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### **Who Is This Message For?**

**Text:** St. Luke 24:1-12

First the human race lived in the Stone age, and then appropriately named, it successively raced through the Bronze Age, the Iron Age, the Middle Ages, the Age of Enlightenment, the Industrial Age, and the Post-Industrial Age, to now find itself in what is variously called the Information Age or the Age of Communication. Now, what marks our arrival here and what is the chief characteristic of this our age is our unprecedented ability to share information; what really seems to matter more to us now than anything else is continually increasing this ability to communicate and to share information. In saying that, though, I would carefully advise all of us to be aware that there is a difference between communicating and information, a difference which far too many would-be communicators overlook, believing that simply because they are talking that they are actually saying something. Too often they are not.

But whether or not we are actually saying anything, what is indubitable is that we do have an incredible number of ways of getting a message to others. We can talk to them in person, we can telephone them, we can fax them, we can text-message them, we can IM them, we can read their Facebook entries and post our own, we can e-mail them, and we can snail mail them. We can have teleconferences with them. Yesterday the i-Pad came out. We *have* indeed developed the fine art of messaging.

Yet, as advanced as we might be in messaging, messages don't always get through.

Sometimes they don't get through simply because of equipment failure. But sometimes they don't get through simply because we can't decipher them. I, for one, steadfastly avoid text

messaging simply because I can't figure out what is being said in all those cryptic abbreviations that come with no punctuation. It appears to me gibberish and I remain to be convinced that it is actually worth the effort to decipher it. In fact, each time I receive one, I am reminded of the unfortunate messaging that went on between two colleagues I once had. They and several other faculty members at the college shared a two floor building which housed their offices. The group also shared amongst themselves a single telephone out in the hall. Now this rather primitive arrangement tended to result in a situation where one person would have to answer the phone, and if the intended recipient were not in his office so that he could come out and take the call, the one who answered would have to take a message and write it on a post-it and then stick it on the door. One mathematics professor tended to be the one who usually answered since his office was the one closest to the door. As it turned out, this usually posed two rather significant communication problems. First, Edgar was rather deaf, so he didn't always get the message right. Second, his handwriting was terrible and so nobody could read his post-its anyhow. Finally, after receiving many messages that he could not make head nor tail of, in an effort to reform his colleague, or at least just to get back at him, Jim, a history professor, wrote "Edgar: Important" in large letters at the top of a post-it and then proceeded to scribble indecipherable gibberish in the remaining space. Upon returning to his office, Edgar found it and for the next three days he frantically tried without success to track down who had taken the call and written the note so that he could return what he thought was an important call. Well, unlike Edgar, I refuse to chase the message down.

Sometimes, though, messages don't get through not because of their lack of decipherability but because either we believe they are not for us anyhow and we don't listen to them, or because we believe, even know full well that they only *pretend* to be for us personally,

but are nothing more than nuisance solicitations made to any pigeon who will respond to them. Because of these beliefs on the part of would-be message recipients alongside our splendid modern ability to communicate and generate messages, we have also developed a major anti-communication industry that actually blocks messages and frustrates communications. The circular file in the kitchen that receives all the mail marked “Occupant” is simply the low tech version of spam filters, the government’s “Do Not Call” list, pop-up blockers, being “unfriended” and caller ID. When I added caller ID to my own phone system, I had to admit I couldn’t have been more pleased with the invention, as it allowed me to walk unconcernedly away from any phone call that announced itself on the telephone screen with the words “Out of Area.” Not surprisingly, to date, not a one of these callers who found it important enough to call me at dinner has ever bothered to waste his own time leaving a message on the answering machine, a fact that I believe clearly vindicates me in my belief that none of them really wanted to talk to *me*, anyhow; they just wanted to communicate with my Visa card.

But if many times messages don’t get through because we justifiably block them from getting through, there are just as many times that we miss important messages and announcements because we have failed to realize that they really *are* for us and that they really are important to us. As a result we simply don’t listen; that more than anything else frustrates communication. And often enough, and soon enough, we come to regret that deafness to important announcements that are really meant for us. For example, it has been said that in the days before September 11, 2001 numerous messages about foreign flight students who had no interest in learning how to land a plane did not get through to the top levels of the administration and were not taken seriously. If so, surely we must deeply regret that we did not think it worth paying attention to these. Similarly, any number of teenagers begin to smoke thinking that the

warnings on tobacco products are not really for them, and similarly any number of fools climb behind a wheel of a car throughly drunk because they do not get the message that drunk driving kills. Whatever it is that they do hear somehow they think that they are the exception to the announcement, and that it is not meant for them. Usually, in time, they end up regretting their failure to listen. The best thing that can be said in such situations, is that should we survive our failure to get the message, we might become better listeners – but not always.

