

"He is risen, he is not here"

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[0:00] He lived a perfect life. Died an atoning death for us.! Bearing our guilt and shame upon himself.!

And he was vindicated at his resurrection.! Meditate on your word.

That you be present with us in your spirit. To open God's word to us. Give us ears to hear. And hearts to listen and respond in faith. We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Please be seated. A happy Easter morning to all of you.

Especially those of you visiting our church for the first time this Easter morning. On this Lord's Day. At the culmination of the 40 days of Lent.

[1:05] The Passion Week. We are especially happy to have you worship our risen Lord. As the church remembers his resurrection today. We would like to know more about you if you're visiting us for the first time.

So I want to invite you on the North X. The table on the North X there. There are mugs with our Trinity mugs. There are cards in the mugs. I want to invite you to fill out the card.

And leave the card. But the mug is our gift to you. You can take that with you. Let us go into our Gospel reading this morning.

It's short. Eight verses. An account of the resurrection. It is the briefest account of the four Gospels.

And if you've read the book of Mark. If you've read the Gospel of Mark.

Then you're familiar with his brevity. He is short and to the point. And he keeps to form. As he recounts the details of the empty womb. Tomb rather.

[2:06] Tomb. Rather. This morning. The scene that we saw in our Gospel reading. Quickly moves on. On the previous end of chapter 15.

From the crucifixion on Good Friday. To the speedy burial. To the seeming quiet. Settling in. The kind of quiet that settled in on Sabbath.

Holy Saturday. The settling of grief. And sadness. At the death of. Of Jesus Christ. And then comes.

At the beginning of the third day. Is where we have. In our Gospel account this morning. That's where our text began. Where we saw that when Sabbath was passed.

Mary Magdalene. Mary the mother of James. And Salome. Bought spices. So that they might go and anoint him. That is Jesus. They went very early on the first day of the week.

[3:06] That is the Sunday. When the sun had risen. At the crack of dawn. They went to the tomb. And they were saying as they went. We will roll away the stone for us.

From the entrance of the tomb. Such was the devotion. Of these holy women. That even though they were devastated. And they were devastated.

Despairing they were. At the death of Jesus. Their hopes were dashed. All the hopes they had. In Jesus being the Messiah. Was dashed. Yet they still got up.

At the crack of dawn. To anoint the body of Jesus. With spices. These same women. Had been eyewitnesses. To his crucifixion.

They had watched. In agony. As Jesus was mocked. By sinful men. As he was beaten. As he was spat upon. As he was nailed to the cross.

[4:04] They saw the sun. Refusing to shine. At midday. As the sun turned its gaze away. From the greatest injustice. In the whole of human history.

As the righteous one. Died for the sins of the whole world. They felt. And heard. The earthquakes. As the earth groaned.

And quaked. As the one who called into existence. That called even the earth itself into existence. Gave up his life. As an atonement for us.

These women bore witness. To all that happened. To their friend. And their master. Jesus Christ. In his passion. Then they followed.

At a distance. We're told. At the end of chapter 15. They followed this man. Named Joseph of Arimathea. They followed him. As he took Jesus' body. Down from the cross. And placed it. [4:59] In his own tomb. After asking. For permission. From the pilot. The governor. So they knew. They saw everything that happened.

They knew where Jesus was. They saw. They saw the stone. Being rolled. At the mount of the tomb. And so then they set out. On Sunday morning. They set out. Sunday morning. The third day. But they didn't set out. With joy. And expectation. Not the kind of joy. And expectation. That we have this morning. There was no hope in them. There was only sorrow. And despair. One might expect them. To be even angry. And bitter. At this point. Perhaps that stage of grief. Hasn't set in yet. But what's not in doubt. Is their love for Jesus. Even in the midst of their grief. And utter despair. [5:55] They set out. Early in the morning. To anoint. The body of Jesus. They had been. Among his closest companions. They had followed Jesus.

All the way from Galilee. Caring for him. And his apostles. They like the eleven apostles. Hiding away. They had heard.

Jesus speak of his death. They also heard him speak. Of his rising on the third day. And yet the third day comes. And they are not expecting anything.

No one expected anything. For them. It was a dismal day. It was a living nightmare. Of dashed hopes. And sinking despair.

And I want to point out. That there is. There is so much here. In Mark's writing. That shows that. This is not a myth. This is an historical account.

[6:53] This isn't myth making. First. Because if it was myth making. It would have had. It would have made the disciples. Jesus disciples look better. Than they did. In this account.

