

He Lives!

Sermon - Easter Sunday, April 9, 2023

Scripture Reading: Mark 16:1-8

Golden Verse: *“Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; He is not here. Look, there is the place they laid Him.”* - Mark 16:6

The story we heard this morning happened right after the Sabbath, on the very first day of the week, ... on Sunday morning ...

But let us summarize what happened before this story.

On Maundy Thursday, Jesus Christ had his last supper with His disciples. They were celebrating the Passover when, thousand years before, God brought Israel out from the slavery of Egypt, made them free, and gave them new hope and new life.

After supper, Jesus, surrounded by His disciples, went out to the Mount of Olives to spend the night there. As they were climbing the hill, Jesus was singing psalms, although He knew what He could expect from now on. He knew that Judas betrayed Him already. He knew He has to suffer enormously and, after a difficult night, on Friday He will be crucified.

Our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified on Good Friday at around 9 a.m. As He was suffering, He still prayed for those who did this to Him: *“Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”* (Luke 23:34)

Although Jesus suffered enormously on the cross, having internal and external bleeding, He still cared for the other crucified person, comforting him, saying: *“Truly I tell you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”* (Luke 23:43)

Shortly before Jesus died, He reported to God, the Father: Father, for what You sent Me, it IS DONE.

After very long agony, offering His spirit to God, Jesus died at around 3 p.m. Jesus died as a human. Those who loved Jesus went to Pilate, the Governor, for permission to take His body off the cross and to bury His body. They were in a big hurry because, based on their custom, after 6 p.m., they were not allowed to touch a dead body. Otherwise, they were excluded from the Passover celebrations. For this, on Friday late afternoon, the women did not have enough time to properly embalm the body. They laid His body in a big hurry in the tomb.

At that time, the tombs were not dug in the ground, but carved in the mountains. They looked like little rooms, and the entrances were closed carefully with a huge stone. No people or animals were able to enter.

On Saturday, the priests, although they broke the Sabbath, asked Pilate to seal the stone and to order Roman soldiers to guard the tomb of Jesus so that nobody could steal the body. The priests feared that the disciples would steal the body and spread the news that Jesus was resurrected.

The people of Israel, the Jews, were resting and celebrating the Passover from Friday at 6 p.m. Jesus' human body was lying in the tomb.

On Sunday, early in the morning, before sunrise, we see women approaching the tomb in a big hurry where the body was laid. In their discussion, there is a question that is causing them serious concerns and worries: Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb? They knew the stone would be a huge obstacle, but they continued. As the women realized they would not be able to roll the stone away, they became desperate. It is interesting that they continued their journey.

Did you ever have moments, when you wanted to do something desperately? Although you knew you would not be able to make it, you continued your journey because something from inside told you not to give up. Go, and maybe something will happen.

These women were shocked when, from far away, they noticed that the stone was there, but was rolled away from the entrance of the tomb.

What would be your questions in their situation? Who did this? What happened here? Why is the stone rolled away? Why did Jesus' enemies not allow His dead body to rest in peace?

The women went through a series of shocks: the stone was rolled away; they saw an angel who was talking to them as a human; their shock increased as the angel was encouraging them not to be afraid; and then they were extremely shocked when the angel said that Jesus was not in the tomb anymore because He was resurrected. The top of their surprise was when the angel repeated to them word by word **the same words** that Jesus said to them a few days before: to go towards Galilee and they would meet Him in person on their way.

I think, psychologically, these women were so surprised, that they could not even digest and understand everything that happened there and what the angels said. They started to run out from the cemetery to meet the disciples, who were hiding in an attic of a house.

I am highlighting only **two** things from this very rich and colourful story, and the consequences we have to take with us.

1. Jesus Christ is God, and He cannot be held by the tomb.

It is so laughable that the priests and His enemies wanted to seal the tomb, to make sure He would stay in forever.

These women were planning so many things to finish their customs around Jesus' body. They were prepared to touch the dead body of Jesus. Because they were using only their short way of thinking, they were focusing on death, and they could not remember what Jesus said to them previously that He HAS TO DIE, but in three days He will be alive again.

They knew Jesus, but not very well. They did not or could not take His words seriously. Although they saw that Jesus resurrected Lazarus and a 12 year old child, they could not imagine or believe that He is stronger than death and He will be resurrected because He is the resurrection and the life. Jesus died as a human and resurrected as God.

Today, you can meet with the resurrected and Living Jesus Christ, and you can submit your whole life to Him.

We are not together today to remember a person of history, but we are worshipping Jesus as our living God. We are here to listen to His message, and we will walk away taking His words with us.

2. If we are committed to know more about Jesus and to follow Him faithfully, we will face many unexpected obstacles.

However, the second great message here today is, that all these obstacles will be removed by Jesus.

The women must say: there is a huge stone at the entrance of the tomb, but we will continue our journey, and we will not change our minds. If they had NOT continued their journey, picturing the huge stone as an obstacle, if they had turned around halfway, they would never have experienced those miracles.

If you are committed to knowing more about Jesus, to meet Him in person, please start and continue your journey. Don't stop, don't turn back. On your journey, Jesus will come close to you. He will assure you that He is God, and He loves you dearly.

These women were drawn to Jesus because they loved Him and they knew that Jesus loved them so much when He was amongst them. The love of Jesus is drawing many people here to worship today and to grow in faith.

All those who believe in Him, follow Him and love Him will die but, right at the same moment, they will be resurrected in a different body and will live with Him in His glorious eternity, forever and ever.

Probably you still have a lot of questions about Him and the resurrection. I know that some of those questions can be obstacles in front of you in your journey. However, please trust Jesus. He will talk to you, and He will explain everything to you, step by step. He will roll the stones away so that you can grow in faith, and you can reach His eternal glory.

However, you have to promise today that you will never turn back, no matter how many unanswered questions, or obstacles, or bad experiences you have. You must follow Jesus faithfully, and put your trust in Him that He will lead you, holding your hands.

All of us have many and different problems, and sometimes we have a feeling that we will collapse. Accident, illness, family problems... "Who can resolve all these?" we ask. Who will roll the stone away? We are stressed, asking if we have a future. Often we say: I cannot take more, I will collapse.

If you believe that Jesus, with whom these women met on the first Easter day, is a living, loving and caring God, He will help you. If you follow Him, You will experience that He will roll the problems away. You always can count on Jesus. You will experience that it is worth praying to Him, to call Him YOUR LORD.

His message to you today is: Trust in Me; Follow Me; I will walk with you. Amen