

“He’s Alive” John 20:1-18 Easter Sunday April 20, 2014

The Sunday school teacher asked if anyone knew what Easter was all about. Johnny said Easter is when your friends & relatives come over and you stuff your self with food & watch parades & football on TV. No Johnny, the teacher replied, that is Thanksgiving. Mary raised her hand & said Easter is when Jesus came out of His tomb after dieing⁴ our sins; but then He saw his shadow and had to go back inside for six more weeks of winter.

It is easy to get confused isn’t it? Easter must have really confused the disciples. They saw their Messiah die. He was dead. They knew He was dead. They saw Him buried in a borrowed tomb, which was sealed with a huge bolder and guarded by roman soldiers. In today’s text we will see Mary come with news that the tomb is empty and she doesn’t no where Jesus is. They run to the tomb and find it empty, just as Mary said. It takes faith to believe in the resurrection. It takes faith to believe an angel who says He is not here, He is risen. Or does it? Through out His ministry Jesus told the disciples over and over again that He must die for the sins of the world, then on the 3rd day He would rise again weren’t they listening? Did they not understand? Did they forget? Or were they simply confused?

S. Lewis Johnson said “The resurrection is God’s Amen to Christ’s it is finished.” The death & resurrection of Jesus go hand in hand. Without the resurrection, Jesus death would have been in vain. The resurrection proves God accepted Jesus’ death as payment for our sins. Easter is all about hope. Without Easter man has no hope. One Sat. night Napoleon had his army surrounding Feldkirch, Austria. They were planning an attack at dawn. The villagers prayed for deliverance. At dawn the church bells rang for the Easter Sunrise service. Napoleon, not knowing it was Easter morning, thought the bells were symbolic of the Austrian armies return to the city. So thinking the city had been fortified, Napoleon retreated. When the bells of Easter ring out, the enemies God retreat. Death is God’s enemy. The atoning death of Christ is our only hope for eternal life with God in heaven. Do we believe Jesus is alive today? It’s no wonder the disciples were confused; what a week they had. Last Sunday the crowd praised Jesus as He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey’s colt. They waived palm branches, shouted Hosanna, & called Him the son of David. Thrsday night they celebrated Passover and Jesus washed their feet. He served them. He told them He must suffer and die; & that He would rise again. Jesus told them that one of them would betray Him&that Peter would deny knowing Him. How could these things happen to the Messiah? How could Judas betray Jesus? How could Peter deny Him? How could that same crowd who shouted Hosanna last Sunday, shout crucify Him on Friday? Confusing isn’t it? Yet it happened just that way. For 30 pieces of silver Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss in the Garden of Gethsemane. Judas not only identified Jesus&condemn Him to death, but he also condemned himself as he committed suicide not long after that. Peter is the one who said Thou art the Christ when Jesus asked who do you say that I am. Peter drew his sword and cut of a man’s ear when they came to arrest Jesus, but facing his own possible arrest in the high priest’s court yard, Peter denied 3 times that he even knew Jesus. Confusion can be cured with focus. If Peter could have kept his focus on Jesus, he might not have denied knowing Him. If we keep our focus on Jesus & t he fact that we know is alive today, perhaps we won’t deny that we know Him. In Matthew 10:32-33 Jesus says “*Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him will I deny before My Father who is heaven.*” Do we deny Jesus before men or do we stand up for Him? Is He the main focus of our lives/do we believe He’s alive today? Pray

[vs1] John tells us here that Mary came to the tomb very early Sunday morning, while it was still dark. Ever wonder why we have sunrise service on Easter morning? It is because Mary and some

other women went to the tomb about sun rise to anoint the body of Jesus and give Him a proper burial. John ends chapter 19 by telling us that Joseph of Arimathea & Nicodemus claimed the body of Jesus, wrapped it in strips of cloth anointed with myrrh and aloes and placed him in Joseph's own tomb. They had to hurry because it was getting dark Friday afternoon and Sabbath started at sunset; & no work could be done on the Sabbath. These women came on Sunday morning, the day after the Sabbath, to complete the job & finish giving Jesus a proper Jewish burial. Mary was the first woman to arrive at the tomb & she saw that stone had been rolled away from the entrance to the tomb.

Mary Magdalene loved Jesus very much. He was her focus in life. She was the last one to leave the cross Friday afternoon and the first one at the tomb on Sunday morning. Jesus had cast 7 demons out of her according to Luke 8:2. Jesus tells us in Luke 7:47 that he who is forgiven much loves much and he who is forgiven little loves little. How much have we been forgiven? How much do we love Jesus?