Presumably. Because they were the ones. Who wrote the myth. They would have made themselves. Look better. In fact. To be honest with you. If it was myth making. It would not have included women. As eyewitnesses. In the first place. Because. In the first century. The testimony of women. Amounted to very little.

In both Jewish. And Roman society. Men. But Mark. And the other gospel writers. All. Included. These women's names.

In the account of the resurrection. It was an inconvenient truth. But it was the truth. And so they included it. They recorded it.

[7:51] Just as it happened. Mark who wrote his gospel about 20 to 30 years after the event of the resurrection being the earliest gospel writing these accounts 20 to 30 years after the resurrection including the names that are included here these names would have been well known and so people would have been around who knew these people or could have corroborated if this was being made up and you notice if you read all the other gospel accounts they all included the names of these women or even names of places and people like Joseph of Arimathea would have been a well known figure and so this is not myth making this is historical fact and Mary, we're given the names of these women look at them, Mary Magdalene

Mary the mother of James we're well familiar with Mary Magdalene Mary the mother of James John's gospel named her as Mary the wife of Copas if you then go on to read the end of Luke two of the men on the road to Emmaus one of them was Copas so maybe, we're not sure but very likely, that was his wife one of the disciples of Jesus so, Mary Magdalene Mary the wife of Copas and Salome Salome is the wife of Zebedee the mother of James and John the apostles these three women set out to anoint a body they were set out in grief and despair and as they went they wondered we will roll the stone away and this wasn't an insignificant question they were asking because they had seen two nights before as the stone was rolled into place to close the mouth of the tomb here are three women likely at least two of them are middle-aged it would have taken five strong men to roll the stone away and so they knew they couldn't do it there was an impossibility they might know or maybe they didn't that there were even Roman gods that were supposed to be guarding the entrance to the tomb and so as they went they were wondering and one may conclude even as you as you think about it and realize that no many of that question that even the fact that they're going is pointless it was an exercise in futility yet they went because love compelled them

and looking up we're told in verse 4 looking up they saw what?

that the stone had been rolled back well again make sure to let us know this isn't just the wind that rolled the stone away it wasn't the women that rolled the stone away it made parenthetically it was very large it was actually easier to roll the stone in place because there's a groove that the stone gets into as you roll it to the entrance of the crate to roll it back out is the hard work and so Mark makes sure to tell us the stone has been rolled back but it was a very large stone this is the first miracle of the day the stone had been rolled away and the Roman gods that were posted were not there and so the women as they came they saw that the stone had been rolled away one problem out of the way and they want to enter in again they are looking for a body and so they enter to anoint the body as they intended the body where is the body relieved that the stone is no longer an hindrance their relief quickly gave way to a greater panic where is the body they grieve has been deepened and we know from Luke's gospel that they thought that evildoers had come and stolen his body but there was someone in the tomb as they entered verse 5

Mark in his brevity tells us entering the tomb they saw a young man sitting on the right side dressed in a white robe and they were alarmed now who they saw is no mere man this young man was an angel the white robe that's described there is meant to describe in the other gospels shining robe and and and that likely contributed to their alarm do not be alarmed the angel says to them you seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified yes all this we know the women are likely thinking but then he says he has risen he is not here see the place where they laid him while you're in the tomb you see the clothes he's not here you can see it he is not he has risen he is not here the words that changed everything in heaven and on earth he has risen he is not here now the importance of these words transcends time and space and yet it is also very personal in its importance to each human soul you know if you go today to Medina

Saudi Arabia you will see the tomb of Muhammad and his bones interred in there if you go to the Red Square in Moscow you will see Lenin's Masoleum where he is buried if you go to Westminster Abbey you can see the crypts of kings and queens of England as far back as a thousand years all interred their bones interred in their resting places but you go to Jerusalem you go to a place called the garden tomb where tradition says Joseph of Arimathea's tomb likely was in which Jesus was buried you go there and you will see inscribed at the entrance of that tomb the words he has risen he is not here I won't one day I want to go there God willing not expecting to out find anything just want to see that word those words he has risen he is not here what is your response to those words because that is the crucial question before you this morning for these women their response was one of fear and alarm they weren't jubilant they were afraid and it's not necessarily because they didn't believe the angels words the angels seem to be saying to them come on ladies this is just as he told you and as the reality of God's word dawned on them their fear and alarm only seemed to increase how would you have reacted if you were in their shoes on that fateful day on that fateful morning you know

