



Pastor's Message: The Mystery of the Missing Body, by Dr. Paul Maier

The Lutheran Witness April 2, 2009

While surfing the internet, I found this gem by Dr. Paul Maier about Easter and the Resurrection. Rather than try and re-tell you what Dr. Maier said, I thought I'd let Dr. Maier speak for himself. Enjoy & Happy Easter!

Your Fellow Servant in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pastor Dan".

Pastor Dan

Easter is the ultimate test of faith. The one great watershed that ultimately divides believers from unbelievers is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. As St. Paul put it so categorically in 1 Cor. 15:14: "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain."

You can't have it both ways: Either Jesus actually rose from the dead, or He did not. The various middling alternatives—He rose in spirit rather than body and all the many variations on that theme—are quite illogical and extremely unsatisfying.



Photo: Paul L. Maier

Nothing in this world's past or present is of more importance or has caused more controversy than the Resurrection event. So, you would imagine that every last shred of evidence on what happened in Jerusalem at the first Easter would by now have been processed logically, examined carefully, and then believed or disbelieved.

Astonishingly, this is not the case. Critics of Christianity have repeatedly preferred fancy to fact in their attempts to discredit the Resurrection, while Christians have not used all the evidence available in affirming it.

Explaining Away the Resurrection

Those who deny the physical resurrection of Jesus have offered a series of imaginative suggestions to account for the phenomena cited at the close of the four Gospels. All are testimony to human ingenuity, but also to human stubbornness in refusing to deal logically with the evidence. Here are the prime examples:

The stolen-body theory:

The disciples removed Jesus' body so that they could hatch the myth of a risen Christ, a view as old as Matthew 28 or older.

But who would have had the motives to do this? Certainly not the Eleven, who were hiding in fear of receiving the same treatment as Jesus. And even if they had suddenly turned that brave, how could they have succeeded in stealing a body from a guarded tomb?

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The wrong-tomb theory:

The women of Easter morning got their directions crossed and stumbled upon an open tomb instead of the one in which Jesus was laid to rest.

But afterwards, surely, Jesus' opponents would have directed the dear ladies to the proper tomb in order to scotch any claims of a resurrection. Not for nothing do all three Synoptic Gospels add an otherwise unnecessary verse, such as Luke 23:55: "The women ... saw the tomb and how His body was laid in it."

The swoon or Jesus-never-died theory:

Jesus only appeared to die, perhaps from the effects of a narcotic or other drug that He received on the cross, but He revived in the cool of the tomb and left it Sunday morning either under His own power or with the assistance of friends.

This, however, founders on the fact that the Romans—grimly efficient when it came to crucifixions—made assurance doubly sure that the victim didn't pretend death: A pike went through Jesus' heart.

The hallucination theory:

Confronted with an empty tomb, the women later claimed to see visions of Jesus through "wish fulfillment," and the disciples and other early Christians picked up on this via psychological contagion.

Yet 500 or more saw the risen Christ in Galilee, according to St. Paul (1 Corinthians 15), and they would have had to experience mass hallucination in order to have seen Him. But there is no such thing.

Have you had enough? Well, please permit one more.

The lettuce theory:

A gardener in the tombs area was so piqued at curiosity-seekers trampling over lettuce seedlings he had planted around Joseph of Arimathea's tomb that he removed the body of Jesus and reburied it elsewhere!

Crude as this one sounds, it is one of the earliest of these pathetic hypotheses, and the church father Tertullian (circa 155–230) himself records it.

Other, even more fanciful flights of the imagination could be listed. But all these "explanations" have three things in common: They all are illogical, raising more problems than they solve, and are easily disproven; they all contradict crucial points of evidence in the Resurrection accounts; and they all posit a missing body, an empty tomb.

This last point is of enormous importance, though it is generally overlooked.

Admitting an Empty Tomb

Rather than using any of the specious arguments above, would it not have been a much more effective thrust against Christianity to claim that Jesus' body was never missing, that it lay in Joseph's sepulcher all the while? Astonishingly, this argument was never used—and for good reason. There is compelling evidence outside the Gospels that Jesus' tomb was indeed empty on Resurrection morning.

