

Luke 24:1-12  
Easter Sunday  
April 17, 2022

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen.

When I was a kid and mom wanted me to do something not so fun, I always had an excuse. What kid doesn't? Chad, clean your room. *But* mom after I finish playing this video game. Chad, go to bed. *But* mom just a few more minutes of television. Chad, pick up after the dog. *But* mom I think it's Brian's (my brother) turn. Rarely did my *but* carry much weight.

God's word that we read is quite amazing, is it not? Sure, there is the parts we are not so eager to delve into that perplex us. Yes, there are those passages of law that point out when we turn from the ways and will of God, which in turn sends us scrambling, like a kid on Christmas morning racing to open presents, toward the gospel of grace, love, and forgiveness. The good news.

Part of what amazes me about God's word is how so many times something in the text catches my eye that I had never noticed before. Like a stone rolled away to reveal something new. This week it was a simple three-letter word that on its own would carry little weight, not even make grammatical sense. Yet, there it is this morning. Not once. Not twice. *but* count it, six times.

By now, I am sure you have all figured it out, *but* if you haven't let me read a few key parts of our gospel lesson.

- *But* on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb.
- They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, *but* when they went in, they did not find the body.
- *But* the men said to them ... "He is not here but has risen."

That three-letter word "but" carries a tremendous amount of weight in Luke's resurrection account. So much so, that it is the very first word he uses. It's a transition word that moves the reader to something else. It's used to introduce a phrase that contrasts to what preceded it.

What preceded the first word in chapter 24 is the placement of Jesus' dead body in the tomb. *But* that wasn't the end. *But* a new day dawned. *But* the light broke through the "darkness [that] came over the whole land" (23:44) when Jesus "breathed his last." *But* when they went in gone was his body. He was not there, *but* he had risen.

Like a surgeon making certain every stitch is sutured just right, Luke does the same with his inclusion and placement of six three-letter words. Of course, we know it is not these words that carry the weight of what happened, that is the work of God to raise Jesus from the dead, but these short words have a way of highlighting the fact that what once was is no longer. They have a way of opening our eyes to a new possibility and reality. They have a way of helping us see something that previously was not visible.

Abraham Lincoln is quoted as saying, "Life is hard, *but* so very beautiful." That is what Luke is doing in beginning Chapter 24, the resurrection of Jesus, in his usage of a simplistic three-letter word, which on its own carries little to no weight. However, connected to what follows, what God has done, reveals the beautiful handiwork of the God of new life and new beginnings. The death of Jesus was hard. It was painful. It was full of sorrow. The sky did go dark. The sun failed to shine. *But* behold the empty tomb. *But* behold the beauty of three words that are central to Christianity and spoken by millions gathered this morning, "He is risen!" (Say it with me one more time.)

Metaphorically speaking, just over two years ago it did seem the sun refused to shine. We were forced indoors. The world came to a halt. Doors were closed. Houses locked down. Fear abounded. Uncertainty ruled the day. We were unable to gather as the people of God. *But* we found a way. *But* God led us to today. *But* the good news continued to be made known. *But* new life broke in upon us. *But* we were never without hope. *But* here we are today. In our beloved worship space again. Singing our Alleluias! Breathing in the intoxicating aroma of new life. Observing the sun's rays of a new morning shine through the windows. Remembering how he told us that he would rise again on the third day. Singing an Easter staple, *Jesus Christ is Risen Today*, in which verse three proclaims, "*But* the pains which he endured, our salvation have procured, now above the sky he's king, where the angels ever sing. Alleluia! Jesus Christ is risen today!"

My "but mom" spoken often as a child most always led to an excuse. That holds true today I am sure for all of us. Other times, a "but" hinders our ability to experience new life found in God. *But* that's the way it's always been done. *But* I am just a sinner. *But* I am not worthy. *But* there isn't enough. "*But* these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them." What if Peter had stayed the other disciples? What would he have missed? "*But* Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened."

That *but* led to encounter with the activity of God. That *but* led to the reality of what Jesus had told them would happen on the third day. That *but* led him to experience the amazement of what had happened. May ours do the same when the world tells us otherwise.

- *But* I am a child of God.

- *But* I am baptized.
- *But* I am loved.
- *But* I am forgiven.
- *But* I am a new creation.

We are a resurrection people. This morning we celebrate. We worship. We remember. We hear the good news. Receive the feast of love. And we go forth, with the women from the empty tomb, to tell all the Easter promise, "He is not here, *but* has risen." Alleluia! Thanks be to God!