

ESF, Easter service message  
3/27/2016

## **Faith in the Resurrection**

### Mark 16:1-8

*When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. <sup>2</sup> Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb <sup>3</sup> and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" <sup>4</sup> But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. <sup>5</sup> As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. <sup>6</sup> "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, 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, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'" <sup>8</sup> Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.*

One of the most important battles ever fought was on June 8, 1815 at a place called Waterloo. English commander, General Wellington encountered French emperor Napoleon. If Napoleon could defeat Wellington, he would rule England and most all of Europe.

So the battle raged on and on, and all of England waited for word out of Waterloo. There were no radios, no phones. A ship would flash a message through light signals from the battle-front on to another spot and from there on to England.

On the final day the ship got as close as they could to the battle and as the signal came back, England wondered who was winning the war as it was getting near the end. Then dense fogs set in London. Just as the message was flashed, "Wellington Defeated," but they

couldn't make out the rest of it, due to the fog. So, they went to bed that night convinced of defeat and wondering how soon the army of France would march into the streets of England. But, early the next morning the fog lifted and they could read the whole message, "Wellington defeated the enemy at Waterloo."

2000 years ago, on a Judean hillside, there was another battle. It was between Jesus and the devil. In the battle Jesus was crucified and died on Friday. The fog was there on Friday and the next day. And the message showed: *Jesus defeated*. But the fog was cleared on Sunday morning. The full message was revealed: *Jesus defeated the enemy at Calvary*. He rose! The message gives us victory and hope in all circumstances. How? Today's text gives us the answer.

### **The stone of the tomb was rolled away**

Early Sunday morning, three women came to the tomb where Jesus' body had been buried. They came to the tomb to take care of Jesus' body with spices. While they were going to the tomb, they had a problem. It was that the tomb was sealed by a large stone which they would not be able to move away. So they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" In those days, tombs were carved out of rocks. In front of a tomb, a huge stone would be placed on a grooved ledge that would roll down into place. The only way to move the stone would be to roll it back up the ledge - which would take a lot of men. The women wouldn't be able to do that.

But once they got there, they saw that the stone had been rolled away. The tomb was empty. They wondered, "Who has moved the stone? Where is Jesus' body?"

Then they saw a young man in the tomb. He was an angel. He sat where Jesus' body was laid, and said to them, "*Don't be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.*"

What a change of events! Here the women who went to the tomb saddened by death heard the message of resurrection! The stone of the tomb had been rolled away because Jesus had risen from the dead and God's angel had moved it (Matthew 28:2).

As we live by faith in difficult situations, we all face some kind of stone that we have to move away but can't move. What giant stone stands in your way? What stops you from becoming what you want to become? You have dreams, hopes, goals. But something stops you. Not enough money? Not enough time? Not young? Not educated?

But whatever impossible stone you are facing, don't ever forget what happened to the stone of the tomb of Jesus. The stone was rolled away by the angel of God as the evidence of resurrection. Even though this incident took place over 2000 years ago, God is still rolling stones away. God who brought about the resurrection to Jesus and rolled away the stone of the tomb, can roll away stones for us today. It gives us a reason to have hope again.

### **Angel's message of the resurrection**

#### **1). *He has risen***

When the women came to the tomb, they thought that Jesus' body would be in the tomb. But the angel proclaimed to the women that Jesus rose from the dead: *You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here.* By these words, the angel encouraged them and all believers in Christ to overcome the fear of death and to live with hope in eternal life.

If you know the truth that there is power to overcome death, you don't need to be afraid of anything. The reason why many people are living in fear is because they don't have the truth of the resurrection.

Some years ago, a 40-year-old man from Norfolk, England, dug up what appeared to be an unexploded WWI bomb. He was afraid that letting it go would detonate its explosive power. While holding the bomb, the terrified man called an emergency operator on his mobile phone. He even used the call to issue his last words for his family. The operator kept saying to him that it would be okay. But he kept saying to her, “You’re not the one holding the bomb.”

First responders rushed to the place, and army bomb disposal experts finally arrived there. But the drama came to an abrupt end when the “bomb” was identified. It was part of the hydraulic suspension system from a Citroen, a popular European car.

There are times we find ourselves frozen with fear. As believers, we know that the one who is in us is greater than the one who is in the world, but we forget the power of His resurrection while clutching our fear.

The devil is a liar. He lies to you that death is final and there is no life after death. He lies to you that you can never overcome the power of death. If you listen to the devil’s lie you will live with the fear of death. Or you will feel that your life is meaningless, because your life is just gone in the end, accomplishing nothing.

