



Saint John United Methodist Church
12700 W. Hwy. 42, Prospect, KY 40059
stjohnky.com

Message for Easter Sunday, April 9, 2023
“Good News: He Is Risen!”
Speaker: Pastor Tom Grieb
Scripture: Mark 16:1-8

That First Easter

The Sabbath was over and the women, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome approached the tomb of Jesus just as the sun was rising. It was early that first Easter morning when those who had followed Jesus began to come to grips with the fact that he had risen from the dead. The rising of the sun lent light to the great thing that had happened.

The rising of the sun in the east always has a way of putting a special light on things. The rising of the new day sun has a way of inspiring us to no end.

I particularly notice the rising of that new day sun on Sunday mornings as I make my way to church. It is just off to the east as I make my way down North Buckeye toward 42. Nearly thirty years ago, I remember seeing the very same thing on Sunday mornings as I made my way down 1793 on my way to church. The sun rises at nearly the same place on both roads.

I remember back then reading something about the rising sun and how it ought to remind us of the resurrection of our Lord. I can't tell you how many times I have repeated it over the years.

It goes like this, *“The rising of the sun each morning is a sure reminder of the hope and peace of the day when Christ rose from the dead.”*

Whether Easter or not, I am thankful to be reminded every day of Christ's resurrection. It is the resurrection that offers the promise of life now and forever more. It is good news for today and every day and should hearten us to no end.

Our very identity as Christians is in Christ's resurrection. We are a resurrection people, after all. Let's hear about that resurrection just now as we read Mark 16:1-8. It is that wonderfully simple account of Christ rising from the dead.

Mark 16:1-8 (NIV)

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, “Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?”

But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

“Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’”

Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone because they were afraid.

Dealing with the Stones in Our Way

The women came to the tomb of Jesus with a heavy heart. They were grieved to no end. The purpose in coming to that tomb was to anoint the body of Christ for a proper burial. Their minds were clearly on the death of Christ, despite the many times he had told them that on *“the third day”* he would rise from the dead.

The women were so fixated on the death of Christ they weren’t even thinking about such things. That’s why their focus was more on the spices they carried and the fact they were going to have a tough time rolling the stone away from the front of Christ’s tomb.

Tombs back during Christ’s day were carved into a rock wall. They would have consisted of a front room for gathering and a second for the body to be laid to rest. The opening to both rooms would have been closed off by a large circular stone that was fitted in a stone groove.

Regarding moving that stone, the women hadn’t really thought things through. You and I do that all the time. We are quick to just strike out and leave the details for later.

The women at least asked themselves, *“I wonder who’s going to roll the stone away? I guess we should have thought about that.”* They trudged forward only to find that God had done that. He had provided in a miraculous way.

I don’t know if you have driven down 1793 recently, but right as you get to Rose Island Road there is a huge stone just off the side of the road. It’s a monster. In fact, it’s more a boulder than it is a stone. It is going to take a herculean effort and the right equipment to get it moved. Thankfully, this stone didn’t roll out into the road, much less into an on-coming car.

All of us know from experience that *“stones”* get in our way all the time. Those *“stones”* take on all sorts of shapes and sizes. They can take the form of some sort of disappointment, a serious illness, a broken relationship, the loss of a job, or the death of a loved one. Sometimes those stones are of our own making.

There are even times when we figure there are stones ahead when they aren’t. Those *“stones”* are simply the product of a worrisome nature. Hear this, when it comes to those *“stones”* that are in our way, whether they are real or perceived, God will either help us around them or will move them entirely. In both instances, God provides.

If anything, this is at least one thing we can learn from the experience of the three women who approached the tomb of Jesus that first Easter. God always provides. He is always at work. If God granted Christ the power over life and death, then he certain has the power to see us through those things we face.

Jesus is Lord over all of life—now and forever. God stands ready to steady our resolve and encourage us to no end.

- What “stones” stand in your way?
- And how is Christ helping you to meet them?

Don't Be Alarmed

The scripture reports that *“when the women looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away.”*

Mark has it that *“a young man dressed in a white robe”* delivered the good news of Christ's resurrection. *“Don't be alarmed,”* he said. *“You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here.”*

“Don't be alarmed,” he said. It doesn't so much matter what it is, but we are forever letting our alarm, if not our panic about things, get the best of us.

Cheryl visited the kids in Nashville last weekend. She told me a cute story of our young grandson, Miles, who went into his older sister's bedroom room to console her during a meltdown she was having.

We all have them, don't we? Miles evidently told her sister, Maggie to *“take a breath.”* After a while he came out of the room and told Cheryl, *“She is not taking a breath.”*

We do well to take a breath every now and then.

I have been reading a bit about *“mindfulness”* recently. *“Mindfulness”* essentially encourages us to slow down, be well-centered, and not let adverse circumstances get us down. Deep breathing is a big part of that. In our alarm, if not panic about things, we'd do well to breathe.

“Just breathe.”

The young man dressed in all white told the women not to panic. The way he saw it, there was no reason to panic. The greatest thing of all time had just happened. Jesus had risen from the dead.

The fact of Christ's resurrection should keep us from panicking as well. He is Lord over life and death and stands ready to see us through whatever we might be facing.

If Jesus conquered death, then certainly he can conquer anything else we might face.

While we can't blame the women for being panicked, Christ's resurrection would eventually help center them and bring them to the very place they needed to be—hopeful and full of thanksgiving over the great thing God had done.

We'd all do well to contemplate that great thing and make it a part of our lives each and every day, and not just on Easter. In a word, the resurrection has a way of:

- Steadying us when things go awry.
- Strengthening us when we need to take the next step.
- Offering peace when we are way too unsettled.
- Lifting us when grief strikes us down.
- And helping us when we need to overcome.

“He has gone ahead of you,” said the man in white. Jesus is not only with us, but out ahead of us and what’s going on to see us through.

A Message Just for You

The women were given some instructions that early morning. There were told to *“go and tell”* the good news of Christ’s resurrection to his disciples.

Interestingly, Peter was mentioned by name. Christ wanted to let Peter know that everything was okay. Sometimes all we need to hear is that everything is going to be okay.

This might go without saying, but Jesus always takes a personal interest in those he loves. He did with his disciples, and he does for us. He certainly did that with Peter. After his resurrection, Jesus would get into a conversation with Peter that would essentially undo what Peter had done when he denied Jesus three times.

“Do you love me?” Jesus asked Peter three times in John 21:15ff. Each time Peter acknowledged that he did.

“Follow me then,” said Jesus. Even though Peter wasn’t worthy, the resurrected Lord called him by name and set him apart to do just that.

Mary was also called by name as recorded in John 20:16. It was upon hearing her name that Mary recognized Jesus for who he was.

Jesus, the resurrected Lord, calls you by name as well.

- Do you hear him calling?
- Are your ears open to what he has to say?
- Are your eyes recognizing him as the resurrected Lord that is?

If so, then love him with all you are and as an expression of that love follow him wherever he takes you. And if not, then what better time than now to accept the grand good news that Jesus is risen from the dead.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!