Upon finding the tomb empty, Mary ran and told the disciples. [vs.2] this verse tells us that Mary was not alone. She said "we" don't know where they have laid him. By using the word we, Mary indicates that she was not alone even though John doesn't mentioned any other women. Notice that Mary did not investigate the situation. John says when she saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb; she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved. That disciple is of course John himself. John implies that when Mary saw that the stone was moved she assumed that someone had stolen the body. As humans, we generally assume the worst don't we? Jesus said on numerous occasions that He would be resurrected after His death. But grief clouds our thoughts and thinking. Being confused by what she saw, Mary ran to get help.

[vs.3-7] Peter and John had to see for themselves that the tomb was empty. They both ran to the tomb. They ran together for a while but John, being younger, out ran Peter and arrived first at the tomb. John stopped at the entrance and looked in. He could see the tomb was indeed empty. He could see the cloths that Jesus was wrapped in. Peter on the other hand did not stop at the entrance; he just kept on running right on inside. He too saw the linen clothes in one place the handkerchief which had been around his head in another place. This is proof no one stole the body. Thieves would not have taken the time to unwrap the body & neatly fold anything, let alone make two separate piles. Y2 piles?

In order to understand the significance of the folded napkin, you have to understand a little bit about Hebrew tradition of that day. The folded napkin had to do with the Master and Servant, and every Jewish boy knew this tradition. When the servant set the dinner table for the master, he made sure that it was exactly the way the master wanted it. The table was furnished perfectly, and then the servant would wait, just out of sight, until the master had finished eating, and the servant would not dare touch that table, until the master was finished. Now if the master were done eating, he would rise from the table, wipe his fingers, his mouth, and clean his beard, and would wad up that napkin and toss it onto the table. The servant would then know to clear the table. For in those days, the wadded napkin meant, "I'm finished." But if the master got up from the table, and folded his napkin, and laid it beside his plate, the servant would not dare touch the table, because the folded napkin meant, "I'm coming back!" And so He shall. Are we looking for the soon return of Jesus Christ?

[vs.8-10] John entered, saw, and believed. What did he believe? John believed that Jesus had indeed been resurrected and is alive. John tells us that they did not know the scriptures that say the Messiah would rise from the dead. Many times Jesus had told them that we would be handed

over to evil men, executed and buried, but that he would arise again on the 3rd day. They just did not understand. Even at this point, John may not have understood, but he believed. Christianity is all about belief. It is about faith. Paul tells us in 2 Cor.5:7 “*We walk by faith not by sight.*” Do we believe that Jesus is alive today?

After looking around in the tomb, Peter and John went back to their lodgings. John saw and believed. Peter, according to Luke 24:12 wondered. Do we believe this morning? Or do we wonder? The resurrection proves that Jesus is indeed the Messiah. It proves He indeed is the propitiation for our sins. It proves His blood was accepted in payment of our sins. Do we believe or do we wonder? John says he believes; what do we say?

The empty tomb confused Mary. She was not sure what to think. Her earthly mind was focused on anointing the body of Jesus and giving him a proper burial. That was the purpose of her trip. When she found the body gone, she thought somebody moved it. But her love and devotion to Jesus paid off. She saw and talked to Jesus Himself. Mary Magdalene was the first person to see and talk to the resurrected Jesus Christ. [Vs.11-17]

Mary went and looked in the tomb a second time. This time she saw something. She saw 2 angels! One sat at the head and the other at the feet of where Joseph and Nicodemus had laid the body of Jesus. They asked her why she was crying. She answered them because they have taken away my LORD and I don't know where they have laid him. She still doesn't believe Jesus is alive. Her grief has clouded her mind. She is only thinking about what she saw Friday, not about what she has seen so far this morning and not about what she had heard over the past couple of years. Mary was so sad she was not even impressed with having seen angels. She looked away. She turned around after this conversation with the angels and saw what she was looking for.

Only she did not know it. She saw what she thought was the gardener. He too asked her why she was crying. Then He asked her what she was seeking? Jesus always asked people what they were looking for, what they wanted when they came to Him. What are we seeking this morning?

She did not recognize Jesus. She asked him if he had removed the body. She volunteers to bury him herself. Her love for Jesus pours through even her great grief. How much love do we have for Jesus? Would we recognize him if we saw Him? Then He calls her by name. Immediately she recognizes him and calls him Rabboni, which means teacher. Her eyes were opened when Jesus called her by name. Not surprising. Jesus said in

John 10:27 “*My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me.*” Do we know the voice of Jesus/ do we follow Him/ is He r Lord? Whose voice r we listening to?

