

EASTER SUNRISE SERVICE March 23 08 MARK 16:1-8

He lives!

Have you ever had a bad day turn into a wonderful day? Many times we hear women say they are having a bad hair day when the wind blows and their hair spray fails. Or there are other times when you seem to have bad days. Like today with the weather like it is. You know snow showers predicted, rain maybe later, cold and kind of yucky. Watching golf and Tiger Woods yesterday he was having a bad day when many of his putts were lipping out of the cup. Murphy's law sometimes comes into play. If something is going to happen, then it will happen. When things go bad, they go very bad.

Well it happened many years ago when the women went to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus. For the last few days they were in tears. They were in tears because Jesus had died. They remembered the torture, the suffering, the yelling of those who wanted him crucified. They remember the storm that came the moment Jesus died. They remember helping take Jesus from the cross so they could bury him. They remember doing what they could to prepare him for burial. But not all things were done. It was getting late and they needed to finish so he could be laid to rest. They promised Mary, Jesus' mother, they would go to the tomb the first chance they had so that they could do a proper job of preparing his body for eternity.

So they watched as they placed the body in the tomb of Joseph of Armathea, and wept as the stone was rolled into place. And they went home to grieve.

And now, on the first day of the week, at the crack of dawn they went to the tomb to do what they promised they would do. And as they went they talked among themselves about the life of Jesus. They talked about not seeing the smiling face of Jesus anymore, or hearing his sweet voice, or watching how he seemed to mesmerize the crowds when he spoke. They remembered the happy days when Jesus walked among the crowd and often stood to hold the little children that had gathered around him. He would tell them funny stories. Sometimes he would sit on the grass and hold one in his lap. He would laugh with them as he tickled them and made the children laugh.

And of course, they could not forget the solemn days when people were hurting and came to Jesus and he touched each one. They remembered the stories he would tell. They remembered how they would laugh with him or even cry with him. They remembered how he touched life after life and heart after heart. They remember the transformation of lives as sinners became saints. They remembered how eyes were opened. They remembered stories of forgiveness. Stories like the Prodigal son who returned to a waiting Father. They shared their own stories of why they now followed Jesus and what he meant to them. As they grieved, they shared the

stories. And they walked to the tomb. And when almost there they began to ask a more serious question. How would they get into the tomb? The stone would be too heavy for them to move. And they had not asked the disciples to help. After all, they were in hiding. Perhaps they thought if the soldiers were still there they might help. But no, that would not be possible because they had sealed the tomb fearing that someone would steal his body and say he was alive. If the soldiers helped they could get into deep trouble with Pilate and with the high priest who wanted to make sure nothing could take place that would look as if Jesus had risen.

So they kept trying to figure it all out. And when they got close enough to the tomb their problems were all solved, or just beginning. First of all, **the stone was removed**. They panicked! They ran to see inside, and found no body. You talk about a horrible day. There it was. Stone rolled away. No body could be seen. They were full of fear. Who would take his body? And why? You talk about

Yet, in our story we see something wonderful. A young man dressed in white was found in the tomb by the women. He said, ‘don’t be alarmed, you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here. He is alive!’”

Wow! What wonderful words to hear. He was not dead he had risen just as he had said. There were no doubts. But listen to what happened next. “trembling and bewildered the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone because they were afraid.”

Amazing! Instead of running and telling others the good news they said nothing. But when Jesus appeared to others we know that doubts turned to believe. For when they saw the risen Christ there was joy and they did run and tell the disciples.

Folks we celebrate this morning not the empty tomb, but that Christ is alive. Every Easter Sunrise service is the same. On Friday we leave Jesus in the tomb knowing that on Sunday morning when the women went to anoint his body he was not there, but is alive. And though during Lent we think of our sinful nature, on Easter morning we think of the victory that has been won.

The devil doesn't dance any more! He was defeated. God dances. Jesus dances. The whole Christian world dances.

Hear these words from the song “Lord of the Dance.”

“I danced in the morning when the world was begun, and I danced in the moon and the stars and the sun, and I came down from heaven and I danced on the earth. At Bethlehem I had my birth. I danced for the Scribes

and the Pharisee, but they would not dance and they would not follow me; I danced for the fishermen, for James and John; they came to me and the dance went on. I danced on the Sabbath when I cured the lame; the holy people said it was a shame; they whipped and the stripped and they hung me high, and they left me there on a cross to die. I danced on a Friday and the sky turned black; it's hard to dance with the devil on your back; they buried my body and they thought I'd gone, but I am the dance and I still go on. They cut me down and I leapt up high, I am the life that'll never, ever die; I'll live in you if you live in me; I am the Lord of the dance, said he. Dance, then wherever you may be, I am the Lord of the dance said he, and I'll lead you all wherever you may be, and I'll lead you all in the dance, said he.”

Every Easter we are the ones who come to find the tomb is empty. Every Easter we are the ones who must go and tell the world that the tomb was empty and Jesus is alive. Every Easter we are the ones who should be excited to know that our Savior lives. Nails didn't keep Jesus on the cross. His love did. And what we learn from John 3:16 is fulfilled today. “For God so loved the world that he sent his one and only Son that whoever will believe in him will receive forgiveness and eternal life....For he came to give his life that all who believe in him will live.”

So this morning we come celebrating the risen Christ. There aren't bad days ahead. There are only days that the living Christ can make glad days. There aren't any more days to be afraid, for the risen Lord lives today to take care of our fears. There aren't any more days that we need to pay for our sins, for Christ is alive and has taken all our sins to the cross on Friday. There aren't any days we have to think about being separated from God, for up from the grave he arose and we shall all live forever with the saints to reign. For he is alive.

“Up from the grave he arose, with a mighty triumph over his foes; he arose a victor from the dark domain , and he lives forever with is saints to reign. He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!”

Easter people raise your voices, for he is alive. He's alive! Let us shout it to the whole world. Our testimony is this:

He lives. He lives. Christ Jesus lives today. lives. You ask me how I know he lives ? He lives within my heart.

May the joy of Easter be with us always in the name of the Risen Christ, amen.