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Sermon

April 4th, Easter Sunday

To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (Rev 1:5-6 NKJ)

Our sermon text for this Resurrection Sunday is taken from Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 28, the first 10 verses:

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. 2 Suddenly, there was a great earthquake! For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, and going to the tomb, he rolled away the stone and was sitting on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. 4 The guards were so terrified of him that they shook and became like dead men. 5 The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid! I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. 6 He is not here. He has risen, just as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. 7 Go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has risen from the dead! And look, he is going ahead of you to Galilee. There you will see him.' See, I have told you!" 8 They hurried away from the tomb, with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9 Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" They approached, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go, tell my brothers that they should go to Galilee, and there they will see me."

This is the Word of the LORD!!!

Mercy, Grace, and peace are yours through your God and Father, and through His Son, Jesus Christ, true God and Man, dear fellow Sons and Daughters of the King...

When you go through something traumatizing, something you might hear from someone trying to comfort you is the cliché, "Time heals all wounds". That is to say, "Don't worry, the farther you get removed from this situation the better you're feel".

But, if you are the one being told that, those words ring hollow. I don't care how I feel 18 months from now, I'm hurting right now!

Are those words even true? I googled that phrase yesterday, and I came across an article from Psychology today. It gave several reasons why those words are not true. Here are a few that I found profound. A. Sometimes things get worse before they become better. Sometimes the initial tragedy is just the tip of the iceberg, and subsequent loss is going to follow in the aftermath. You lose your job. That hurts. But then because you have no job, you also lose your house, and your car gets impounded.

B. Certain trauma can be timeless. Say that your lifelong spouse dies. That pain might dim over time,

but you're most likely going to feel that hole in your life for the rest of your life.

C. It depends on the wound. This is certainly true. Say you lose your leg in a car crash. Time can heal the trauma of going through something like that, but the loss of the use of your leg is something you need to learn to adapt from. Time will not give you that leg back.

But Easter morning is the proof that these words are ultimately true. As cliché as "time heals all wounds" may be, from a Biblical perspective it's absolutely true. Yes, pain is something we deal with here and now. And, yes, just because time will pass, it doesn't guarantee that you'll get over that. But, eventually with the passage of time, whatever wound you are inflicted with will be healed. How can we be sure of that? Well, that is the glorious truth of Easter morning. The truth revealed that morning provides us our theme this glorious Easter Sunday: JUST WAIT, IT GETS BETTER! A sad morning of mourning suddenly shifted, the good news gave way for good

new purpose, and a great sight pointed ahead to an even better one! We pray: LORD, SANCTIFY US BY YOUR TRUTH, YOUR WORD IS TRUTH, AMEN!

Matthew starts out the final chapter of his gospel with a couple of time markers: **After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week** This picks things up from his previous chapter. Jesus had just died. Joseph of Arimathea received the body of Christ from Pilate. He laid Him, wrapped in linen clothes, in a newly hewed tomb. This was witnessed by the two Mary's also mentioned here. But, because the Sabbath preparations were about to start soon, they could not prepare Jesus' body the way it should have been anointed. So, they had to leave, and get back to it later.

To these Mary's, the pain was quite still sharp. Not enough time had nearly passed to dull that. The fact that they had not even enough time to give Him a proper burial also didn't help. But also, this was Jesus who just died! He was their Lord and Savior. No amount of time was going to ever heal that trauma. The words of the Emmaus disciples really carry the same thought that these women must have been thinking and grieving over on their trip to the tomb: **But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. (Luke 24:21 NKJ)**

No doubt it was with heavy hearts these women found themselves with traveling to the tomb that morning. When you experience loss and grief, some of the everyday things don't register. For instance, they had both been at the tomb when Jesus entered it. They saw the huge stone that was rolled in front of it. They forgot about it until they were already on the way there. Mark's gospel says: **And they said among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?" (Mar 16:3 NKJ)**

Do you know what else they had forgotten? Something even more important? Jesus said He would rise from the dead! But the Pharisees didn't forget. When they should have been observing the Sabbath, instead these men were making sure no one

tampered with the tomb. They asked Pilate for a security detail to guard a dead body. That was their level of paranoia. **Pilate said, "You have a guard; go your way, make it as secure as you know how." (Mat 27:65 NKJ)** Little did they know that by securing the tomb as best as they knew how, they were only providing more evidence that His tomb could never be secured!

If we were on the same trip as the Mary's that morning, we might tell them, "don't worry, it gets better!" They probably would have considered that comfort to be as cliché as "time heals all wounds". But in this instance, truly things would not get worse before they got better. For one, they couldn't get any worse. But for another, the day would suddenly shift from one of mourning Jesus to a morning of His glory!

2 Suddenly, there was a great earthquake! For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, and going to the tomb, he rolled away the stone and was sitting on it.

An earthquake snaps them out of it. This was an unnatural earthquake, that is to say not a normal seismic event. It was a seismic thing that had just happened, but the reason for the earthquake had nothing to do with geological plates colliding. An angel caused this earthquake. The stone that the women had forgotten about was rolled away. The guards stood there dead in fear. But the angel's concern was not with the men who secured the now vacant tomb. Rather the angel's message was to the women whose grief would be rolled away as instantly as that stone.

The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid! I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. 6 He is not here. He has risen, just as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. 7 Go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has risen from the dead! And look, he is going ahead of you to Galilee. There you will see him.' See, I have told you!"

