

April 20, 2025

## **Bad News, Fake News, Good News — Easter!**

*Luke 24:1–12 - On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. 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? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ‘The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’ ” Then they remembered his words.*

*When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.*

Have any of you seen the musical or the movie ‘Wicked’? It’s the back story of the Wicked Witch of the West from ‘The Wizard of Oz’.

The opening of the musical starts at the end of the Wizard of Oz, sort of where things left off for us — Dorothy has killed the Wicked Witch by pouring water on her. “*I’m melting!*” And then Dorothy heads back to Kansas with her ruby slippers. The musical starts in a local village where they have just heard the news. The opening song is a big musical number.

Now the night of the day Queen Elizabeth died, the performance was running in London, England. They decided before the performance started to pay tribute to the Queen. They had a minute of silence, and then the musical proceeded as usual with a very big number, “*No one mourns the Wicked*”: “Good News! She’s Dead!!”

Tik Tok had a field day with that awkward opening.

**Good news.** That's what the word '*Gospel*' means. That's why we have Good News Bibles. The gospel of Jesus, the good news of Jesus.

Today we call the day Jesus died "good." *Good Friday*. We were tempted to do a big choir number "Good news! He's Dead!" Samia didn't think it was quite the right tone. Because when you enter into the space of Good Friday and the cross, nothing of it feels like good news.

We have to start there with the bad news. Today's scripture is from Luke's gospel. Later in Luke's story he tells about how two disciples are walking to the town of **Emmaus**, and while they walk a stranger walks with them who hasn't heard the news. The stranger says, "*What news?*" And they answer:

"About Jesus of Nazareth, he was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel."

That is such a sad line: "*but we had hoped...*" If we took a moment we could all say something of the "but we had hoped..." But we had hoped the other person would win the election. (I want to know where I can get *Vote for Pedro* lawn signs!) But we had hoped the ceasefire would hold, but we had hoped the job would work out, that things would be different for me by now; but we had hoped the doctor would listen to us, but we had hoped the cancer was gone, but we had hoped they'd still be here with us.

Life is full of dashed hopes and bad news.

They had hoped for a redeemer, a saviour for Israel.

Then, on top of the bad news came confusing news — that they were pretty sure was fake news.

Propaganda and fake news are not new. As long as there have been empires, there has been fake news, but we are living in a time where it is hard to trust news. Especially news that comes via social media. Especially news during an election when the different parties are slinging mud at each other to see what sticks — and it doesn't seem to matter whether what they sling is true.

It really is important that we hold up the value of good journalism. I think of places like Myanmar who just had that devastating earthquake. The government deeply

distrusts the west and so won't let journalists in, which means the world doesn't know how bad the situation is and can't properly organize aid. It's like that in other places too. A few days ago at least 116 journalists died in the Israel-Gaza war. And many of these were targeted attacks.

We are developing a skeptical and a critical lens. I recommend that when you read something, you try to see if you can back it up with reputable news sources. While our big Canadian newspapers do have a bias, and tend to lean one way or the other, they all aim for accuracy.

It's ok to be skeptical and critical. We'll talk a bit more about doubting Thomas next week. But that's certainly how the disciples where when the women came to them with the news that he was risen. The reading said: "*it seemed to them nonsense or an **idle tale***." Fake news! So often women have not been believed or seen as credible.

I find it so amazing that it is *to the women* that the angel appears, and in John's gospel it is to Mary that Jesus appears first.

The news starts with some of the least credible sources in the eyes of the world — hysterical women, and then his own biased followers. It's not the Roman guards that spread the news. The news is not from the results of an Inquiry or from Pontius Pilate or Caesar himself, so the news is unreliable, confusing, and possibly false. That's where we are on Easter Sunday morning.

Now it's not where we are 2000 years later. We believe that Jesus rose from the dead, that he defeated the grave, that torture, pain, betrayal, denial, injustice were not the last words — but that life and victory and healing and peace and justice are the last words.

But how did we get there?

I'm not very good at math. It's been years since I helped a kid with their math homework. So, take this with a grain of salt...but when I add up bad news with confusing or unreliable news, it doesn't equal good news.

I know, because this is what we've been living through. I really think that the Global Pandemic did a number on the whole world. It was traumatic, it was hard on every economy and country in the world, except maybe that one island where the penguins hang out — their economy was doing great until the tariffs were

announced.

