

The grace, mercy, and peace of Christ Jesus, our risen Lord and Saviour, be yours this Easter Sunday! The title for today’s sermon is ‘They still didn’t get it’, based on the reading from the Gospel of St. Mark, the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter. Let us pray.... Amen.

Two ladies walked in the early morning light. Together they carried the necessary burial spices for their teacher and friend who had been executed some days earlier. By now there would be a stench from the decaying body in the Middle-Eastern heat, but the body needed to be properly prepared. The women would have done what was necessary after His death, but the Passover and Sabbath Laws prohibited them. So, at their first opportunity, at first light, the two went out to the tomb. While the two ladies knew what they had to do with His body, they discussed how they would get to the body. They knew where to go for one of them saw the exact location of the tomb when He was placed inside. Their problem was a stone, a very large stone, had been set in place to seal the tomb. How would they move it? They weren’t sure. But they knew they had to go to the tomb.

But when they got close, they saw a problem. The stone which concerned them, the very large stone, had been rolled back. The entrance of the tomb was open. But when they looked inside their teacher and friend was not there. Someone else was. A young man dressed in a white robe. They were puzzled. They were confused. The two women were alarmed! Where was their teacher and friend? Where was the One they saw sealed inside?

In the midst of their confusion the one dressed in white spoke the sweetest words in history. He said to the women: **“Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. <sup>7</sup> 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.”**(Mark 16:6-7)

You can imagine the thoughts of these two women: they were there because Jesus’ body needed to be properly prepared for burial. They were looking for the corpse of Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, died, and was buried there. He was dead. That’s why they came! But wait, what did he say? Jesus is risen!? But, how could this be? People just don’t rise from the dead. People who die stay dead, that is how it works 100% of the time.

And so what did these two ladies do? They bolted. The two fled. **“Trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.”**(Mark 16:8)

Those two ladies, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome, heard the angel proclaim their, and our, salvation. They heard the words angels had waited to proclaim since Jesus’ death: **“Christ is risen!”** Alleluia! They heard the words of Christ’s victory over sin, death, and the devil: Jesus’ victory as promised. But the ladies didn’t get it.

*(Pause)*

We may shake our heads at the two and ask how they couldn't understand such fantastic news, mainly since Jesus told them what was going to happen to Him. Why were they not like the shepherds at Jesus' birth, who boldly shared the good news they had heard with everyone? Probably it was because it was more conceivable that the Saviour of the world had come as a baby born in Bethlehem stable, than that someone had been executed on a Roman cross, was pierced to prove His dead, bled out blood and water upon removal of said spear, and then was placed in a tomb for three days was raised from that death. People don't rise from the dead, mainly not in this circumstance. Death is the only end.

But therein is the Good News. Now in Christ Jesus death is NOT the end. This is because Jesus, unlike every person who lived and died before Him, actually did physically rise from the dead. Not metaphorically. Not spiritually. Just as Jesus physically died, Jesus physically was raised from the dead. And Jesus' resurrection had eternal consequences for the two women, as it also has eternal consequences for us and for all people.

What the two women didn't get, at least not yet, was Jesus is alive. The final enemy, death, the one we really had to fear was destroyed by Jesus resurrection.

In those three words: "**He is risen!**" are the greatest news in all of history, and that's saying something because there were some huge proclamations in history. Some of the biggest are: "**Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, <sup>33</sup> and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.**"(Luke 1:30-32)

Or, "**Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. <sup>11</sup> For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup> And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.**"(Luke 2:12-12)

Or, "**You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.**"(Luke 3:22)

Or, "**This is my beloved Son; listen to him.**"(Mark 9:7)

But the words: "**He is risen!**" is greater than all the rest because without Jesus' resurrection, the rest are worthless. Jesus physically resurrection proves God accepted His full payment for your sins. His resurrection tells us He really is the One who saves us from our sins. Jesus' resurrection fulfills the angel's proclamation to the shepherds that Jesus is our Saviour. Jesus' resurrection proclaims He is the Son of God and has accomplished your salvation, delivers forgiveness to you, and assures "**all who believe and are baptized will be saved.**"(Mark 16:16)

Jesus death and resurrection are **THAT** important. Paul proclaimed to the Corinthians in today's Epistle, "**For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures,** <sup>4</sup> **that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,** <sup>5</sup> **and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.**"(1 Corinthians 15:3-5) Paul continues by explaining who else saw the Resurrected Christ, and the list is extensive.

