

3-31-24

Sermon- He is Alive!

Scripture John 20:1-18 CTW Psalm 118: 1-2, 14-24

Hymns- Ileana and WDT will pick these for each service.

Theme- Belief in the whole of the resurrection is a vital key to the Christian's existence. In short, everything the prophets predicted, everything Jesus taught, and everything the apostles would write for our understanding – all that the Bible says about the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, this must be believed and lived out before a watching world.

I. Introduction: TA-DA!

A Sunday School teacher had just finished telling her third graders about how Jesus was crucified and placed in a tomb with a great stone sealing the opening.

Then, wanting to share the excitement of the resurrection, the teacher asked: "And what do you think were Jesus first words when He came out of that tomb?"

A little girl in the back of the room shot her arm into the air and leaped to her feet and shouted excitedly "I know, I know!"

"Good" said the teacher, "Tell us, Bethany what did he say." Extending her arms high into the air she said: "TA-DA!" (Pause)

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was indeed for the world a "TA-DA".

It has touched the lives of believers throughout the ages.

Yes, "TA DA" Christ is Risen!

II. On Easter day Christ came out of the tomb and into our lives with passion, power, and victory.

A. There are two meanings of the word, "passion." It is derived from a word meaning, "suffering," which you may recognize in the word, "compassion," to suffer along with another. Thus, the passion of Christ refers to his crucifixion, his suffering for the sins of his people.

B. Passion also means intense emotion. And on the cross, the intense love of God for his people caused Jesus to take the punishment for God's pure and intense hatred of sin. Love **and** hate – the two great passions brought together in the passion of Christ.

Of course, world history points to many passionate people. Is the person and message of Jesus different? Jesus' love held him to the cross, but was that merely a deep emotion, or did it spring from a greater source?

To answer that, we must hear of a Sunday morning over 2000 years ago.

III. The Apostle Paul insists that the resurrection is central to Christianity. 1Corinthians 15.14-19 tells us: "And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain...and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied."

A. Love carried Christ to the cross, but the moral influence of a mere model of love is of minimal value. A dead savior offers no redemption; the crucifixion without the resurrection grants no forgiveness. But the Bible insists that this Jesus – crucified, dead, and buried – rose from the dead!

Furthermore, this is the best news anyone could ever hear.

The right news changes lives, behavior, thoughts and hearts. The resurrection of Jesus is that kind of news: life-changing truth which demands at least three responses from us today.

B. First: We Must Accept the Resurrection Because It Is True (John 20.1-10)

Peter and John run to the tomb after Mary's report of a missing body. John arrives first and stoops to peer in the short doorway. Peter plunges into the cave, so John then follows. They see something surprising: the burial cloths.

God provides much evidence of the resurrection: the testimonies of his apostles, the reports of hundreds of eyewitnesses, the changed character of the disciples, the manuscripts which offer many proofs of their historicity and reliability.

We could also study how these accounts have marks of first-hand truth – a lack of fabrication and the willingness of the writers to admit their own foibles and failings. But let's pay special attention, today, to the evidence of the "not-quite-empty" tomb.

Verse 5 says that John "saw the linen cloths." Greek has several words for "seeing"; this is the most general one – John simply saw. Verse 6 tells us that Peter also "saw," but here is a different word. More than mere observation, this includes comprehension or understanding.

John saw the cloths; Peter somehow perceived they meant something. Then John enters the tomb, and the end of verse 8 states he "saw and believed."

This is a third word for "see," and can include the idea of **experiencing what is observed**. Here is an example: when John the Baptist preached before the coming of Jesus, he said

that he was preparing the way for the Lord so that all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

The word, "see," is more than to observe with the eyes; it includes the idea of experience. That happened to John; he saw and believed – **he got it, in other words!** But what precisely did John see that made him believe the resurrection? At least two things.

1. First, John saw the "linen cloths." Bodies were prepared for burial first by coating them with sticky spices (including myrrh) then wrapping them tightly in cloths. The result was a virtually glued wrapping, similar to the way golf balls used to be constructed.

That is why, when Jesus resurrected people, the first thing friends would do is begin to remove the grave cloths. It was like unwrapping a package sealed with sticky duct tape. John sees that and realizes that no one stole the body.

A thief would not spend an hour in the middle of the night unwrapping a decaying corpse so that he could carry it naked from the tomb! He would grab and run, like a purse snatcher.

2. Second, John saw the face cloth folded in a place by itself. Unlike the body wrappings, covered as they were with a pitch-like glue, the face and head cloth was not treated with burial spices. That cloth was clean.