The circumstantial evidence for the empty tomb is overpowering. It deals with the question: "Where did Christianity first begin?"

To this the answer must be: "Christianity and its core proclamation of Jesus' resurrection could only have arisen at one spot on earth—the city of Jerusalem." But this is the very last place it could have originated if the decomposing body of Jesus of Nazareth were still inside Joseph's tomb for all to see. That would immediately have snuffed out the flame of an incipient Christianity whose central claim was Jesus' resurrection!

What happened in Jerusalem during the weeks following the first Easter could have taken place only if Jesus' body actually was missing. Otherwise, the Temple authorities, in their confrontation with the apostles, would simply have aborted the movement by walking over to the sepulcher of Joseph of Arimathea and unveiling Exhibit A. They didn't do this, because they *knew* the tomb was empty. Their official explanation for that was simply that the disciples had stolen the body. This was a solid—no, blatant admission that the sepulcher was indeed vacant.

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Extrabiblical Evidence

The objection, of course, is that the presumed failure of the authorities to produce Jesus' body rests only on New Testament sources biased in favor of Christianity. True, it rests on them, but not only on them. In my book *In the Fullness of Time* I present some important, yet long overlooked, evidence on this issue deriving from purely Jewish and Roman sources, ranging from the first-century Jewish historian Josephus to a fifth-century compilation called *Toledoth Jeshu*.

What is important about these secular sources—all of which admit an empty tomb—is that they deliver this positive evidence even though they are hostile sources. And that makes theirs the strongest sort of historical evidence. Historians call this interpretive tool “the criterion of embarrassment,” which is a self-authenticating proof. Put simply, if a source concedes something decidedly not in its favor, then that something must be factual and true.

Well into the second century A.D. and long after Matthew recorded its first instance, the Jerusalem authorities continued to admit an empty tomb by ascribing it to the disciples' stealing the body. In his *Dialogue with Trypho*, Justin Martyr, who came from neighboring Samaria, reported in about A.D. 150 that Judean authorities even sent specially commissioned agents across the Mediterranean world to counter Christian preaching with exactly this explanation of the Resurrection.

Does any early source claim that Jesus' tomb was still occupied after that first Easter Sunday? The answer is no. For that matter, does *any* later source make that claim? No, not to my knowledge, even though any later such claim would have less than marginal significance. Rather, *all the sources agree that the tomb was empty*.

Accordingly, if all the evidence is weighed carefully and fairly—and using the canons of historical research—one cannot but conclude that the sepulcher of Joseph of Arimathea in which Jesus was buried on Friday was truly empty on the following Sunday morning. And no shred of evidence has yet been discovered anywhere that would disprove this statement.

Does this, then, prove the Resurrection?

No, certainly not. An empty tomb does not, in itself, prove a resurrection. But the reverse is true indeed. A physical resurrection would require an empty tomb as its first symptom, since any occupancy would immediately disprove it. There are, of course, a host of positive arguments and proofs that Jesus did rise from the dead, quite apart from the empty-tomb argument. You know them from sermons on the Resurrection.

It is happily astonishing, then, that the most incredible claim in history—someone rising from the dead—not only cannot be disproved, but best accounts for a momentarily missing body that first Easter. “The mystery of the missing body”? It's no mystery for Christians. He is risen indeed!



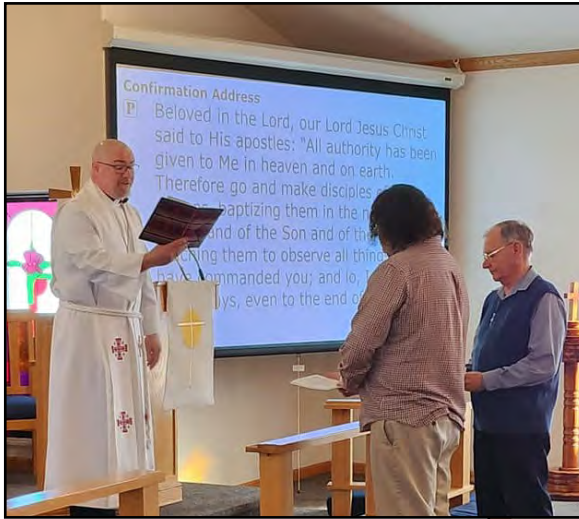


ST. JOHN Special Events

March, 2024 News

St. John Lutheran Church
790 Greydene Avenue
Canon City, CO 81212
Web: stjohncanoncity.org
Phone: (719) 275-0111

Following months of afternoon classes, Ben De Nise was confirmed on Sunday, February 11, 2024.



