

April 11, 10 Matthew 28:8-15

RESURRECTION NEWS

HE'S ALIVE!

WOW! What a wonderful day Easter Sunday was. So many people came to worship at both services. We had a great breakfast meal thanks to those who brought food to share and those who put it together. It was a great day. Truly, we might say that that was the day that the Lord had made and we rejoiced in it. I hope and pray many lives were touched by the story, the music, and the whole worship experience as they heard the Easter story that they heard. I pray you who are here today will never forget the resurrection news that “Up from the grave he arose, with a mighty triumph over his foes” that we sang. I love that Easter chorus because it is the Easter story. Many years ago Easter was thought of as new clothes, the Easter Parade, and church. I remember the movie called Easter Parade with dancing, singing and a love story starring Fred Astaire. I can still picture him with a grey suit, top hat and his cane holding some lady on his arm as she sang “In my Easter bonnet with all the frills upon, I’ll be the grandest lady in the Easter parade.” (Boy how did I ever remember that line.) I remember Easter as a kid getting a new suit and tie and new shoes I could not wear till Easter Sunday. I remember going to church, the Easter basket, the chocolate bunnies and enjoying a good family meal. That was a long, long time ago, when things were different in

the world and in my life. The reality is that Easter isn't about new clothing, or Easter egg hunts, or the Easter bunny, nor having ham, deviled eggs and mashed potatoes for dinner. They may be part of the tradition of Easter, like turkey at Thanksgiving and gift giving and Santa at Christmas, but Easter is entering the Sanctuary and seeing the lilies open in the shape of trumpets sounding forth the resurrection theme, "Hear ye, hear ye one and all, Christ the Lord is risen today... Raise your joys and triumphs high...! Sing you heavens and earth reply...! Love's redeeming work is done...fought the fight, the battle won...Christ has opened paradise..."

Those are words of hope and promise that we sing at Easter time. We should never forget their meaning, or why we sing them, or why they were written many years ago by those who were touched by God's Spirit. We closed our worship service by singing "Christ the Lord Is Risen today" with gusto! We opened the doors to the town of Williamsville and the world to shout to those who did not make it to church, to those who don't know Jesus, "CHRIST IS ALIVE!" three times, each time getting louder and louder. We shouted it for all the world to hear. You see, it is an important message. It is resurrection news, HE'S ALIVE! Just recently someone told me that they had their young grandchildren staying with them the night before Easter. She told them that in the morning they would be going to church and one of them popped up and said, " But Grandma, if we go to

church we will miss Easter.” Friends, I hope none of us will ever miss Easter, for Easter is Resurrection news that Up from the grave he arose.... Jesus lives!

But that’s not the end of the story. We don’t close the book on Jesus or his ministry with the resurrection story. That’s just the beginning. His story is an ongoing saga. In fact when we get to Pentecost in about 5 weeks we will talk about that very thing. The book of Acts it is an open ended book because lives are still being transformed, Jesus is still working and will till the end of time, till there are no more stories to tell.

So it is with great joy and humble adoration that I say once again, “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 the saints to reign. He arose! He arose! Hallelujah, Christ arose!”

I know, I know, not everyone gets as excited as I do. I know, I know there are others who are more reserved than I am. But folks, it’s an exciting story because it is true. Christ is Alive. Christ lives today. That’s not only the meaning of Easter; it’s the meaning of a life transformation. Every time I go by St. Johns’ Hospital there are big, big signs telling about their new total transformation of what it is as a hospital. And every time I see that sign I think maybe that sign should be on the outside of every church because the church is in the transforming business, transforming lives, from sinners to saints, from those without hope to

those who are full of hope, from those who struggle with things in their lives to those who feel the presence of the Lord, from those who are unbelievers to those who come to know Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. That's why Christians can sing, "Because he lives I can face tomorrow. Because he lives all fear is gone. Because I know he holds the future, and life is worth the living just because he lives." That's not just a popular Christian song; it's the joy of Easter coming to life. Because Jesus lives he holds our future in his hands and we need not fear, for he directs our paths if, there is that word again, if we let him and surrender to his will.

That's the resurrection news.

Max Lucado writes so many wonderful books that I just love his way of writing and I like some of the titles he uses, like "He Still Moves the Stones." That's the book I've reread almost every Easter time because it reminds me that even today he still moves the stones to let us know that Jesus is alive and that because he lives he can remove the stones in our lives that keep us buried in a variety of sinfulness and woes. You know, I just thought of something, because it goes with an Easter song, "He tore the bars away." It's true. He tore the bars away from his grave and ours as well. The article on the back page telling about the book says, "A five-time divorcee, a despondent cripple, a sister at a funeral, a father in an emergency. These are not just Sunday School stories. Not romantic

fables. Not somewhere-over-the-rainbow illusions. They are historic moments in which a real God met real pain so we could answer the question, “Where is God when it hurts?” Max invites us to relive these stories, to be reminded that the God who spoke still speaks. To know that the God who forgave still forgives. The God who came still comes. He comes into your world; He comes to do what you can’t. He comes to move the stones you can’t budge. He still moves stones.”

With that said, let’s turn to the resurrection news for this morning found in Matthew’s gospel. It’s his account of what happened that first Easter morning. Since we know how the women went to the tomb and they found the tomb empty, let’s pick up the story in verse 8 as the women left the tomb with the resurrection news. **READ MT. 28:8-15**

Here are some resurrections news flashes. First, which we already know is that **the tomb was empty**. And because we have the history of that time through the gospel writers and even the Apostle Paul, we know that he lives today. “Christ is alive! Let Christians sing! His cross stands empty to the sky. Let streets and homes with praises ring. His love in death shall never die.”

