

The Angel's Easter Message.

Text: Mark 16:1-8

Suggested Hymns:

88, 103, 92, 91, 95

1) A joyful announcement

2) A solemn command

3) A comforting promise

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Mark 16:1-8, ¹ *Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him.* ² *Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen.* ³ *And they said among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?"*

⁴ *But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away -- for it was very large.* ⁵ *And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.* ⁶ *But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him.* ⁷ *"But go, tell His disciples -- and Peter -- that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you."*

⁸ *So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

In the grey dawn we see the first Easter congregation proceeding to its place of worship. It was not a happy throng hastening to the Temple, but a handful of sad women, bound for Joseph's tomb. They come to pay "the last offices of tenderness and devotion" to the body of their Lord. They are heart-broken, bewildered, and terrified. When Jesus died, their faith was shattered, and their hope perished.

Luke 24:21 portrays their sad plight, ²¹ ***“But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened.***

But their love for Jesus lives and urges them on to His tomb. They become alarmed when they perceive that it has been opened. Entering, they are filled with consternation, because the body of Jesus is not there. Was it stolen?¹

That, then, is the evangelists’ picture of the first Easter congregation in its sanctuary: A few Galilean women, in deep mourning, trembling in the darkness of the sepulchre, prostrated by grief, perplexed, their hearts throbbing with fear, their hopes shattered, and their-spirits utterly crushed.

Standing there in the gloomy haunt of death, with their faces bowed down to the earth, — what a commentary on 1 Cor. 15:19! ¹⁹ ***If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.***

But to this congregation God sends the first Easter preacher. Not a man with unclean lips, however, but, as at Jesus’ birth, a holy angel, a true “ev-angel-ist.” Our text says, ***they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.*** His appearance is described in Matthew 28:3, ³ ***His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow.***²

In heavenly accents he delivers his message. ***“Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him.***

⁷ ***“But go, tell His disciples -- and Peter -- that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.”***

This message produced a complete transformation in the women. Their sorrow was turned into joy. We read in Matthew 28:8 that ***they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word.*** Having gone forth with weeping, they could now return with rejoicing. We read in Psalm 126:5-6 that ⁵ ***Those who sow in tears Shall reap in joy.*** ⁶ ***He who continually goes forth weeping, Bearing seed for sowing, Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, Bringing his sheaves with him.***

Thank God, that the angel’s Easter message was delivered for us also. And it is just as powerful and life-giving today as it was then. Let us, therefore, give

it our prayerful attention that we may *“obtain joy and gladness, And sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”*³ May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Angel’s Easter Message Contains A Joyful Announcement.

The Easter tidings.

Having assured the women that there is no reason for fear, the angel delivers his announcement in short, majestic utterances, *You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here.*

Note the tone of triumph. He begins with a reference to the death of Jesus. The angel is not ashamed of the cross, because in it is the salvation of men. But, like Paul,⁴ he emphasises the resurrection, because without it the crucifixion would be a grim, unfruitful tragedy.

The substance of the message is contained in a single Greek word meaning *He is risen*. Our eternal destinies are concentrated in it. *He is risen*, that is, by His own power.⁵ Jesus says in John 10:18 regarding His life that ¹⁸ *“No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.*

Death could not hold Jesus⁶ for He is the Resurrection and the Life. Jesus says in John 11:25, *“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.”* Jesus emerged from the conflict as victor.⁷ Hence, the prophecies are fulfilled. One such prophecy is recorded in Psalm 16:10, ¹⁰ *For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.*⁸ Another is Matthew 12:40, ⁴⁰ *For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*

He is risen! This joyful message has come down through the centuries. It is the only genuine Easter message today. As a messenger of the Lord, I bring it to you also. *He is risen!*

So how do we receive this wonderful news? The angel takes for granted that the women will believe his words. Although they have not seen the risen Lord, they are to be so certain of the resurrection that they can confidently announce it

to others. ***“But go, tell His disciples -- and Peter -- that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.”***

Their faith is not to rest on personal observation or external evidence, but on the word they heard. Remember what Jesus said to Thomas a week later, as written in John 20:29. ***“Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”*** And Hebrews 11:1, ***‘Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.’***⁹ The women did not disappoint him. They believed.