- Mar. 4 - Jack Jones
- Mar. 8 - Isaac Larson
- Mar. 14 - Kevin Wright
- Mar. 20 - Myron Martinson
- Mar. 21 - Sage Rosales
- Mar. 22 - Emmie Leason
- Mar. 24 - Dawn Atkinson
- Mar. 25 - Chris Pushchak
- Mar. 28 - Dan Kletke
- Mar. 28 - Ethan Moffit
- Mar. 29 - Destynie Larson
- Mar. 30 - Ryan Lehmpuhl
- Mar. 31 - Donna Heldt

- Mar. 3 - Jericho & Kerrie Leason
- Mar. 17 - Sean & Beverly Kane
- Mar. 30 - Doug & Carolyn Westlund



Trail Mix hikers Kerrie and Maddie Leason, and Gail Kirkegaard enjoyed a sunny walk on Tunnel Drive Trail on Thursday, February 1st.



Door Keeper, Lenny Williams, will greet you and open the door for you when you arrive at church on Sundays.



ST. JOHN

Student Report

March, 2024 News

St. John Lutheran Church
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Hagah, hagah, hagah

There is a word that is used quite frequently on campus among the Theology and Ministry courses: hagah. In Hebrew, it looks like הָגָה. There are a variety of direct translations but the closest English word is often 'meditate'. Seen in Joshua 1:8 "*This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it.*"

The kind of meditation that hagah-ing calls for is similar to how a cow chews its food by regurgitating and chewing again. We are encouraged almost daily in class to read and reread the Bible. To not just read a passage here and there or to speed through the chapter, but to return and meditate. I always picture the herd of cows that graze just next door to St. John when we discuss this idea in class.

Two of my classes have been covering similar topics the last week or two. I have found that the content always sticks better the second time around. In addition, I notice more of the little bits and pieces the second time, since I am not as focused on retaining the large, main content. While somewhat annoying to be learning the same thing twice, it has been refreshing to have a review. Each teacher is using the content from a slightly different angle as well, so the slight nuances mean that I am not hearing the same thing verbatim.

Devotions somehow feel different from the time I spend daily in the Bible for classwork and for homework. They feel calmer and more personal, even if I have read the same passage for homework a few hours earlier. I have a daily devotional book that I read at night before going to bed. Lately, I have found that the devotion topic or concept floats back up in my mind frequently the next day, often as I walk between classes. That is the kind of rumination or meditation that we are encouraged to do.

This upcoming month of March is quite full. I will be home for Spring Break February 29th through March 10th. My choir tour is March 15th -20th and my parents will be driving out to Lincoln, Nebraska for our concert on Tuesday the 19th. If you would like to carpool with them, please speak to Kris or Lori soon to coordinate plans. I will also be home again for Easter break from Wednesday March 27th through April 1st.

I look forward to seeing you all again soon, and I thank you for your continued messages and prayers of support. This semester is rapidly ending, and I will only have three more after this. That alone is quite scary to prepare for, yet I embrace it with open arms.

God's peace,
Alana Holt, Concordia - St. Paul





ST. JOHN

St. John Youth

March, 2024 News

St. John Lutheran Church
790 Greystone Avenue
Canon City, CO 81212
Web: stjohncanoncity.org
Phone: (719) 275-0111

Blind Bowling!

