Luke 24:1-6a (NIV)
1 On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. 
2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 
3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 
4 While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. 
5 In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? 
6 He is not here; he has risen!”

INTRODUCTION: (Text as the Scripture Reading)
—Read text: Luke 24:1-6a (NIV) ‘On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. ‘They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ‘but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ‘While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. ‘In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? ‘He is not here; he has risen!”
—Easter symbolically brings us to our final earthly destination. Lent’s 40-days always ends at the tomb which held Christ’s body and which stands for our own tomb. It didn’t belong to Jesus but to Joseph of Arimathea, someone like us—trying to be a disciple. In fact, in a way he represents us. His empty tomb, from which Christ arose, symbolizes ours! And it has a message of good news for us: HOM.idea. –So, at the close of our Lenten journey, we come again to the garden tomb. We accompany the women who came on that first day, and with them, we make some Easter morning discoveries. First, we see...

I. He Is Gone! — (He was there (they had seen Him buried), but they didn’t find the body they were expecting....
A. They were entirely sure about His death [They saw the spear go in! There was no room in their minds for modern theories of Jesus faking death.]
B. The mystery of our hope is that our God became a human being; the history of our hope is that He died as a human, in our place!
C. But nothing short of Christ’s resurrection could have changed His confused, discouraged, and despairing disciples into fearlessly bold evangelists! (Christ’s resurrection utterly transformed them!)

TRANS: We call the day of Christ’s death “Good Friday,” because we know about Easter. To the women at the tomb, the resurrection was a surprise. It had been bad Friday for them, watching their hopes die on a cross. Because these women didn’t anticipate it, His resurrection was ecstasy for them! We, who grow up knowing about it, can never know the thrill they experienced, but we can learn from their discoveries....
II. He Is Gone, but He Left Some Things Behind

A. He left behind 75 lbs of spices He didn’t need.
   1. Nicodemus gave these spices as a way to dispel the odor of His decaying body, and the women were bringing even more!
   2. But Jesus left behind a fragrance that sweetens our path to the grave [anonymous: “Why should we tremble to convey / These bodies to the tomb? / There the dear flesh of Jesus lay, / And left a long perfume.”].

B. He left behind His grave clothes, reminding us of 3 things...
   1. He had fully identified with our human condition of wearing clothes to protect the body and keep it warm in cold weather.
   2. He had fully identified with our human death by being wrapped up in a shroud to hide the loathsome process of decaying flesh.
   3. By abandoning these grave wrappings, Jesus showed that where He went, and where we’ll someday go, the bodily coverings in this life will be traded for eternal robes of righteousness.

C. He left behind angels
   1. They were at the tomb not to serve the needs of the risen Savior, but to serve as messengers to the women and to us.
   2. They rolled back the stone not to release Jesus from the confines of tomb, but to show us that He was alive, that He had risen.
   3. They came there not to awaken Christ from death, but to assure us that our death too will receive similar angelic watch-care.

D. He left behind an open passage from the tomb
   1. Death appears so final, until we visit the empty tomb and see that Jesus knocked down the doors of the death-house.
   2. Mortal humanity’s hope of immortality has been won by our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, who said in Rev 1:17b-18, “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.”
   3. His glory in the open doorway of the empty tomb now penetrates the obscurity of the grave (No longer is death dark, shadowy and fearsome—Jesus bathed the pathway to the afterlife with light!)

TRANS: We have the leisure to reflect on what Jesus left behind, but for these women, there was a more obvious, practical discovery....

III. He Is Gone, and So Are Our Plans...

A. They came searching in vain [It’s simple logic: “No one’s ever to be found where they are not!”]— but some still look in vain for Jesus...