

What a Beautiful Son-rise!

Luke 24:1-24

Introduction

I recently came across this story, it was told by “Dear Abby”.

A young man from a wealthy family was about to graduate from high school. It was the custom in that affluent neighborhood for the parents to give the graduate an automobile. "Bill" and his father had spent months looking at cars, and the week before graduation, they found the perfect car.

On the eve of his graduation, his father handed him a gift wrapped Bible. Bill was so angry that he threw the Bible down and stormed out of the house.

He and his father never saw each other again. It was the news of his father's death that brought Bill home again.

As he sat one night going through his father's possessions that he was to inherit, he came across the Bible his father had given him.

He brushed away the dust and opened it to find a cashier's check, dated the day of his graduation - in the exact amount of the car they had chosen together.

The world is full of empty promises. We watch TV, and the advertisements tell us that we can be happy, sexy, rich, or famous, if we only purchase a certain product. It doesn't take long before we have been fooled enough to know that the world's promises are full of emptiness. But, God is different. Instead of promises full of emptiness, on Easter, he gave us emptiness that is full of promise.

I would like for us to go back to that 1st Easter Morning. It is early as a group of Jesus' disciples, all women, make their way to His tomb. They had risen early, before dawn and began walking, deep in their own thoughts, light in conversation. For Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome, the task before them is a sad one. They are going to finish the burial preparation on the body of Jesus. Suddenly there was a great earthquake that shook the ground and they were frightened, but soon it was over and they continue on their journey.

However, as the sun was rising, they could now see the tomb, and they stop in their tracks. Something is amiss.

They expected that the guards would be at their appointed duty stations, for they had been assigned to keep anyone from stealing the body of Jesus. But what they didn't expect was that their normally organized camp was in disarray.

Upon closer examination, they saw the problem ...the stone that was covering the entrance to the tomb where Jesus was laid is rolled back. The sepulcher is open!

They were already concerned about who would roll the stone away from the door so they could finish embalming the body of Jesus. Remember, Jesus was taken off the cross and placed in the tomb in haste because:

Luke 23:54-56 ... that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on. 55 And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. 56 And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment.

The Cross is Empty

It didn't dawn on them that the soldiers did not stop or question them on why they were at the tomb of the young rabbi. Instead they continued walking to the sepulcher. They may have even given thanks to God for providing an open tomb for them to finish their work.

As they draw closer to the tomb, they see a man dressed in white clothes so clean they seemed to shine. The man speaks to them in a soft and kind way...

Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. But why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen, as he said. Don't you remember how he told you, while he was 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? And they remembered.

*Come see the place where he lay, then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee, where you will see him.
(Matthew 28:5-7; Luke 24:5-8 ESV)*

The Tomb is Empty

For some reason, Mary Magdalene doesn't get the story right. She runs to where the disciples are staying and tells Peter and John "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." (John 20:2)

John 20:3-10 So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. 4 Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5 And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, 7 and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. 8 Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; 9 for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. 10 Then the disciples went back to their homes.

The Burial Clothes are Empty

Three important things to remember about Easter.

The Cross is Empty – Jesus died a horrific death on the cross so you and I can be forgiven. On that cross Jesus paid the penalty for our sins. Jesus offered himself up to be slaughtered, a perfect, sinless life for each one of us. When Jesus cried out; "It is finished" the wrath of God on sin was paid. The Cross stands empty today.

Before that fateful Friday, God could open the books and look up each name, and written in black were the words – "guilt of sin." But when Jesus went to the cross, God literally transferred our accounts to His name. On that day, across every name – he wrote – in Jesus blood – "Forgiven – Forgiven – Forgiven."

The Tomb is Empty

Let me tell you about Philip; Philip never felt like he belonged. He was pleasant enough but he looked a bit different and sometimes seemed unusual to his eight-year-old classmates.

In his Sunday school class several weeks before Easter, Phillip's teacher introduced a special project. He gave every member a plastic "egg"--the kind pantyhose used to

come in. He explained that each child was to go outside, find a symbol for new life and put it into the egg. Enthusiastically, the class responded.

Back in the classroom the eggs were opened one at a time with each child explaining the meaning of his symbol.

In the first egg was a pretty flower; in the next a beautiful butterfly, while green grass was in a third. The children "oohed" and "aahed". In another was a rock, which prompted loud laughter. Finally the last egg was opened - there was nothing.

"That's stupid," said one child. Another grumbled, "Someone didn't do it right!"

The teacher felt a tug on his shirt. It was Phillip, who said, 'That's mine, and I did do right! It's empty, 'cause the tomb was empty."

There was an unusual, thoughtful silence. And strangely, from that time on, Phillip was accepted as part of the group.

Phillip continued to struggle with many physical problems. That summer he picked up an infection which most children would easily have shaken off. But Phillip's weak body couldn't and a few weeks later, he died.

At his funeral nine eight year-olds with their teacher brought their symbol of remembrance and placed it near his coffin. Their unusual gift of love to Phillip wasn't flowers. It was an empty egg - now a symbol to them of new life and hope.

It was Phillip, the "different" child, who had helped his friends see the wonderful hope in the message of Easter. (Preaching Today)

The "high day" for Christianity is today, Easter. We celebrate Easter because the TOMB IS EMPTY!

Note: Isn't it interesting that the tomb where Jesus was laid was only "borrowed?" You see Jesus only needed it for three nights and days.

The tomb is empty because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. His resurrection fulfills the prophecies concerning the Messiah and it is the promise to every one of us that we too will be raised to eternal life.

A father and son were traveling down a country road on afternoon in the spring time when suddenly a bee flew in the window. Being deathly allergic to bee stings, the

boy began to panic as the bee buzzed all around inside the car. Seeing the horror on his child's face, the father reached out and caught the bee in his hand. Soon, he opened his hand and the bee began to buzz around once again. Again, the boy began to panic. The father reached over to his son, and opened his hand showing him the stinger still in his palm. "Relax, son," the father said, "I took the sting, the bee can't hurt you anymore."

The empty tomb is God's way of saying to us; "Relax, my child, I took the sting, death can't hurt you anymore."

The Burial Clothes are Empty – Jesus body was made alive. Jesus no longer needed to be wound like a mummy. He was not dead and He did not need the burial clothes any longer.

The empty burial clothes meant that fellowship was restored between Christ and those that loved him. Jesus would appear to Mary Magdalene, the Apostles and disciples. The Bible says that Jesus appeared to over 500 people in His resurrected body. A body that walked, talked, taught, and ate.

Conclusion

I want you to consider this Easter, differently than any other Easter you have experienced.

I would like you to meditate on these thoughts:

The cross could not hold Him.

The tomb could not contain him

and the burial clothes were no longer needed.

Jesus is alive!

It has been nearly 2000 years since Jesus was crucified, buried and resurrected.

That 1st Easter Sunday, as the women went to the grave, they had no idea what was about to happen to them. They were not yet aware of the wonderful promises of that day.

- a) Off in the distance stood an empty cross – the promise that their sins were forgiven.
- b) At the end of their journey was an empty tomb – the promise of their eternal life.
- c) Inside the tomb were empty burial clothes. The promise that they would once again have a close personal relationship with Jesus Christ – their living Savior.

This morning, we have heard about three promises that God has made to us;

- (1) the promise of forgiven sins
- (2) the promise of eternal life
- (3) and the promise of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

My question to you this morning is this; will you take him at his word?

Bob Crowder