

April 16, 2017

Easter - Go and Tell

PRAYER

May the words of my mouth be meditations to our hearts. And be always acceptable unto Thee. O Lord our strength and our redeemer. AMEN

SERMON

The reading of the Gospel of the resurrection always holds different feelings for me. First feelings I have are about how distraught the women were as they were going to the tomb. You have to understand that they were, they wanted to perform the rites, the ceremonies that should have been done for Jesus' body after he had died and before he was laid in the tomb. But because of the late hour they were not able to do that. The Sabbath was beginning. They weren't able to perform that ceremony for their friend, for their leader, for their teacher.

Combined with the feelings of sadness and mourning for the loss of their friend. The additional inability to perform the ceremonies that were traditional for the women to do for such a person. Made it very difficult for them. And so, Friday night was a terrible dark night of mourning and grieving. The Sabbath which was supposed to be a day of prayer. A day of worship. A day of resting. A day of being with God turned into a day of lamenting, loss. Lamenting the inability to perform those ceremonies that were so important to them. So it's no real surprise they were coming out very early on that Sunday morning. The first day of the week to perform that ceremony.

I always have this image of these two women walking together and wondering how will we move the stone. How will we get those guards to do that for us? Will they even perform that for us so that we can give to the body? Will they simply turn us away when we get there? All these things going through their minds as they are making their way to the place where Jesus was buried.

Then something amazing. A sound a feeling like an earthquake. An angel descended from heaven. The guards being so frightened that they seize up. They shake with fear and become like dead men. And there they see the stone rolled away and the angel sitting on top of the stone. They had to have been afraid too. Wondering what was going on. They'd been dealing with so many things, so many emotions. And now the stone beyond any idea that it could happen has been rolled away for them. They have access to the tomb.

And here an angel sits. Robbed in white. Looking like lightening. And what does the angel say to these two women. Don't be afraid. Almost always the

first utterances from God, from Jesus, or from God's representatives. Those words, don't be afraid. I know why you're here. You're looking for Jesus who is crucified. But he's not here. Just like he told you, he's been raised. You can go in, take a look. See where he was laid. He's not there. Because God's promises are true. And Jesus as God's son spoke the truth when he said this was all necessary. This had to take place. So that the punishment for sin could be satisfied. So that resurrection knew life. Life in a different plane. Life in a different way could be brought forth and offered to God's people. To all the people. Come and see where he was laid. And then go. You have seen that the tomb is empty. Go and tell the disciples. Go and tell them that they will see Jesus when they travel to Galilee.

A wonderful pronouncement. And now a task. Go and tell. That was given to the women. The first witnesses of the resurrection. And yet that wasn't all. They're excited. They're still fearful. They're still trying to figure out what all is going on. This is beyond belief. This is so wonderful. It's such good news. And yet, they still haven't seen Jesus. They have only the word of the angel. And they're going to give that message to the disciples when Jesus appears to them.

And their excitement and their fear, they see the one that they have traveled with. That they had helped. Who had helped them so much come to know and understand the love of God. That had given them a task. To go and tell. And now he stands before them. And their first response is to bow down, to worship. To say what an incredible thing this is. He is truly alive. Recognizable, he is here greeting us on the road. And gives them the same task. You have seen me now, go and tell my brothers. To go to Galilee and there they will see me too.

Amazing story. Beyond belief. And yet nothing more true. God fulfilling the promise of making it possible for us all to be reconciled to God. With a punishment for all sin. The sin of the world is taken upon his son. The love that is so great, so deep that God will not allow our own sinfulness to separate us ultimately from God's presence. From that relationship with God. Go and tell my brothers. Go to Galilee and there they will see me too.

What more can you say? It is the reminder of God's great love for you. God didn't do this just for the people who had lived before. Nor just the people who were witnesses in that day. Jesus did what he did for us. In obedience to God, the humanity of Jesus took upon himself the cross, the sins of world. Took them to the grave. To put them aside. To offer forgiveness for us all. To reconcile us to God. To have the most intimate of relationships possible. God dwelling in us and we dwelling in God. Simply by accepting by what has been

offered. By what has been given in the great gift of Jesus' sacrifice, his death and his resurrection.

And we come here this day to celebrate the fulfillment of that promise. Jesus raised from the dead. That is what we come to church for to celebrate every Sunday. To celebrate the resurrection, to be reminded that God's promises are true. To be reminded that God's love for us is so great that he was willing to come and be united with humanity, his creation. To teach, to heal, to show that great love so that we might be ready when Jesus goes to his passion and his death.

To be ready for celebrating the resurrection. Knowing that it is a fulfillment of God's promise. Knowing that God calls each of us to come and be a part. Each generation like the women at the tomb. Go and tell. Share the message. That's your responsibility. That is the message I give you. That is the task and responsibility that I give you. This community called the church. This community called the kingdom of God. That's our responsibility.

We've been baptized. We have been reborn. We have died with Christ in the water of baptism. We have been raised up as Christ has been raised up. The life we live now is a resurrected life. The life we live now is to go forth and to proclaim the light of the world. because there is so much darkness still around us. There are so many who have never heard. There are so many who have not heard in a way that they are able to receive the truth of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And that is our message to the world. We come to the church like the women coming to the tomb. To be reminded of what Jesus had taught them. To show the resurrection. We are to go back out. Just as the women were sent back. Go and tell my brothers. We are called to go back out into the world and to share that truth. To share that light. To share that love of God in a way that moves people to see Jesus in who we are and what we do. As we feed the hungry. As we visit those who are sick and are in prison. As we are with those who are poor. And help them to come into the fulness of Christ to receive the blessings of God in the world.

Today, today is special. We celebrate the resurrection. But I remind you that every Sunday is a celebration of the resurrection. Every Sunday we should come with the intention of knowing again the truth of God's promises. And to hear again God's message to us. Go and tell my children. Go and tell Jesus' brothers and sisters that he has been raised from the dead. That God's promise has been fulfilled and you are invited to be a part of it. That is our message to the world and that is the salvation of God's creation.