The background of the page is a painting of an open tomb. The tomb is a dark, rectangular opening in a dark, textured rock. Inside the tomb, a white shroud is draped over a stone block. The shroud is rendered with soft, painterly brushstrokes, showing some shadows and highlights. The surrounding rock is painted with dark, moody colors like deep blues, purples, and greys, with visible brushwork that gives it a rough, uneven texture. The overall mood is somber and contemplative.

# All Glory, Laud, and Leiros

The disciples' all-too-human response to the resurrection reminds us that God's love is stronger than our doubts and failings.

LINDSAY SMALL



One of my favorite book series as a child was the Chronicles of Narnia. In the book *Prince Caspian*, Lucy awakes from a deep sleep and follows a familiar voice into the forest. There she is reunited with Aslan, the great lion. Aslan tells Lucy, “Go back to the others now, and wake them up; and tell them you have seen me again; and that you must all get up at once and follow me.”

“Do you mean that is what you want me to do?” gasped Lucy.

“Yes, little one,” said Aslan.

“Will the others see you too?”

“Certainly not at first,” said Aslan. “Later on, it depends.”

“But they won’t believe me!” said Lucy.

“It doesn’t matter,” said Aslan.

So Lucy goes back to her brothers and sister, and tries to convince them to get up and follow something they cannot see.

Testimony brings forth strong reactions. We are cynical people by nature, and to rely on the word of another can be difficult—especially when it’s an incredible word. *Credo* means “I believe,” so *incredible* really means “unbelievable.”

And that’s what the women and disciples thought about Jesus no longer being in the tomb. They were dumbfounded, amazed—it was *incredible*.

The women had gathered to anoint the body of Jesus. But when they arrived at the tomb, something amazing had happened. The stone was rolled away, the tomb was empty—and two men appeared in dazzling white clothes.

The women were terrified, of course, but the angels proceeded to do a reassuring Sunday-school lesson with them, reminding them of all Jesus had told them. We get the sense that the women collectively said,

“Ohhhh, that’s right, we remember now!” And they ran back to the apostles who were hiding behind locked doors because they were afraid.

Notice that the women didn’t first share this news with strangers—they told the people who were in the best position to believe their testimony, those who had lived with Jesus and heard his words. Surely the disciples would at least try to believe their story.

But they didn’t. Not even close.

Luke says, “But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense” (24:11, TNIV).

Nonsense. Idle tales. That’s how our Bibles most commonly translate the disciples’ reaction. But it’s actually a little more colorful than that.

Anna Carter Florence, one of my favorite preachers, has written extensively about their reaction and the specific word they used to respond to the women—*leiros*. In *Preaching as Testimony*, she describes the moment after the women came into the room and brought this amazing news. “For one wildly out-of-character moment, they forget their disciple manners and resort to the subtle cadences of a high-school locker room.”

She explains that our Bibles translate it as “idle tale” or “nonsense,” but the Greek word actually means “trash,” “garbage,” or “bull,” or in a more vulgar way, “~!@#%&!&!” “No matter how you spin it, *leiros* is just a locker-room word, a wet towel whipping through a chorus of jeers. Until high school boys start accusing each other of being full of *idle tales*, a more faithful translation would probably be, ‘These things seemed to them like ... a lot of *bull*.’”

*Leiros* does not appear anywhere else in the New Testament. Nowhere does this foul word occur, except on Easter morning. It’s the very first reac-

tion to these first female evangelists. It’s the initial response after the good news is shared for the first time.

When the women first announced, “Christ is risen,” the disciples did not jump up and exclaim, “He is risen indeed!” Instead they shouted back, “*Leiros!* We don’t believe you.”

Florence continues: “The logic of *leiros* is that our testimony will be heard as a lot of nonsense, even from the ones who know us and love Jesus most. The gospel has always met with ridicule, right from the very first time it was preached. It has always sounded like a lot of *leiros*. It has

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always been more than the church can handle, even when it is the very thing the church prays for; not even the disciples, as much as they loved Jesus, could take the good news. They flung it back in the women’s faces.”

But let’s not be too hard on the disciples—because it’s not hard to guess why they might have resisted the women’s story.