But the Scripture is telling you the truth. The truth is that there is a resurrection. The truth is that there is power in the resurrection of Jesus. The truth is that Jesus has defeated death! Death is no longer a dead end. It is no longer something that one must face with dread, and despair. Death is no longer the enemy of those who believe because it has been fought and conquered by the Lord.

We can say with the Apostle Paul, “*Death has been swallowed up in victory*’ *Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?*’ *The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our*

*Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Corinthians 15:54-57). Jesus has conquered death. Jesus destroyed the shroud of death that enfolds all people. He has swallowed up death forever.

The truth is that He can give you the power of the resurrection. If you believe the truth, the truth can set you free from all fears in your life.

## ***2). Go, tell his disciples and Peter***

After assuring them that Jesus had risen from the dead, the angel told them to go and tell his disciples and Peter the news of Jesus’ resurrection. No one would have appreciated this more than Peter. Because he failed miserably by denying his relationship with Jesus and fled when Jesus was arrested. So, the angel emphasized the name Peter when he commanded them to deliver the news to Jesus’ disciples: “Make sure that the risen Lord wants Peter to know that He has risen from the dead.”

Perhaps you’ve made some mistakes that have been really haunting you. You may have been paying a heavy price for the consequences of your mistakes. You may have committed a terrible sin and you have been tortured by guilty feelings. Sometimes you wish you could just start your life over but think that is impossible.

But the risen Lord gives you the power to have a fresh start on your life. The Lord who has overturned death to life, can give you power to overturn the result of your mistake and sin to a new start of a hopeful life.

It’s called a new birth and it happens by letting the risen Lord Jesus Christ come into your life. When you believe and accept His resurrection, He will forgive you of everything you’ve done wrong and give you another chance, a chance of a new life.

**3). *You will see him, just as he told you***

The angel also gave them this promise: *you will see him, just as he told you*. The women didn't go to the tomb with faith in the resurrection. But they didn't give up on their faith in the relationship with Jesus, even if He was dead and buried. They did what they were able to do with their faith: They "*bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb*" (verse 2).

When the women came to Jesus' tomb, they expected to see Jesus' dead body lying in the tomb. They planned on unwrapping His dead body from the grave clothes, and packing the grave clothes with more spices - giving it a proper anointing. Although it hadn't been too long since Jesus' burial, still imagine dealing with a body that had been in the grave for over a day - and having to handle that body and see it face to face. This "job" they were about to perform was a scary job. Also, under the old law, it would have made them ceremonially unclean.

These women showed an exemplary faith in what they were about to do. Even though they knew Jesus was dead, they were still going to show honor and respect to His dead body. They still were cling to Christ. Then God's angel gave them the news of the resurrection and also the wonderful promise that they would see the risen Lord just as He had told them. God blesses those who live by such faith.

That's what happened to Job. After he lost everything- his possessions, his children, and his health- he did not give up on his faith. He did not give up on believing God's sovereign will for his life. And God showed him the power of the resurrection. He testified: *I know that my Redeemer lives, ...and after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God* (Job 19:25-26). If you don't give up on your faith, even when you lose everything,

God will come to you as the risen Lord. If you don't give up, you will see the risen Lord.

It was Easter Day 1973. Uganda groaned under the terror of Idid Amin. His soldiers cruelly beat and killed Christians. However Pastor Sempangi bravely and openly preached on the Risen Lord in his town's home football stadium to over 7,000 people. After the service, five of Idid Amin's Secret Police followed Sempangi back to his little church and closed the door behind them. Five rifles pointed at Sempangi's face.

"We are going to kill you for disobeying Amin's orders" said the captain. "If you have something to say, say it now before you die." Sempangi, thinking of his wife and little girl, began to shake.

But the risen Lord living in his heart gave him the courage to speak. "Do what you must," he said, "The Word of God says that in Christ I am already dead, and that my real life is hidden with Him in God. It is not my life that is in danger my friends, but yours. I am alive in the risen Lord, but you are still dead in your sins. May He spare you from eternal destruction."

The leader looked at Sempangi for a long time. Then he lowered his gun and the other guns followed, "Will you pray for us?" he asked. And Sempangi prayed for them. From that day on those five officers converted and protected the pastor with their very lives.

If you do not give up on your faith even when everything seems to be over, the Lord will touch you with the power of His resurrection.