So, after the resurrection, Christ (or an angel) carefully folded it up. Here is an act of deliberate, calm, and orderly behavior.

Like a Sherlock Holmes mystery, Jesus is leaving clues that cannot be mistaken by any thoughtful observer. The body cloths, sticky and piled in one place, indicate that the body materialized outside of the wrappings.

And the head cloth announces that this was no hurried act of theft, but the careful actions of someone leaving a trail of breadcrumbs for the disciples to find and follow.

And John walks down the path, in his mind, he puts the pieces together, and believes. I can picture him standing there, looking around, thinking, thinking – suddenly he snaps his fingers and says, “I got it!” This is the resurrection he spoke of; this is what the prophets meant; I see! CHRIST IS ALIVE!

C. Second: We Must Rejoice at the Resurrection Because It Changes Everything (John 20.11-16)

Mary Magdaline felt deep affection for Christ because he healed her of demons. Now her frayed emotions overwhelm her as she contemplates the consequences of the theft of Jesus’ body.

It might end up drug through the city behind a chariot or beheaded and displayed as a warning to those who speak against the government or the religious authorities.

The last few days had stripped her of every hope, and the possibility of this final indignity done to her Lord results in what we might call an emotional breakdown. Then his voice: “Mary.”

“Teacher!” and she instinctively runs and grabs him.

1. Mary had stayed at the tomb after others left. In response to such deep affection, Jesus appears to her first. It is also worth noting that in a society which treated women as insignificant and unimportant, the central event of space and time is first revealed to a woman.

God would have us observe his willingness to work against cultural customs which deny Biblical truth. In him “there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, [black nor white]. We are all one in Christ.” (**Galatians 3.28**).

Appearing first to Mary Magdaline was a great gift to all who are oppressed in this world.

2. And She is forever changed. She was weeping, now she rejoices. What was oppressed is now honored, what was dead is now alive, they who were hopeless, are now happy. Behold, in him, all things are made new.

Maybe some of us have lost the joy of that first glimpse of the living Christ. Remember what it was like when you first met him? Yes, I know that years of struggling with sin and problems in the church and difficulties and things not turning out as you had hoped – the fight of faith can make us cynical or even despairing.

But as Jesus says to the church in Ephesians, so he says to us: “remember the love you had when faith was new and return to your first joy.”

But are there some here who have never heard the voice of Jesus as Mary Magdaline did on that Easter morning.

When in prison, I spent time with a man who had been raised in the church but decided to be a Muslim when he was in the military. Yet all the time of his wandering, he knew that he was missing the joy of Christ.

Eventually he heard the voice of Jesus, and he came to salvation. Now he radiates the same love I hear in Mary’s voice when she says, “Teacher!”

Do you have that love? I especially speak to you raised in the church. I’m **certainly not suggesting** that you wander into Islam to learn the emptiness of false religions.

I am asking that you vigorously pursue a joyful faith, a living hope, true belief. Faith in Christ is more than reciting a creed or joining a Biblical church; **it is delighting in God**. Is Christ your

happiness? His presence that first Easter morning changed everything for Mary Magdalene, how about you?

IV. Conclusion: A Response is Necessary!

A. Third: We Must Respond to the Resurrection Because It Proves the Gospel to Be True! (John 20.17-18)

Often the gospel writers leave us longing for more detailed explanations. Why does Jesus seem short with Mary? What is wrong with her response? There were certainly times when he allowed people to touch him after the resurrection, why this pushing back?

Though we must read between the lines a bit, I think we can find the answer. Mary grabbed Jesus with a desire to keep him forever here. Jesus, being God, looks into her deepest thoughts and recognizes that Mary plans never to lose hold of him again.

That is why Jesus says, "I am ascending." In other words, "Do not be confused here Mary. I am alive; but the answer is not my bodily presence. I am going to the Father who will send another comforter in accordance with the promises found in scripture!"

B. Mary Magdalene must respond correctly to the resurrected Christ. Joy? Yes. Her ideas for the future and having Jesus live here on earth? No. It is as if she has telescoped the resurrection and second coming; she has omitted the church age to come.

In the near future, Christ must sit beside the Father, send the Spirit, reign through the church, and empower the ministry of evangelism and teaching.

"No Mary," says Jesus. "This is not my final return, but the beginning of my departure. I must leave, and you live the faith once for all delivered to the saints."

In other words, Jesus' message to all of us today is:

“Let not your hearts be troubled; rejoice in the good news of the resurrection and realize that the ascension proves the message I have been preaching all along about the kingdom.”

There you have it: Believe, rejoice, and respond in faith this morning by coming to His table to refresh your spirit...all are welcome!

Let Us Pray...