[15 : 41] I have great sympathy for these women because they were weary emotionally they were already weary mentally physically and now they realize they've come to the tomb with the wrong expectations they were expecting to see a body they've come to this tomb with the wrong questions I wonder how you've come today to the word of truth that Christ has risen have you come what questions are you asking in response to that news are they the right questions are you looking for the dead whether you should be looking for the living Lord the reigning king and as it starts to dawn on these women their fears only increase their alarm only increases as their response to the realization of God's power and this reaction to the display of God's power is not new especially in the gospel of Mark if you remember

Mark 4 you remember when Jesus rebuked the wind and said to the sea when the disciples were all in the boat with him and he was fast asleep even in the midst of a storm and they woke him up he stood up and he says to the wind and the seas peace be still and what does Mark tell us the wind and the waves immediately obeyed his words and there was a great calm upon the water now do you remember the disciples reaction as they saw that you would think wow we were about to die we were scared out of our minds because they thought they were about to die and then they saw this great deliverance you would think they would be all yelling as if their team just won the Super Bowl or something cheering happy giving each other high fives but that's not what happened as they saw Jesus' power displayed their fear increased they were afraid Mark tells us they were afraid because they knew only God who made the seas the wind and the waves can exercise power over them and

so they wondered to themselves in fear and trepidation who is this man who is he that even the winds and the seas obey him

I think a similar kind of fear and alarm gripped the women as they realized that Jesus had again done the impossible the implacable enemy death had been defeated and they were not as primitive as we like to think in our modern age although those people back then none of them were probably educated they don't know anything they believe anything they're not modern people we have this chronological snobbery but even they knew people don't rise from the dead they were not given to flight or fancy they knew better than to think that dead people could just rise they knew it was an impossibility and it is because it's such an impossibility the greatest of all impossibilities to be released from the clutches of death is because they knew that that fear gripped them they understand that this is a paradigm shift this changes everything his resurrection is for his disciples it is the dawning of hope his resurrection proves that his atoning death has been accepted as a successful efficacious sacrifice for the sins of all who turn to him in faith his resurrection proves that everything he has said to them concerning himself is truer than true his resurrection reveals to them that he is worthy of their trust worthy of their love worthy of their worship it changed everything for them and the question then is has it changed everything for us here in the here and now the reverend

John Donne's famous poem comes to mind death be not proud those who come to put their trust in Jesus the Messiah know that death has no power over them because Jesus has defeated death the old nature our old sinful nature which is with its attachment to sin has been crucified on the cross the price for your sins has been paid in full and you've been given a new nature a new heart that loves God and seeks after God it is because of his death and resurrection because of his resurrection we await our new resurrected glorified bodies as well and the same words of assurance that he spoke to that thief on the cross when he said to him truly I tell you today you will be with me in paradise as they are ushered through the veil of death

Jesus your Lord and Redeemer your Savior tells you truly I tell you today you will be with me in paradise and so as another Anglican priest and poet George Herbert says death used to be an executioner but the resurrection has made him a gardener it's not that death and the loss of loved ones are painful they are death is always unnatural whenever it happens death my 93 year old grandmother dying was unnatural just as unnatural as my 32 year old cousin dying death is always unnatural but for the Christian it has no lasting sting because of the resurrection death is our entrance into eternity with God and so the dawning of this reality of this resurrection power is what changed human history it is the grounds of our

[22:27] Christian courage in the face of evil and persecution and death the Christian confesses that we have died and our life is hidden with Christ in God and when Christ who is our life appears what would happen we also will appear with him in glory that's what we confess this resurrection with Christ is for every Christian a sure and certain hope it has always been since this event of the resurrection you know in Rome there are epitaphs on tombs of Christians and Epicurean just like we have now we have you have the name of the person and maybe a quotation an epitaph about them the Romans had that as well and there's this particular catacomb that was discovered with Christians on one side of the catacomb and Epicureans the dominant

Roman philosophy of the day and they were around during the time of the early church and on one side are the inscriptions of the Epicureans on their tombs on their tombs on their catacombs on the other side are the Christian descriptions and let me just read to you the Epicurean epitaphs the first one says while I live I live well my play is now ended soon yours will be too farewell and applaud me that's the first one second it says baths wine and love ruin the constitution but they make life what it is farewell the third epitaph says oh relentless fortune this is one from a grieving mother who lost a young son oh relentless fortune that delights in cruel death why is Maximus so early snatched from me but hear the Christian inscriptions on their tombstones very short but hear the same theme that runs through all of them zoticus laid here to sleep the second one the sleeping place in Christ of elipis the third one yelaria sleeps in peace you know that word rest in peace it's a Christian term we use it now ubiquitously whether you're Christian or not Christians invented the word rest in peace because they alone can say rest in peace because they are the only ones in Christ who have peace with God as they stand before judgment do you hear in the Christian epitaphs echoes of Jesus' words concerning Lazarus when Jesus said about Lazarus he's not dead but sleeps the early Christians adopt this language to describe the death of the faithful departed

