

Copyright April 21, 2019. All Rights Reserved. Geist Christian Church

Title: Fake News...Good News

Preaching: Ryan Hazen, Senior Associate Minister

Scripture: [Acts 10:34-43](#)

Text: [Luke 24:1-12](#)

E-mail: [Ryan Hazen](#)



Men have been thinking they are superior to women for a long time. Some of you may be familiar with the term "mansplaining." It's a relatively new word that was just added to the Oxford English Dictionary in 2018. Oxford defines "mansplaining" as "the need of a man to explain something needlessly, overbearingly, or

condescendingly, especially when addressing a woman, in a manner of thought to reveal a patronizing or chauvinistic attitude."¹

Most of us men "mansplain" without even thinking about it. For the times that I've done it, which are many and I'm sure more than I'm even aware, I apologize. I am self-aware enough to know that I may be part of the problem and not part of the solution.

Even though it just went into the dictionary last year, we have examples of "mansplaining" in Luke's version of the Easter story. Each of the Gospel writers takes a slightly different take on the story and Luke has the women as key characters in the story and gives us a glimpse of their interaction, first with men at the tomb and then, as they tell their story of the resurrection to the men who were the disciples of Jesus.

Luke tells us that there are at least five women, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and "the other women with them" – so three that are named plus "other" being plural – at least five, maybe more. They were there on Friday when they put Jesus in the tomb and saw the stone rolled over the entrance. But sunset came, the beginning of the Sabbath before they could properly anoint and care for the body. It was a task that would have to wait until Sunday morning – wait until first light after the mandated rest on the Sabbath.

At first light after the Sabbath, (the word Luke uses is best translated "deep dawn", that first twinkle of light) they loaded up the spices and ointments they had prepared and went to the tomb. Instead of finding the body as it

had been left, they found the place in disarray – the stone rolled away, linen that wrapped the body lying about. Confused – Luke says “perplexed” – they went into the tomb but instead of finding the body of Jesus, they were confronted by two men in dazzling clothes. Then begins the one-sided conversation with the men doing the talking – a first example of “mansplaining.” “Why do you look for the living among the dead?” they asked. “Don’t you remember how he told you he would rise again?”

I feel for the women. It’s an odd question. They are not looking for the living among the dead – they are looking for the dead among the dead. These very same women were witnesses to his death. They saw him hang on a cross. They heard his final utterance, “Father, into your hands, I commend my spirit.” If I had seen what they saw and heard what they heard, I, too, would be looking for the dead among the dead. But the men in dazzling clothes tell them that they are looking both for the wrong thing and in the wrong place. They absorb the information and then go to give witness to the disciples as to their experience.

Historians would remind us, even in this country within the last 100 years, women of all races and men who were not white were not considered credible witnesses in court cases. It was only in 1975 that women were allowed to serve on juries in all 50 states. To this day, when people on the margins offer witness - when women, people of color, children, people with a history of one sort or another tell true stories that run counter to the commonly accepted narrative, people often don't believe them.

The disciples were not immune to this societal pattern. Even though the men know that Jesus was capable of great miracles, even though they had watched him defeat death and illness and poverty time and again, even though they had seen Jesus repeatedly do the impossible, when the men heard the women tell a story that ran counter to what they deemed possible, most of them did not believe the women. In fact, Luke tells us that they considered the testimony of the women to be an “idle tale.” Did you hear those words as I read them? I’m sure there must have been more conversation than recorded between the men and the women but Luke just says that the men thought it an “idle tale.”

The words “Idle tale” is a G-rated translation of the word that would have been much harsher and dismissive in Greek. “Idle tale” is the Greek word “leros” and it occurs only once in the whole of scripture. Friends, this is “mansplaining” on steroids and “idle tale” is a lousy translation. This Greek word, “leros,” is harsh, defiant, and dismissive. The word “leros” literally means “a load of garbage” or “crazy talk” It's where our word “delirious” comes from. ²

Now consider this for a moment - The disciples, this band of brothers who journeyed with Jesus and now have churches named after them, upon first hearing the news of the resurrection of Jesus, look around at each other, look at the women, shake their heads and collectively say that their story is a load of garbage!

How do we determine what is true and what is not when we hear a story? We each have a different sorting mechanism for how we sort fact from fiction. Some will consider the source. Where we get our news is important to its credibility. Another factor in parsing fact from fiction may be to determine the feasibility of the truth of a statement – in other words, does it make logical sense? Could it feasibly happen? These limits are often tested and one may not line up with the other. Let me give you a couple of examples and you decide.

I read on the internet that, in 2016, the town of Dorset, Minnesota elected as their mayor a four-year-old named Gwendolyn Davis who actually lives in Utah. ³

A club in San Francisco said that the real Dolly Parton lost a Dolly Parton look-alike contest at their facility.⁴

I'm telling you that I once decided to marry a woman after knowing her for less than a month.

