

Easter Sunday
April 4, 2021 Sermon

Before the sun broke into the horizon, the women were about the women's work. Go to the grave, mourn after a Sabbath's rest, and finish the business at hand. "It was not what we had hoped." Messiah was supposed to enter into Jerusalem and banish the wickedness that had perverted the people. His kingdom was supposed to be established.

Death's stink and sting was in the air. Wickedness was celebrating. It had killed that upstart. No more meddling from God.

Jesus did so many miracles. A little more time and one wondered whether or not all those in need would be healed. Just give Him a little more time. That's all that was needed. Why did He have to go back into Jerusalem? He could have skipped the Passover this year.

All we need is a little more time and everything will go the way we want. Practice makes perfect.

The two Marys trudged in the cold of the morning. Arms filled with the rest of the preparation. Spices for burial. Frankincense and Myrrh. What were they thinking? We suppose. Were they disappointed? Were they sad? Were they distraught at the thought of continued tyranny? Their expectations were dashed. Their expectations died with Jesus.

Oh, how wonderful it is for humans to build up their hopes only to have them dashed.

Mary the Mother of Jesus treasured so many things in her heart over the years. She knew, through her encounter with the angels, what she was told that first day when she was told that Jesus was coming. Did she understand, or was she also perplexed like most of us? Mary, the mother of James and Salome, a trinity of women, walking to the tomb. Mary Magdeline, the outcast woman, healed from the disease of demons, loved Jesus because He freed her. But, was that love based upon who He was, or just what He had done. Dare we ask ourselves the same question? I know who Jesus is supposed to be. I know the things He did. But I trudge through this life with hopes that are often dashed. It cannot be that my hope is in the wrong place, can it?

Keep their expectations low and their anticipation high.

The conundrums of life often puzzle us. We focus on the immediate things. Gather together what is needed. March through the cold of morning. Oh! What are we going to do. The tomb is covered. Who's going to roll the stone back? Men never get up this early to do these things. That's what's wrong with men these days. They're never around when you need them. Did they even think any of these things at all?

Keep them focused upon themselves. Don't give them a moments rest.

They looked and the stone had been rolled away. How had this happened? What happened? What to do when the unexpected happens? No one ever wrote a guide book for this. Did Scripture ever mention what to do in situations like this? The mind races. It does not take in reality, it just races. "Unless I see, hear, or understand, it cannot be."

Keep them guessing. Don't let them see. It cannot be! It must not be!

The obvious. The stone was rolled back. Don't you love how Scripture tells the story? Mary Magdeline saw it this way. Luke reports a different way of seeing it. Matthew, yet another. John proclaims that he went in first, ahead of Simon Peter. No, they do not disagree. They are eye witnesses. A true corroboration of witnesses does not want everyone to say the same thing, otherwise you know it's made up. They saw what they saw. Each picked up different details. That is the reality of being a witness. No one disagreed with the facts. They just saw that portion which they saw. You know this is a piece of truth and not made up. They did not agree on the details, but all agreed on the facts.

Mary Magedline though it was a gardener. John saw the face cloth neatly folded. Matthew explained that an earthquake rolled back the stone (accountants must always have an explanation). Everyone was in their minds and with them, racing away in a perplexity of their own thoughts. We humans do that. Limited to time and space, we do not understand the mysteries of the universe, let alone the mystery of Almighty God, the Creator of all things. We see things through the dim eyes of our few years upon this earth. God has been unfolding His plan from, well, the beginning.

The devil collapsed in a fit. Checkmate.

It is easy to suppose that all of the Easter season happened in one day. It did not. Like us, dots needed to be connected. What was said earlier needed to register in context. Stories were compared. The truth was the reality of what was right before them, but not understood. Too many, or sometimes so it seems, many know the story of Easter, then go off chasing after Easter bunnies. Yeah, we know, Jesus was not in the tomb. Next.

Too often, we go home after Easter Sunday service, have a family meal (or whatever the tradition may be) and move on, jumping back into the rat-race, the hamster wheel of life. Moving fast, but going nowhere.

If the reality of the resurrection seeps in, I mean really seeps in, then reality as we know it in this limited short-term life is revealed like that tomb. Empty! All of your hopes in this world are empty. Did not Jesus say that if you gain the whole world, but lose your soul, it is meaningless? Did not Solomon say the same thing? This world is filled with vanity. Struggle, wrestle, accumulate, and then leave it all behind. But wait, even the robe, the only thing Jesus owned, was left behind.

My friends, see the clues. Our Savior has been setting them in front of us all along. See the clues. Do not be unbelieving, but believing. The rolled back stone, the empty tomb changes everything.

It is said that before death, your life flashes before you. No one who's died has come back to tell me whether or not this is true. Well, that's not true. One did. He has come and told us to not look back, but to look forward. Look to Him, the One who came from eternity and follow Him into eternity. Only the One who descended can ascend. And He takes with Him those who take His hand of friendship and fellowship. This is so much more than coming to an empty tomb and discovering that it is indeed empty. This about the Author of life telling us that there is more to come. Where is your hope?

If we hope only for this life, or if we believe in the resurrection and there was no resurrection, then we are to be pitied. But, in fact, if Christ was raised from the dead, then we have a hope the world cannot give. Yes, our hope is out of this world.

Stare at the empty tomb.

No! Go on and just live your life. Don't be bothered with these things.

Walk in.

Stay out!

See that there is nothing in death. Death is no more. Though you die, yet shall you live. Be not unbelieving, but believing. Know that your Redeemer lives and because He lives, know that all He has promised is true. You have been united with Christ in a death like His, therefore, you are promised a resurrection like His.

Hush, be still and be gone wicked one. Christ is Risen!

He is Risen indeed!