

The kind of tomb in which Jesus was buried by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus most likely had a square opening. You’d have to bow down to get inside. Off to one side would be a large, round stone, propped up against the side of a hill a foot or two higher than the entrance. It would take a couple of strong men to get it rolling down a groove or channel to the front to block the entrance. Now, what I would like you to do is imagine what it would’ve sounded like when that stone rolled down the track and came to a stop. A huge THUD would’ve been the result, the type of deep, heavy sound that has a feeling of finality about it.

Imagine what it would’ve been like from the inside. You’d hear the stone grinding against the face of the hill and the rocks. Slowly the entrance disappears—then comes the THUD. Pitch darkness in the tomb. Absolute silence. Life is over. It’s done, even some of the most enjoyable moments in life.

Those moments would’ve included the many meals Jesus shared with his disciples. Imagine the laughter, the camaraderie, the chatter. The sounds of food being dished out, utensils being used, the filling of empty cups. Other meals with tax collectors and people on the margins would create similar sounds, some more boisterous, and others more subdued and formal. Then there were the noisy meals with thousands in attendance, at which bread and fish were miraculously multiplied. Can you imagine the sounds of surprise and satisfaction coming from the crowds?

But all that came to an end with a THUD. The stone rolls in place. Everything comes to a halt. The disciples have fled the scene. Joseph and Nicodemus had risked everything to bury Jesus. A few women observed the place where they laid him. But it’s clearly the end of the story.

Until it isn’t. Until that Sunday, so early in the morning, when the women are coming up the path to anoint Jesus’ body with spices. Their love for Him outweighs everything, including a clear plan for moving the stone. *Who will move the stone* is a detail that they evidently decided they would figure out when they got there. And when they got there, they discovered there was nothing to figure out. The stone has been pushed away, back up the channel, perhaps, and the sounds are the noises astonished people make. Silence punctuated with a few gasps. The type of questions you ask when you’re utterly amazed. And then, a confident, bold, clear voice speaks. It’s the voice of an angel. The angel announces that Jesus is risen! His body is not in the tomb. Jesus is alive and is going to meet his disciples, just as he said he would.

And just as he said he would, the living Jesus meets his disciples over the course of forty days. During a couple of those reunions, Jesus eats with his dear friends. The sounds of the meals are renewed; hushed tones at first, astounded cries follow, then shouts of joy and hugs. Around these tables Jesus turns men and women into courageous messengers of hope. The angelic message, “He is Risen” is now on their lips. It is music to their ears and a song they will sing to the world.

Can you hear it? Can you hear “He is Risen” echoing today? Do you find it thrilling? I sincerely hope so, because there are many other sounds that will shake you to your core.

One such sound is another thud, a repeated thud, the thud of dirt hitting the top of the casket, filling up the grave, being patted down. Then another thud, a gravestone being set. There’s the sound of tears being shed, and then silence, as everyone leaves the cemetery. Grief and sorrow have their own soundtrack, much of it a quiet absence. There’s less of everything, because a voice has disappeared. We cry, we sigh, we groan, because we can’t do anything about it. But Jesus can, Jesus has, and Jesus will.

The day will come when He returns in glory and power. The silence will be shattered. He will come to your grave, to the graves of all who have followed him. The gravestone? Like a tiny crumb. Flick. Away it goes. Same for the dirt, and out we come. Bodies alive once again. Hands and feet that hug and dance. Eyes to see the beauty of God’s new creation. Ears to hear songs of praise that make our Easter singing sound like whisper.

And we will feast, surrounded by those who love Jesus. We’ll be laughing, talking, a noisy celebration, all because Jesus is larger than the stone; all because “He is Risen” is true. And to encourage you before that great day, there are sounds of resurrection all around you. Do you hear them?

Listen to water splashing in the baptismal font. No stone, no matter how large, can stop Jesus from claiming people as His own through the water and His Holy Name, with Father and Spirit.

Listen to the wine being poured at the Lord’s Supper. No burial stone can stop Jesus from coming to you in this meal with life and forgiveness, because He is alive and forgiving.

Listen to the pages of the Bible being turned. No stone can silence the voice of God’s own Son, which speaks persuasively, calling all to repentance, consoling the repentant with full pardon, pardon He purchased at His cross.

Listen to the music of resurrection being played and sung this morning. No stone can stop those who love Jesus, the risen and ascended Lord, from singing his praise.

Listen to the prayers being spoken. No stone, no matter how large, can stop Jesus from listening to our prayers, and advocating for us before His Father.

Listen to the laughter and the love and the affectionate words being shared in this fellowship of believers. Let it serve as a present joy and a preview of the coming Feast.

Listen to the truth at the heart of the world. Christ is Risen. He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!