

“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: ” Luke 24:5-6 (NIV)

To add a little extra context to today's passage, the women had prepared all the spices to anoint Jesus' dead body and when they arrived at the tomb they discovered it completely empty and to add to that 2 men who were wearing gleaming clothes suddenly turned up. Altogether a somewhat startling and confusing experience.

Much as in the ancient world people weren't as sceptical about the existence of spiritual beings and the ability for miracles to occur, it wasn't exactly an expected sight and most of the time when God's messengers turned up - Angels, or Angelos, the word used for a messenger, normally male, in ancient greek (ἄγγελος) - you either had a shock of your life because they were so bright that mortal eyes could barely see them or they turned up in a way that you didn't know they were God's messengers because they looked like 'normal' man beings and you only realised either by the way they spoke or in hindsight. In this case the women have had the blessing of being the first ones to be given the news of Jesus' rising from the dead. Like when God sent Jesus in the first place and the shepherds were chosen amongst the first visitors. Purity of heart is much more important than outward appearance or wealth of a financial type.

I'm going to briefly look at 2 things from this passage that stand out. The first is that women were the first on the scene. A woman was not exactly much more than a commodity in some ways. Women certainly didn't have equal rights to men and were often seen as the weaker sex and somewhat lesser than their male counterparts. Yet its the women who cared enough to go to the tomb in the first place. It's the women who get the first glimpse of the empty tomb and get to see the angels, which in itself is an awesome experience, or so I would have thought as I've never knowingly seen an angel. The lowest of society are chosen as the first witnesses to the miracle that has shaped countless lives for over 2000 years. What an honour!

The second is where the angels ask the women why they are looking “for the living among the dead”. I think this is poignant in many ways to our modern lives. I think sometimes we look for the “living amongst the dead” whilst we are trying to make sense of our lives, or when we hope to encounter Jesus in within our own limited understandings, expecting Him to come to us when we call rather than just being open and if He comes, awesome; and if not, so be it. Although the angels were literally talking about Jesus' physical body, we can look for Jesus in all the wrong places...or maybe not Jesus specifically, but rather the desire to feel whole or fulfilled in life. Sometimes we forget Jesus and leave Him to the sidelines of a Sunday service - if that - while we look at climbing the career ladder or focus on getting all the things we missed out on when we were children. All these things, though not always a bad thing, are like looking for the living amongst the dead if they become our single focus in life.

Pray;

Risen Lord, we thank you that you look at the purity of our hearts above our material wealth. We thank you that even if human society looks at us as lesser beings because we are women, poor, unemployed, childless, disabled, mentally ill, neurodivergent, christian or any other reason that we may be seen as 'different' you see our true worth and love us regardless of human stigma. We pray that you will remind us to put you before our careers. To put you before the accumulation of material wealth. To put you before even our families and friends. Help us to remember that we are here but a fleeting moment, rarely more than 100 years and compared to you that's just the blink of an eye, and that we should focus our efforts while we are here on you. Amen.