Wednesday, January 31 - St. John Youth and friends, with the leader Valerie, Dietrich, Jaidyn, Evie, Martha, Solveig, Dustin, and Carol! They had tacos, chips, snickerdoodles, and chocolate silk pie! They enjoyed a game of blind bowling too! (Many thanks to Carol Skoda for the pictures)





ST. JOHN

News & Notes

March, 2024 News

St. John Lutheran Church
790 Greydene Avenue
Canon City, CO 81212
Web: stjohncanoncity.org
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Attendance:

January 28 - 99 February 4 - 83 February 11 - 76 February 14 -15/50 February 18 - 93

Baby Shower:



The Ladies of St. John are invited to a Baby Shower in honor of Rachel Gammell, to be held Saturday, March 9th 10:30am at Liv Booth's home: 1004 Ridgeview Place Canon City. Brunch will be provided. Invitations coming soon!

We request that any gifts please remain unwrapped. Liv is going to create a beautiful display of unwrapped gifts for viewing at the party. If possible please mail or pass along any gifts to Liv in advance or please bring your gift unwrapped to the shower. Also, consider gifting her with a signed baby book in place of a card. A list of books and other registry items can be found on Rachel's registry:

<https://www.babylist.com/list/baby-reg-rachel-gammell>

Ride to Church: If you or another member you know needs transportation to church on Sundays, please call Ken Davidson at 719-429-4919.

Announcements: Please e-mail announcements for the Sunday worship bulletins and monthly newsletters to Office@StJohnCanonCity.org. Sarah makes the bulletins and Gail makes the newsletters. Thank You.

Missionaries: Please remember to pray for JP and Aimee Cima in Cambodia and Chuck and Cheryl Ferry in Taiwan, asking God to protect them all and use them to spread His gospel.

Prayer Chain: For prayer concerns we have a phone chain and an e-mail chain. Please contact one of the following: **Phone:** Mary Richardson, (719) 269-1426, **E-mail:** 1956cew@gmail.com .

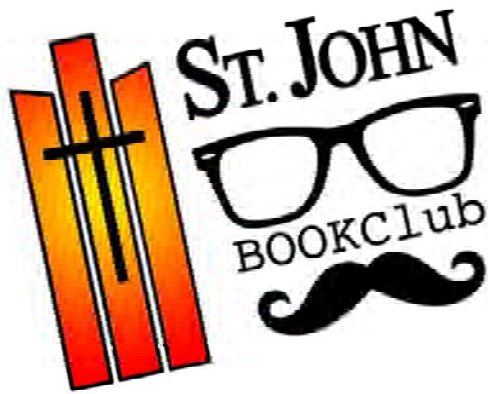
Food Bank: The first Sunday of every month is when we share our blessings with the needy in our community. Please bring basics such as sugar, flour, or canned food for the box near the mailboxes.

We Welcome All in the name of Jesus Christ. Thank you for blessing us with your presence when you join us to worship at St. John. Please sign our guestbook, and take a visitor packet.

Special Prayers: Please contact Pastor Dan prior to Sunday services to include any special prayers.

Trail Mix Fremont Peak Sunrise Summit: The 4 mile hike (2 up and 2 back down) is scheduled for Saturday, March 23. We will hike up in twilight to arrive at the peak's summit in time to view a lovely sunrise in the east over Cañon City, and spectacular views of the Royal Gorge and Sangre de Cristo Mountains. B.Y.O.B. (Bring Your Own Breakfast), and invite your hiking friends! A sign-up is on the bulletin board. Contact Gail K. for info. (720) 201-8743. *"In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also."* Psalm 95:4