Now what is true with respect to national security, or our health or safety is also true spiritually. There are spiritual messages that are meant for us that we just don't get because we don't really believe that they are for us. That is particularly true with respect to the announcement of the Resurrection, "he is risen." We have announced that Christ is risen this morning and it is an important announcement. So let us therefore take a moment between the egg hunt and the family dinner to think about who this message is really for.

So who is this message for?

One, it is for the rulers of the earth. Now, rulers always think that their power is invincible and that, because they are rulers, that they will always be the ones to determine how things will go. The message of the resurrection is that God is, however, as Isaiah prophesied, creating a new heaven and a new earth in which the ways things have always been done is over and done with. What is over and done includes the rule of power, even if the powerful try to resist believing that. Instead, this message to the rulers of the earth is that in this new creation it is not they, but the meek who shall inherit the earth, and the message is that it is the first who shall be last, and the last first. This message to the rulers of the earth is that if one would be great that he or she must become a servant of all.

It is also for the poor and the oppressed, those who have been getting in the neck from

the rulers of the earth for far too long. They who have been trampled, they whom the powerful have eaten up as one eats bread, well, this message is for them, too, that things are not going to be this way forever. They are the ones who will ultimately inherit the earth, and it is they, the meek, who will ultimately be the determiners of the way that the world really goes. So this message is for all those who were born in some obscure corner of an empire, and it means to tell them that it is not emperors or empires that ultimately matter, but those who humbly walk with God in justice.

And this message is for those who mourn, for this message is a message of comfort. This is a message for all of us who have lost someone or something dear, and who have holes left in our hearts. This is a message to them that all of their tears will be wiped dry, and that in the City of God which the resurrection inaugurates, death will be no more, mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.

It is also for the sick, the lonely, and the outcast. To say that the one who alone paid attention to them before and who did not treat them like dirt, or did not simply ignore them is the same one who was raised by God to sit at his right hand in heaven is to say that heaven now and always will pay attention to them. It is to say that Christ's is the victory and that illness, loneliness and exclusion are therefore no longer the way of the world. To say that he is risen is to proclaim freedom to the prisoner, sight to the blind, and food for the hungry.

And this message is also for sinners. It is first of all a message for those who mourn their sins, and who are weighed down by guilt, guilt so ponderous that they cannot rise. It is for those whose guilt has made them worthless in their own eyes and has made them ashamed. It is a message for them that they might know that there is forgiveness, that there is redemption and that there is release, and most of all that there is love and acceptance. But it is also a message for

those sinners who do not mourn their sins, whose consciences do not bother them, and who are deceived about their own righteousness, for this message is that in God's light all will be revealed and set straight. It is a message to them that even if in this world evil frequently is inextricably mixed up with good, and is not always punished, that there really is a final setting right of all things.

And this message of the resurrection is also a message of Good News for God's people. It is a message this morning for all clergy and elders and deacons who have given of themselves tirelessly, except that they are now tired, and weary and discouraged. The resurrection is a message that they have not been wrong about the church that they have worked for and that they have loved, even when it hasn't loved them back or done anything for their worldly ambitions except to eliminate them. The Resurrection is similarly a message, too, for those of the faithful who are not so sure any longer that God is working in their lives, or are not sure that life has a purpose, for the Resurrection is a message that tells them once again that God is working in the world, and that he is in the end victorious over sin and death and despair. And the Resurrection is also a message for all those who would destroy Christ's body, the church, and tear apart its peace and unity. For the Good News is, whether they think it is good or not, that hatred and enmity, that injustice and lies will not prevail.

So who is this message for? Who ought to be paying attention to this message?

This message is for all of these people. This message is for everybody. This message is for you. Therefore listen to it once again and listen to it carefully: Christ is risen. Christ is risen, indeed. Alleluia.