But most importantly: Jesus died for your sins, was buried, and He was raised on the third day. Why? Because Jesus' actions destroyed the accusation and power sin, death, and the devil had over you. In short, Jesus' death and resurrection are your salvation.

Nothing else in all your life is more important than this. Nothing. Jesus' action for you means you are reconciled back to God instead of having to stand in Judgment for your sins, it means you don't have to face the devil on his terms because you are delivered in Christ. It means in death you will be at eternal rest in Christ and in the resurrection, instead of eternally damned with Satan and his demons in hell.

Easter proclaims Jesus risen for you, me, and all sinners. This is why Jesus came: He came and paid the ransom for your sins and to bring you eternal life in Him. Jesus came to deliver you back to Himself. Jesus came for you and your salvation, just as He came for all people.

While your sins and mine nailed Jesus to the cross and killed Him, He did not stay there. His dying proclamation: "It is finished" declared your sins paid for. Jesus sealed your forgiveness with His death. By His death He destroyed death and by resurrection He brings you eternal life. For while forgiveness is freely given to you and for you, it cost a huge price, one larger than any of us could ever pay. Jesus willingly paid it for you because He loves you.

Now Jesus brings the gifts he earned on the cross and through His resurrection to where He promises to be and through the means He promises to work through: namely His Word and Sacraments. He is clear on this. Nowhere in Scripture does Christ promise to work apart from His Word, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Nowhere else in Scripture does Jesus promise the forgiveness of sins He earned on the cross. Never does God say He will work apart from His Word. Instead He promises that: "**where two or three are gathered in His name**": namely gathered around His Word and Sacrament He will be there. Here Jesus continues to come to us to teach us and feed us. Jesus continues to work in the place He promised He would always be: in these His Means of Grace. Jesus doesn't promise to work in mysterious ways, but in concrete and tangible ways. He promises Himself through His Word, in the waters of holy Baptism where we die to sin and are raised in Him, and as He gives us His very own body and blood, both crucified and risen, in, with, and under bread and wine in the Lord's Supper.

And the best news is it is all completely free. No strings attached. No bait and switch. It is freely given and freely received. Jesus actively searches out and comes to all who hear His

Word and through it the Holy Spirit plants the seed of faith and with all His gifts. So while the two women at Jesus’ empty tomb did not get it at first that Easter morning, the seed of faith was planted, later they did get it.

God continues to use the same Means of Grace: His Word and Sacraments so you too can receive the gifts Christ died and rose for. Through them, the Holy Spirit continues to work to plant the seed of faith in Christ, to grow and strengthen your faith and trust in Christ and His work for your salvation, and to carry you to eternity. Through them He brings you all of Christ’s gifts earned and won for you on the cross and through His resurrection.

All who are in Christ are freed from the power of sin, death, and the devil. While in this life, sin, the devil, and the world will continue to attack Christians. Still, the eternal power and condemnation of sin, death and Satan was destroyed by Christ Jesus’ resurrection for you. Their accusations are mute because Jesus rose from the dead proclaiming His victory. Christ Jesus, God in the flesh, who died for your sins and trespasses on Good Friday, was raised for your justification and salvation on Easter morning.*(Romans 4:25)*

So I invite you to continue to hear His Word, to meditate on it, and rejoice in Christ’s victory in which everything has already been accomplished and in which you have everything you need. Henceforth you and I do live with the blessed opportunity to spread among other people the Good News of what Christ has achieved, for us, for them, and for all. In Jesus you have eternal life. For the tomb is empty. Christ is risen just as He said He would. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, alleluia.

Amen.

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