

Pastor T.C. Arnold
The Resurrection of our Lord
March 27th, 2016

Our Easter celebration this morning is intentionally overwhelming. The music, the choir and the bells, the lilies and the decorations – It's all supposed to be overwhelming. We can be overwhelmed with memories as well. Memories of Easter's past. Memories of family celebrations and church as a child. And when you listen to Luke tell the Easter story, he focuses your attention on that very thing. Remembering.

Think of it. The first Easter was a swirl of activity and overwhelming emotion. Women come to the tomb with spices and find that the tomb is open and the body of Jesus is gone. They come across men who dress like lightning. And when these men talk, they know what these women are doing: "*Why do you look for the living among the dead?*" They know what has happened: "*He is not here, but has risen!*" and they even know what has been done and said in their past: "*Remember how He told you, while He was still with you in Galilee that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise*" (Luke 24:5–6). And in the midst of all of this commotion, what does Luke focus our attention upon? Luke, when he puts it all together, calls our attention to one simple act: "*They remembered His words*" (v. 8). That's what Luke wants us to know this morning as we celebrate Easter. On that first Easter morning, when Jesus rose from the dead, in the midst of the wonder, the fear, and the worship, His people simply and faithfully did one single thing: "*They remembered His words.*"

God on Easter morning sent angels to the tomb to help His people remember, and this morning through His Word He helps us to remember as well. God has made the empty tomb a place of remembering for us this morning in order that we might truly rejoice in what Christ does for us on Easter.

But what kind of remembering is this? You see, memory does many things. Have you ever noticed how a person, friend or foe, can come into your life and with a few simple words change everything? They simply say, "I remember when you used to . . ." or "Do you remember when . . ." And in that remembering, things change. That's the power of memory. But how do things change? This morning, I would like to consider two ways in which remembering changes our lives.

On the one hand, remembering can take us away from our present and lead us to a world that is past. You remember how things use to be – whether that be bad or good. In your mind, you are transported backward into a different time and place. Sometimes this causes us great distress. Other times we remember the past with great joy. And perhaps it is a bit of both when we remember a loved one who is no longer with us. Many other examples could cause the same thing.

On the other hand, there is another kind of remembering that does not take you away from the present but brings you more fully into it. An example might be when a grandparent holds their first grandchild for the first time. I've been told that this takes a person back to when they first held their child, who is now a parent for the very first time. It takes you back, but yet, even more fully, it brings to life more fully the present reality.

Two types of remembering, then: that which takes you away from the present and that which brings you more fully into it. The question I have for you this morning is what kind of remembering happens at Easter? What happens when God comes among us today and, through His Word, helps us remember? Does He take us away from our present or bring us more fully into it?

For these women, remembering the Lord's words brings them more fully into the present. With the words of Jesus, they begin to understand the strange new world that surrounds them. Empty graves and men who dress like lightning. Angels who have been with you all of your life. These

things make sense: Jesus had talked about a heavenly kingdom. The world is God's, and God's kingdom has come.

Remembering, therefore, can bring us more fully into the present. But our world will tell you differently. Our culture shakes its head at us Christians. When we remember Easter, our culture acts as if we have entered the realm of the imagination and lost touch with the present. "A Savior rising from the dead? A world filled with sin and the devil and angels and demons? That's a world with outmoded morality and strange views of creation and answers to questions that people no longer ask," they say. "Too much of this and you will no longer be able to function. You won't be able to enjoy the good life. You will not get ahead in business if you try that 'love your neighbor' kind of stuff." That's the world's reaction.

Today, the Church remembers the death and resurrection of Jesus because this event makes life in this world richer and full of meaning. All of us have sins in our past that make us fearful about going on. Some may wonder if our discretions of the past will ever catch up to us. We worry about our sins that may yet have future consequences. It seems as if our past has destroyed our future. But God comes today and speaks to us. He says, "*Remember My Son. Jesus. He gave His life for you. Your sins are forgiven. He has risen and rules and is now the author of life. Through Him, you are a child of My kingdom. In Him, you are a member of My family.*"

Did you notice in the Gospel that Luke stops in the middle of the story to give us the names of these women? Luke writes, "*Returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles*" (vv. 9–11). Luke stops in the middle of the story to give us their names because these women have suddenly become something. They have become witnesses to the working of God. They went to the tomb as mourners, but now they come back as witnesses. They have names and a life experience and a story to tell.

And so today, we pause to remember this blessed resurrection and know that Jesus knows your name too. You are relevant. You are relevant not because of anything in you or anything done by you but simply because you are God's and you live in God's world. Daily business is more than business: it is a vocation. That difficult conversation you have with your daughter is an occasion for graceful speech. The fragile moment of your life is filled with meaning beyond your making and a love beyond your strength. Your life are in the hands of God, and there, in His hands, we become part of the way God is at work in the world. For us, as for these women, life becomes more meaningful because Christ has risen and sends us forth to live in His world by His grace.

Today, Luke proclaims the resurrection and asks us to remember. Remember the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In Him, you are forgiven. By Him, you have new life. With Him, your life is part of His unfolding kingdom. Yes, it is easy to get overwhelmed at Easter. That's because this love of God . . . it's overwhelming. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.