

The Twofold Easter Message.

Text: Matt 28:5-8

1) Come and see

Suggested Hymns:

2) Go and tell

88, 91, 95, 286, 103

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Matthew 28:5–8, *⁵ But the angel answered and said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.*

⁷ And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you.” ⁸ So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word. (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The sun rising over Judea’s hills was ushering in the world’s first Easter Sunday. Its first rays had dispelled the darkness of night. One of earth’s greatest days was dawning. As we look, we see a number of women hastening along the way near Golgotha to the garden which belongs to Joseph of Arimathea. They have with them a good amount of sweet spices.

Filled with sadness and sorrow, they are wending their way to the grave of Christ that they might anoint His body for final burial. On Good Friday there was too little time left for them to attend to this matter. The Sabbath had begun just shortly after Christ was taken down from the cross. Only the most necessary preparations could be made then. Now they wanted to finish what they had to leave undone on Friday.

The Angel’s Message to the Women

The sad events which had happened on Golgotha had enshrouded their minds and hearts with dark clouds of bitter sorrow. It was night in their soul. They forgot all about the Saviour's promises that He would rise again.

To get an idea of how this sadness affected them, let me call your attention to the fact that they had given no thought to that immense stone which had been placed in front of the sepulchre. Not until they were nearing the grave did one of them think of it, and she realised that they were not able to remove it.¹

How startled and astonished they must have been when they noticed that the stone was rolled away! But just imagine how much greater their amazement must have been when upon entering the grave they saw an angel of God, who had come from heaven to deliver the first Easter message to them.

Oh, how their hearts must have leaped for joy when they were told that Christ was no longer in the grave, but that He was risen! This message of the angel is the true Easter message. It shall engage our attention today. Under the gracious guidance of the Holy Spirit let us then dwell upon *The Twofold Easter Message*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Come And See

A very natural effect upon the women who entered the sepulchre all aroused by the fact that the stone was rolled away, and now seeing the heavenly messenger with a countenance like lightning and with clothing white as snow, was that they were filled with fear and trembling.

The angel assured them, however, that they need not fear. He knew that they were looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He was well aware of the fact that they were expecting to find Him still cold in death. But he had come to announce to them that He was risen from the dead.

In order to encourage and convince them, he urged them, *Come, see the place where the Lord lay*. What they saw there was to assure them that Jesus was alive again.

What was it that they saw? We ought to be eager to know, for we, too, should come and see. While we cannot go bodily to the grave near Golgotha, we can go to the record of Holy Writ and there see what the women saw.

What we see in Scripture is just as certain as though we stood right at the grave with the Galilean women to behold what they beheld. Holy Scripture brings God's account of what actually happened on that first Easter day.

The Empty Tomb

First of all, the women saw an empty tomb. They had carefully watched on Good Friday how and where the body of Jesus was placed. But when now they eagerly looked at that place, they discovered to their consternation that the body of Jesus was missing.

Had Christ's enemies stolen the body? That thought must have worried the disciples. Mary Magdalene, who was among those women who came to the grave, at the very moment she saw that the stone was rolled away, had hurried back to Jerusalem to tell the disciples about it. ***"They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."***²

Then she rushed back again to the garden and looked into the grave. It was when she turned to look around that Jesus appeared to her and asked her why she was weeping. She even hinted that He might have been guilty of taking Him away, and told Him frankly, ***"Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away."***³

This shows that the disciples must have suspected something like this. Could this not be the case? Let us note that the women saw a grave which was left in splendid order. The burial cloths and linen napkins were carefully laid aside.

Had there been theft of the body, the thieves, knowing that there was a guard at the grave, would never have taken time to lay cloths aside in such good order. Furthermore, the very fact that there was a guard at the grave dispels the thought of a possible theft.

Again, the women saw the messenger of God, and he declared to them that Christ was risen as He had said. That was heaven's message to remove every semblance of doubt.

Convincing Evidence Of The Resurrection

All this evidence was sufficient to convince them that the resurrection had actually taken place. Their beloved Saviour was no longer in the realms of the dead. Though death had fastened its grim fetters upon Him, though it had done

its very worst and rendered Him a corpse, though it seemed on Good Friday as though it had won a decided victory over Christ and had destroyed every ray of hope, Christ had now torn its fetters into shreds.

He had triumphed over the ruthless foe in that terrible battle. He had torn open the terrible jaws of the grim monster and had come forth again alive. Though the women had not seen the resurrection itself, they saw overwhelming proofs of it.

Yes, they were given assurance that they would actually see Him with their bodily eyes. The proof was most convincing. It dispelled the dark gloom and the bitter sorrow which had filled their hearts. They believed the message of the resurrection.

They saw not merely with their bodily eyes, but above all with the eyes of faith. This faith was strengthened all the more when on their way to the city the Saviour appeared to them.

Convincing Evidence in Scripture

“Come and see” is the message which is proclaimed to you today. Take your Bible and read what God has told you about the resurrection of Jesus who went into death for your sake.

God has furnished a great mass of evidence to convince you that Jesus Christ, the Crucified, has actually risen from the dead. The angel proclaimed it. Individual disciples saw Him. More than 500 saw Him at one time. The disciples ate with Him. They talked with Him. They touched Him. They saw His nail prints.

Even doubting Thomas, who went around for a whole week and would not believe the reports about Christ’s resurrection, was so convinced that he cried out, as we read in John 20:28, *“My Lord and my God!”*

I say: Come and see! You can convince yourselves. There is abundant evidence.

At the beginning of the last century, Sir Gilbert West and Lord Lyttleton, two prominent writers of England, were determined to do something which would suppress the Gospel.

It seemed to them that the two main things which must be disproved in order to accomplish this were the conversion of Paul and the resurrection of Christ.

