Easter Sunday Sermon

Luke 24:1-12

*Jesus conquered death so that one day we will too.*

“Why do you look for the living among the dead?” This is the question spoken by two men in dazzling clothes to the women who have come to Jesus tomb early on the third day. It seems an odd sort of question doesn’t it? They are not among the tombs looking for someone living they are looking for someone dead. They are looking for the tomb of their beloved friend and teacher, the one they hoped was the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

No one goes looking for the living among the dead. We only go to the places of death seeking the dead. Yet these strange men ask this question to the women and then simply state, “He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again."

After this the women remember the things Jesus had spoken to them, and they run to tell the rest of the disciples in hiding. The disciples think the women are simply telling a fanciful tale. The rest of the disciples are convinced this good news is a delusion or misunderstanding created by broken hearts.

Afterall the women have not seen the risen Christ himself. They have only the strange encounter with two men and the words and promises of Jesus. What is that compared with physical proof. Peter alone among the doubters at least goes to the tomb, and like the women he finds it empty. Peter then begins to wonder in amazement at what is going on.

"Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.” These words summarize why we are gathered here today. We are here to celebrate the reality of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We are here to celebrate the reality that Jesus has overcome the power of death, and he promises that all those who trust and believe in him as Lord will one day rise as he has.

This is our faith and our hope. Yet maybe it sounds like a fantasy or just a nice idea. Afterall who looks for life among death? Who expects that hope and life can come from a grave? Can we simply trust in what Jesus tells us in the words of scripture?

On Good Friday when we gathered for worship, we were reminded in the crucifixion of Jesus that death is real. It is a powerful force that separates us from the ones we love. It leaves us grieving without our loved one’s voices, their touch, and the ability to speak with them. We don’t go to the gravesides of our loved ones expecting life. We go there and see continued reminders of the power of death.

"Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.” These words confronted the women at the tomb when they went seeking only death, and they confront us here and now. Can we trust them? Can we dare to hope that they are true and that one day all the faithful departed will bodily rise from the dead to eternal life?

These are the questions we are asked each Eastertide. Do we really believe all this about Jesus bodily rising from the dead? All through the year, and especially at Eastertide, as we gather to hear the Word, to pray, to speak the creeds, and to receive the sacraments we affirm again and again that yes, we really do believe this.

We believe and trust that Jesus kept his promise to bodily rise from the grave because God does not lie. God alone always keeps promises. We have faith in these promises even when others around us and our society do not because of the one who gave them to us; Jesus Christ the Son of God.

Jesus was born into our world to live and die as one of us that he might free us from sin, death, and the devil. Jesus kept this promise by dying for us on the cross. Jesus promised the gift of new life now and eternal life to come to those who believe, and we receive this promise in the gift of Holy Baptism.

Jesus promised us the continued forgiveness of sins, life, and to be with us and we receive this promise each time we come to the altar an receive in bread and wine the true body and blood of Jesus Christ himself.

Jesus promised to be with us always to the end of time and we receive this promise in the Holy Spirit which is always with us, in us, and around us strengthening our faith, giving us courage, and helping us to trust in Jesus and his resurrection. Jesus never breaks a promise.

In a short while we will welcome Benjamin into the family of God. When he comes to worship, we will remind him of Jesus promises to him. As he grows we will be there to support him, and to remind him that he is a part of the living story of Christ.

When Benjamin begins to ask the questions, “Did Jesus really rise” “Does Jesus really love me” “Did Jesus mean it when he promised a resurrection to those who trust in him?” We will be there to say yes. We will be there to remind him that Jesus never breaks a promise, and so he can trust and have faith that Jesus will always be there loving him, claiming him as a child of God, forgiving his sins, and leading him to eternal life to come.

"Why do you look for the living among the dead?” We have faith and courage just as the women at the tomb did before us. So, we boldly proclaim that life has come among death, because we trust and believe that Jesus is Lord and he is risen and no longer in the grave just as he promised. Instead Jesus is active in our world brining his new life into all areas of the world affected by death, and one day his promises shall be complete when he returns and bodily raises all the faithful to be with him forever at the feast of the Lamb. Amen.