

## **Week 5 — He Is Not Here: Hope that Sends Us**

Core Reading: Luke 24:1–12 — The angel at the empty tomb

Optional Readings: John 20:11–18; Acts 1:9–11; Hebrews 13:1–2

### **Reflection**

After the garden comes the silence of the tomb. The women arrive carrying spices to care for the body of their lord. They are not expecting resurrection. Their hope has ended and they are in grief. But once again God speaks into the dark places, as angels appear. “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.” This is the final angelic appearance in the narrative of the Gospels, and this time, the message is one of eternal life. Something new has begun. The women are searching in the wrong place because the world has changed. Death is no longer the end of the story.

Throughout this series, angels have met people at turning points - in confusion, in exhaustion, in costly obedience, in anguish. Here, they stand at the greatest turning point of all. The future has broken into the present. The distance between heaven and earth has been undone.

And yet the initial reactions to this resurrection miracle are not immediate joy. Instead the women are terrified by the interaction with the angels, and when the disciples hear their story they dismiss the news as nonsense. It is a reminder that the reorientation of hope is often not easily accepted. It must be received, remembered, and lived into over time.

John’s Gospel slows the moment even further. Mary Magdalene stands weeping outside the tomb when the angels ask her gently, “Woman, why are you weeping?” They meet her where she is within her sorrow. So we see that hope unfolds not by denying grief, but by allowing it, and journeying through it.

Hope, throughout the Bible, is not optimism. It is not just a positive outlook or a refusal to acknowledge pain. The women greeted by angels at the tomb do not suddenly forget the cross. The wounds are still real. Their grief has been real. Instead, hope is the steady conviction that God’s life is stronger than death; that love has not been defeated, that evil does not have the final word, that what seems finished is still in the hands of God. It is trust in a future that has already begun, even if we cannot yet see its fullness.

Because of that, hope changes how we live now. It frees us from despair, and allows us to work for justice. It encourages forgiveness because we know that God sees beyond our brokenness. It enables compassion because we know that loss does not have the final word.

Christian hope is meant to send us back into ordinary life - into our homes, our workplaces, our communities - as people who carry resurrection woven into our hearts and souls. The empty tomb is the beginning of a different way of living.

The angel’s last word is hope, and hope moves us outward.

So we find that if death does not have the final word, then despair does not either. Christ is risen, and love endures all. Angels stand at turning points and tell us of God’s story breaking into our own. We step forward in hope, trusting that no darkness is beyond God’s reach.

## **Discussion Questions**

1. What strikes you most about the angel's words at the tomb?
2. Why do you think hope can be difficult to receive, even when it is offered to us?
3. How does resurrection hope differ from simple optimism?
4. Where in your life do you need to be reminded that this is not the end of the story?
5. What might it look like for you to carry hope into your daily relationships and community?

## **Closing Prayer**

God of resurrection,  
You have spoken life where we expected only endings.  
Plant your hope deeply within us.  
When we forget, remind us.  
When we doubt, steady us.  
Send us into the world  
as people shaped by the empty tomb -  
to live with courage, compassion, and joy.  
Amen.