

Easter Sunday A 11

April 24, 2011

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer.
Amen.

Christ has risen! He has risen indeed! Alleluia!

The announcement as we began our worship today. There on the first day of the week as Mary and Mary came to see the tomb where Jesus had been laid, God's messenger made a similar announcement, 'Do not be afraid; I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified, He is not here, he has been raised just as he said he would.'

There is a part of me that wants to say, 'The promise of new life has come true, Jesus was raised from the dead proof that God is able to do what he says he will do.' Now the promise of eternal life for us will also come true, we have been given a new life. Now we can go forth and live like people of the promise, as people of hope, as resurrected people – enough said, Amen.

But you know a pastor cannot stop with a 30 second sermon. Because I know you are still wondering what does this mean, how does this work, is it really true. Yes, it is really true; Christ has been raised by the power of the Holy Spirit to the glory of God the Father just as he promised. But that does not mean you are without doubts or that conspiracies have not remained since that first day.

Last week as we read the passion narrative we ended with Jesus death on the cross, his burial in the tomb that Mary and Mary came to visit on that first morning. The Gospel of Matthew also tells us that the religious leaders and other people of authority who were afraid that what Jesus might said would come true would actually happen. So they posted soldiers, guards for the tomb to ensure he would stay put. Yet it took place anyway. At that moment it was not Jesus but the soldiers who were like dead men as the earthquake struck and the tomb opened.

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Here the very witnesses we want to hear from were like dead men, who did not go to tell the world but returned to the very religious leaders and people of authority who posted them to the tomb. There they gave their witness, there they gave testimony as to the moment of resurrection. But the world, the authorities did not want the truth to get out so they put them into the witness protection program, they paid them off to lie about the truth.

The truth is Jesus was not held by the tomb no matter how secure they tried to make it. God is was able to break the seal, move the stone and restore his Son to life, raising him, putting him on the throne at the right hand of God. Nothing was able to keep God from keeping his promise to his Son or to us His children. For just as Christ was raised from the dead and given a new life so we have been too.

Yet the reality remains, the authorities were not able to keep Jesus in the grave, but they have succeeded in keeping the news quiet, in spreading their conspiracy theory that it was all fixed, that it was the disciples of Jesus who were pulling a fast one trying to keep his followers from turning away and returning to their old beliefs or understandings.

Except little did they know the disciples and followers did not believe Jesus when he told them that he would be raised. Why else were the women coming to the tomb. If they had believed Jesus coming to see the tomb, going to look for the dead in the place of the dead would have been futile. Then it happened, in that moment as the earthquake struck and the tomb of Christ was opened the world changed. The landscape of the world was permanently altered; it would never again be the same.

Earthquakes do that. In the last year while none of us have actually witnessed the life changing, the earth altering affects of an earthquake we have seen

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the evidence. The images on our TVs or computers have shown us the lasting changes in the landscape. From Haiti just over a year ago, to Chile, to New Zealand, to most recently Japan. The landscape and the lives of the people have been permanently changed.

It was on the first day of the week at dawn as Mary and Mary went to see the tomb that suddenly there was a great earthquake and the world has never been the same. Yet as the various theories continue to circulate, the skeptics and the world continue to search for the proof. The world continues to search to prove the shroud is real, that the wood or the nails from the cross points to the truth of the crucifixion, that the cracks in the earth or the fault line in the crust of the earth moved and shook the ground two thousand years ago.

If that is where you are keep searching, keep looking for the evidence. For if that is what it takes for you to believe I hope you find it, yet in the mean time I pray you will continue to be open to the possibility that this is all true without the proof. I hope you will continue to join us especially in the next few weeks as we hear of the disciples encounters with the risen Christ, to continue to learn and follow the imperative commands heard this day.

As Mary and Mary arrived at the tomb on that first day the angel said to them; 'Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised. Come and see then go quickly and tell his disciples. Indeed Christ is going ahead of you to Galilee, tell them to go home, back to their hometowns, their houses, their places of work, their everyday spaces there they will see him.

As the women hurried off to spread the news, Jesus was ahead of them, meeting the women on the road. There as the women fall down in worship and thanksgiving, Jesus gives them the same imperative. 'Go and tell my

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brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.’ Jesus changes the angels words just a little, but they are significant, or the disciples are no longer disciples or followers or students of the teacher, they are brothers. The world, the landscape has changed for the disciples and for us. For we have become more than friends and followers we are family. As family we receive the same promise that the grave no longer hold has a hold on us, that with Christ having been raised from the dead so we have been as well. In the words from the letter to the Colossians, ‘Now set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and you life is hidden with Christ in God. So when Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.’

We come this day to celebrate and shout with joy that the promise has come to us. That sin and death no longer have control over us, that through the death, burial and thanks be to God the resurrection of Jesus, our Lord and Savior, the old has passed away and we have been made a new creation. Now we have a mission and purpose in life, we have come to the tomb, invited to look at its emptiness, then are sent to go and tell our sisters and brothers the promise has come true, to proclaim the mystery is real. To announce to the world; Christ has risen. He has risen indeed! Alleluia!

AMEN

T.G.B.T.G.

Pastor Michael