

Sermon April 5, 2015 - Easter Day: The Resurrection of Our Lord

“Larger Than a Stone”

Mark 16:1–8



Dear Friends in Christ,

This is Easter, Christ is Risen!

A great number of Christians all over the World rejoice and celebrate this special day for it is God’s Victory over death, sins and satan!

But, there are also, those who either have grown to reject the resurrection of Christ and the power it confers on His people, because they have come up with the idea that the resurrection is a vicious hoax, a made up story, a myth. And there are others who don’t know that the resurrection is and

means for them, for they haven’t heard the Good News of the Gospel yet.

But the Resurrection is not a wicked, heartless, vicious hoax, nor should we take it lightly, for Easter is really the most fantastic fact of history, and you are part of that history. In Fact that history is about you.

This history proves that Jesus died on Good Friday, on a wooden cross, on a mountain hill called Golgotha. Then, he was buried in tomb that was sealed with a large stone. The stone in front of Jesus’ tomb was very large, Mark says in our Gospel. It was huge. And it was there to stay. Or so it seemed.

But when the stone sealed the tomb it also seemed that life was now over for Jesus. Done! Finished!

Now, isn’t that what happens when we bury our loved ones? Life for the loved one is finished as that person knew it, including some of the most enjoyable moments in life.

Now, imagine if you were with Jesus, followed him everywhere, you would remember the enjoyable moments you must have shared with him! One such enjoyable moment was when Jesus ate a meal together with his disciples. I can imagine the laughter, the camaraderie, the chatter. Other meals with unwanted people of his time, would make the same sounds, perhaps more boisterous or maybe more polite. Then, you would also remember the happy memories of Jesus feeding a great multitude of people with some loaves of bread and some fish! What a celebration that would have been!

But all that came to an end when the stone rolled in front of the tomb. His disciples had to run for their lives. Two men, Joseph and Nicodemus, have risked everything to bury him. And some women have stood at a distance to see where Jesus is buried. His body is covered in darkness and surrounded by silence. He’s dead. A large stone is in front of the tomb.

But, as it happens sometimes with our departed loved ones, after they had died, we wished we had done more things for them, or said things, meaningful things, or that

we had the chance to mend broken relationships, but now is too late and regret and remorse overcome us.

One of the men who run to the tom on that first Easter is Peter, who along with Judas had rejected Jesus. Judas sold Jesus for 30 coins of silver, and Peter denied Jesus not once but three times during his trials. Judas filled with remorse for what he had done went and killed himself. But Peter, well Peter is another story.

His story can be recanted this way... let's watch.. (Video)

O the feeling of remorse! He is now dead!

All was confirmed with probably loud noise when the stone rolled and sealed the tom.

We don't want that to happen to us, do we? One of the lessons we learn from Easter Sunday is the importance of making every effort to mend our relationship with those whom we have hurt or have hurt us so that when the last damp of dirt put on the casket is done with we are left with no remorse because of things we should have said or things we said but needed to be corrected.

And more importantly, that when our time of death comes, we would die in Christ. That we would be buried in Christ, not away from! That we would not deny Jesus, our faith, our church, our rightful place as children of God, because it is easy to run away rather than remain a faithful Christian, isn't it, just imagine Peter, who walked with Jesus, how easy was it for him to deny his friend and Lord!

But this is the Good News, on that first Easter morning all changed. Some women were going to the tom to anoint Jesus' body with spices to cover up the odor of death. But they aren't strong enough to move the stone. They're ready to take care of his body, but they have forgotten one important detail. Who will let them in?

To their surprise and amazement, when they got there, that problem was already taken care of. That large stone has been pushed away. In Matthew's account, it says an angel did it. The tomb is open!

The women are amazed and afraid. An angel is there, waiting for them with a message. The heart of the message is this: he is risen! The body is not in the tomb anymore. He is alive and is going to meet his disciples, just as he said he would. Now that message is huge. Jesus' resurrection from the dead is larger than any stone. No stone could keep him in, and the women don't need to go in the tomb any more, for their lives are now changed forever. He is risen!

And the most amazing thing happened to Peter, remember the one who denied Jesus three times, now he is being mentioned by name. And just as Jesus said he would, Jesus meets Peter and his disciples over and over again during the next forty days. He even eats with them.

During a couple of those reunions, Jesus does something that looks so small and ordinary. He eats with his disciples. He picks up a piece of fish and eats it. He has breakfast with his disciples on a seashore. He isn't some ethereal phantom. He is flesh and blood. The scars are there for Thomas to touch and believe. What a meal that would have been! Hushed tones at first. Amazed gasps. Then the chatter and hugs.

