

Easter Sunday
Pastor Jacob Hanson
04/12/2020

Opening Prayer

He is Risen! Good morning, and welcome here to our drive-in style Easter service! We have been praying for you, and will continue to do so in this strange season. During this tough time of being apart, praise the Lord that He is still in control. I've missed seeing you and being around you, and many of you have expressed the same that life just isn't the same without proper church. This has been the weirdest and strangely the most difficult Lenten season of our lives. There have been many hardships for a lot of you. Economically, health-related, absent from the ones you love, it has been a tough start to 2020. In many ways this has been the most Lenten of all Lenten seasons, as all of us have seen the somber and the solemn. The forty days between Ash Wednesday and today are a somber time in the life of the church usually, but with all that we have been through over the last month it has been infinitely more serious than normal. We have worshipped apart, taken Communion in silence in our own homes, and have been denied the church community that we love. We have looked more like the underground church in a closed country than the openly joyful worshippers that we usually are. We also have looked much like the disciples following the death of their leader, following the death of Christ. For many it has been a hopeless, joyless, frightening time. But Beloved Congregation, there is joy in all of this for us... this morning as we celebrate Easter Sunday, we remember that our Lord is in control. We remember that He is risen, He isn't in the tomb anymore. We remember that by Jesus's death and resurrection that we are healed, that we are given eternal life through Him! Although Lent may have been extra hard, Easter Sunday has still come. We are still here, God is still in control, and Jesus's promise of resurrection is fulfilled by the empty tomb!

The lead up to Easter Sunday is one of utter gloom. Jesus, the Messiah, the promised one, the chosen one, the Son of David, had been crucified. Jesus had done no evil, had sinned against no one, had spoken nothing but the truth, and had willingly gone to the cross. The disciples, His friends, who had followed Jesus for three years had just seen their leader put to death, betrayed by one of their own, Judas Iscariot. Many of Jesus's followers, including His own mother, had watched from a distance as the one in whom they had put all their trust and hope had died. His last words being "it is finished," Jesus had died. A criminal's death was allocated to Him, and the couple of kind Jewish leaders who were there (Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus) had laid Jesus in one of their tombs hastily before the Passover. The lead up to Easter Sunday, Beloved Congregation, could not get any more horrible. All the hope that these folks had in Jesus as the Christ had been broken... He had died just like He said He would and they were left alone. But of course, this isn't the end. This isn't how the story of our Messiah finishes.

John 20:1-2 reads “Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb. So she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved [probably John], and said to them, ‘They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.’” The first day of the week for the Jews is Sunday. Because Saturday is the prescribed day of rest (especially during the Passover), none of Jesus’s followers could come and properly attend to His body. They had hastily wrapped Him in some burial linens, but there was more that was needed to be done. Mary Magdalene, one of the women who had followed Jesus for many years, was the first to come to His tomb. Imagine her horror when she had seen that the stone was rolled away and that Jesus was no longer inside. She grabbed the disciples John and Peter, and the three of them together (as we probably would) assumed that someone had stolen Jesus’s body. But as Peter and John investigate, a hint of hope creeps in.

Verses 5-8 read “and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in. And so Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself. So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb [John] then also entered, and he saw and believed.” The scene from the outside to Mary Magdalene looked like a grave robbery, the stone was rolled away and the body was gone. But inside all of the linen wrappings were present and the face covering was neatly folded. It wasn’t a scene of disarray, but rather one of order. It was certainly enough of a sign that John at the very least began to believe that His Messiah maybe was not dead... but that He quite possibly have had risen again. Following their investigation, Peter and John left wondering to themselves and they returned to their own homes. But Mary Magdalene stayed behind, and it is she who was given the most wonderful and amazing thing... something that she could never have hoped to see ever again. She saw Jesus alive and well in front of her.

Beloved, who is the person whom you miss the most who has passed on? A grandparent? A spouse? A child? A best friend? Imagine the joy you would feel to see them again, living in the flesh, there with you? Mary Magdalene gets that joy here with Jesus, but don’t be too jealous. The true joy of being Christians is that we know if our loved ones and we cling to Christ, that we too will see them again. That is part of the eternal beauty of the resurrection given by Jesus on Easter Sunday.

Verse 11-16 read “But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looking into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying, and they said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’ She said to them, ‘Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.’ When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you

weeping? Whom are you seeking?' Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, 'Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, 'Rabboni!' (which means teacher.)" What a beautiful sight that must have been. To move from utter desolation, no hope, all is lost, to then knowing that the one in whom you had put all your trust was alive... that He truly was the Messiah. From here Jesus will send Mary on to the disciples and other followers to whom He will soon appear over the course of the next forty or so days, and later Jesus will ascend to heaven. It is a beautiful scene, and it is one that we celebrate today. Beloved Congregation, Easter is the most wonderful day of the year for us, because it rightly fills us with hope.

The core of our faith is that we, as sinners, cannot pay our debt to our Creator. The wages of sin is death, and because the Lord is not only all-loving but also all just, sin cannot be tolerated. Without help we are hopelessly lost, and we cannot make our way to heaven through our own "good" deeds. The Lord, loving us dearly (John 3:16 anybody?) makes the ultimate sacrifice for us. Jesus, God in human flesh and one part of the trinity, comes to earth and lives as one of us. Our Savior walks around, for roughly thirty years, as a normal (albeit without sin) human man. He then preaches and teaches all over Judea both to the Jewish nation and to the Gentiles, and proves by His actions that He is the promised Messiah from out of the Old Testament. To pay our debt, Jesus the Lamb of God, then is killed by the very ones He came to save. But His death does not end in tragedy, but rather triumph. Today on Easter Sunday He resurrects Himself, overcoming sin and death, and proves without a shadow of a doubt that all He preaches is true. The promise that is found throughout all of scripture, that God would bless the whole world through the Jews (Genesis), that He would put a king on the throne to rule forever (2nd Samuel), that He would create peace and justice and hope for all who follow Him... it is all accomplished with Jesus's rise from the grave. It is the final nail in the coffin, not of Jesus, but of death. We are here worshipping and rejoicing because by His life, death, and resurrection we too are blessed to share in eternal life through Jesus.

So what does this mean for you today, and what should you take away this Easter Sunday morning? Very simply Beloved Congregation, hope and joy. If you call upon Jesus as your Savior (if you don't now is a great time to start!) then you can rest assured knowing that your King reigns. You don't serve a dead god who can do nothing, you serve a risen Lord who is in control and is all powerful and is all mighty and who loves you enough to make a way for you. He has promised us eternal life, and we can know it is true because He proves through His resurrection that death has no hold on Him. It therefore, by His promises, also has no hold on us. We may perish here, but we will not remain in the ground just as He did not remain in the tomb. He is not here, He is risen. Someday we too will rise, and in the meantime we can have hope and joy in knowing that our Savior lives. Happy Easter Beloved Congregation, your Savior reigns. He is Risen! Let us pray,

Closing Prayer