However, there’s more resurrection news from that day. **THE WOMEN WERE AFRAID!** And we think, why? Well, they were afraid because they didn’t know what to do now. Who wouldn’t be when your world as you knew it was turned upside down. How many of you have been afraid? You may have been

afraid when you started a new job. You might be afraid when you go for an interview. You might be afraid when you go to the doctor. I bet even the great Tiger Woods had some butterflies when he teed it up on Thursday at the Masters golf tournament. Fear of comments from the gallery. Fear of not hearing applause. Fear his friends would not accept him back. Fear is almost a natural thing and the adult Sunday school is using Max's book about fear to be able to deal with our fears. Come join us to learn.

These women were afraid. Questions were on their mind following their experiencing the empty tomb. Yes they heard the angel, but you know, that could have been scary too. Who would believe them? What he said was pretty startling. He said "Don't be afraid. You are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here he is risen." Now folks that must have brought more fear to them thinking how it happened. How could they be sure? And then the angel said, "Go tell his disciples Jesus has risen and will meet with them soon." Can you picture them on their way with that story? Who would believe them? Luke records that account with these words, "The women left the tomb and told the disciples all these things, all the things that happened at the tomb, but they, the disciples, did not believe them because it sounded like nonsense."

I think some in the world today still think like that. Those 10 guys huddled together in the Upper Room hiding following their Master's death, those who ran

away to hide, the big fisherman who denied even knowing him, were not excited to hear that the tomb was empty and an angel had told the women that he who they sought was not there because he had risen. **And they didn't just not believe, but they thought it was nonsense.**

In Mark's gospel he writes, "*The women were confused and shaking with fear, so they left the tomb and ran away. They did not tell anyone what happened, because they were afraid.*" In fact, that's the way the resurrection news ends in Mark's gospel. It ends with confusion, fear and the ladies not doing as the angel told them, to go tell the story. They run away to what? We don't know. I'm glad that's not the end to the story.

In Matthew's account we have a different story. We find that the women were fearful and were happy. We can't miss that. The fear they had was not knowing the particulars of the resurrection. They were happy because Jesus was alive. Now to top all that off we see one more thing....Matthew records, "Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings....Don't be afraid. Go and tell my followers to go on to Galilee, and they will see me there."

Aren't you happy when "suddenly" all hope seems dashed and you think all things are impossible or you are struggling out of nowhere Jesus appears in the form of a friend, or a feeling, or a note or a phone call and you sense calmness as

you hear, “Child, be at peace, I’m here with you” and all those troubles get washed away?

Can you picture them now? Can you see the fear being replaced with joy? Can you see the transformation in those women? After their encounter with Jesus, hearing his words, even touching the living Jesus, I bet they dropped what they had with them and ran to tell the disciples that not only had Jesus risen, but that they had seen him, that they walked with him and talked with him and the joy they felt as they tarried there in the garden near the tomb, none other has ever known.

The disciples did not believe their story, they thought it was nonsense.

Would you have believed the women’s story? Do you believe the story today?

You see, in order for a transformation to take place you got to believe. You got to believe without a shadow of a doubt that Jesus has risen and lives today and because he lives we know he has given us victory over the bondage of sin and the sting of death. I wonder how many Doubting Thomases’ there are in the world today. I wonder if Jesus came and stood here today and showed us his pierced hands and side how many would just believe or would there be some who still need to touch those holes in his hands, and touch the side where he was pierced before they would believe.

Folks, we hear the stories. We see the drama’s we watch the movies, but do we believe? Will it affect our lives when we walk back out these doors to our

homes, our jobs, our schools, our play, and our families or wherever we go? That's the key. Do we truly believe that God still rolls away the stones in our lives to free us from our own fears and doubts? Do we believe that God can do the impossible? Do we believe the resurrection news that Christ is alive? I mean, if we don't believe that story then how are you going to believe anything else God says? How are you going to believe in what he has planned for your future and how he has promised some day to come and get you to take you to the place where this is no more pain or sorrow?

I think it is amazing that when we celebrate Jesus' birth we think about the angel appearing to the shepherds and telling them to go and see in Bethlehem the little baby that was just born who is God's only begotten Son, born to set the people free. And when we did our little story line each week we remember one of the characters who ran through the town banging on doors and shouting the good news that God sent the Messiah and he is here. And if some of you remember, that story fell on deaf ears for the most part. No one was excited. And the story just seemed to fade away of the Messiah's birth. Now, at Easter time, we have more good news, or should I say we have greater news. For on that first Easter morning the tomb was empty. What those religious leaders thought was the end of Jesus, the end of his power was just the beginning, and for once again, "Up from the grave he arose. He arose the victor from the dark domain and he lives forever with

the saints to reign. He arose! He arose! Hallelujah Christ arose!” He died to set us free once again. This time from our sinfulness and from the grave. But hear me this morning. There were doubters then and there are doubters in the world today. Not everyone believes Jesus was who he was, nor believe he rose from the grave, nor believe he lives today.

Friends, I hope and pray we will never forget the greatest story ever told. And each Sunday for awhile, that robe we were invited to come and touch to let God touch us, will be here for those of you who want to come and touch it again and again. And maybe, just maybe, those of you who are dealing with your doubts or you have questions, or you want the assurance of your salvation, or maybe you need help in letting go some of those sins in your life and you want to pray through to victory at his altar. God says come. Come and release those things and let the stones be rolled away from your own tomb and rise again with the risen Lord to a new life through a grand transformation through the power of the risen Christ. This is the resurrection news. He’s lives! You ask me how I know he lives. I hope it’s obvious. He lives within my heart.

Happy Resurrection Day! for Jesus is alive! Praise God!