But what could it mean for Peter? Let's watch again... (video)

Aah! Is all about grace, isn't it! That's one of the fruits of Jesus resurrection, not only for Peter, but for each one of us.

Peter was forgiven of his denial of Jesus and a new relationship begun, a relationship that brought Peter to serve God even to the point of death, not because he needed to mend things with Jesus, but because he was forgiven of his wrong doings.

In the same way with us, He is ready to forgive us our wrong doings, our sins against God and against one another, and restore us into a new relationship with God and with one another! That's what the resurrections of Jesus can do. But there is more!

All of us, like those who have gone before us, are going to die someday as well. The saying that "from dust you came and to dust you shall return" is going to get real. Dirt, concrete or steel will seal our tombs. Death is too large a fact of life that we can't do anything about. It is a fact of life and we must go through it, but whom you allowed to guide your life, whom you walked with hand by hand and in a tight fellowship here on the face of earth, will mark the outcome of your own afterlife.

Just as Jesus resurrected on that first Easter and surprising all those witness, men and women, so the day will come when he will return in glory and power. The silence will be shattered, the darkness undone. He will come to your grave, to the graves of all who have followed him. And whatever covered your tom, dirt, concrete, stone or steel, they will be removed and out you will come. Bodies alive once again! Hands and feet that will hug and dance. Eyes to see the beauty of God's new creation. Ears to hear the songs of praise that will make our loud and joyous Easter singing seem like a whisper.

And we will eat! The meal is described in the Old Testament Reading. Rich food. Drinks that will burst upon your taste buds with absolute delight. I'm heading straight for the roast beef, and mashed potatoes drowning in gravy. And for dessert, I'm hoping for warm cherry cheese cake! It will be a feast, a banquet. A meal so large we'll never be hungry again.

And what is more delicious, we will be surrounded by those who love Jesus. We'll be laughing and talking. Listen to the noisy celebration. All because, as the prophet Isaiah says, the Lord God will swallow up death forever. Tears will be wiped away from our eyes. They are too small to stop Jesus on the Last Day, the day of our resurrection.

He is Risen! He is Risen indeed, those simple words, really change everything doesn't it. The message is larger than any stone, than anything that could ever keep us from Jesus and that incredible feast on the day of our resurrection.

But not just on that Last Day, even here, every day of our lives.

Remember when Jesus met his disciples, He changed their lives, changed them into something far better than their wildest imagination. Jesus turns the disciples who had deserted and denied him into men of courage. He turns women who were terrified into messengers of hope. The sounds of a meal and a reunion with Jesus change everything. The simple message "He is risen!" is larger than any stone, than anything that could ever keep him from his followers. Jesus' resurrection is huge!

The same is for us. Because just as death was changed to life in Jesus, even now, we who are in need of hope and a brighter future, Jesus can change our lives, can offer us a better future, not worldly riches to be sure, but a life that is worth living here while we await that final day when we will take us to be with him, even if that life proves difficult, after all remember that His victory is larger than any stone can handle.

As a promise and so that we stand in victory always he gives us the means to do so, the water of our baptism and His body and blood.

In there, no stone, no matter how large, can stop Jesus from claiming a child, a person to be his own in the waters of baptism.

No stone so large can stop Jesus bringing His precious blood and body which he feeds you here in this house of prayer, offering you His grace, life, good life here on earth, and life eternal in heaven.

He does speak to us too, and no stone so large can hinder His word as the pages of the Bible are being read and explained to us, herein this house of prayer but also as you open your Bible at home and anywhere you do so and you get inspired as you read and meditate. No stone, no matter how large, can stop Jesus from assuring us he is with us always, even to the end of the age.

Listen to the joyous hymns being sung today. No stone, no matter how large, can stop those who love Jesus from singing his praise.

Listen to the prayers. No stone, no matter how large, can stop Jesus from comforting us in our times of grief.

And later one listen to the people cheer, and maybe your own cheer as you go about in helping others, here as a congregation, or you in your own way. No stone, no matter how large, can stop Jesus from feeding people through our gifts.

Listen to the laughter as you sit down to eat with family or friends. No stone, no matter how large, can stop Jesus from giving us a glimpse of the feast to come. And no stone so large can prevent you from restoring a broken relationship with a loved one who for a time have stopped speaking or caring for each other. No stone so large can prevent you from giving it all up and joy and peace embrace the one who has wronged you! Jesus has done it with us, he can help you, he can strengthen you to do de same, after all he has vested you with a new life.

Listen to the message that changes everything.

“He is risen!” Amen.