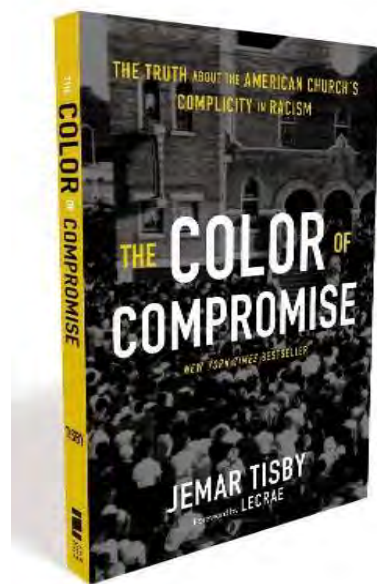
Who Is My Neighbor? Recalling Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan, in Luke 10:25-37, we hear about a man who had other plans for his day. He was not out for a casual walk that day. He had a place to go, and it was not a safe road. He might have had an appointment, but that had to be rescheduled. He might have been going to town for supplies, but now that had to wait. He might have reduced his purchases after paying the doctor to care for the man. It is not likely that he organized a group of brave men, such as Guardian Angels, to protect people traveling on the road. It's not likely that he started a non-profit organization and solicited for donors to provide medical care for crime victims. But it was in his heart to stop and help that man. It is in the Christian's heart to help people in need. Our neighbors are strangers as well as members of St. John. Gail K, St. John Evangelism.



February & March 2023

Here is what is happening at the BOOKClub:

The next book on our list is [The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism](#) (ISBN 978-0310113607) by Jemar Tisby. This book is highly recommended by our district president Rev. Maxwell; and after discussing the anti-semitism of WWII, we will now consider the racism a bit closer to home. The description reads:



The Color of Compromise is both enlightening and compelling, telling a history we either ignore or just don't know. Equal parts painful and inspirational, it details how the American church has helped create and maintain racist ideas and practices. You will be guided in thinking through concrete solutions for improved race relations and a racially inclusive church.

The Color of Compromise:

- Takes you on a historical, sociological, and religious journey: from America's early colonial days through slavery and the Civil War
- Covers the tragedy of Jim Crow laws, the victories of the Civil Rights era, and the strides of today's Black Lives Matter movement
- Reveals the cultural and institutional tables we have to flip in order to bring about meaningful integration
- Charts a path forward to replace established patterns and systems of complicity with bold, courageous, immediate action

The Color of Compromise is not a call to shame or a platform to blame white evangelical Christians. It is a call from a place of love and desire to fight for a more racially unified church that no longer compromises what the Bible teaches about human dignity and equality. A call that challenges black and white Christians alike to stand up now and begin implementing the concrete ways Tisby

outlines, all for a more equitable and inclusive environment among God's people. Starting today.

Used copies are available on Amazon for \$7-\$8, a Kindle edition for \$13, and an Audible audiobook for \$7. Three paperback copies have also been ordered for the church library. If you have any problems finding a copy, please call Pastor Dan.

The date for discussing this book is Tuesday March 12th, 6:30pm – although this date may change if necessary.

Pick up a book & join us at the BOOKClub!

What a remarkable opportunity we have in Cambodia to serve body and soul, for this life and the next, by our words and our deeds. Earlier we reported ([here](#) and [here](#)) on [Aimee's work with Concordia Welfare and Education Foundation](#) among the ethnic Jarai people in Ratanakiri to address issues on health and hygiene. This important work meets needs of body in this life. Meanwhile, J.P. traveled this past month to the same village, along with Mr. Khorn Sopha and Pastor Bun Sopheap, to teach a 5-day seminar on Luther's Small Catechism. This was the second of five locations where the Cambodia Lutheran Church has asked J.P. to teach. The team knew it would be a difficult week—not only is it hard on student and teacher to endure such a demanding schedule, but the students would be doing it in their second language. Unfortunately, none of the team could speak [their native ethnic language](#). Despite these limitations and challenges, it was a great week! As J.P. has come to experience, the first lessons on the 10 Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer generated easy agreement. The latter lesson especially, framing prayer not as our manipulation of but rather our response to God, really seemed to hit home. But upon beginning the final three lessons of Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and Confession and Absolution, there were more puzzled looks as the distinctives of Lutheran teaching came out. But the group took it very slow, digging into LOTS of Scripture and allowing plenty of time for questions. J.P. saw a lot of nodding heads as the teaching was tested against Scripture. This [important work of teaching](#) Scripture serves souls—both in this life and with a view towards the next! The recent opportunities God has given us in Ratanakiri remind us that Word and deed belong together. Like the ministry of Jesus himself, as Christians we are called to care for body and soul, for this life and the next. We must never pursue one at the expense of the other. The Christian hope covers both!

