

Temporary and Permanent

[Luke 24:1-12](#)

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Our son Lewis was born on October 2nd, 2020, which as some of you may remember was not an ideal time to bring a child into the world. Covid was still in full swing – no vaccines were available yet, just social isolation and masks to try and slow the spread or flatten the curve. Very early in the morning we dropped Calvin off with a friend, and headed for the hospital, and spent the following hours moving through the stages of labour, as various masked doctors and nurses and anesthesiologists moved in and out of the room to check on how we were doing – mostly on how Johanna was doing, really. And eventually we reached a point where we knew this might be the last quiet moment for essentially the rest of our lives, so Johanna asked me to quickly text our family to let them know that the baby was on his way any minute now. So I pulled out my phone and sent a couple quick messages, and as I did so, a breaking news alert popped up: The president of the United States, Donald J. Trump, had just tested positive for COVID-19. And I thought, wow. That is big, important news. I should tell Johanna about this right away! And I looked over at Johanna, and in that moment, I suddenly realized, you know what? Now is not the time. Right now, Johanna's probably not going to be all that interested in international politics. Read the Room, Curtis. So I put my phone away, and didn't mention the news to Johanna. Every once in a while, you need to stop and

get a little perspective, and you realize that there's something going on right in front of you that is far more important than anything else you might be temporarily worried about. When something really big is happening, when you're standing in the presence of a miracle, witnessing new life coming into the world, everything else can wait.

And I wonder if that's how the disciples felt on that Sunday morning, so many years ago. All that week, they had so much on their minds – they had arrived in Jerusalem with big plans, dreams of political intrigue and military adventure. They were going to overthrow the Romans, establish a new kingdom, change the course of history. And then in a heartbeat, it all fell apart, as the soldiers arrived in the garden and hauled Jesus away, the trial, the torture, the crucifixion. Suddenly they were running for their lives, hiding in the shadows, trying to find some way to safely escape back to an anonymous quiet life, fishing in Galilee. But before they leave Jerusalem, a few of the women decide to risk the danger. They go to the tomb where their leader's body has been laid, to anoint his body with the traditional burial spices, to offer one last act of devotion and service to the man who meant so much to them. So they gather the proper spices and they head for the tomb, but when they arrive, nothing is as it should be. Nothing is the way they expect it to be. The stone has been rolled away from the entrance. The tomb is empty. The body of Jesus is gone. And as they stand there gawking, two men appear before them, dressed in dazzling white, and they announce to these terrified women that Jesus isn't there, Jesus isn't dead,

He is risen, He's alive. The women rush back to the safe house where the rest of the disciples are hiding, and they share the story of what they saw at the empty tomb, what they heard from the angels – Jesus isn't dead, He is risen, He's alive.

And all of a sudden, all those plans that these disciples have been making all that week, all of a sudden they really aren't that important any more. Their political plans, their dreams of setting up a little kingdom carved out of the Roman Empire, that doesn't matter any longer. Their escape plans, the carefully planned withdrawal from Jerusalem back to safety in Galilee, that doesn't matter any longer. The spices – the spices that those women bought at great expense, at great personal risk, so that they could go and anoint their master's dead body, those spices are no longer necessary. They'll have to see if they can get a refund, trade them in for store credit or something – it's a hard thing to explain at the customer service desk – reason for return, resurrection. But in that moment, none of those women are worried about the spices. It doesn't matter any longer. These disciples have witnessed the greatest miracle that could ever be possible, they have witnessed something that will change the course of history, and in that light, in the light of the empty tomb, in the light of the Risen Christ, nothing else matters. Everything else can wait. All their plans, all their worries, all the things that seemed so important, so essential only a few hours before, everything else can wait. Now that they know that Jesus is alive, now that they know that death has been defeated, that the grave

has been conquered, there is nothing else that matters. When you're standing in the presence of a miracle, of new life coming into the world in an entirely new way, then everything else can wait. Jesus isn't dead, he is Risen, he's alive, and that changes everything.

And yet, you'll notice that for most of the disciples, it takes a little while for this truth to really sink in. Even though they are now living in a world where death is no longer permanent, where dead people can be raised back to life, where the humble carpenter that they've been following around these past few years has been revealed to be so much more than just a man, so much more than they ever thought possible, even though all this is now and forever true, the disciples haven't quite figured out what it all means. They're still standing around in that safe house, dismissing the women's story, still arguing over the best escape route back to Galilee. Peter is the only one who listens to the story and decides to go and see for himself, but even then, Peter comes away more baffled than anything, still unable to really come to grips with the consequences of what has happened. A miracle that big, something that fundamentally re-orders everything you thought you knew about life and death, it's understandable that they don't get it, that they stick with the safe, simple things they know and trust, predictable unimportant stuff like politics and travel plans. But they can't stay that way forever. They can't keep worrying about the little things, they can't keep squabbling about petty concerns. Soon and very soon, these disciples are going to have to come face to face with the truth of

what has happened, they're going to come face to face with Jesus Christ, and when that happens they will realize what is truly important, what truly matters, and they will set all the rest of their worries and concerns aside, at least for the moment. Because when the tomb is empty, when death has been defeated, when Jesus is alive, then everything else can wait.

And that's still true for us, here and now, today. The tomb is still empty. Jesus is still alive. Ever since that moment when those terrified women stumbled back to Jerusalem to share what they had seen and heard, the power of death over humanity has been broken, finally and fully, once and for all. And yet even after all this time, for his disciples, it's still taking some time for the truth to really sink in. For all of us, all who still call ourselves followers of Jesus Christ, each and every day we spend so much of our time struggling with fear and worry, drawn into squabbles and struggles about simple, everyday things. Just like those first disciples, we spend so much time and energy worrying about temporary troubles, about politics and travel plans and getting a refund on burial spices, and all the while the greatest miracle in human history is right there in front of us. A new kind of life has entered into this world, abundant, everlasting, resurrection life is here with us now, today and forever. In Jesus Christ, death has no power over us any longer. In Jesus Christ, the tomb is empty, once and for all. We live in a world where death is not the last word, and that changes the way we see the world around us, how we experience trouble, how we face death. It doesn't mean they won't hurt – we will still suffer and endure pain

and hardship here in this life, just as Jesus did – but it means that all of that pain and hardship, all the trouble and suffering human beings can throw at each other and ourselves, none of it can conquer the everlasting life we've been given in Jesus Christ. None of it can reverse the victory that Jesus has already won for us. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are called to see everything in this world from a new perspective, in the light of Easter morning, to look first and foremost at the Risen Christ, the new life he brings, and in that light see all the trouble in this world for what it truly is – all of it is temporary, the last remnants of a fallen, fading empire that started to crumble the moment the stone was rolled away. We live in a world where death has already died. We live in a world where the new life of Jesus Christ is free and abundant and it never ever ends. We live in a world where the light of Easter morning shines here, it shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it. As children of God we have nothing to fear, because God's light shines on us, God's love works through us, God's life lives in us, and when you can see the light of Jesus Christ, when you have been to the empty tomb and heard the story from the angels and you know that he's alive, then there's nothing else to do but go and tell the story to everyone you meet, run and share the light and love and life you've been given with the world around you, because everything else can wait. Jesus is alive, and the world will never be the same again. He is Risen! Hallelujah! Amen!