

Easter - The Festival of the Resurrection

Hymns: 192, 187, 195, 205, 200

The INTROIT

(Ps. 139:18,5,6,1,2)

P: When I awake, I am still with Thee, Hallelujah!

C: Thou hast laid Thine hand upon me. Hallelujah!

P: Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;

C: it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

P: O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me;

C: Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising.

The COLLECT

Almighty God, who through Thine only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, hast overcome death and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life, we humbly beseech Thee that as Thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by Thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

The FIRST LESSON

Isaiah 52:13-15

Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.

THE GRADUAL

(Ps.118:24,29; 1 Cor.5:7-8)

P: This is the day which the Lord hath made:

C: we will rejoice and be glad in it.

P: Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good:

C: for His mercy endureth forever. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

P: Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us.

C: Let us keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Hallelujah!

The EPISTLE

1 Corinthians 5:6-8

Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

P: Hallelujah! Christ, our Passover:

C: is sacrificed for us. Hallelujah!

The HOLY GOSPEL

St. Mark 16:1-8

And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.

And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.

And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.

Mark 16:1-8 — “They Saw”

INTRODUCTION

- I. THAT THEY MIGHT COME AND ANOINT HIM
- II. THEY SAW THAT THE STONE WAS ROLLED AWAY
- III. THEY SAW A YOUNG MAN SITTING ON THE RIGHT SIDE

CONCLUSION

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Mark 16:1-8 — “They Saw”

Grace, mercy, and peace to you all from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Today is the Festival of the Resurrection. The appointed Gospel reading is Mark 16:1-8:

And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.

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And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

INTRODUCTION

Our text begins by saying, “**And when the Sabbath was past, . . .**” The Sabbath was established on the seventh day as a day of rest in the knowledge of the completion of all of God’s good work of creation. Holy Saturday is the concluding Sabbath that completes God’s work of redemption and recreation. The LORD brought the work of redemption to completion with His death on Friday. His holy Sabbath began at sunset and He rested after completing His good work of the new creation. On the Eighth Day, the first day of the new eon, He rose from the dead, and ended the Sabbath as a particular day, rising to provide His saints with the Sabbath that has no end. He established this never-ending Sabbath for all of mankind. However, before we can enter into His never-ending Sabbath rest we must hear it proclaimed to us. That is what Easter is.

I. THAT THEY MIGHT COME AND ANOINT HIM

Did the disciples understand? No, they did not. Did they rest on the Sabbath? No, they followed the rules of the Sabbath, but they did not enter into the restfulness that the LORD had provided. Rather, on account of their reliance upon their own understanding, they entered into a time of terrible dread and anguish. Rather than rejoicing in the Great Day of the LORD that had been prophesied so many times in the Scriptures, they hid in fear and mourning. Why?

The answer to this is set forth in the first sentence of our text. Mark writes:

And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.

This is the mistaken notion of worship that people take up even today. The commonly held understanding of worship that arises from our own thoughts is entirely backward. This is what we do to everything regarding our approach to God and His Holy Communion. We turn everything upside down and inside out. We turn our thoughts to the wrong source.

Notice that upon which these dear ladies set their hearts and minds. The entire day of the Sabbath they fretted about what they ought to do for the Lord Jesus. Did they rest at all that Sabbath Day? They obeyed the rules of not cooking and not going out to do business. But did they rest? Did they rest in the comfort of what their Lord had told them that He was accomplishing? Did they find rest for their souls? Did they remember the reason for coming to the Lord that He had proclaimed? He said, **“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”** (Matt 11:28-30)

Is this what is recorded of them? On that holy Saturday, did they trust that their Lord had carried their burdens and had taken their yoke upon Himself so that all that they needed to do was to rest in Him? No. They did not. Instead, they took up the burdens again for themselves. On that day of the Lord’s glorious resurrection they focused upon what they should do for Him, rather than upon what He had done for them. Moreover, the LORD’s anointed, they determined to anoint. To what end? He did not need anything from them. He was not even in the sepulcher! They sought Jesus at an empty tomb.

Such is the way whenever we seek Jesus according to our own attempts at worship. Such is the way when we seek to serve the LORD according to our own efforts. Such is the way when we seek Jesus according to what we imagine is good and right.

Did Jesus not teach them continually that He must suffer and die for the sins of the world and then rise again on the Third Day? He suffered, died, and was buried on Friday, the first day. He was in the sepulcher barely over a day and then He rose from the dead and left the tomb empty, leaving behind His burial cloths and all that is associated with death forever. The Third Day, even before these fretful ladies arose, the Lord Jesus had already risen.

But these ladies were too busy thinking about how they would show their love to their Lord Jesus to be able to think on the things that He had told them. They were too busy preparing in their hearts to come to Jesus to reflect upon what the Scriptures declared concerning worshiping in spirit and truth. They were too busy imagining the loving things that they would do for their Lord to recognize what He had done and had established for them and for all.

And so their efforts were in vain. Surely they thought that their worship was worthy. Surely they took comfort in how much they loved their Lord Jesus. Perhaps they even counted themselves as more devoted than those who were still sleeping. But all that they proved to all the world was that they did not trust the words that Jesus had spoken to them. All that they proved with their attempts at devotion and with their efforts at witnessing unto Him was that they were

foolish in their unbelief. They thought that they were worshiping the LORD, but in reality they were trusting in themselves and their own acts of devotion. The thought of the glory of the LORD being displayed in His resurrection never even entered into their hearts. They were too full of themselves and their own vainglory to think about the fact that the Lord Jesus is the resurrection and the life and that death has no power over Him. They came to honor the Lord with their own dead works, to anoint the Lord according to their understanding of love. But their love was not alive. Their lord was dead. Their lord never even lived. For the Jesus they sought was not the True and Living God. He was not equal to God. He was only equal to their own understanding, and therefore they sought a dead Jesus.

