

Sermon for the Resurrection of our Lord (Easter Sunday) – Mark 16:1-8

In the Name of the Father and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

So, what are you looking for? Yeah, you heard me; what are you looking for? Why have you come here today? Why this place; why this day? What are you looking for? I suppose some of you are here because it's your traditional, expected thing to do on Easter Sunday: "My parents always made sure we were in church on Easter, and I am carrying on the tradition." Some of you are here because you are always here, every Sunday. So, today is no different. But, why are you really here? What are you looking for? I will suggest that you are looking for home.

Maybe you're here because you're home for the holiday and your family always goes to church together on Easter. Maybe you're here because you're unable to be home, and church on Easter Sunday reminds you of your home and your family. Maybe church and the people here are your home and family.

Whatever the case may be, there is something about this day and this place that reminds us of home – and rightly so!

The unfortunate fact remains, however, that we spend most of our days looking for home somewhere else. Our focus is upon the things of the world. We look around us, we look to the things of this world as if they are what truly matter. We look at this world as if it truly is our home. And while that may seem like a small matter on the surface, in reality it means that we are just like the women in today's Gospel reading from St. Mark. The first place we "go" to seek Jesus is a tomb. We look for Him among the dead. We look to the tangibles, the disposables, the perishable, the mortal, and what we can see. We seek Jesus among the dead! We treat the tomb as if it were home. We know our life on this earth is short, so we try to accumulate enough to enjoy it comfortably. We trust what our eyes see and, in so doing, lose sight of what really matters.

Why would the women go to the tomb to see Jesus? They were doing their duty. They were going out to anoint the dead body of Someone they loved. They were going to properly prepare His body for burial. And it's not as though the trip over there was a walk in the park. It was dangerous: Jesus was an executed criminal whose followers could face the same fate. The Mary's and Salome showed fierce pluck while frightened disciples cowered behind closed doors. These women were devoted. They loved the Son of God. But it wasn't enough. They lost sight of His promise: they believed Jesus was dead. They went to the tomb to see Jesus because the tomb is the home for a dead man.

Why did they seek Jesus among the dead? Because they saw that death is the end of all men. Sin made it so. Death is the reality we all face. Yes, it is true that we fight it, we deny it, we do all we can to put it off; but the reality we're heading for is death. We see death as our end; we see the grave as our final home. You can eat healthily, work out, see the best doctors, eliminate stress, and try to find strength from within; but in spite of all these, you will still die.

This is the devastation wrought by sin in our world and in ourselves. In the Garden of Eden, man willingly brought sin into our world; they forgot that sin would also bring death with it. Death is separation from God. Death is everlasting condemnation. Death is the great enemy that no man can overcome. Our sins have justly sentenced us to it. We have no ability; we have no hope of escape from it. It's little wonder that we live as if the tomb is our home.

Yet it's for this reason that God sent His Son into the world. Jesus came to rescue us from the reality of death itself. Christ has freed us. Jesus came to accomplish what we had no hope of accomplishing. By His cross, He has redeemed, restored, and renewed us. Jesus overcame the twin forces of sin and death. Jesus hung on the cross to bear our sin—suffering, bleeding, and dying as the all-availing sacrifice. He conquered Satan as He provided the sacrifice required and cleansed us from all guilt and shame. For this, God sent His Son; for this, Jesus faced death in our place and finished the work God promised He would do; and for this, He was laid in a tomb as a lifeless corpse—but a lifeless corpse with a promise!

The women who went to the tomb that first Easter morning were not focused on the promise that Jesus would rise from the dead. They were focused on the corpse. They went to see Jesus among the dead. They were living as if the grave was their home—the end of their life, too. But the angel told them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; He is not here.”

Why do you seek the living among the dead? Why do you seek Jesus in a tomb? He is not here. He is risen!

Have you lost someone to death recently? Over this past year? Or over the past several years? Does that loss still linger on? Do you have fears and doubts? I'm not here to talk you out of your thoughts of pain and loss. I don't have a quick fix for you. I can't inspire some inner courage within you. I say only this: take your doubts and fears and loss and show them to the empty tomb.

The tomb is empty! It isn't Christ's home. Only for three short days did the grave hold Him. The grave was not and would not be His home. Sin, death, and Satan could not contain Him. He is not there. He is risen!

Do you realize what this means? If the tomb is not Christ's home, then the tomb is not our home either! Christ is victorious over sin, death, and the devil, and He shares His victory with us. Christ paid the price and overcame the Old Evil Foe, and we are rescued; we are restored to our God. Welcome home!

The tomb is empty. It's no longer our focus because it's no longer our home. His promise is true: **THE TOMB IS EMPTY!** We do not seek Jesus among the dead, nor do we live our lives as those who have no hope. The tomb is empty! He is risen, and so also shall we rise!

This world is confusing. This world is uncomfortable. This world is difficult. This world is heavy and overwhelming. This world still seeks our attention and our citizenship. But this world will not have it. This world is **NOT** our home. Christ has risen! The tomb is empty, and we live our lives as the children of God walking through this strange land. We are the living children of the living God. We're not distracted by the glamour and the glitter; nor are we overcome by the pain and the darkness. We see with eyes focused, not on the tomb, but on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:1-3), the One who returns us to a right relationship with our Father in heaven. We walk with eyes focused not on the land of death, but to the open gates of everlasting life.

Welcome home! This is the reality I am blessed to speak to you this day. Welcome home! The tomb of Christ is empty—He is not there; He is risen. And we, too, shall rise! Welcome home! Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. ✨BJF✨