

April 24, 2011  
Sermon for Easter Sunday  
St Peter Lutheran Church  
Bowie, TX  
Larry Knobloch, Pastor  
Matthew 28:1-10  
From Death to Life

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

<sup>1</sup> Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. <sup>2</sup> And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. <sup>3</sup> His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. <sup>4</sup> And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. <sup>5</sup> But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. <sup>6</sup> He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. <sup>7</sup> Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.” <sup>8</sup> So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. <sup>9</sup> And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. <sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible : English Standard Version.* Wheaton : Standard Bible Society, 2001

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

We my friends, loved ones in Christ, He is Risen. He is risen indeed!

So?

I mean, tell me, what difference does it make? OK, I'll tell you.

My family and I had just gotten settled in Fort Wayne, Indiana when I received the call, Winston (my step-father) had passed away.

Early the next morning, amidst the January snow, we boarded the plane to come home to bury him. I couldn't eat, really couldn't sleep. I had asked to read the obituary and to say a few words. I didn't know what until the night before the funeral when I was led to Ecclesiastes where God tells us of time: (Ecc 3:1-13, ESV)

You know how it goes: "1 For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

2 a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; ...

I was led to verse 4 to begin with..."4 a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;"

Winston was a man who said what he thought, and I could picture him getting on our case, saying, "What 'chall crying and moping around about, I can dance again!" You see, Winston had become more and more disabled over the years and one of his favorite things to do was go to dances.

Since he and mom always went to family places, we came along and that's probably where I learned to enjoy dancing.

My step-father knew Jesus as his Lord and Savior and I don't doubt a bit that he is in heaven today. I really don't remember much of the funeral, I was busy thinking of Winston being able to walk without pain again and especially being able to dance again.

After the service, my appetite came back and again, joy came when I thought of Winston. I praise God for re-assuring me of Winston's salvation by faith in Christ and therefore, of my own salvation in Christ Jesus.

The Preacher, as the author of Ecclesiastes identifies himself, goes on to say, "10 I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. 11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. ... 12 I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; 13 also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God's gift to man.

Winston's grave is just that, a grave, but there is a story behind it. Although there is a body, his soul is dancing in heaven.

The empty tomb we hear about this morning, is just that too; an empty tomb...but what a story lies behind it!!!

God sent an angel that first Easter morning to point to the empty tomb. But the empty tomb preaches far more than the fact that the body is gone. For He is risen! ... The empty tomb preaches the fulfillment of all God's promises of salvation directed to those that call upon the name of Christ!

The empty tomb preaches the completion of God the Father's plan to provide a way back to Him. The empty tomb preaches the absolute truth that death—God's set wage for all sinners (Rom. 6:23)—has now lost its sting, its hold in mankind. The empty tomb preaches that the old creation is over and the new creation had begun in Christ by His victorious death and resurrection.

God preaches through Isaiah: "He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces..." (25:8) The Bible records Jesus' Words in John 5:24, "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my Word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

He is Risen! ...

The empty tomb preaches what the Scriptures preach: death is done! Death is over! And death is no more because of Jesus! Jesus' resurrection makes death and the grave of little meaning for every believer. The empty tomb preaches this: He is Risen! ...

The women were stunned at the angel's words. They could hardly take it in. We would have been too if only days earlier we would have seen the bloodied and shamed body of Jesus being lowered from the cross.

But here was the angel sitting on the very stone that had sealed the tomb. As he pointed to the empty tomb, the angel preached probably the shortest sermon in history,

“Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for He is risen, [pause] as He said. Come, see the place where He lay.” As they looked, the loudest and most impacting object lesson laid before them..the empty tomb, and they saw with their own eyes, He is risen! ...

Death has been defeated, the grave has no hold, All is well, because the tomb is empty, His is risen! ...

That means that your tomb will be empty too. That’s what Winston would tell you if he could be here today.

Paul preaches the same reality in the second reading for today. He tells us, “For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”

You have gone through the waters of Holy Baptism, you have been re-born in Christ Jesus, you are already beyond death and the grave! Every believers sin, death and shame are roadkill viewed through the rearview mirror, why? Because it was all paid for on the cross and now, He is risen!...

This resurrection Gospel is not merely a message to the women that first Easter morning, nor is it just to the disciples as the women ran to tell them the Good News, but it is God’s Good News to you too!

It is as if you were at the empty tomb that morning too, because as the women departed, slightly confused in great fear, but also great joy, only to rund smack dab into Jesus, as He tells us too, “Do not be afraid;”

But then He tells us too “Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me.”

His first words to the women were reassurance, but they are quickly followed by “Go and tell”. We should take those words to heart. It’s only a few verses later that He gives us the Great Commission in Mt. 28:19 saying: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”

It’s as if Jesus is telling us, “I’m here, you are saved through faith in Me, I am risen! So you will rise again. Now that that’s settled, go and tell everyone!”

And just as Jesus reassured the women, He closes the book of Matthew with a reassurance to us, saying, “...behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

The empty tomb tells us a great story. The story of how we sinned, our Savior came, He suffered, He died, and He rose again. He is coming back and He wants everyone to know, so we are called to carry the Gospel to the nations, including those right next door. Not for our salvation, for the tomb tells us that Jesus paid for all, for He is Risen! ...He is Risen!...HE IS RISEN!! He is risen indeed!

Don’t tell me, the world is waiting! They are longing to hear of the peace of God which passes all understanding. May our risen Lord keep all of your hearts and minds. In Jesus name.

Amen.