Thus they said among themselves, **“Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?”** How silly could they be? They did not even think ahead to invite someone along to move the stone. They were too busy thinking of their own devotion and their own love of one whom they counted as dead.

Is it any different for the majority of those who come to a church building focusing upon the excitement of their worship experience? Is it any different for those who come to show their devotion to the LORD? Is it any different for those who prepare sermons and worship services that focus upon the glory of the worship experience? Is it any different for those who focus upon their singing in the choir? On whose works is the focus really?

II. THEY SAW THAT THE STONE WAS ROLLED AWAY

And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.

The LORD knows our hearts. He knows the foolishness of our unbelief. He knows that we will seek Him according to our own thoughts, words, and deeds. And so He provides that we should see that the stone has already been rolled away. Yet this still is not enough for us. Like the ladies, like Peter and John, we insist on going into the empty tomb.

Even today, how many Easter sermons focus upon the empty tomb? How many people run to the empty tomb as the evidence of the resurrection? But as the witness of Mary Magdalene testifies, this proves nothing. Like Mary, we look for Jesus in our own ways rather than the ways that He has ordained. She imagined that someone stole Jesus away. Even when Jesus appeared to her, she was so full of her own thoughts that she could not recognize Him. It was not until she heard His voice that she knew Him. It is John, the last of the disciples, who writes of her doubting, writing many years later for the churches that had been long established.

Yes, like Mary of Magdalene, we begin to see the empty tombs that are carved out with human hands, and finding that Jesus is not in these we imagine that someone has taken our Lord Jesus away. But the fact is that Jesus is standing very nearby, calling us to turn from the whitewashed tombs that we build as places to gather unto Jesus and to come to His voice and receive Him as He has promised.

When we see that the stone has already been rolled away to show us that Jesus is not where we had expected Him to be, rather than grieving, we should remember what He has told us. His body, His temple, is not made of stone or mortar or bricks or wood or even plastic. His body is made of flesh and blood, and He still comes to us in His flesh and blood, even as He came and showed Himself to the women and to the disciples after His resurrection.

III. THEY SAW A YOUNG MAN SITTING ON THE RIGHT SIDE

And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.

This is the way of the LORD our God. He always provides a man to speak the truth to us. He always provides a preacher of the Gospel. Can we hear what the Gospel says? The ladies came to the sepulcher bringing their preparations and false worship. They came with their ideas of love and devotion to a place where Jesus had told them not to seek Him. But He knew that they needed to be catechized. This is what catechism is. It means *to sound down upon, to instruct by word of mouth, to resound*. We never can hear the pure doctrine enough. We need to hear it again and again and again. Our hearts are not faithful unless the Word enters into our hearts to fill them with the true faith of Jesus. And so Jesus sees to our indoctrination of the true doctrine. He provides preachers to turn us from our own thoughts to the doctrine of the Scriptures.

And what does this doctrine say? It says that the LORD had told us not to linger where He is no longer present. Jesus most certainly was in the tomb for a time. The ladies saw Him there. They gathered to Him in His death and they helped to wrap His body and place it in the sepulcher that Joseph paid to have built. They all knew that Jesus was in that place. But He was no longer there. He had told them where to find Him. And so, knowing that the people would not obey His words but would cling to their emotional attachments, He sent angels to call them to let go of their sentimental attachments and to go where Jesus had told them that He would be.

And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.

What in the world was in Galilee? The temple was in Jerusalem. All of the Old Testament was associated with Jerusalem. Jerusalem was where the people of God had gathered for centuries! What in the world would they find in Galilee?

Jesus! Jesus had told them to go to Galilee and that He would meet them there. In fact, the angel catechized them, repeating again what Jesus had said: **“tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.”** Yes, not only were they to go to meet Jesus in Galilee, but He had told them that He was going ahead of them to wait for them there.

The temple veil had been torn from top to bottom. The holy place was no longer to be found in the temple of the Old Testament. Jesus had instituted the cup of the New Testament as the new place of His presence. The holy of holies was no longer unapproachable but was torn open for all to join in the Holy Communion of the gathering unto the LORD in His holiness. And that veil is torn open for us every time that the pastor speaks the words of consecration and breaks the bread for distribution and carries the cup and puts it into our hands to put to our

mouths. This is where Jesus promised to be for us. This is where we find Him waiting for us today, even as He said.

CONCLUSION

The Church that Jesus is building is not constructed with human hands. It is not built upon our works or our faithfulness. It does not stand upon tradition. It is founded upon the doctrine of the apostles which declares the one true confession of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. Our God is the living Word of Life. He is present for us today just as surely as He was for those who falsely sought Him that first day of the Lord's resurrection. Some hid in fear. Others sought him in an empty tomb. But Jesus calls us to come where He has promised to be found. He is here for us today. The Lord is risen! He is risen indeed! He comes to us under the forms of bread and wine to which He has enjoined Himself by His command and promise. He has joined us into His kingdom through Baptism and calls us to partake of His Holy Communion in His body and blood. His tomb is merely a place of His remembrance. The Lord Jesus commands that having entered into His tomb of remembrance through Baptism that we continue in the Communion of the life that is in His blood. This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it! Yes! This is the LORD's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes! Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast. In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus forever. Amen.