

## **Remember the Good News of Christ's Resurrection!**

Luke 24:1-10 Easter 2019 Pastor Robert Hein

Dear Friends of our Risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,

Easter is a time to celebrate and be glad, right? It should be the happiest day of the year. But you know that isn't the case for everyone. For some people, Easter can be a very difficult day. If you peruse the morning paper or check out CNN, Fox News, CBS, or any other news source, you will find that bad news doesn't take the day off on Easter. If you watched your local news this morning, you probably heard about someone getting shot and killed, someone being hurt in an accident, or someone suffering loss from a destructive storm. Yes, even today, the headlines are all about disasters and threats and corruption and political infighting, in this country and abroad. Let's face it. There is plenty of bad news going around, even on Easter.

This was true of that first Easter Sunday morning as well, at least at the outset. For many, it actually started out as a pretty gloomy day. I did a little study of words and expressions used in the accounts of Easter from the 4 evangelists, and this is what I found.

When the women came to the empty tomb, they wondered what happened. They headed out there, not to celebrate the triumphant resurrection of their Savior, but rather to finish the burial arrangements, and pay their last respects to their dead friend.

At the appearance of the angel, they were filled with fright. Mark tells us that they were alarmed. Trembling and bewildered the women fled from the tomb.

Outside the tomb, Mary was crying, because she thought someone had stolen the body of the Lord. Later, when the women did go and tell the disciples what the angel had said, they didn't believe them. It seemed like nonsense to them.

Peter too wondered what had happened.

In addition, the faces of those two disciples who walked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus were downcast. They were slow to believe and very troubled.

The other disciples were all hiding out behind locked doors for fear of the Jews.

The soldiers who saw the angel at the tomb were so afraid they shook like dead men. And then, of course, we have the sad story of the Jewish leaders conspiring with those soldiers to hide the real truth of Jesus' resurrection. Rather than acknowledge the good news, those soldiers took a large sum of money to say that Jesus' disciples stole his body in the middle of the night while they were sleeping. Yes, that first Easter Sunday morning certainly had its share of bad news to go around as well.

What was the problem? What did all these fearful misguided people have in common? They had all forgotten about Jesus' power and promises. The solution – **They needed to remember Jesus' words.**

Listen again to the account of the resurrection from Luke's gospel. "1 On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. 5 In their fright, the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? 6 He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 7 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' " 8 **Then they remembered Jesus' words.**

Did you catch that? Before Jesus visibly appeared to these women, the angel directed them back to Jesus' words and promises for comfort, insight, and encouragement. They were to remember what Jesus had told them while he was still with them. Remembering, and cherishing Jesus' promises would fill their hearts with peace and hope and joy.

And so it is for you and me today as well. I know there is plenty of bad news all around us in our world today, and some of it impacts our lives personally. But regardless of our outward circumstances, we can still have hearts overflowing with hope and joy and confidence, just so long as we **remember Jesus' words and cherish the good news of Christ's resurrection.** \*

The women at the tomb should not have been surprised at all to find it empty. After all, it was what Jesus had predicted all along. On several occasions Jesus had told his disciples that he would be arrested by his enemies, condemned to death and be crucified. But he also promised that three days later, he would rise again. This was all part of God's saving plan. He needed to suffer and die on that cross as our substitute to pay for our sins and complete his redemptive work. Therefore they should not be alarmed by the events of Good Friday. They should not lose hope. Rather, they should remember what Jesus said and look forward to his triumphant return.

But in their time of distress, their memory failed them. I'm sure the shocking events of the last 48 hours had shaken their faith to the core. In their fear and confusion, they had forgotten all that Jesus had said and all that Jesus had done during his three year earthly ministry. But the angel's message jogged their memory. It led them once again to remember, and to rejoice in the good news of their Savior.

Yes, they could remember once again Jesus' wondrous miracles. They could remember that he had once walked on the water and stilled the storm. He had healed the sick and drove out demons. On several occasions, he had even raised people from the dead. When they remembered Jesus' awesome power, they no longer needed to feel bewildered and afraid.

They could also remember the wondrous promises Jesus had made to them throughout his ministry. Jesus had promised, **"I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me. I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. No one can snatch them out of my hand. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life-only to take it up again."** John 10:10, 11, 17

Yes, they just needed to remember Jesus' words and promises. That was the key. Then their despair would turn to hope, and their fear to gladness. \*\*

And so it is for you and me today as well. No matter what bad news is going on around us, there is still good news to be found in Jesus' resurrection. First of all, Jesus' resurrection assures us that he is true God. He is not just a good man or a good example.

