

DCF:

Of all the days of the year, this is the one that brings the greatest joy to believers. This day - this Easter Sunday - is even better than Christmas! On Christmas we celebrated the gift of the Savior coming to this world. We received gifts from our parents and loved ones. We sang Christmas hymns and pondered the amazing fact that God became a human being. All wonderful things, fantastic praiseworthy things.

But today is better than Christmas! Then, we received the gift of a Savior who came to save us. Today we receive the gift of eternal life! Today, we rejoice in the fact that His payment for our sins is complete. Today, we rejoice that all our sins are paid for, eternal life is ours and we too will rise again just like Jesus did. Today, we shout with joy “HE IS RISEN!” Look at His Word. See? Now, go and tell!

Part One: See?

This morning we’re looking over the shoulders of some very caring ladies. Who else would get up at dawn to go to a cemetery? These ladies had faithfully obeyed the Lord’s command to do no work on the Sabbath day. Perhaps they sat at home, turning over in their minds what they had seen and heard that Friday. The fake trial. The whippings, the nails, the suffering, the cries of Jesus. The crucifixion of their friend and Lord. His death.

They had seen where Joseph and Nicodemus had laid the body of Jesus. Now, they were on their way to finish the burial as a final act of love. They would make sure that his body would be wrapped just so. They would make sure that he would be buried with as much dignity and respect that they could offer. So, moved by love and the desire to honor Jesus, they set out at sunrise.

Little did they expect what that day would bring. As they were walking, an earthquake rocked the city. Approaching the tomb, they saw an angel sitting on the rock that had so recently sealed a tomb. ***“His appearance was like lightning and his clothes were white as snow... The angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.’”*** Can you imagine the fear, the wonder, the bubbling joy that must have roared through their hearts? Jesus isn’t dead? He is risen? Yes, the women saw the empty tomb! Just a few minutes later Jesus Himself appeared to them! He is risen! He is risen indeed!

Do you see what those women first saw so long ago? By faith we peer into the tomb and see that the Lord is not there. By faith we see our Savior appearing to those same women. He is risen! He is risen indeed! And, as we see by faith this wonderful news, we ask ourselves that good Lutheran question. What does this mean?

What does this mean! Why, it means that we can truly follow the angel’s and Jesus’ command ***“Do not be afraid.”*** It means that Jesus has conquered death. It means that Jesus has paid for all our sins and that His payment is fully accepted by our heavenly Father. It means that those who believe this will live forever. As Jesus Himself said ***“Because I live, you also will live.”*** The empty tomb means life, joy, forgiveness and peace with our God. Ah, what a wonderful morning! He is risen! He is risen indeed!

“Do not be afraid.” Such wonderful, precious words those ladies heard. Words of comfort and strength. Words that we need to hear time and time again as we battle sin here on this earth. We don’t need to be afraid of God, afraid that He will punish us for our sins. Jesus has set us free from that fear. We don’t have to be afraid of death. Jesus has conquered death for us. We don’t have to be afraid of the future. Our times are in our risen Savior’s hands. The power of God is on our side, making sure that our future includes eternity with Him. We don’t have to be afraid of Satan. His power over us, his accusation of sin making us unworthy has been crushed, splintered, utterly erased.

Today, on this beautiful Easter morning, we see the empty tomb and feel like shipwreck survivors, floating in a life raft, who suddenly see a rescue ship bearing down on them. As we gaze at that empty tomb along with the women, we see our salvation. He is risen! He is risen indeed!

This sight rocked the women’s world, didn’t it? How should they react? What should they do with the

news that Jesus was not dead, but alive? The angel and Jesus tell them. You've seen the truth. Now go and tell!

II. Now, go and tell!

It's real tempting, isn't it, to keep this news to ourselves. After all, it means so much! Those sins which keep us up at night. Forgiven. Those thoughts that try and lead us away from our Savior. Forgiven. Those words and actions that dishonor our Savior and God. Forgiven. Sometimes, when we think of our personal forgiveness, we're tempted to keep that news to ourselves because we don't want to admit to others the depth of our sinfulness. And, it give us such great joy, such great happiness, that we wonder if others will truly understand our joy. Oh, the temptation to keep this news to ourselves is great.

But that's not what God wants. Did you notice the angel and Jesus telling the women to spread this news? ***"Go and tell... tell my brothers."*** Ladies, you've witnessed the greatest event this world has ever seen. Don't keep it to yourselves. Go tell!

What an awesome gift God gave to these ladies! What a privilege they had! The angel didn't appear to the disciples first and tell them Jesus was risen. That joyful job was given to these ladies. Can you imagine how they must have felt, to be so chosen by their Lord for the greatest news this world has ever heard? They must have felt like that 4 year old who gives good news to her daddy. After prompting by her mom, she goes up to her father and says "I'm going to be a big sister." Mom didn't tell Dad the good news that they were expecting a baby. She included their daughter with this wonderful news. She was the first messenger of this fantastic news, and the ladies in our story today were the messengers of the greatest news this world has ever heard.

Isn't it fantastic that God still includes us in His plan of salvation? We are His angels, His earthly messengers. We are His "earth angels" who tell others that He is risen! He is risen indeed! We hear this message this morning and respond like the women did. We bow down and worship our Savior from sin. We respond by following Jesus' command to go and tell. What a joy to let others know that Jesus is risen from the dead. He lives, and we too will live forever. We want others to hear and believe, hear and live.

It isn't easy at times, is it? Our sinful nature wants us to shrink from this news and timidly live in this world. Satan wants us to bury this news in the farthest corner of our hearts and never share it with others. The battle rages on, doesn't it? So, Jesus again steps into our lives and encourages us to rejoice and respond with the message of salvation. He comes to us again and again in His Word, strengthening our will and desire to let the world know what happened on that first Easter morning so long ago. Fortified by His Word and moved by the Holy Spirit, we shout with joy "He is risen! He is risen, indeed!"

When you leave this place, leave with joy. Let the world know of your joy and happiness, your peace and forgiveness. May our shouts of acclamation, our smiles of peace and joy, our gifts of love and our most heartfelt attention to this day tell the world that we have a Savior. He is Christ the Lord. Go and tell that He is risen. He is risen indeed!

AMEN