First of all, they had watched Jesus die. Even those who were in hiding had heard accounts of the whipping and the nails and the beating. He was dead. They were cowering in a locked room trying to figure out where and when everything had gone so wrong. And we can imagine the guilt and shame they must have been feeling.

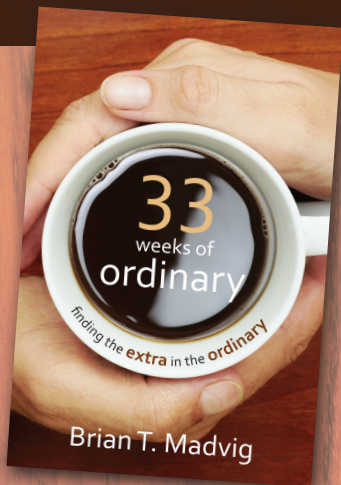
Perhaps they were thinking about their last encounter with Jesus. Poor Peter, I wonder if the cock’s crow was still ringing in his ears.

And so not only was this news unbelievable, but perhaps there was even some dread and fear involved as

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So Good Press is proud to announce the publication of a new book by **Brian T. Madvig**



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**Brian T. Madvig**, MDiv, PhD, recently began writing down and telling personal stories to foster connection and encourage authenticity. He has been a clinical psychologist at Arbor Clinical Associates in Wheaton and Northfield, Illinois, for over 17 years. Brian is a member of Winnetka Covenant Church in Wilmette, Illinois.

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well. Jesus is resurrected? He's back? Leiros!

But look what happens in the next verse. In Luke 24:12 Peter—the one who had the biggest reason to hide—ran to the tomb to see for himself. Then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

He didn't have the same *experience* as the women—he didn't see the two men in dazzling clothes. Testimony does not come with a rewind button so that we can duplicate another's experiences. But testimony sets something in motion—the impulse to go and see for ourselves. And Peter did just that.

He went and he found that the women were telling the truth. He saw the empty tomb and the linen cloths lying by themselves. He saw enough to know that something big had happened. And so Peter made his way back to the community, wondering.

Eventually, we know, he would do more than wonder. But how would he ever have gone to the tomb by himself if the women had not risked rejection and testified to the living Christ?

And so the Easter story is for both the preacher and the seeker.

We are all preachers. We are all called to share the good news of Easter, to carry the story to others, to testify to the resurrection—no matter the response. Our testimony will be met with rejection. Our words will be thrown back, our stories rebuffed. But the power of the resurrection cannot be contained. The initial reaction might be "leiros," but leiros leads to seeking and seeking to wonder and on and on.

But we are also the seeker, practicing resurrection through difficult circumstances—through hardship, doubt, grief—and sometimes we simply want to shout, "Leiros!"

For the seeker in all of us, I must say I am grateful for the disciples'

all-too-human response. It makes them seem real to me—not so different from us. We seek, we fall, we hide, we praise—often all at the same time. God knows that we often come to him singing, "All glory, laud, and leiros."

It's good to be reminded, on Easter of all days, that the power and love of God is not thwarted by shaky belief or indignant outbursts. And so we are called to testify to the living Christ, to spread the good news of the resurrection wherever we go, whatever the response. And we are called to respond, to seek, to look for Christ everywhere we go.

This is incredible, unbelievable, beyond our understanding. But it's no idle tale. It's not nonsense. And it's certainly not leiros.

And so Lucy goes back to her sleeping siblings and attempts to wake them up. "Wake up! It's Aslan! We must follow him!" Her testimony is met with groans and reluctance. But eventually they get up. They stumble behind her in the dark, unable to see the great lion that Lucy so clearly sees. But slowly, they begin to see a faint shadow. The shadow grows darker and darker until finally the great lion turns and faces them.

Lucy's oldest brother, Peter says, "O Aslan, I'm so glad. And I'm so sorry. I've been leading them wrong ever since we started."

Aslan responds, "My dear son." And turning to all of them he says, "The moon is setting. Look behind you... there is the dawn beginning."

The dawn has begun for you, for me, for the whole world. It is Easter. And we are resurrection people. We are people of the story. And so may we testify boldly to the risen Christ, and clamber over all the leiros in our life and seek him with wonder.

Christ is risen! ■