



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

Message for Easter Sunday, April 17, 2022
“Lay Down Your Sorrow”
Speaker: Pastor Tom Grieb
Scripture: Mark 16:1-8

Hallelujah!

A couple attended Easter service together. They very rarely did that. The wife attended every Sunday. The husband hadn't been in years. He spent way too much time at the racetrack betting on the horses.

On the way home the wife asked how things went. *“Not bad,”* said the husband. *“The pew was comfortable, people were friendly, and I loved the music.”*

“By the way,” he asked, *“did you notice everyone looking at me when I sang?”*

“Yes, I did,” said the wife, *“and when we go again, be sure to sing ‘Hallelujah, hallelujah,’ not ‘Hialeah, Hialeah.’”*

This is a day of great rejoicing. Jesus is risen from the dead. It is Easter. We celebrate the greatest good news of all. Because of Christ's resurrection from the dead, we have strength for today and hope for tomorrow, with that hope stretching all the way to eternity.

We have every reason to lay down our sorrows. We have every reason to celebrate and sing our *“Hallelujahs!”* as well. Let's hear the account of that resurrection as we read Mark 16:1-8.

Mark 16: 1-8

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.

God Speaking into a Troubled World

It seems we are experiencing a maelstrom of bad news these days—the war in Ukraine, high inflation, the lingering effects of the Pandemic, crime that's clearly out of control, deep concerns over immigration, and what seems like one injustice after another.

Personally, all of us are challenged by strained relationships, uncertainties about what's next, and, of course, the everyday stresses and strains of life. All of these things affect us.

Paul writes in II Corinthians 4:17, *“For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.”*

There was good reason for that. The good news of this day is that God speaks to our troubled times with the good news that Jesus has risen from the dead.

Despite the evil that abounds, despite rampant suffering, despite all the injustices that are perpetrated day in and day out, God has the last word, and it is good. The resurrection of Christ from the dead is the very bedrock of our faith.

Hear this from I Corinthians 15:14, *“And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.”*

Easter is so much more than Easter bunnies and bonnets. It is the very day God proclaims that life will prevail.

Strength for This Life and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

Not to be lost in the joy of this day is the fact that Easter comes on the heels of Good Friday. Christ's resurrection follows his crucifixion. The very worst humanity could dish out didn't come close to overcoming what God had intended to all along.

Suffering gives way to the sweet release of new life. The world may offer its worst, but God is still in charge. His power stands victoriously over all that robs us of life.

Christ is risen from the dead. That one event alone not only gives us strength for this life, but bright hope for tomorrow. A new day has dawned, now and forevermore.

A Brand-New Day

Our scripture lesson for this morning talks about that new day.

Weighed down by the events that had just happened, the women, whose intention it was to tend to the body of Jesus, approached his tomb full of sorrow. Jesus, the one they followed so faithfully was now dead, or so they thought. Overwhelmed by their grief, they didn't expect to find the living among the dead.

As the women approached the tomb, the sun was just coming over the horizon. It was a brand-new day, a day that would forever change their lives and the lives of those who would follow thereafter.

As you know, we had some pretty severe storms run through the area on Wednesday evening. The rains came and the winds blew. It was quite something.

Did you notice things the next morning? The sun shone brightly. The spring flowers seemed more pronounced. God's beauty abounded. What a difference a day can make.

Sometimes things look a whole different in the morning. I sometimes sleep on things just to gain a little perspective. More times than not, things look quite a bit brighter in the morning. The rising of the sun each day, if anything, ought to remind us of that first Easter morning when Christ's tomb was found empty, and the word of Christ's resurrection was proclaimed.

This is a brand-new day. The good news proclaimed this morning provides:

- Joy to the sorrowful.
- Hope to the hopeless.
- And peace to those weighed down.

Regardless of what you are facing, there is every reason to be hopeful. Christ's resurrection all but seals it. Hope might best be summed up with this acrostic:

Have
Only
Positive
Expectations

Because of Christ's resurrection from the dead, you and I can live having only positive expectations—for this life and the next.

Think of it, if Christ can overcome death, he can certainly help you overcome whatever you're facing. With that in mind, the things you face aren't nearly as pressing. There's hope.

