

The Empty Tomb – Sunday 5th April, 2015 – Easter Sunday

“but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.” (Luke 24:3).

Beloved in The Lord,

People like to raise up memorials. As we look around the world we see that there are many and varied monuments, that are set up in memory of famous people or events.

The Christian faith has no real monuments, because, as we just read in the text, when the women arrived at the tomb where Jesus body had been laid, it was empty. The body of the Lord Jesus Christ was no longer there.

I can just imagine what it would be like if Jesus body was there. There would have been a huge monument erected in memory of this miracle worker, this faith healer, this prophet who proclaimed peace and good will to all men. This humble Galilean who drove out demons, healed the sick and even raised people from the dead. This great man who loved the outcasts and ate with tax collectors and sinners. There would be a steady stream of pilgrims who would come and pay their respects to this Jesus. They would come to receive some solace or a blessing from visiting His tomb.

Praise God the tomb was empty. The women did not find Jesus body there because He was no longer there. For sure He died on Good Friday. They even drove a spear into His side releasing the last drops of blood in His body. Well meaning followers, took down His body from the cross, lovingly wrapped it in grave cloths and laid it in an unused tomb, which belonged to a rich man. A great stone sealed the entrance and a seal and guard was placed to secure it. This was done because the religious leaders were afraid that Jesus disciples would steal His body and say that He had risen from the dead on the third day as He had taught that He would.

What the religious leaders had not counted upon, nor the disciples understood, was that Jesus was telling the truth when He said that He would rise up from the dead on the third day. Jesus knew the Father would raise Him up. Neither the stone, nor the seal, nor the guards could keep Him in the tomb.

On Easter morning when the women came to the tomb, They did not find Jesus body, because He had risen from the dead We read in the following verses:

“but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing; ⁵ and as the women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living One among the dead? ⁶ He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, ⁷ saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.” ⁸ And they remembered His words,” (Luke 24:3-8).

Oh, what joy entered their hearts. He is risen, Jesus is alive. No need for a monument, or a giant headstone. No need to make pilgrimages to the tomb, because He is not there, He is alive. This my friends is the good news of Easter. Jesus Christ is alive. He Himself states: ***“Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last,¹⁸ and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades” (Rev.1:17b-18)***

Jesus Christ is alive forevermore. The empty tomb is our hope and our assurance. Death could not contain Him, and death will not contain us, if we believe on Him.

Jesus says: “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies,²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die” (John 11:25-26).

Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life. When and if we believe in Him, then our eternal life is secure. He was the first to rise from the dead, and at God’s appointed time, He will raise up all who have died in Him, and He will take us all to be with Him forever in The Father’s House. Paul gives us a very graphic description:

“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words” (1.Thess.4:14-18).

These words are given to comfort us. There is nothing that comforts me more than the empty tomb, and this truth, that at God’s appointed hour, the trumpet will sound and Jesus Himself will come back to empty the tombs of those who are His.

The joy of Easter is the empty tomb. The joy of Easter is that our Lord has risen, never to die again. The joyous message of Easter is that death is swallowed up in victory.

For sure, by reason of sin, we all must die one day, but by reason of God’s tremendous grace and love, if we die in faith in Jesus Christ, then we know that death will not contain us. Praise God.

Paul writes: “But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, “Death is swallowed up in victory.⁵⁵ O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law;⁵⁷ but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1.Cor.15:54-57).

According to God’s law, we all deserve eternal death, for we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God. But, God took our death penalty and laid it upon His Son Jesus, who bore our guilt, shame and punishment, so that we would not have to. Jesus died in our place upon the Cross. With His blood, He paid the price for our sin. He did it because He loves us. He Himself said:

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life”(Jn.3:16).

Jesus died in our place because He so loves us. He took His own blood and presented it on God’s altar to atone for our sin. The empty tomb is a witness that God accepted His holy sacrifice. By raising Him from the dead, God showed us that the debt had been paid, the sacrifice was accepted, and life is given to not only Jesus, but to all who will believe in Him. This brings us to the very important question: “Do you believe in Jesus Christ?”

To believe means to surrender your life to Him completely. It means that you rely only upon His blood for your salvation. As the old song says: *“Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling.”* That is what it means to believe. You understand that there is nothing you can do, but to trust in Christ Jesus alone. To trust in His blood alone. Your so called good deeds and your imagined good life will not help you to get saved. Only the blood of Jesus.

If you have not as yet fully trusted in Jesus, then do so today. Bow your head before Him, surrender to His cross. Lift up your eyes to Him and pray: “Jesus, be merciful to me a sinner. I accept you into my heart as my personal Saviour and I proclaim that You are Lord.” At that moment your name is written indelibly in The Lamb’s Book of Life.

If you have surrendered to Jesus, then may today’s message strengthen your faith and give you new hope. May the empty tomb bring the joy and peace of Christ to your heart anew today.

Paul writes:

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord” (1.Cor.15:58).

Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.