Gilbert West decided that he would refute the resurrection of Christ, and Lord Lyttleton set to work to refute the conversion of Paul. At the conclusion of their work they met again by appointment. West asked Lyttleton: *“What is the result of your work?”*

He replied: *“I have fully investigated the narrative of the conversion of St. Paul and am satisfied that this man, on his journey along the Damascus highway, really saw Jesus of Nazareth and that this Jesus was the very Christ of God.”*

Gilbert West stated: *“I have thoroughly investigated the resurrection of Christ and have come to the conclusion that He who is said to have come forth from the sepulchre of Joseph’s garden, was, as He claimed to be, the veritable Son of God.”*

These men could not accomplish what they had set out to do. The evidence was too convincing, it was overwhelming. It can convince you and me. You might just as well deny that the sun rose on that day as to deny the resurrection of Christ.

The Death And Resurrection Of Our Substitute

But there is more for you to come and see than the mere fact of Christ’s resurrection. Remember that Jesus Christ entered death as our Substitute. He had come to atone for our sins. That is why He had to die. He was bringing His blood and His life as a sacrifice to the throne of God.

The very fact that He came forth again proves that His sacrifice was sufficient. God is actually satisfied. We have been redeemed. We are now reconciled to God. — Furthermore, in order to save us, - sin, death, and the devil had to be overcome. Christ entered that battle for our sake. He fought unto death.

But His resurrection proves that He gained the victory. I want to emphasise that He did this for us. God Himself teaches you to say: *“Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Grave, where is your victory? ...*

But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”⁴

Again, since Jesus rose from the dead, He can surely raise us on the Last Day, as He has promised. He is our resurrection and life. Because He lives, we shall live also.⁵

We have just heard some of the fundamental facts of our Christian faith. You can convince yourselves by dwelling on the resurrection of Christ that they are firmly established. Simply *“come and see.”*

2. Go And Tell

The Easter message, secondly, directs us to go and tell. The angel told the women that they should go quickly and tell the disciples. The disciples were still groping about in the gloom of sorrow. The darkness of despair was hovering over them. They were sad when they should have been glad. The women now had the very news which could dispel all gloom.

They should go and tell the disciples that Christ crucified is risen again. They should go and tell it to these men who had not deserved such news. They had acted shamefully. They had forsaken Christ at the crucial moment. Peter had even denied Him.

The women had been out to Golgotha, but of the Twelve only John is mentioned as having been there. None of them had taken the interest in Christ to attend to His burial. That was left to strangers. Even now the disciples were hanging their heads. They acted as though all hope was gone.

But to these men the women should tell the news of the resurrection. One of the Evangelists, Mark, even records in Mark 16:7, ***“But go, tell His disciples — and Peter — that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.”*** Peter gets a special mention even though this man had so shamefully denied Him.

Again, we note that they should go quickly and tell it. The very fact that they knew it should move them to hasten to bring the news to those who needed it desperately.

Believers Must Confess

“Go and tell” is the message which Easter impresses also upon us. If we ourselves have heard of the glorious victory which Christ gained for us by His resurrection from the dead, if we know that this has been established beyond all doubt, namely the certainty of our redemption, if we are convinced that sin, death, and hell have been overcome and that salvation is now a reality, if we are assured that all men may have part in it by faith in Christ, then this very joy which we ourselves have experienced ought to move us to go and tell it to others.

Tell me, can it be otherwise? Where true knowledge of this wonderful fact dwells within the heart, there will also be a burning desire to let others know the glorious truth which will dispel all gloom and sadness for them and fill them with the assurance of eternal life.

We Have Many Opportunities

Do you know of some person who is troubled and filled with sadness? Go and tell him that Christ has risen from the dead. Assure him that this firmly established the great work of his redemption.

Do you know of someone who has forsaken Christ and is wandering about in the uncertainties of this life? Go and tell him that Jesus, who was crucified for him, is risen indeed, tell him that Christ is seeking him.

Do you know of a person who has never heard the message of salvation and is living in ignorance and darkness and is heedlessly travelling the way that leads to destruction? Go and tell him that Christ is risen and that He has established also his salvation. Tell him to turn to his risen Redeemer and be saved.

We have in our country many people who know nothing of Christ. You and I know that Christ is risen from the dead and that Christ’s work for us has thereby been firmly established. Is not the great ignorance which prevails on earth as to this truth, a mighty challenge to us to go and tell what we know?

We have the message which can save the sinner. Without this message he is hopelessly lost; with it he definitely can be saved. Can we be selfish and indifferent about this? Does not the wonderful resurrection of our Saviour which today causes our hearts to leap and our lips to burst forth into anthems of joy move us to go and tell?

Easter Is A Mighty Incentive

Does not the wonderful and blessed resurrection of our Saviour, which today causes our hearts to leap for joy and our lips to burst forth into shouts of triumph, move us to go and tell?

Does not your Easter joy increase when you realise that God grants you the privilege of being His co-worker in proclaiming the Gospel of Christ's death and resurrection?

When you yourself have experienced the blessedness and the joy of the victorious Easter message, must you not resolve wholeheartedly to support mission work and Bible distribution.

Does not today's news of Christ's victory for all mankind move you mightily to go and tell?

May God graciously grant that you and I may personally rejoice today from the very depth of our heart! The Easter message furnishes abundant cause for joy. Let us swell the anthems. Let us sing praises unto our Saviour, who has procured indescribable blessings for us.

Filled with exuberant Easter joy, let us address ourselves to the tasks which God has set before us. Let us faithfully perform our duty toward the millions who need the joy of Easter as well as we need it. May everyone of us come and see, and then go and tell! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Mark 16:3

² John 20:2

³ John 20:15

⁴ 1 Cor. 15:54-57

⁵ John 14:19