God Is All about Rolling Away the Stones in Front of Us

Our neighbor just recently had some huge rocks delivered to his house to prevent some erosion he has been experiencing. They were monsters. A couple of weekends ago, he and a friend, with the help of some heavy equipment, got them in place. They're not going anywhere. Stones can be that way.

I have another neighbor who has some stone sculptures in his front yard. They are essentially large stones artistically set on top of one another. They are really quite neat. It doesn't matter how much the wind blows they always are in place. Again, that's the way it is with big rocks.

The scripture reports that the women who approached the tomb of their beloved Jesus were concerned with how they would move the stone that was rolled in front of that tomb where Christ laid. That stone stood in the way of them tending to Christ's body.

When it comes to life, it seems as though there is always something in our way that prevents us from doing what needs to be done. Those things have a way of weighing us down and causing a great deal of worry. In a word, there are plenty of stones in our way.

Circumstances overwhelm. Uncertainties weigh us down. Guilt has a way of haunting us. Sorrow and grief can be all consuming. The good news here is that God is all about rolling away the stones that are in front of us. It was that way for the women. It's that way for us.

The fact is this: God is all about rolling away stones, taking the blinders off our eyes, and breaking the shackles of a faithless heart to awaken us to the fact that Christ is risen and because of that we can live life to the full.

God always finds a way. The resurrection asserts that, if anything does.

What stones stand in the way of you receiving the good news of Christ's resurrection?

Called by Name

The message of Christ's resurrection is a message directed to every one of us. It is very personal in nature.

It's interesting to note that the angel of the Lord instructed the women to go and tell, "*the disciples and Peter.*" Peter is mentioned specifically here. It was important that Peter was aware of the news we celebrate today. He was the one who had denied Jesus three times when he was just sure he wouldn't.

Of all the disciples, he had to be the most tortured by what he had done.

William Barclay writes at this point, "*The most precious thing about Jesus is the way in which he loves us on the field of our defeat.*"

I pray you have experienced that. Christ is all about redeeming our lives.

- He longs to set us free from the very things that bring us sorrow.
- He wants to forgive us of the wrong of our lives.
- His every desire is that we live in the newness of life he so longs to give.

And so, Jesus, having risen from the dead, calls us by name and delivers the good news of each of us.

Not only was Peter called by name, but so was Mary Magdalene. You can read that in John 20. It was upon hearing Jesus say, "*Mary*" that she recognized him as the risen Lord.

Think of it, you and I are called by name to live in relationship with the risen Christ. Just as Peter's sorrow was turned to joy upon hearing of Christ's resurrection, so ours is as well.

They Said Nothing

Upon hearing about Christ's resurrection, the scripture records that the women fled the tomb that morning.

*"Terror and amazement had seized them; and **they said nothing** to anyone, for they were afraid."*

They had just heard the greatest good news of all time and they, "*said nothing.*"

Soon they couldn't help but share the news. They, along with all the disciples, would live into the truth of the resurrection and would go on and take the world by storm.

Even though life would eventually dish out its very worst, they would persevere all for the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus, the resurrected Lord.

Regrettably, we too do as the women did as they made their way from the empty tomb. We too “say *nothing*” when it comes to Christ’s resurrection. We are all too afraid how others might react.

We have every reason to shout it at the top of our lungs, “*Hallelujah!*”

Only for a Weekend

We have talked a lot this morning about stones.

You know the tomb where Christ was laid was more than likely a rock-hewn tomb.

The tomb was offered by a member of the Sanhedrin named Joseph of Arimathea. Joseph was one of the few members of the Sanhedrin who was supportive of Christ.

The tomb ended up only being borrowed.

I like the story where Joseph is asked, “*That was such a beautiful, costly, hand-hewn tomb, why did you give it to somebody else?*”

“*No big deal,*” said Joseph, “*he only needed it for the weekend.*”

“*After three days he arose,*” just as he said he would, and we are left to live in that good news forever more.

The stone is rolled away, Christ calls us by name, let’s not stay silent, but go and share the news to all who will receive it.

“*Hallelujah!*”