

The Sign of Nothing
Luke 24:5-7

April 21, 2019

The Resurrection of Our Lord - Easter Day

Bobby was a unique little boy. He was born with a disease that caused his body to be paralyzed and his mind to be slow. He was 12 years old, but still in the 2nd grade. The other 19 members of the class would tease him and laugh because he squirmed in his seat, drooled, and made funny sounds. But Bobby remained happy and positive. His teacher tried to protect Bobby from cruelty and teasing of the other children, but she was not always successful.

It happened one spring that the class was discussing Easter the teacher gave them some homework. She gave each child a large plastic Easter egg. Their homework was to bring it back the next day with something inside that shows the meaning of Easter. The next day, all the children brought their eggs back and put them in a basket on the teacher's desk. School began and the teacher began to open the eggs. One student put candy his egg. Another student put a tiny toy rabbit in her egg. Another student put a colored egg in his egg.

Finally, the time came to open Bobby's egg. When the teacher opened it and looked inside, she saw nothing. The egg was empty. The teacher thought, "Those boys and girls are really going to tease him for this one." So, she put the egg aside and went on to the next egg. But Bobby spoke up and said, "Teacher, aren't you going to talk about my egg?" The teacher responded, "But Bobby, your Easter egg is empty." Bobby looked into her eyes and said, "Yes, but that's because Jesus tomb was empty. He died on the cross so that God could forgive our sins. God made him alive on Easter so that we could live forever. Jesus came out of the tomb and it was empty. And that is the meaning of Easter." Not one student teased Bobby that day.

Bobby got it right. Many people think that Easter means Easter baskets, candy, colored eggs, rabbits, chicks, and so on. Those things are nice, but they don't give the true meaning and reason for Easter. During our special Lent services, we have been meditating upon the SIGNS of salvation – those things that show us our salvation – things like ashes, rainbow, baby, wine, and so on. You might think on this special day of celebration that our sign for today would be big and flashy, but it's not. Bobby got it right. Our sign for salvation today is – nothing. That's the meaning of Easter.

If the tomb was not empty, then Easter means nothing. If Jesus' dead body was still in the tomb on Easter, it means one of 3 things about Jesus. First, Jesus was a liar. Jesus said several times that he would get crucified and rise from the dead on the third day. Or, Jesus was a fraud (fooler). Maybe he thought he could rise from the dead, but couldn't. Or, Jesus was simply crazy. People do not rise from the dead and tombs that have bodies on Friday will still have bodies on Sunday.

If the tomb was not empty and Jesus' body was still there, then we his work to earn forgiveness for our sins was not successful. Jesus' death and His resurrection go together. His resurrection guarantees and proves that God the Father accepted Jesus sacrifice on the cross for the forgiveness of the world. If the tomb is not empty, we cannot be sure that our sins are forgiven.

If the tomb was not empty and Jesus' body was still there, then we have no hope for the future. What will happen in the future? We will live and try to enjoy ourselves as much as possible. Then we die and we stay dead. If Jesus cannot rise from the dead – if Jesus remains dead in the tomb, then we will also. And, what's worse, we will go to hell because we have no forgiveness for sins and no way to avoid death. All of our family, friends, and other people who trust in Jesus Christ all of their lives and then died, they are gone. They remain dead or they go to hell.

If the tomb was not empty and Jesus' body was still there, then our lives have no purpose or meaning now. Our churches become clubs for how to live better. Our preaching about new life and eternal life become worthless. Our teaching about Jesus becomes only nice stories, like stories about Santa Claus. They make us feel good, but cannot do anything for us.

If the tomb was not empty and Jesus' body was still there, then people should feel sorry for us for being such stupid people. We worship a liar/fraud/crazy man. We give our hard earned cash to

support this organization. We give up many pleasures and we accept much suffering. And for what? Our lives end and what? Nothing.

The group of women walking to the tomb that first Easter morning did not expect to find an empty tomb. They expected to find a tomb with Jesus' dead body still there. They were going to the tomb in order to complete a funeral and not to celebrate Easter. That is when they received the most outstanding good news ever proclaimed by the angels, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen." And this changes everything!

Because the tomb was empty and Jesus' body was not there, this means Jesus is not a liar; He was not a fraud; He was not crazy. He is the Son of God, the Messiah, Christ. He is our teacher, friend, and most important, our Savior.

Because the tomb was empty and Jesus' body was not there, this means that Jesus' work to earn forgiveness for sin and everlasting life for us was successful. Jesus' death on the cross paid the full price for our forgiveness and God the Father accepted that sacrifice by making Jesus alive again. Jesus' death earns forgiveness for your sins. You are right with God and have His peace.

Because the tomb was empty and Jesus' body was not there, we have hope for the future. Trusting in Jesus Christ and His work means that, when we die, we don't remain dead. As Jesus died and rose again, so also you and I will die and rise again to live. And this life, is not more of the same earthly life. We have eternal life in heaven because Jesus defeated sin, defeated death, defeated Satan and hell itself and the proof? His own resurrection. Jesus' resurrection from the dead also means that we can look forward (excite wait) to joining all people with faith in Jesus Christ in heaven. That means seeing our friends, family, and all Christians who are already there.

Because the tomb was empty and Jesus' body was not there, we have meaning and purpose for life now. We have the best news for this world out there. The story about Easter is not just for Jesus' disciples and friends long ago. The story about Easter is not limited to this one special day in the year for us. The story of Easter is our reason for comfort, joy, and hope. The world is searching for this peace with God and a joyful life and never ends, even though they may not know it. We have the answer in our possession.

Yes, we may suffer. We may give up much in this world. People may laugh at us, make fun of us, or reject us because of our faith in Jesus. They may even feel sorry for us. But what we have and want to share with the world – all the blessings in Christ – are worth it.

Bobby's disease got worse. He died a few months after that wonderful Easter lesson. People who attended Bobby's funeral saw something very odd. On the casket were 19 plastic Easter eggs and every single one was empty. That class had learned that the true meaning of Easter: Jesus' empty tomb.

The same is true for us. This is the hope and joy that we had. Since Jesus' tomb was empty on that first Easter long ago, we have forgiveness of sin and peace with God. We have life with purpose and meaning now – sharing His love, His salvation, and His eternal life with all of the people on this planet who have not heard it. We have hope for eternal life. Because Jesus rose, left an empty tomb behind, and lives, so also, we one day will rise from our graves, leaving empty caskets behind, and live forever with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in heaven. Because of nothing, we have everything. Christ is risen! (He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!) Amen.