they know it is a sleep when we die as Christians it's a sleep that has a glorious awakening in the presence of the Redeemer of our souls it is Christ's resurrection that makes this clear to us but perhaps you are here this morning and you're thinking that sounds good that really does sound good how lovely it would be to be enveloped in that kind of love to have that kind of assurance that nothing in this world can take away that would be lovely but you may maybe you feel you don't deserve it maybe you feel that you're too far gone well just look at verse seven look at the words of the angel that

Jesus instructed him to say to the women look at those words of grace spoken by the angel says but go tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee there you will see him just as he told you remember what the disciples did they all deserted him they ran away you might expect Jesus to say well go find those good for nothings and bring them no that's not what Jesus said in I think it's in John or Luke's account Jesus Jesus says go to my brothers referring to the the apostles and here he says go and tell the disciples and Peter they all ran away from him and look that word and Peter Peter the one who denied him three times it must be it must be included and Peter because Peter probably thought he's on the house if we would just go tell the disciples the other ten would have gone

Peter is thinking to himself I have denied him I've done the very thing I said I wouldn't do I'm on the outs but yet Jesus says go tell the disciples and Peter Peter probably thought Jesus had nothing else doesn't want anything to do with him anymore but Jesus would have Peter Jesus wants Peter to know that he has been forgiven Jesus wants Peter to know that the penalty for his sin has been paid in full on the cross so if you're here today thinking you're unworthy well Peter Peter was counted worthy not on the basis of what Peter has done he hasn't done anything he's failed enormously but Peter's been kind of worthy on what on the basis of what Jesus had accomplished on the cross and that's the only basis that you can come before him also this morning do not think about your past do not think about what you've done that may make you unworthy because there's nothing you could do that could make you worthy but come in faith in surrender come in trust in believing and he will cover you with his righteousness he will take all your guilt and shame upon himself that is the work of

[28:51] Jesus Christ that is the gospel in a nutshell you if you're here this morning thinking you're too far gone I want to remind you I want to tell you you are not beyond the mercy of God here is the one powerful enough to shepherd you through the valley of the shadow of death and to bring you safely to green pastures where he will sustain you with the spiritual food of his body and blood it is him you must come to please if you come with a friend this morning if you've been in church week after week and you still don't know this morning I want to inform you that you can make a decision right now and right right here to follow him and if you do make that decision tell your friend that you come with or come here after the service there will be someone on the on the on the side here to pray for you but come the invitation is open and look at verse eight and they went out and they fled from the tomb these are the women after hearing all of this they went out they fled from the tomb for trembling and astonishment and seized them and they said nothing to anyone but they were afraid now this is a very abrupt ending to the gospel it's so abrupt that later scribes tried to add to it so if you have the service for example if you have the ESV

Bible you will see in in parentheses that that verse nine to on in Mark chapter 16 are not actually in the original manuscripts so Mark's gospel probably likely very this this irrefutable proof that Mark's gospel ends in verse eight why would Paul why would why would Mark end his gospel with this account of fear and astonishment of the women why would he do that perhaps it's to put us in the same crisis of decision that they were in as they heard about the resurrection because you see the proclamation of the resurrection is not just mere information to take in and I think the women knew that they knew that to proclaim Jesus as Lord and to proclaim it as

God's Messiah God's King is to stand against the powers of this age when rebelling against God because that's the implication of the resurrection and the question that faces them faces us all as well what will you do upon your receiving this news of the resurrection this proclamation that King Jesus has conquered sin and death that he is eternal that he has eternal life in him for all will come to him what will you do with that news this world uphanded news that Jesus is Lord and all knees must bow this news is not going to be welcome news to the powers and principalities of this present world it never has been but will you proclaim it anyway will you proclaim it knowing that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead that same power the spirit of God lives in you will you

proclaim the news that he is risen we brothers and sisters in Christ we are on the winning side do you know that the resurrection is Christ's vindication he is one we are on the winning side our gospel message is the declaration and the invitation to all to come to the side of the victorious king so will you go and tell as the angel invites the women to do will you go and tell that Christ is risen Christ is risen Christ is risen Christ is risen Hallelujah.