

“Defeating Death!”

Easter 03-31-13

All around the world this morning, Christians are proclaiming one message: “CHRIST IS RISEN!”

We’ve been raised to believe that if something sounds too good to be true, then it probably is! Many of us have been taken in by empty promises. The world gives us promises that are full of emptiness, but on Easter, God gave us emptiness that’s full of promise: An empty cross, and an empty tomb. Each empty object shows us God’s promises are real.

Turn to Luke 24. Let’s go back to that 1st Easter Morning. It’s early, the sun hasn’t risen. A few women who are Jesus’ followers are on their way to a tomb where they saw Jesus buried. Look at verse 1, *“But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared.”*

They’re on their way to complete anointing Jesus’ body. The tomb was near the “Place of the Skull” where Jesus had been crucified. On their way, they stop, motionless, and stare off in the distance. Silhouetted by the glow of the pink sky, they see 3 empty Crosses. Empty reminders of the horror of Friday.

The one in the middle, that’s the one Jesus hung on. Take a close look at it. At the top are bloodstains are from the crown of thorns that was crushed into Jesus’ skull. The stains on the ends of the crossbar came from the nails that were driven into His hands. The main beam was soaked in blood, blood that was shed when the Roman soldiers beat Jesus brutally. It also has stains from the blood that poured from His side when a Roman soldier ran a spear through His side to see if He was dead.

The cross is the place where He died, but today, it’s empty! It’s empty of Jesus’ body, but full of God’s promises. It’s full of hope for you and me, because the promise of the empty cross is that you and I are forgiven! It was on that cross that Jesus paid the penalty for our sins.

“SIN”! It’s a word that isn’t “politically correct,” but the fact is, we’ve all sinned! The only person who’s ever lived a sinless life is Jesus Christ! Because, we’ve sinned, we deserve God’s punishment. We deserve hell for eternity! But when we look at the empty cross, we’re reminded we’ve been forgiven! Listen to Romans 5:8, *“But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* When Jesus Christ breathed His last, He cried out; *“It is finished.”* Our penalty was paid in full!

The women continue on their way to the tomb, but when they get there, the stone guarding the opening has been rolled away! Look at verses 2-3. *“And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.”* They go inside and the tomb is empty! They don’t know what happened! Where’s Jesus?

Two angels answer their questions. Look at verse 4-6. *“While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.”*

Those words of the angels, should have been an “aha” moment for the women, but they weren’t! They should have remembered what Jesus had told them. But the angels had to remind them. Look at the end of verse 6 through verse 8, *“Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.” And they remembered his words.”*

Aren’t we many times just like the women? Jesus has said, *“I will never leave you or forsake you”*, but we wonder if He’s there and if He cares about us. Jesus said, *“I have loved you with an everlasting love”*, but we see our sins, our denial of Him, and we don’t

see how He could still love us! But He showed His love for us as He suffered and died in our place. If death had been the end, the true purpose of His coming wouldn't be completed!

Jesus' whole purpose of coming to earth was to suffer and die in our place but then to rise again to show us He had power over sin, death, and the devil. This was and is a message of true joy for all mankind! It's a message that needs to be shared!

And that's exactly what the women did! Look at verses 9-11, *"and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them."*

The announcement of the women to the disciples was not only that the stone had been rolled away, but that Jesus was not in the tomb because He had risen! The response of the disciples was less than positive! They thought the women were crazy!

Look at verse 12, *"But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened."*

Jesus had returned to life in power and glory and had passed not only through the graveclothes but the tomb itself! He didn't even need the stone rolled away to rise! The angel had rolled the stone away so that those who came to the tomb might believe! Peter believed in Jesus' resurrection because of the evidence he saw!

The empty tomb is the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the promise of an empty tomb is that we too will be raised to eternal life. To those who know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, death has lost its sting, it's no longer something to fear. We have the promise that one day we will live forever with Him in Heaven! Listen to John 6:40, *"For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."*

The resurrection of Jesus allows us to take a different view of death. Jesus Christ, through His dying in our place and His rising again, shows us death's been defeated! Death's no longer a dead end. Our life doesn't end when our physical body dies. Our life goes on for eternity! Death's no longer fearful. We know what's going to happen after death and it's nothing to fear at all! Death's no longer the enemy. For those who believe, we know that death has been challenged and Jesus Christ has been victorious over it! Because Jesus lives, We shall live forever!

Listen to Jesus' words from John 11:25-26, *"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die! Do you believe this?"*

This Easter morning, be filled with the overflowing grace of the crucified and risen Jesus Christ! See the miracle of God's love! Christ is Risen! He is Risen indeed! Alleluia!