My brother called me on a Sunday in 1997 to tell me my father had died suddenly of a heart attack.

A passerby on the street in 2001 said that a plane had flown into the World Trade Center in New York.

A notification on my phone on Monday told me that the Cathedral of Notre Dame was on fire.

A bunch of women told me that Jesus has risen.

Interestingly, ALL of those are true. Some may be hard to believe because of the filters you use to process information but all of these are true. Yes, a four-year-old is a mayor, albeit honorary, of a small town in Minnesota. And, the one about deciding to marry the woman I knew for less than a month – we're coming up on our 24th anniversary next month.

When the women tell an "idle tale," Peter is the only disciple that gives the words from the women a hearing. He was the only one able to hear Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary, and the other women and take their testimony seriously. Through his own mistakes of the last few days, he has been reminded that sometimes the last thing that you think can happen does actually happen. Rather than dismiss the women's tale as hysterical delusions, he ran to the tomb to witness this most recent miracle for himself. He ran because he has experience that Jesus might once again stretch the limits of what is possible. Peter recognizes God once again at work in their story. He, like the crowds who have followed Jesus throughout his ministry, has to go and see Jesus' latest acts of powerful love for himself. He runs to the tomb and he sees that all is left in the tomb is Jesus' burial clothes. Scripture tells us that he is amazed. Jesus has surprised him once again.

I would hope that the resurrection would surprise us as well. Because, in the end, resurrection is not only the promise of eternal life, which, after all, would be enough but also the assurance that the life-giving love of God will always move the stones away. Tombs are just that -- containers for the dead. And while we seem rather content these days with such spaces -- those dead places that fuel corruption, deception, racism, sexism, suspicion, rejection, marginalization, judgment, and fear -- God continues to roll those stones away that keep life at bay. And when the stale air of decay meets God's breath that creates new life and the possibility of hope and peace, death truly is no more.

If Jesus could overcome death by rising from the grave and leaving an empty tomb, then there is nothing in your life that Jesus can't handle. But that doesn't necessarily mean that Jesus is going to take away all your problems or even that He is going to remove you from them. But the good news, Jesus said, is that He would overcome the world. And the empty grave is the proof that He has done that.

On any given day but especially on this day, people come to this service with burdens. Some are grieving the loss of someone close. Some are dealing with an illness or diagnosis either personally or for someone that you love. Some have financial problems. Some hate going to work each day. Some struggle in marriages or other relationships. For some, your relationship with God is going through a dry spell and you just don't feel very close to Him anymore. And if you're not going through something like that right now, it is nearly a certainty that you're going to encounter the same or similar problems in your life at some point, maybe sooner than you might imagine. And when we experience those kinds of circumstances in our lives and we can't see a way out, it's really easy to lose hope.

That was true of a group of women who went to the grave of Jesus that first Easter morning. On Friday afternoon, they had watched the crucifixion. They had followed Jesus as He ministered to others. They had watched him heal people and listened to him teach about the kingdom of God and eventually came to believe that he was in fact, the Messiah they had waited for their entire lives. Lives dashed on Friday were lives filled with hope on Sunday.

This morning I want to encourage you by reminding you that we can have that same kind of hope by doing what those women did – remembering the empty grave and telling the tale even if it seems like fake news, even if it seems like an idle tale. This idle tale is not fake news, it is good news.

It is good news because Christ is out in the world, leading the struggle for true justice, true peace. Christ is risen and goes before us into the world, leading us to a better way of living, into a fuller way of loving. It is not an idle tale. It is not hooey. The God of the universe has become one of us, has lived a life of love and humility even to the point of death, and is risen, having defeated death once and for all time.

And that same God is ready and able to work a resurrection in you. To take that part of you that is broken now, and make it whole. To take that part of you that is wounded now, and make it healed. To take that part of you that is dead, and make it come to life again. And once God gets ahold of you, once God makes you whole and calls you out into the world to help heal others, there will be no doubt.

Beloved in Christ, don't be afraid to pack up your disbelief, doubt, and denial and walk through the door of Easter into the new life that God promises. Hope is alive because Jesus is alive! Tell the tale – even if others call it idle. Tell the tale - who knows who will hear? Live the tale – who knows who will see? It is good news!

¹ <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/mansplain> and online news article from www.wxyz.com on February 5, 2018.

² many sources but one is sermon found at www.pastorjohanna.blogspot.com – Life Meets Ministry, “Which is the Idle Tale?” from March 31, 2013.

³ Wikipedia article on Dorset, Minnesota has an entire section devoted to how they select honorary mayors.

⁴ Verified by Dolly Parton in interview with Woman’s World magazine, August 15, 2018 in article by Melanie Aman.