The news of this angel centers around two different orders. The first is, **"Do not be afraid!"**

Whenever an angel of God stands before a mortal, they usually start out with a similar preamble. It was important that these women don't have a similar reaction as the guards. They could not let fear get in the way of the message that was coming their way. Also, fear shouldn't be the reaction to Easter. The only real victim of Easter Sunday is fear. Easter morning is the end of all fears!

But the angel also says, **“Go quickly and tell his disciples”** They need to take in the sight and the message and internalize it quickly. They need to do this because they need to get the word out.

But isn't this the case of any Christian? We need to get rid of all fear because quite frankly it's going to interfere with our job. Fear can be quite crippling. It can make us like those living dead soldiers. They were alive, but they were not about to be able to do their jobs in the presence of that holy fear. The women didn't have the luxury of being afraid. They had to tell the disciples that **He has risen, just as he said**. Is not that our job as well? To declare that everything Jesus had said is 1,000% true. That is why we strive to make disciples of all nations. Because that is what He told us to do. Why should we be afraid of anything? The tomb was empty and remains empty forever!

For these women, the angel essentially says, “Just wait, it gets better!” Check it out, He's not here. He is risen!!! The timeless trauma of Jesus' death all of a sudden turns into the timeless truth of His glorious resurrection! He was not in the tomb, and He's not ever there again! How does Paul frame the empty tomb? **And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! 18 Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. 20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. (1Co 15:17-20 NKJ)**

If the tomb wasn't empty, then so is our faith. But it is empty and remains empty forever. The Mary's hurry away, filled with joyfully renewed hearts. Their hearts were heavy on the way to the tomb, but on the

trip away from it, they have been given a new purpose based on the Angelic Good news they have received! This is what our faith in the resurrection provides each and everyone of us. We journey through this world sorrowful and full of heavy hearts of sadness, guilt, and sin. But when we return to the empty tomb, our feet quicken as do our hearts full of faith!

But just wait, it gets even better than that!!! **9 Suddenly Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” They approached, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him.10 Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go, tell my brothers that they should go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”**

They had been filled with the message of the resurrection. Now, they see it fully realized in the greeting of their Lord. Perhaps you find it strange that when the resurrected Lord sees these women, He breaks the ice by simply saying “greetings”. The actual word in the Greek is a bit tricky. While the term itself is quite ordinary in its usage, it means more than simply “hello”. The NKJV translates it as “Rejoice” and I think that is more to the point. Yes, it was an ordinary greeting. But this greeting was anything but ordinary. It's a hello, but one that also says, “Be happy!”

When the women see their resurrected Lord, they are overwhelmed with joy. They worship at His feet. A few minutes ago, their intention was to anoint Him with blessing oils. Now, they have a living Savior whose living feet they cling to. It went from terrible, to great, to even greater still! And yet, this sighting is one that points towards another.

What did Jesus point ahead to? Well, His message is the same one that the angel had. **Go, tell my brothers that they should go to Galilee, and there they will see me**. Of course, it would be there when they would all see Jesus, and that would lead to the entire step up of the church today.

But this encounter is also very important. Like the other post-resurrections that would follow, His risen body is physically touched by the women. This was not a vision or merely just the spirit of Jesus. This was

Jesus risen in the flesh. Also, the fact that the tomb was securely guarded proves His resurrection. Also, the fact that the first people to see Jesus alive are women. If this was indeed a fabricated story, you would not have made that up. You would've had Him appear to prominent and respectable men. His resurrection proves what He taught. The last shall be first and the first shall be last.

What does all this have to do with us here today? We weren't there. His resurrection has always been part of the story we have been told about Jesus. He died and then rose again. Why should we rejoice about Easter? What is the point?

"What's the point of Easter?" is an insane question you can ask any Christian. It is the proof of everything we teach. If Jesus simply just dies, we would be hopeless. He would still be dead and so would we. Everything hinges on His resurrection. If He is not raised, then neither would we be. As Paul said, then faith doesn't justify, it misleads. Then sins aren't forgiven because death still reigns. But He really rose from the dead, and so shall you! That's the glorious truth about Easter Sunday. It is epitome of hope. It means that no matter what we go through in this life, whatever worst case scenario you can fathom, the truth of the resurrection for you is one of, "Just wait, it gets better!"

Does time heal all wounds? Most times. Sometimes, there is only partial healing. There are certain losses we cannot simply get over, no matter how much time passes.

And yet, there is only real one wound that time does not heal. It is the wounds the Jesus suffered. When He was resurrected, His wounded side, feet, and hands were still wounded. Thomas wouldn't believe until he touched them. Those wounds remain open forever, for by them we have been healed, and by them we will live after we die.

Because Easter happened, no matter what happens, you will be completely healed eventually. Right now, we walk around with heavy hearts,

saddened by various sins and side effects of sin. But those women provide an awesome example and witness. They were the first to see what we will see forever. They were the first to have the privilege of preaching what we still preach today. They were greeted warmly by their living Lord in the flesh, and so too shall we when we come into His eternal kingdom. And they were the first to worship at His resurrected feet, and so too shall we be when He comes again.

That encounter ended with Jesus telling them of another encounter which would occur in Galilee. But it also points ahead to when we will encounter when He returns in glory. What's the point of Easter? The point is the confidence it gives us! It allows us to sing with the hymnist and all the company of heaven,

Jesus lives! and now is death
But the gate of life immortal;
This shall calm my trembling breath
When I pass its gloomy portal.
Faith shall cry, as fails each sense,
Jesus is my confidence!
AMEN!!!