said to him she could not speak to him then because she was so busy. He said goodbye and she never heard of him again...No body, no trace. It was so traumatic for the parents and his immediate family. When they spoke you could hear their pain, struggle, and distress. You could also hear them say: “If

only there was a body!" I think you always wonder: where is my beloved one who disappeared? Is he/she ok? Are they eating and sleeping properly? As a parent I cannot imagine anything worse happening to you. Being missing is to be between death and life. You are gone but not really gone... if you know what I mean. You are in limbo with your close relatives always wondering, always looking out, always hoping...

Fortunately the women had not too long to ponder on Jesus' disappearance. The two angels said to them that Jesus was not dead. He is alive just like He promised them.

Yes indeed Jesus' body was missing, because He was resurrected by God's mercy! He overpowered death so that His followers will not have to face the darkness and desolation of death.

Although no-one believed the women, Peter did however go to the grave to find only the linen which Jesus was buried in.

And the debate of Jesus' resurrection continues even till today. There are still people who react the same way as the disciples saying that it is idle talk! It could not have happened. It is impossible!

When they asked an important theologian about the resurrection and if it really happened he said something remarkable. He said the women had faith and because they believed it was revealed to them that Jesus was alive. The same is true of every believer. Every believer must ask him/herself the question: Did Jesus rise from the dead for you - today? Does it mean something to you here and now? And if it really does, you will be doing what the women did. They testified. They could not wait to tell everyone. They were not afraid even acknowledging the fact that no-one would believe them? They were so convinced that Jesus was resurrected that the words of doubt of the disciples did not change their minds.

Jesus was missing to come back and save us all from sin, death and hell. He came back to give us the sure hope of everlasting life. He came back to give us a new chance to live life to the full – serving, loving and obeying God.

We must therefore do what the women did – despite the fact that we know how the world will react. We must go out and tell everyone Jesus is resurrected. We must cling to this hope for a new future and console those who are terminally ill, the bereaved, and the lost. We must use each and every opportunity to convince the world that Jesus is, through his Holy Spirit, alive and present. He is present in our joys, in our sadness, in our grief, in our struggles and stress. He is available when no human is. He will be speaking to you when no one else is. He will take your hand and lead you in the direction He wants you to take. But you must not resist Him. You must put your hand in the hand of the man of Galilee as an old song says.

So let us all leave our hands in the hands of the risen man of Galilee and walk to our future with faith, hope, and love.

Amen