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**Luke 24:1–12, ESV.**

**24** But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. <sup>2</sup> And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, <sup>3</sup> but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. <sup>4</sup> While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. <sup>5</sup> And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? <sup>6</sup> He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, <sup>7</sup> that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.” <sup>8</sup> And they remembered his words, <sup>9</sup> and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. <sup>10</sup> Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, <sup>11</sup> but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. <sup>12</sup> But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.

**Hosea 6:1–3a, ESV.**

**6** “Come, let us return to the LORD;  
for he has torn us, that he may heal us;  
he has struck us down, and he will bind us up.  
<sup>2</sup> After two days he will revive us;  
on the third day he will raise us up,  
that we may live before him.  
<sup>3</sup> Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD.

## **Rising again.**

We're all familiar with today's Bible passage. Three women, Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James who was one of the Apostles, along with Joanna, a woman who had been healed by Jesus, enter Jesus' tomb with embalming fluids. They find no body. Instead, they see two men in "dazzling apparel", obviously angelic beings. These beings let the stunned women know that they should not look for a living man in a tomb. They confirm that, just as ancient scripture had predicted, Jesus had risen on the third day. The three women report back to the Apostles and to others what they have learned, but they aren't believed; what they have said is taken as an *idle tale*. It isn't until Peter goes to the tomb to see for himself that people believe. The story goes on, with it clear that now that Peter has personally verified that Jesus has indeed risen from the dead, the followers of Jesus all believe in his resurrection. Now, there are a couple of interesting points here. One is that one man is apparently taken more seriously than three women. Another is that despite all the miracles they have witnessed, the Apostles and other associates of Jesus have a hard time believing that he was no longer dead.

There is some dramatic symbolism in Jesus' resurrection. It shows his power even over death, and it serves to convince us that surely, he has the ability

to save us from eternal death. In the Book of Revelation, there is a reference to something called the “second death”. We all suffer a first death, and that is when we leave this life here on Earth. But the second death is reserved for those who, when the final judgement comes, are forever, as Revelation tells us “thrown into the lake of fire”. In other words, the resurrection of Christ is proof that Jesus has the power to resurrect us, to prevent us, after we have died on this earth, from facing the horrible second death.

But there’s more to this, and before I get to it, I’d like to tell you about something that happened at the hospital where I am a chaplain. It was a while back, some months ago. As always, I’m changing details to protect the privacy of the people involved. There was a very young man, about twenty years old, who was having an elective surgery done. Very elective, something to allow him to keep playing a sport he loved, but something that could have been postponed perhaps forever if he had chosen to give up the sport. During the surgery, some sort of oddity in his anatomy, something that couldn’t be detected from the outside, caused his carotid artery to be cut. He quickly lost a lot of blood and the surgical team lost his pulse. They began to transfuse him and to work on the damage to his artery. People started collecting outside the OR and a large team went into action. I was asked to go back there and talk to the team, to help

people deal with the stress of possibly losing a young, healthy patient. I remember seeing people running – not walking – into the OR with coolers containing blood. They apparently gave this young man nine units of blood, very close to the entire amount of blood in a human. I'll get back to this.

There is a reference to an apparent resurrection on the third day in the Book of Hosea. Hosea is considered a “minor” prophet; such prophets are minor only because their books are short, not because they were less significant in any meaningful way as prophets, compared to the “major” prophets. Hosea served a couple of hundred years before the Israelites were exiled into Babylon after being conquered. At the start of Hosea’s time as a prophet, Israel was at peace; by the time his work was finished, Israel was suffering a horrendous defeat at the hands of the Assyrians. Interestingly, while we are very familiar with the Babylonian captivity which happened hundreds of years later, the Assyrians also sent Israelites into captivity.