Faith in the Word of God is the chief requirement in a Christian, especially also on Easter Day. Reason declares that the resurrection is impossible. The world ridicules it. Many nominal Christians regard it as a pious myth. Shall we doubt it? Certainly Not! We will follow the example of the women and believe the Easter-Gospel in spite of the fact that we have not yet seen the risen Lord.

But in another respect these women are also to be an example of warning. The angel indicates that they should have believed the promises of Jesus concerning His resurrection. We read in Matthew 28:6, ***‘He is not here; for He is risen, as He said.’*** And in Luke 24:6-7, ***‘He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, ‘saying, ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.’’***

In the light of Jesus’ promises it was foolish for them to seek the living among the dead.¹⁰ Had they believed the Lord’s promises, the angel’s announcement would not have been needed. The empty tomb would have proclaimed the resurrection to them.

This is of importance for us, for the Easter message contains not only the announcement of Christ’s resurrection, but also promises for the future. Such as 1 Corinthians 15:20-22, ***‘But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.’***²⁰ ***‘For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead.’***²¹ ***‘For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.’***

And John 6:40, ***‘And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise***

him up at the last day."¹¹ What the Lord has promised us should be just as real and certain to us, as if we already possessed it, and saw it with the bodily eye.

Consider, moreover, that all their sorrow, perplexity, and fears resulted from their failure to believe the promises of Jesus. In reality there was no reason for alarm. God was working out His great plan of Salvation before their eyes, and if they had believed, they would have been confident even from Good Friday to Easter Sunday morning.

Their sorrow was due, not to the fact that Jesus lay dead (for He had already risen), but to their unbelief. Unbelief and doubt always result in misery. For example, Thomas, as we read in John 20:25, ***"The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."***

But in believing there is joy.¹² O the mass of needless grief in our lives, grief born out of our own unbelief and doubts!

Let us consider the fruit of faith in this message. As soon as the women were convinced of the truth of the angel's message, ***they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word.***¹³ They had fear at the greatness of the miracle, and joy because of their desire for Christ who was risen. Why did they rejoice? Not merely because their Friend was being returned to them, but also because they now had conclusive evidence of His deity,¹⁴ Jesus is true Man and true God, and a guarantee that all His promises would be fulfilled.

If we believe, the Easter-message will kindle a never-ending joy also in our hearts, for Christ's resurrection gives us a certified Christianity, an accredited salvation.

Now we know that:

- 1) - we worship a living Lord and not a dead prophet.
- 2) - Christ is God.¹⁵
- 3) - He is our successful and all-sufficient Saviour.¹⁶
- 4) - His teachings are the truth.¹⁷
- 5) - He will be our Guide, Guardian, and Helper in time of need.¹⁸

- 6) - He has received our loved ones who have fallen asleep in His name to Himself.¹⁹
- 7) - He will raise up our dead bodies.²⁰
- 8) - He will give us eternal life.²¹

Thus the Easter-Gospel equips us for every emergency. Hence we rejoice and praise God.²²

2 The Angel's Easter Message Contains A Solemn Command

Our text says, ***But go, tell.*** This is the solemn command given by the angel to the believing women. They should not linger at the sepulchre, for the body of their Lord was no longer in it. Neither should they make a shrine of it.

Rather, they should at once become active as missionaries of the risen Christ by proclaiming His resurrection. The women obeyed, ⁸***So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word.*** Picture the joyful eagerness with which they related their experiences, ***“For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”***²³ When many people share a joy, each has a richer measure of joy, because they kindle themselves and are inflamed by one another.

To whom should they tell it? First to those who needed the message most, the disciples. Jesus repeats this direction in Matthew 28:10, ¹⁰***Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me.”*** And in John 20:17, ¹⁷***Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.’”***

The disciples were like sheep not having a shepherd, sorrow-stricken, terrified, and hopeless. No doubt their conscience accused and condemned them. They were, therefore, in dire need of the glad Easter-tidings.