No, he is the almighty Son of God, for only God himself could perform such a mighty miracle. The Apostle Paul writes, **“Jesus was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead.”** Romans 1:4

Remember that when you need help. Remember that when you are in distress.

Remember that when your problems seem overwhelming to you. Remember to whom you are addressing your prayers, to a great and powerful King. Jesus’ death on the cross proves that he cares for you and is willing to help you. But his resurrection proves that he is all powerful and able to help you. As the hymn writer put it, **“He lives to bless me with his love. He lives to plead for me above. He lives, my hungry soul to feed; He lives to help in time of need.”** CW 152 v.3

Jesus’ resurrection also assures us that our heavenly Father accepts Jesus’ redemptive work on our behalf. Someone put it this way: Jesus said, “It is finished!” on the cross on Good Friday. His Father declared, “It is finished!” on Easter when he raised Christ from the dead. Yes, the resurrection is the Father’s stamp of approval upon all that Christ accomplished as our substitute. Therefore we know with certainty that the door to heaven now stands wide open to us and we will receive a Father’s welcome, because Jesus has removed the separation of sin and restored us to a right standing with God. Remember that when you feel guilty, when you feel worthless, when you feel you are beyond all hope. Remember that there is no sin so big that Jesus didn’t pay for it on the cross. Repent of your sins, turn away from them, and trust in Jesus for forgiveness and freedom and new life. Yes, remember and rejoice that the blood of Jesus, God’s Son, purifies you from all sin.

And Jesus’ resurrection assures us that we too will rise from the dead one day. Death can be a scary thing. It seems so final, like the end of the line, the point of no return, the end of all hope. But when we remember the power of Jesus’ resurrection it changes our whole outlook on death and the life to come.

Remember, death doesn’t have the last word. Jesus does. The grave can’t hold you forever. Jesus will. You see, Jesus is more powerful than death itself. Think of it! Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead. He raised the widow of Nain’s son from the

dead. He raised Lazarus from the dead after being in the tomb for 4 days already. But on Easter Sunday morning Jesus raised himself from the dead. Now that's power! Remember Jesus' power over death, because you will experience that power in your life someday as well. You see, if Jesus can raise himself from the dead, he will have no problem raising you and me from the dead and bringing us safely home to heaven. Remember that when you have to sit at the deathbed of a loved one or visit their grave out at the cemetery. Remember that as you come to grips with your own mortality and declining health. In those dark and difficult days, remember Jesus' promise, "**I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live even though he dies, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.**" John 11:25-26 Christian friends, if you just remember Jesus' words and rely on Jesus' promises, you won't have to be afraid of living and you won't have to be afraid of dying. Remember – Jesus lives! The victory's won. Death no longer can appall us!

We can't see Jesus today. He doesn't appear to us visibly like he did for Mary at the tomb. He doesn't speak to us audibly like he did for his disciples during those 40 days following his resurrection. But Jesus has not left us as orphans. He comes to us today through his word and sacraments to enlighten us with his truth and to guide our path through life. And if we recall Jesus' words and cherish his promises, like those early Christians, we too can experience peace and hope and joy.

I know Jesus can do anything. But he chooses to work in our hearts through the Gospel in word and sacraments. He doesn't just pop into our heads. He speaks to us in the Bible. He connects us to himself in baptism and he strengthens us through the Lord's Supper. The Bible is a miraculous book. It is living and active force which can completely change the way we think and act. Baptism is a miraculous washing of rebirth and renewal. And the Lord's Supper is a miraculous meal, through which Christ grants us his love and forgiveness in a visible personal way.

I urge to remember that. Remember that power Jesus puts at your disposal, cherish those blessings he offers you in the Gospel, recall the great meaning of your baptism for daily living, not just on Easter Sunday, but all throughout the year.

The women at the tomb and those disciples hiding out behind locked doors, got into trouble when they forgot. When they lost sight of Jesus' power and forgot Jesus' promises, they became confused, discouraged and afraid.

Don't let that happen to you. Don't just worship Jesus here on Easter and then go it alone the rest of the year. Don't settle for casual Christianity and a hit and miss worship life. Don't cut yourself off from the means of grace, from your power source for Christian living. Someone once said, "In your time of need, you will never be able to recall a Bible verse that you never learned, and you can never find comfort in a Bible lesson that you have never studied."

Christian friends, the angel's message to the women on Easter morning still holds true for you and me today. In a world permeated with bad news, remember Jesus' words. Continually cherish Jesus' promises. Hold fast to him in faith. Talk to him in prayer. Worship him in God's house every chance you get and hunger and thirst for the blessings he offers you in the Lord's Supper often. Yes, remember Jesus' words, and you too can rejoice in the good news of Jesus' resurrection. Amen.