The Pandemic was **bad news, followed by confusing news**, (wash your hands, actually don't worry as much about the hands, wear a mask!) Close all the parks. It's dangerous for children to be outside on the playground equipment. (Actually outside seems pretty safe.) And then there was **fake news** that vaccinations were dangerous and that taking Ivermectin would help. When societies undergo a **collective trauma**, the experience at first brings people together — and we saw that — but then it divides people. The pandemic brought loss and hardship in so many ways. It was bad news, confusing news and fake news, and emerging from it has not been easy.

Loss and fear and confusion do not equal good. They tend to spiral into more fear, more self-focus, more division, more hate, more lies and false information, more death. We know that. That's what we're living today. That's what the disciples were living too. It's not that they had great strength or great faith to overcome the loss.

So where do we get the good news? Does it come from Laura Secord Chocolate Easter bunnies? Good old Laura Secord who was a hero during the war of 1812 and somehow now a solid Canadian chocolate maker! No, chocolate is great but not that great.

No, the good news came because a small group of followers experienced and believed that Jesus, who was killed, had risen to life. That he defeated death.

The women in Luke experienced the mystical, incredible presence of angels who reminded them of what they had been told. The disciples got the good news partly because of the women, but also because they too had incredible encounters with the risen Christ. One was through a stranger whom they all of a sudden recognized when they sat at a table together and broke bread.

And that changed everything! They changed from the inside out. They believed, and so were no longer afraid of all the bad news or the confusing or fake news. They started telling the good news to others and caring for others, caring for widows, rescuing orphans, truly caring and sharing what they had.

Wouldn't you like an experience with the risen Lord to remind you that all of this fear and division and sin is not the real truth?

Laura Webb led us on a meaningful Maundy Thursday meditation and time of

prayer. With all that is worrying out there, we need to spend time connecting deeply with the living God. We remember Patricia D'Costa, one of the people who brought Christian meditation to our church. Spiritual practices, like prayer, like Bible reading, like journalling, like meditation that have you stopping and connecting to God give us new life and strength, and help us to remember that we are not alone. Honestly, my morning spiritual practice is what is holding me together right now, along with good community, along with doing things like helping. It's funny ... because the more stressed out I get, the more I need both time of prayer and meditation and time doing pastoral care. I did a fair amount of hospital visits in the last week and they were good for me.

A woman in our congregation had a vision a number of years ago. A vision is one way that God can speak to a person. Visions are rare and always special. But the woman who received this vision was not someone who had ever had a vision before. She didn't grow up going to church and was still discovering what being a Christian is all about. This vision came to her at a time when things were very difficult in her life and she was struggling to go on at all. The darkness in her life seemed like it might take over. She emailed her vision to me and has given me permission to use it in this sermon. This is what she said:

"I was doing my readings tonight and I was able to connect with Jesus in a way I never have before. I saw him standing inside this circle, and there were birds and trees and it was just beautiful. I, on the other hand was standing in complete darkness and emptiness. Jesus reached out his hand and I climbed up a few steps. I took his hand, and stepped up out of the darkness, into the beautiful forest with him. I could feel his hand on mine. And I told him I didn't want to go back; I wanted to stay with him. He said I could come back whenever I wanted. Then I turned so I was standing in front of him, facing out, and he put his arms around me and there was this wonderful light that came from his heart, and into mine, and then through me, shining out around us. And then he said I had to go back, because I had to continue to shine his light through me into the rest of the world."

To me, that is the picture of Easter. Jesus holding out



his hand and inviting us into the light. Notice that she had to do something. She had to climb up steps and take his hand, and *then* she was pulled into the light. Christ is risen for you, but you need to receive it to feel it. Notice too that in the vision the darkness didn't disappear — just like that dancing in the dark we've been talking about. The dark was still there and she had to return to it, but this time she was not returning to it alone. She returned with the light of Christ shining through her to others.

That's the Good News! That's the gospel! The world is still a difficult place, filled with bad news and fake news. But with the light of Christ shining in your life — in our lives, in the lives of people who follow the Risen Christ all over the world — healing comes, hope comes. Life comes.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

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Lord God, you have given us much from the stores of your love. Your pockets are deep and you keep giving;  
time after time we experience your gracious hand as it provides us with blessing after blessing.  
In comparison we have little to give—or so we think.  
Today, in making our offering,  
we do so recognizing the immense cost of love revealed by the cross and empty tomb,  
and we come with thankfulness for your gift to us.  
May we be generous and fulsome in the commitments we make, as we live our lives faithfully as your servants in the world.  
Amen.