

Easter Sunday

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Preacher: Fr. Wade Miller

[0 : 00] The typical Easter sermon focuses on our Lord rising from the grave, and rightly so, because that is the event that quite literally changed the world and history as we know it.

That is the event by which our faith is based on. We believe that Jesus died on the cross, that he was buried, and then three days later, he rose again from the grave.

And the church celebrates this glorious resurrection with great pomp and ceremony, and rightfully so. On this day, people put on their best clothes, and the churches tend to fill up with great enthusiasm.

It's a day when the fasting of Lent now culminates in great feasting and celebration. Enough of abstaining from alcohol and chocolate.

Jesus has risen from the dead, so it's time to get busy eating, drinking, and being merry. And all this is well and good. But there is more to Easter than being able to indulge in red meats and good chocolates.

[1 : 25] We read the following words from the very end of our gospel text here in John chapter 20 this morning. Talking about being anticlimactic for Easter.

The disciples went away again to their own houses. Mary Magdalene had gone into the tomb. She saw that the body of Jesus was not there.

She told Peter and she told John that our Lord's body was not in the tomb. Then Peter and John, they went in. They observed for themselves that the body of Jesus was gone.

The stone had been rolled back and the linens were neatly folded, but the body of Jesus was not there. And so, Peter and John believed Mary after they went in and saw for themselves.

And our text says that they went back to their homes because they didn't know that our Lord was going to rise from the dead. Such words put a bit of a downer on any party or celebration.

[2 : 54] Even though our Lord had taught his followers about the fact that he was going to die and rise again from the dead, the disciples must have thought he was speaking figuratively.

What our Lord must have meant is that he was going to raise up Israel from her captivity. Israel was going to rise again.

No longer would the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Medes and Persians, and especially the Roman Empire now keep Israel down.

Israel was going to rise in glory. But Jesus had told his followers that his kingdom is not of this world.

He was not looking to merely overthrow the great political powers of his day. His kingdom involved much more than that.

[3 : 55] He was going to destroy the greatest threat to all human beings, which is sin, death, and the devil. But the disciples, they didn't understand.

And so they just went back to their houses. As a matter of fact, when our Lord appears to them after his resurrection, where does he find them?

He finds them in the upper room hiding out in great fear. Now, I think we need to be a little sympathetic to these disciples.

They did not know what our Lord meant, nor did they have a clear picture of what resurrection looks like. People just do not rise from the dead.

It doesn't happen. But all of us, on the other hand, we don't have that same excuse. Our Lord's resurrection is absolutely unique to all other events throughout human history.

[5 : 01] And we have the testimony of our Lord's triumph over death and the grave from a multiple, multiple of witnesses. The God who became man was crucified.

The God who became man died. The God who became man was taken down from the cross and his body was put into the tomb.

And that same man burst forth from that tomb. Some three days later, declaring his victory over death and hell and proclaiming to all of us, captives to sin and death, to all of us, shackled by sin and death, that we have now been delivered.

Our slavery has ended. Our exodus has come as we are now brought through the Red Sea. And the eternal promised land and the kingdom of God is ours in Christ Jesus because he did the unthinkable, the unimaginable.

He conquered death. And that's what Easter is about. But what is our response?

[6 : 25] Yes, we're willing to give up a little chocolate and beer. Yes, we will stay away from burgers and steaks, maybe on Wednesdays and Fridays. But what do we do with such good news, such extraordinary news?

Do we just go home and say, that was a nice service, and then zone out on our computers? Do we binge watch our favorite shows or crawl back into the depressing news stories of the day?

Do we stare at our phones, waiting on that next text or somebody to respond to a social media post? Or do we just merely entertain ourselves till next Sunday and we come back and we do the whole church thing all over again?

Do we just go through the motions of Easter Day and fail to be gripped by the magnitude of this earth-shattering event?

If we were to go on and read the New Testament, especially the book of Acts, we would catch a glimpse at what these disciples did once they understood the profound significance of our Lord's resurrection.

[7 : 54] They could not keep this news to themselves. They spread the news beyond Jerusalem, Judea, and the uttermost parts of the world.

Why? Because death is no longer to be feared. Death has lost its sting.

Death is powerless, and the devil is impotent. Death can rear its ugly head, and Satan can roar like a roaring lion, but Jesus has made death powerless, and Satan now only has a mere whimper in him.

Friends, Easter is not only about what Jesus did, it's about our response. Our calling is to get busy, reorienting our lives and our ambitions to the kingdom of God.

The only thing that matters, the only thing that's eternal in this life. Easter is about investing in those areas where there is real eternal significance.

[9 : 16] Easter is about proclaiming the joy of being delivered from the bondage of sin and death. Our shackles are gone.

We have been set free. Easter is about the hope restored and that hope now shared with others. Easter is about us being all in as ambassadors and workers in this new creation and in this new life brought about by our Lord's triumphant victory over sin, death, and the devil.

Easter is about us being all in as a miracle. Easter is about us being all in as a miracle. Easter is about us being all in as a miracle. Therefore, dear friends, we give glory to God, especially on this day, for his victory over death.

And we give glory to God by spreading the news, the word, that Jesus Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.