Our text says, ⁷***“But go, tell His disciples -- and Peter -- that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.”*** The angel mentions Peter in particular, for among the Eleven he had sinned against the Lord most grievously. If the angel had not named Peter, he would not have dared to

come among the disciples. He is called, therefore, by name that he might not despair. What a commentary on the Saviour's love and the scope of the Gospel!

The command is expanded. Forty days later the angel's instructions were enlarged to include "*all nations.*"²⁴ Christ rose for all people. Everybody should, therefore, hear the joyful message. The apostles were always mindful of this.²⁵ The resurrection was the staple article of their preaching.

Our obligation is that we, too, should spread the glad tidings of the resurrection. It is our duty; or rather, our privilege. Let us also "run and tell."

Let us tell it to the contrite, those who are distressed because of their sins, that they may be comforted; to the cross-bearers, that their burdens may be lightened; to the doubters, because this alone can bring certainty into their hearts; to the unbelievers, because it furnishes the most powerful proof for the divine origin of our religion.

In short, let us proclaim it to all that all people may be saved. Our own joy and peace increases in the measure in which we do this.

3. The Angel's Easter Message Contains A Comforting Promise.

The angel adds a comforting promise. *There you will see Him, as He said to you.* The women would not only know that the Lord had risen, but they would also see Him in Galilee. This refers to the promise given in Mark 14:28, ²⁸ "*But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.*" It is noteworthy that they actually saw Jesus that same day on the way to Jerusalem.²⁶ Jesus not only fulfils His promises, but usually gives more than He promised.

We have received a similar, but far more glorious promise. We have never seen the Lord, for He has gone to prepare a place for us.²⁷ Yet we often yearn to see Him.²⁸ And we shall see Him face to face, as He is.²⁹ We shall see Him with our bodily eyes.³⁰ Where? In heaven. When? Perhaps sooner than we think.

Let us, then, love Jesus whom we have not seen,³¹ and look for His glorious appearing.³²

This, then, is the angel's Easter-message, the glad tidings that have rung down the corridors of time, bringing joy, peace, and salvation to millions of agonising souls.

Let us receive it with believing hearts, thank and praise God for it, propagate it among our fellow-men, and confidently look forward to the day when we shall awake in the likeness of the Lord and forever see Him as He is.

Let us conclude with this word of Scripture, Romans 15:13, ¹³ ***Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*** Amen

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ John 20:2

² Compare to Ezekiel. 1:14; Heb. 1:7

³ Isaiah 35:10

⁴ Romans 8:34

⁵ John 2:19-22

⁶ Acts 2:24

⁷ Revelation 1:18

⁸ Acts 2:31, Matthew 16:21, John 2:19

⁹ See also Mark 16:14

¹⁰ Luke 24:5, Luke 24:25-27

¹¹ See also John 11:25, 1 Corinthians 6:14, 2 Corinthians 4:14

¹² Romans 15:13

¹³ Matthew 28:8

¹⁴ John 20:28

¹⁵ John 20:28, Rom. 1:4

¹⁶ Rom. 4:25, Col. 2:15, Rev. 1:17-18

¹⁷ 1 Cor. 15:14-18

¹⁸ Matt. 28:20, Psalm 23

¹⁹ 1 Cor. 15:18; John 14:3

²⁰ John 11:25-26; John 14:19; 1 Cor. 15:20; 1 Thess. 4:16; Phil. 3:21

²¹ John 11:25-26; John 14:19; John 17:24; John 10:28; 1 John 2:25

²² 1 Peter 1:3

²³ Acts 4:20

²⁴ Matt. 28:18-20

²⁵ Acts 4:33, Acts 26:22-23

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- 26 Matt. 28:9
27 John 14:1-6
28 John 12:21
29 1 Cor. 13:12; 1 John 3:2; Psalm 17:15
30 Job 19:25
31 1 Pet. 1:8
32 Titus 2:13