Easter Sunrise

HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL

God is good, all the time, and all the time God is good. This morning we find that to be true. It's resurrection time. The tomb is empty and Christ is alive, hope springs eternal. As one hymn goes, "Because He lives, I can face tomorrow, because he lives all fears are gone, because I know he holds the future and life is worth living, just because he lives."

Hope springs eternal all because of a loving God who gave us his Son, and a Son who was willing to humble himself, come to this earth, endure the pain and suffering and be nailed to the cross. But as we said that was Friday and we live in the hope of Easter Sunday. The women went to the tomb and it was empty. No power on this earth could keep Jesus nailed to the cross. No power on this earth could keep him in the tomb. No stone was too big that could not be rolled away to let the world in to see he had risen. No power on this earth could keep him from rising again. So hope springs eternal every time we think of Easter, and every time we sing those great Easter hymns.

There is another Easter song we may not hear too often but as I was writing this sermon one phrase I used brought this song to my mind. Let me share the words with you from the song Rise **Again Lyrics** by Dallas Holm & Praise

Go ahead, drive the nails in my hands;
Laugh at me... where you stand.
Go ahead, and say it isn't me;
The day will come... when you will see.
(Refrain)
'Cause I'll rise.... again;
Ain't any power on earth can keep me down!

Yes, I'll rise... again;

Death can't keep me in the ground.

Go ahead, mock my name;

My love for you is still the same.

Go ahead, and bury Me;

But very soon, I will be free!

Go ahead, and say I'm dead and gone,

But you will see that you were wrong.

Go ahead, try to hide the Son;

But all will see that I'm the One!

'Cause I'll come again!

Ain't no power on earth can keep me back!

Yes, I'll come again;

Come to take My people back.

We gather today to celebrate The Resurrection of Jesus Christ. To give praise to a God who moved the stone that day and a God who still moves the stones, the trials of our lives today. Max Lucado wrote a book I've used before with that title. Hope springs eternal as the stones in our lives are rolled away often one by one as the result of the empty tomb and the knowledge that Jesus is alive.

What does Easter stand for? Lives being changed. Hope of a better tomorrow and an offer of eternal life with God. The disciples were changed. Mary was changed. The Centurion was changed. Pilate was changed. The religious leaders were changed. And then the world was changed because of the message that Christ was alive, and through that message a new beginning happened. Where there was no hope we find hope. Where there was no joy we find joy. Where there was unhappiness we find happiness, all because Jesus lives.

A father and his teenage son were living in Mexico City. They had had an argument, and the son, Paco was his name, shouted curses at his father and then stormed out of the house and didn't return. Days turned into weeks, weeks turned into months. The father searched throughout the city over and over again and finally in desperation he went down to the newspaper and took out an ad… It said, "Paco, if you read this, I want you to know that all is forgiven. I love you and I will be waiting for you this Sunday at the entrance to the city park. I hope you show up, love dad." On Sunday morning 200 Paco's showed up at the park, all looking for forgiveness.

There are so many people searching in this world for something. Searching for forgiveness, for hope, for meaning in this life. And the good news of Easter is that the empty tomb provides that hope in a hopeless world.

We all know the story of the Prodigal Son who took his inheritance and went off to spend it on whatever he wanted while his older brother stayed home and helped his dad. One son was angry because he had to work hard for what he would receive. The other son went off to enjoy life now. He didn't want to wait to receive his inheritance. So he got it and went, who knows maybe only 10 to 15 miles away and maybe for just a few months or years. Each day his father kept going to the gate to look to see if his son was coming home. Each day he checked the mailbox to see if there was any word from him. Every morning before breakfast, every afternoon just before lunch, every evening before supper and once more every night before bed time the father would go to the porch and look down the long spiral driveway to watch for his son to return. But each day it didn't happen. But the father never gave up hope. Finally one day the boy ran out of money and out of friends. He wasted all of it and didn't even have cab fare home. He saw an ad on the board of a coffee shop where he spent his last 25 cents on a bagel and cup of coffee. It said a pig farmer had an opening for someone to clean his pig pens and feed his pigs. Just a few

days work, if interested go to such and such farm. So the son hitched a ride on the back of a wagon and was dropped off within 2 miles of the farm. He questioned the idea of working on a pig farm because, well being Jewish being associated with pigs was forbidden. When you hit bottom you try anything. He got the job and began his chores. He could see why they were forbidden to work with pigs….such a smell…. These pigs live and play in the mud. The muddier it was, the more the pigs enjoyed it. He fed the pigs from leftovers from the farm and from the garbage the farmer could round up. Being hungry the son would see something worth eating, clean it up best he could and then take a few bites. You see, if you're hungry enough you'll eat anything, even stuff you despise. He existed on this for a day or so thinking how his older brother was sitting down to three full meals a day cooked by his mom at a table set for a king. And before he ate his brother was able to take a hot shower, shave, put on clean clothes and rest from his labors later on in a nice warm bed with no problems or worries. He came to his senses and decided to go home. And when he got there guess who was watching down the road? You knew…. When his father saw him he ran to embrace him and welcome him home. They planned a feast for him, invited all the neighbors and his old friends. He took a shower, put fresh clothes and was happy as a lark at being home. His father rejoiced that the lost son was found…the one who was blind could now see…rejoice for hope springs eternal. That's the story of Easter.

Today on this Easter Sunday hope springs eternal for all because the tomb was empty and Jesus lives. Yes I'd say that God is good all the time and all the time God is good.

There are lots of Paco's out there still waiting to hear the story. The newspaper headlines this morning is this….Women went to tomb found it empty…..angels spread the word he had risen…

“He lives! He Lives! Christ Jesus lives today….you ask me how I know he lives? He lives within my heart.”