The reference in the Book of Hosea to a resurrection is often used as evidence that Jesus’ resurrection was a fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament, the Hebrew Bible. This is a common theme in the Gospels, whereby events in Jesus’ life are compared to prophesies or other stories that appear in ancient Jewish Scripture, as a way of adding legitimacy to the belief that Jesus was

the son of God, the Messiah, and the savior of humanity. But this reference isn't about a real, literal, physical resurrection. It has to do with us, as individuals arising again as faithful people, having found our way back to God. So, we can see in Jesus' resurrection a suggestion that we can be resurrected at any time, simply by putting aside our old, corrupt lives where we live only for the things of the world of people and go back to living for the things of God's world. This is how our second passage for today reads:

- 6** *“Come, let us return to the LORD;  
for he has torn us, that he may heal us;  
he has struck us down, and he will bind us up.*
- <sup>2</sup> *After two days he will revive us;  
on the third day he will raise us up,  
that we may live before him.*
- <sup>3</sup> *Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD.*

This passage is a call on the part of Hosea for the people of Israel to repent, to return to living the way God wanted them to live. In this speech, Hosea is doing what prophets did – and that was speaking for God. As a prophet, he was a conduit between God and God's people. Hosea, that is God, is telling us to accept God's punishment, to admit our wrongs, to allow God to forgive us and to renew us spiritually. The goal is thus restoration: *After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him.* It's the same message that three quarters of a millennium later, Jesus would repeat.

Let's look at this parallel between Hosea saying that God will lift up the repentant after three days, resurrecting us from living corrupt lives, and Jesus being resurrected after three days, showing us that he does have the power to overcome evil in our name. {We've talked before about the use of numbers in the Bible and how various numbers are highly symbolic.} Forty is often used to suggest a complete cycle, or an unbelievably long period of time, such as the great flood lasting forty days. Seven often represents ultimate fulfillment, as in the number of days of creation. Three often represents God's power or truth or God's promise, as in God promising the Israelites three things: land, God's blessing, and lots of progeny. Jesus being resurrected on the third day shows that God is indeed in control, that Jesus is the true Messiah, the son of God, and that God will never abandon us. And with respect to this passage from Hosea, when we repent and God resurrects us spiritually after three days, it shows that we can always count on God to forgive us, to restore us spiritually, and to allow us to get back on the right path of treating all people as equally made in the image of God, of passing on God's forgiveness to other people, and of always behaving with grace toward others.

So, getting back to the young man who lost most of the blood in his body, after an artery failed during surgery: It didn't take three days to bring his pulse

back. But he was resurrected. He was dead. A medical team, operating in a time of intense pressure, came together and did what they were trained to do. They gave him a chance to live another twenty-five or fifty or seventy-five years. The truth is that he didn't go from being dead to being just fine in an instant or even a handful of hours. It was a couple of days before he was no longer considered to be in critical condition. But as time went on, and it appeared that he was going to be okay, the elation among the very large team who had taken care of him was astonishing. The place was filled with joy.

Just remember that all of us can be resurrected at any time. Jesus' death symbolizes the gift of a new life for all of us. But that new life can be renewed at any time. We can renew it over and over and over during our lives. We are not to live with guilt and shame. We are highly imperfect. We make lots of mistakes and we will make them all during our lives. Some of us will make truly horrible mistakes. But starting over, being lifted up on the third day, is always a possibility. You just have to turn to God and ask to be resurrected from the death of having done evil things.

You know, Jesus showed us three very critical personality traits, ones that we are to emulate. The first is valuing all humans equally, accepting all people for who they are. The second is always acting with compassion and empathy. We

are to be good to other people; we are to sew the seeds of kindness whenever we interact with other people. And three, we are to forgive. Our society today teaches us that it is a weakness to forgive, that forgiving others is degrading, that it is wrong to ask someone who has been harmed to forgive. We are to be ruthless in beating down those who have done something that society perceives as wrong. But that is not how Jesus lived and that is not what we believe. We forgive. We move on. We let the past go.

A final note on the young man who was resurrected in the OR. I went to see him the next day. He was in an ICU room. His mother was there with him. I walked into his room and told him that I was very happy that things had turned out well. I said that I had three children who were all older than him, and it was a joyous thing that he was alive. His mother looked up at me and asked me to say a prayer. I'd like to repeat that prayer now, at least as best as I can remember it. I haven't given that young man a name here yet. Just for fun, let's call him Hosea.

*God, thank you for life. Thank you for leaving Hosea with us. We know that we will be fine for all of eternity, that we do not have to be anxious about our eventual "first" deaths. But we do dearly appreciate the opportunity to stay here on this earth long enough to serve you by serving God's people. May Hosea and all of us always walk in the footsteps of the risen Christ. Amen.*