

Easter Sunday

April 4, 2021

Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church

Pastor Tyson Labuhn

Christ has Risen! You can say it with me - He has Risen Indeed!
Alleluia!

This morning our Gospel reading comes to us from St. John's Gospel as he shares with us his message concerning the Resurrection. It begins early in the morning on the first day of the week. Mary was making her way to the tomb in the Garden. And we don't know why it is that she got up so early - if she was trying to get ahead of the crowds who might've been leaving Jerusalem after the Passover, or if she was going during the cool early morning hours to finish anointing the body of her Lord, or if she just didn't want to be seen doing so.

One thing is certain, she loved the Lord Jesus and was most likely still grieving as she mentally prepared herself to do the one last thing she could for Him. To make sure that His body had been properly cared for. While she may have been the last to arrive at the foot of the cross, she was also one of the last to leave. She watched how He breathed His last, how His body had been hastily taken down from the cross and put in the tomb.

Most likely, she had been thinking about all the things she needed to get done when she got to the tomb. Would the guards allow her in and help her move the stone back from the entrance? Would she be able to get through the process and finish in a reasonable time? But as she got closer to the entrance, what she saw didn't make sense and she was rather taken back. Because the large stone that once covered the entrance to His tomb was no longer there. Something had happened and she wondered if someone did something with the body of her Lord? And if that were the case, where did they take it? Thoughts must've been racing through her mind and so, not knowing

quite what to do next, she ran to tell Peter and John, the beloved disciple.

You might imagine what she was thinking. Did Peter and John know what happened? Maybe they can help to find the body. But then again, when they heard what she had to say, they were just as shocked and confused as she was. And while there might be some two thousand years separating us from those in our Gospel reading, so often when we discover that things are not as we thought they should be, we can get a little confused and disorientated as well. And sometimes with confusion, as we learned this past year, also comes fear and stress as well.

But back to our reading, St. John tells us that the two disciples, took off running to see the tomb. The beloved disciple, being the younger of the two of them, was first to arrive and quickly stooped to look in the tomb before Peter arrived. And yes, the tomb was empty just like Mary had said. The body was gone. And all he noticed were the linen cloths. But then Peter arrived, and being true to his nature, he went right in the tomb. He too saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth that had been on Jesus' head. It was there folded up in a place by itself.

It was then, that the beloved disciple went into the tomb, and after seeing how everything was left....he believed! He believed that this wasn't a robbery. He believed that someone hadn't just taken Jesus' body. He believed the signs of Jesus' Resurrection. And while each of them had spent time with Jesus, not one of them had fully understood from Jesus or the Scriptures that He would rise again...

The tomb was empty. This is why we rejoice this morning. But, for Peter and John who really didn't know any better, they went back to their homes. And Mary stayed behind weeping outside of the tomb. Then as she dried her tears, she went and looked in the tomb...there were two angels sitting where Jesus' body had been. They said to her, ***“Woman, why are you weeping?”*** And her eyes began to fill up with tears again and as she turned away, she said ***“They’ve taken***

away my Lord, and I don't know where they have laid him." But there was someone standing there next to her, who said ***"Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?"*** Consumed by her tears and grief, she thought He was the gardener, and she said to Him, ***"Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away."*** And like Mary, when we go through grief, we sometimes miss someone as important as Jesus...But then she heard Him say her name clearly. ***"Mary..."*** She recognized His voice and saw Him standing there, and we can imagine that she quickly threw her arms around Him, because Jesus says to her, ***"Don't cling to me, I haven't yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"*** So, she went and announced to the disciples, ***"I have seen the Lord – and that He had said these things to her."***

St. John shares with us in his Gospel that while each one of them saw the empty tomb, only one of them saw the empty tomb and believed. He wasn't the first to go into the tomb, he didn't need to inspect everything before going home not knowing what happened as Peter did. He didn't stay long enough to hear Jesus say his name or see Jesus in person in order to believe that He rose from the dead.

While there were other disciples who saw the many other signs that Jesus did and would come to believe, John's Gospel shares with us, in the race to the empty tomb it was the beloved disciple who won. While he may have gotten to the empty tomb first, he was the one who believed. And just as our Resurrected Lord would also say later in the chapter, ***"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."***(John 20:29b)

We too are blessed that as the Son of Man, Jesus makes what was once impossible, possible for us to believe in the Resurrection by faith even though there have been many documented eyewitness accounts of His Resurrection throughout Scripture. While many know the Resurrection story, it's faith that has brought you here. And

because of His Resurrection and the faith that He has given to you, a new day has dawned for us.

Today, we can celebrate the day of His resurrection because, not only did Jesus die for us on the cross, but He rose again. That means through Him all our sins have been forgiven, and because of His empty tomb, we have eternal life in Him. The empty tomb no longer represents confusion, fear, or sadness, rather it represents for us joy, peace, and the hope that comes to us, even in the middle of our sorrow, and grief. Because He lives, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, we will live also with Him.

We don't NEED to see Him, touch Him, or walk away as if He no longer exists. There is no reason for us to be surprised or confused by death. The tomb was empty that first Easter morning because Jesus Lives. He Lives! And more than that, He is the Resurrection and the Life. No one comes to the Father, except through Him. All we need to do is to go out in the world and share our faith in the Easter message – Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!

In Jesus' name, Amen.