



1616 W. Mequon Road, Mequon WI 53092
(262)241-3121 www.stjohnsmequon.org
Email: office@stjohnsmequon.org
Pastor James Tiefel
(262) 853-9723 (cell#)
Email: pastortiefel@gmail.com

The Resurrection of Our Lord

April 17, 2022

Sermon

Luke 24:1-12

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! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.” Then they remembered his words.

When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

Introduction – It’s not a surprise to anybody that all four Gospel writers—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—all four, include the resurrection of Jesus in their Gospels. What’s interesting is that they don’t tell the story with exactly the same details. There aren’t any contradictions in the four accounts; everything makes sense when you sit down and figure it out. The Holy Spirit inspired all four accounts just as he inspired all the words of the Bible. But the four evangelists are writing for different people and different reasons and so they tell the story of Easter in different ways.

But there is one thing that is the same in all four accounts. Each writer—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—each one wrote that there was no body in the tomb. Except for some burial wrappings, the tomb was empty. The corpse laid there on Friday was gone. And each writer in his own way tells us why. At some point on the third day after he died, at some magnificent moment, Jesus became alive.

On that Easter morning the tomb was empty; the body was gone. Jesus was alive. The exact hour he came to life, the names of the people who came to the tomb, the number of angels who announced the good news—nice to know but not really important. Here’s what’s important: the tomb was empty; the body was gone. Jesus was alive. The Easter lilies, the Easter breakfast, the Easter songs—nice to do but not really important. Here’s what’s important: the tomb was empty; the body was gone; Jesus is alive.

Whether we hear this truth again and again or hear it only on one Sunday of the year, whether we believe it with absolute confidence or don’t really think too much about it, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the central and vital truth of the Christian religion. Everything we do in this life and everything we hope to do after this life depends on Easter. If Easter is going to mean anything at all, the body must be gone, the tomb must be empty, Jesus must be alive. The truth is:

There Has to Be an Easter

Jesus predicted it ... Salvation demands it ... Witness requires it

1. The sad task of preserving Jesus' dead body really happened on Friday after the crucifixion and the men took care of it. For these women a visit to the tomb was more a labor of love than anything else. They couldn't travel on the Sabbath Day and the Sabbath Day ended at 6:00 p.m. By then it was too dark. Luke tells us what happened. **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 worried about the stone that covered the tomb entrance, but when they arrived **they found the stone rolled away from the tomb.** Obviously they went inside. **But when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.** They were speechless; they had no idea what to think. You can see them with mouths open, hands to their faces in shock. **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.** They simply collapsed. Every person in this church would have done exactly the same. But there were smiles on the faces of these angels; what they said was almost humorous: **Why do you look for living among the dead?** And then came the most important words the human race has ever heard: **He is not here; he has risen!**

The body was gone, the tomb was empty, Jesus was alive. It has to be that way. There had to be an Easter because Jesus predicted it. The messenger reminded them: **Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.** From the start, Jesus always talked about his resurrection. Sometimes in pictures: **Destroy this temple and I will raise it again in three days.** Sometimes with logic: **I have authority to lay down my life and authority to take it up again.** He never talked to his followers about the death that was coming without talking to them about the resurrection that was coming. **Then the women remembered his words.** Of course.

I can tell you I'm Superman. I can say that I'm faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive, and able to leap tall buildings with a single bound, but if I can't back it up I'm a fake and a failure. If there were no Easter, that's all that Jesus would be: A fake and a failure. If there is no Easter, you should believe nothing he tells you: nothing about pardon or protection or prayer or paradise. But there is an Easter! The body was gone, the tomb was empty, Jesus is alive. There had to be an Easter because Jesus predicted there would be an Easter and now you can believe every promise he makes, promises about here and now and promises about there and then. Jesus said he would rise from the dead and he did!

2. When the angel reminded the women of Jesus' words, he included what Jesus said about the suffering and death that was coming. **Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners and be crucified.** They were at the cross; they saw all the ugliness. And so have we in the days just passed. But those women probably didn't know as much as we know. They didn't see Good Friday in the same way we do. They believed Jesus was the promised Messiah and the Son of the living God, just as we do. Did they grasp that Jesus was offering his perfect obedience and his innocent death in place of their disobedience and the death they deserved? We know that. When the sun stopped shining and the earth went dark, did they realize God was forsaking his Son as he carried the sins of the world in his body? We know that. When they saw the blood drip from his head and hands and feet and side, did they understand that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin? We know that. When Jesus cried out **It is finished** did they believe that God's plan to save the world was a done deal? We know that.

But if there were no Easter, it wouldn't make any difference what we know. So what if Jesus died? Everybody dies. So what if his death was gruesome? Lots of people die gruesomely. Without Easter we would never be sure that our sins are covered or that Satan is crushed. St. Paul wrote with complete honesty: **if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.** That's exactly why there has to be an Easter! Salvation expects it; salvation demands it. The resurrection sets the work of Christ in cement. It guarantees that our sins are forgiven. It assures us that Jesus is present in our lives. It certifies the reality of heaven. With the resurrection God cannot change his mind about us. The tomb was empty, the body was gone, Jesus is alive and so we are **convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

3. I don't know how fast these women could run, but they ran or at least they walked as fast as they could. **When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. But they did not believe the**

women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. Silly. Impossible. Peter needed to see for himself. **He got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves.** The women were right: the tomb was empty; the body was gone. But **Peter went away, wondering to himself what had happened.**

There had to be an Easter or Peter would have always wondered; nothing more. Without an Easter, Jesus' words would have become nonsense. Silly. Impossible. Little by little the apostles would have gone back to their fishing boats or wherever they worked. The other disciples would have regretted the time they spent with him and maybe even felt cheated. They would have started again to watch for the Savior God had promised to send. The story of Christianity would have been nothing more than blip on the pages of history.

But that didn't happen, did it. Quickly enough those apostles saw Jesus. And so they started in Jerusalem, then to Judea, then Samaria, then to Damascus and Antioch and Macedonia and Athens and Rome. Nothing stopped them, not persecution, not poverty, not prejudice. Peter said it: **We can't help speaking about what we have seen and heard.** What changed them? What turned nonsense into truth? What turned their wonder into witness? Easter did it. The tomb was empty; the body was gone; Jesus was alive. The witness of the Christian Church requires the resurrection. Christians do not proclaim a "has been" Savior. We proclaim a "he lives" Savior. For you and me, a living Christ makes all the difference in the world and that same living Christ compels our witness to the world. Every word we speak to a person we love has Easter wrapped inside. Every offering we bring shares the message of Easter. Every pastor we train and every missionary we send goes to the world with Easter.

If there is no Easter, Jesus was a liar. If there is no Easter, his forgiveness is a joke. If there is no Easter, we have nothing to tell. But the tomb is empty; the body is gone; Jesus alive. His Word is truth; his promises are sure; our mission is obvious. **Christ is arisen! He is risen indeed!** Amen.