Jesus tells her not to cling to Him. He must go to His Father. Cling means to hold on to; to fasten oneself to. She probably hugged him so tightly that he thought she'd never let him go, but he had to go. He needed to ascend to heaven and be with God for awhile. He would be back, but he doesn't tell Mary that.

He just tells her to go and tell his disciples that she has seen him and he is going to His Father and our Father to His God and our God. Jesus had just died for the sins of mankind. He had conquered both sin and death. He did not rise again to set up an earthly kingdom, His new mission was to go and prepare for us a place in heaven. Christians need to remember that this earth is not our home; we are just here for a little while. Glorifying God should be our number 1 priority. That is why He created us and put us here. Are we living a life that brings him glory?

Because of her love, focus, and concern for Jesus, she is the first one to see the resurrected Christ. John and Peter left Mary tearfully seeking Jesus' body. She searched until she found the resurrected Christ. She found joy and was willing to share that joy.

Do we find joy in Jesus? Are we willing to share Jesus with others? Mary's grief blinded her to Jesus the first time she saw him on that first Easter morning. She was not looking for a resurrected Savior; she was looking for a dead teacher. What are we looking for?

Notice that Jesus never appeared to anyone in His grave clothes. Lazarus did. Lazarus would one day need them again, Jesus would not. Romans 6:9 says "Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. When we accept Jesus as our personal Savior and leave our life of sin behind us, we too must leave behind our grave clothes of sin and corruption as we put on the righteousness of Jesus. Are we clothed with the righteousness of Jesus this morning?"

[18] Mary went and told the disciples that she had found the LORD. She told them that He was alive and had spoken to her. John and Peter had left her crying at the tomb seeking a dead body, now she comes to them and says she has found a resurrected Lord. She found something better than what she stared out looking for. That is the way God is; He always gives us more and better than what we seek. Paul tells us in Ephesians 3:20 that God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think. We are to use these gifts to glorify God. What do we do with the resources that God blesses us with

Just like Mary, we can't find the living Christ until we find the empty tomb. The resurrection is the key to Christianity. Jesus said in John 11:25-26 "*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?*" Because of the resurrection, Christians need not fear death. It is our way to heaven. The resurrection is what sets Christianity apart from all other religions. Christianity is not a religion, it's a relationship; a relationship with a living God; the one true living God. Jesus is alive today! Do you believe this?

Little Phillip did. He was an 8 year old boy with downs syndrome in the local Sunday school class along with 9 other 8 year old boys and girls. Since he was different, the other children didn't really accept him, they tolerated him, that was about all.

On Easter Sunday, the teacher brought empty plastic eggs and gave 1 to each student. She told them to go outside and put something in the egg that represented new life. One child put in a flower, one a butterfly, and one a rock with moss on it. Phillip's egg was empty. The children laughed and ridiculed him say oh Phillip, you never do anything right. But Philip responded I did so do it right. Jesus' tomb is empty. This is a picture of that. The new life we get through Jesus. You could have heard a pin drop. The room became totally silent for several minutes. From that day forward, Philip was part of the group. He fit in at last. Summer came and Philip got sick and passed away. At the funeral, all 9 classmates of Philip and their teacher walked together up to the casket and placed an empty plastic egg in it. Easter's hope is found in an empty tomb; an empty tomb that promises us new life. All we have to do is believe.

Christians have a message of good news to share with the world; are we doing it? Or are we crying over the cares of this world? Are we seeking earthly pleasure or are we seeking Jesus this morning? Mary found the disciples and told them the good news. Do we tell the good news?

The tomb was sealed with a huge boulder. One of the women's largest concerns was how would they move it. God moved it for them. Not so that Jesus could get out, but so that we could get in. By the same token, each of us have a huge boulder blocking our hearts entrance, we need

to remove this boulder so Jesus can enter our heart. Jesus is a Gentleman. He won't go where He is not invited. In Rev. 3:20 Jesus says "*Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me.*" Are we dining with Jesus today? Have we asked Jesus to come and live in our heart?

Do we believe that Jesus is alive this morning? Do we believe that because He's alive, we will live too? Just what do we believe? Is Jesus real to us today? Do we believe that He is indeed alive? Does the knowledge of this good news fill us with joy? Do we share that joy? They tomb is empty! Hallelujah! Jesus is alive!!!!!!

Amen, let's pray.