

**J.D. Ousley**  
**Sermon—21Apr19**  
**Lk. 24.1-12**  
**“Tomb Raider”**

*In the Name of God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Amen.*

My son, Andrew has an interesting occupation.

He has formed a non-profit corporation that presents classical music in unusual places. The idea is to attract new audiences for this music—younger audiences who might not be drawn to concert halls.

Andrew’s first project was to hold concerts in a church crypt; along the wall of the crypt are niches that contain the ashes of deceased members of that church.

He later organized performances in a larger space where caskets of the deceased are kept. Most recently, he presented a number of concerts that were spread out in various locations in Brooklyn’s Greenwood Cemetery.

Andrew’s web site for all these events is ironically entitled, “deathofclassical.com!”

As it happens, these concerts may remind their audiences that columbariums and tombs are intended to make the remains of deceased persons *accessible*. Family members and friends might wish to come and pay their respects from time to time. Cemeteries make it possible for those who mourn to retain some contact with the departed.

That was the reason why the disciples of Jesus approached his tomb on Easter morning. They wanted to honor the man who had taught them so much—the man who had made them into a family.

But the disciples were only coming to pay their respects. They weren’t expecting Christ’s tomb to be empty. And they weren’t expecting to see two angels. And they certainly weren’t expecting to have – as Mary Magdalene had – and encounter with Christ himself.

Those experiences led the followers of Jesus to a vast series of reassessments, and renewals, and conversions that eventually became the Church. Christ had risen. The tomb wasn’t a dead end. There could be life after death.

Those experiences on Easter morning led to us to this church on this Easter day, to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus the Christ.

Notice that, in December, we often enjoy “Christmas *time*.” We’re glad that we are able to use the days before and after Christmas to extend our celebration of the holiday.

Yet even though Easter is a religious holiday equal in importance to Christmas, we generally don’t celebrate it for an extended period; we don’t think of “Easter time.” Even though the church season officially lasts for fifty days, Easter flowers have vanished long before the end of the season.

And that’s too bad. For, like Christmas, Easter is a season that we ought to savor. As the Lesson we heard earlier put it, “in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who died.”

In the Bible, “the first fruits” are the produce brought in at the beginning of the harvest. Observant Hebrew farmers would offer their first fruits to the Temple before they would sell the rest of their crops so that they would have money to live on.

The lesson thus suggests that Christ's resurrection from the dead is *the first of many resurrections*. Since Christ reigns alive in Heaven, he is able to welcome others into the life of God's Kingdom. He will also, presumably, be able to welcome us as well.

So, if we think about it, maybe we should celebrate Easter time even more than Christmas time! For Easter gives us not only new life in this world but also the promise of eternal life in the next.

Now I admit that promise of eternity can seem to be distant and vague. But, in fact, it can be a promise that can have an immediate impact on how we live our lives.

For there are times when you wake up in the morning and you struggle to find the energy to get out of bed. You feel the weight of the world pressing down upon you like a stone. Your worries about the future are so numerous that you doubt that you will ever be able to deal with them.

But then you find that, just as God raised Jesus up out of the tomb, so God raises you up. The divine Spirit pushes away the psychological boulders that block you from facing the burdens of life.

Now I would grant that these boulders can sometimes seem too heavy to move. For example, you may harbor feelings of resentment toward someone who has betrayed you and said nasty things about you behind your back. The seething resentment you feel toward that person is a mental stone that keeps you confined to the darkness of your inner thoughts.

If that's the case, then it's time for you to find the Tomb Raider!

As the light of the Risen Christ begins to shine through the entrance to the tomb, let that light dawn on you. Christ is with you, and he will always be alive within you.

"Hail thee, festival day, the day that art hallowed forever." Now is Easter time. Now is the time to come out of the tombs that we have put ourselves in.

It's time to come out of the tomb of worry. The tomb of passivity. The tomb of doubt.

Christ has risen from the dead and his spirit allows us to shake off the inner debris that holds us back.

We are indeed free—free in the Risen Christ.

*And now unto God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit be ascribed as is most justly due all might, majesty, power, dominion, and praise, now and forever. Amen.*