

Easter Surprises and Golden Tickets

Luke 24:1-11 and Acts 10:34-43 | Easter Sunday | April 20, 2025 | Pastor John Klawiter, preaching

Grace and peace to you my siblings in Christ,

On Sunday, we had an epic Easter egg hunt. This year, with a new wrinkle. There were SIX golden tickets hidden inside the eggs.

If you won a golden ticket, you received a special bonus Easter basket like Grace did.

These prizes were highly coveted and the look of disappointment on my OWN kids faces was real as they opened each egg to only find candy.

Eventually, the ticket winners emerged.

Except one.

One of the areas only had one winner come forward.

As the clean-up began, one of the girls who was helping, Harper, found the last ticket!

It was on the ground. In the preschool area of the gym. She quickly delivered it to Brett, our Children Youth and Family director. She told him that someone must've dropped it and that she hoped whoever it was would come forward.

But nobody did. Brett awarded Harper the final Easter basket.

Harper was so excited—she didn't expect to receive the basket. She had felt the disappointment of opening all of her eggs and not seeing the golden ticket. Suddenly, her emotions changed!

Waking up to the tomb being empty on Easter morning might not be comparable to finding a golden ticket on the ground at an Easter egg hunt, but for the women, they certainly had a rollercoaster of emotions throughout the first Easter.

Luke describes how they felt: The women are perplexed. Then, when the two men in dazzling clothes greet them, they are terrified.

Upon remembering Jesus' words, they run to tell the other disciples who... don't believe them—can you imagine how THAT must've felt?

Sermon Transcript

They are witnesses to this incredible, miraculous, event that turns the world upside down. Yet it's too unbelievable to believe.

It's a story that we hear every year on Easter—just from different voices—Mark, Matthew, John. This year it's Luke.

But what we don't often dwell on is what happens AFTER they discover the surprise?

In Luke's gospel, as you keep reading, still on Easter, there are two of the disciples who are walking 7 miles away to a village called Emmaus.

They meet a stranger on the road. They are in disbelief that this stranger hasn't heard the story.

They tell the stranger about Jesus. How the women had gone to the tomb this morning and his body wasn't there. The women said an angel appeared and said Jesus was alive. So, the men went to see the tomb and he wasn't there.

These men are skeptical. They still don't believe the women.

This stranger, listening to the story, finally opens up the scriptures to them. He explains all of the things about Jesus and why the Messiah should suffer and enter into glory.

They arrive at their destination and invite him to come in. The stranger comes inside and breaks bread—and suddenly their eyes are open—they recognize this stranger. He said, every time you break this bread, remember me!

It's JESUS!

The two disciples run back to Jerusalem to tell the rest of the group that they've seen him. As they do this, Jesus stands with them and says "Peace be with you." They eat fish together. They believe.

After that initial fear and shock, they have quite the story to tell.

Peter, one of the closest disciples—in fact, the one who denies knowing Jesus out of fear—has an important voice to share that news.

In the Acts reading, do you know who he's talking to? He's not on trial. He's not speaking in front of Pilate or Herod.

Sermon Transcript

He's witnessing to Cornelius—a centurion. A leader of the army. Soldier—and the last time we've heard from a Soldier, it was at the foot of the cross.

Do you know think Peter might've been afraid to share the good news of Jesus with someone who could arrest and kill him? He sure did.

But what about Cornelius??? His curiosity about Jesus could put him in a difficult position—he could be called a traitor, be labeled disloyal to the emperor. He could put a target on his back—and his WHOLE family—for welcoming in Peter.

You see that's where the power of Jesus goes beyond our political affiliation or our loyalties to empire. Our faith in Jesus Christ is not about pursuing our own ambition—it's about witnessing to the love that Jesus Christ compels us to.

How does that translate for us today?

Some Christian pastors complain that this message of love and caring for our neighbor is weak. That the sermon on the mount doesn't resonate. It's not macho enough. Who needs a Jesus who would rise up—they'd rather have a Jesus who didn't die in the first place.

It seems counter-cultural to gain power and financial security, just to give it away.

But when I hear the story of resurrection, and the women who shared the story—Mary Magdalene (point), Joanna (point), and Mary the mother of James (point)... I hear their story of courage.

When I hear the story of Emmaus, I hear witnesses telling the story to a complete stranger.

When I hear about Peter and Cornelius, I hear that there is no human power or authority on this entire planet that has the ability to create more change than the love of Christ that broke through the barrier of DEATH—for us to be alive.

Wanna know what's really macho? Dying for the sins of the entire planet. Then coming back to eat fish with your best friends. Boom.

Today, let's live. We can be Christians, proud of our loving Jesus, proud of loving our neighbors, and not be pushovers. Let's show up for others. Let's not be afraid to speak up. I want others to see my actions and be hope-filled—hey, that guy has my back.

Sermon Transcript

During that Easter Egg hunt, I wonder what happened. Why did that golden ticket end up on the ground?

A preschooler must've seen the piece of paper instead of candy and thought—this isn't what I'm looking for—and discarded it while trying to find the rest of the candy.

Harper's first response was not to find the rightful owner. She was willing to do the right thing, no matter what it cost her. That's it. That's the kind of faith I want others to see.

Jesus Christ is our golden ticket. We possess a tremendous reward through his sacrifice on the cross and the empty tomb.

But this is not the end of the story. The story is just beginning. Be a witness—be a Christian of this world that shows sacrificial love. That doesn't accept status quo. That's not afraid to say what needs to be said for the sake of our world.

Jesus Christ is Risen today. The promise of resurrection doesn't go back into the cave tomorrow after the celebration. Our actions can't either. Rejoice and BE the church. Let there be no doubt who we live for. Because he lives, we live. We live for the Risen Christ. Amen.