And whatever you do, in **WORD** or **DEED**, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Col. 3:17)

SQUARE TWO

Cima Newsletter
vol. 18, No. 1, Jan. 2024



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Aimee.Cima@lcms.org

Wanna help us impact the people of Cambodia? Give [here](#) or mail a check to 1) P.O. Box 66861, St. Louis, MO 63166 (payable to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod), OR 2) 40718 Highway E-16, Mapleton, IA 51034 (payable to Mission Central). For ALL checks, in the memo line write "Cima family-Cambodia."

Praise: for the LCMS Asia missionary family retreat in early January; for J.P.'s travels to Ratanakiri; for recent new members of the [youth group](#); for initial preparations for a national youth gathering in Cambodia; for solid recent progress on J.P.'s dissertation.


Prayers: for a busy upcoming month, with Aimee heading to Ratanakiri and Papua New Guinea, and J.P. heading to Kampot and Siem Reap; for safe travels for a team from California arriving to serve with us and the CLC from February 16.



Can you believe this is our 200TH newsletter!? See the whole archive [here](#).



MARCH 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
3 3RD SUNDAY IN LENT 9:00 Divine Service 10:30 Sunday School & Adult Bible Class 11:30 Elder's Meeting	4 7:30a Morning Prayer 4:00p Canon City Youth Choirs 6:30p Confirmation	5 7:30a Morning Prayer <div style="border: 1px solid black; text-align: center; padding: 5px;">Sarah Out of the Office</div>	6 7:30a Morning Prayer 10:00 Bible Study 6:00p Soup Supper 7:00p Lent Svc.	7 7:30a Morning Prayer 9:00 Quilters <div style="border: 1px solid black; text-align: center; padding: 5px;">Sarah Out of the Office</div>	1 7:30a Morning Prayer <hr style="width: 100%;"/> 8 7:30a Morning Prayer	2 <hr style="width: 100%;"/> 9 <hr style="width: 100%;"/>
10 4TH SUNDAY IN LENT 9:00 Divine Service w/ Holy Communion 10:30 Sunday School & Adult Bible Class 11:30 Council Meeting <u>DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME BEGINS</u>	11 7:30a Morning Prayer 4:00p Canon City Youth Choirs	12 Circuit Pastors' Meeting – Pastor Out of Office	13 7:30a Morning Prayer 10:00 Bible Study 6:00p Soup Supper 7:00p Lent Svc.	14 7:00 Men's Breakfast 9:00 Quilters	15	16 9:00a LWML Meeting
17 5TH SUNDAY IN LENT 9:00 Divine Service 10:30 <i>St. Patrick's Day Dinner</i> <u>ST. PATRICK'S DAY</u>	18 7:30a Morning Prayer 4:00p Canon City Youth Choirs 6:30p Confirmation	19 7:30a Morning Prayer 6:30p BOOKClub	20 7:30a Morning Prayer 10:00 Bible Study 6:00p Soup Supper 7:00p Lent Svc.	21 7:30a Morning Prayer 9:00 Quilters	22 7:30a Morning Prayer	23
24 PALM SUNDAY 9:00 Divine Service w/ Holy Communion 10:30 Sunday School & Adult Bible Class	25 7:30a Morning Prayer	26 7:30a Morning Prayer	27 7:30a Morning Prayer	28 7:00 Men's Breakfast 9:00 Quilters 1:30p Lent Svc. 7:00p Lent Svc. <u>MAUNDY THURSDAY</u>	29 7:30a Morning Prayer 1:30p Lent Svc. 7:00p Lent Svc. <u>GOOD FRIDAY</u>	30
31 EASTER SUNDAY 6:30 Sunrise Service w/ Holy Communion 7:30 Easter Breakfast 9:00 Divine Service w/ Holy Communion	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;">  <p style="margin: 0;">ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH CAÑON CITY, COLORADO 790 Greydene Ave., Cañon City, CO, 81212 http://www.StJohnCanonCity.org 719-275-0111</p> </div>					