

Sermon Easter 2016 Luke 24;1-12 Job 19;23-27 3-27-16 Pastor Schempf Zion, Clyman, WI

When Easter Sunday falls at the end of March, those of us in Wisconsin know that balmy temperatures, with spring in full flush is not guaranteed. A cold, gray day is quite possible. Cheery Easter fashions can be worn today but only beneath a warm winter coat. But, praise God, our Easter celebration does not depend on the weather. We celebrate the resurrection of Jesus no matter what. Nothing is going to hold us back. Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia! The very first Easter began in gloom as well. With downcast hearts the women made their way to the tomb in the pre-dawn chill. Concern about the large stone at the entrance of the tomb was on their minds but their thoughts would have been focused more on what they would find once they entered the tomb. St. Luke clues us in on what they were expecting. He concludes his description of Jesus' burial like this, "the women who had come with Him out of Galilee followed after, and saw the tomb and how His body was laid." "How His body was laid." When you've been to the funeral of a loved one, "how their body is laid", how they look in the stillness of death makes a powerful and lasting visual impact. It's etched in your mind. That mental image of Jesus' body; how it was laid, would have filled their thoughts on their early morning trek to the grave. When they found the stone rolled away they went in, only to discover that the body of Jesus was not there. Their minds reeled. Luke says that they were "perplexed". But they were perplexed only for a moment. Terror was their next emotion. When two angels in dazzling apparel suddenly stood before them, their instant response was to bend low with their faces down to the ground. The angels, identified as men, got right to the point. "Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again?" In fact they did remember. Jesus' words came back to them. They departed quickly from the tomb with a crazy mix of emotions; fear and great joy. (What a combination!) Startled and stymied initially, so shaken that they couldn't utter a word, they finally got their feet moving, and raced back to tell the disciples, none of whom believed a word they said. They too would believe soon enough, but their initial reaction is not surprising... dead men don't come back to life. They didn't believe the women's report. In the meantime for the women, a number of whom had actually seen Jesus along the road on their way back from the tomb, their frame of mind had changed. Everything had changed. They had left for the tomb with one thing on their mind; 'the way His body was laid'. Jesus' resurrection came crashing into their sad world of sad events, sad thoughts, sad feelings, and sad 'everything'. Jesus' resurrection changed all that. Their gloomy outlook, their one and only focus, the sad reality of 'how His body was laid' was completely overshadowed by the fact that Jesus was risen from the dead.

There are times in your life when the 'how his body was laid' mentality permeates your thinking. A negative funk infects your spirit. You remember your sins, things you have said and

done and the fallout that has resulted. You remember the hurt you have caused others... and the trouble you have brought on yourself. When the women remembered 'how His body was laid' that painful sight was directly connected to their own sins. There are also times when we, like Job, don't understand the way that God is working in our lives, refining us through a painful process like that man of old. Like those women at the tomb, Job too couldn't get his mind off the pain in his life. It was impossible for him to focus on anything else, impossible to rejoice because pain and sorrow permeated everything. In the midst of Job's suffering there was only one thing that could bring him any relief. He found hope in what God had revealed to him concerning the resurrection of Jesus and his own resurrection from the dead. "I know that my Redeemer live and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God; whom I shall behold, and whom my eyes shall see and not another." Job was able to look past the pain he was in and the bleak reality that his body would decay after he died because he knew that His Redeemer, Jesus, was a living God and would raise his body from the grave. Don't you love his added emphasis, his confident hope when he says, "whom I shall behold and my eyes shall see and not another"? It's like a victory lap, "It will really be me, my body, my eyes that will be raised from the dead." When Satan tries to break you down and convince you that you are a loser, that you have no reason to be hopeful (and he always tries to defeat you with hopelessness) there is a way to fight back. Remember that your God is a living God who is with you in this life. When you fall in sin He lifts you back up with divine forgiveness. He promises to never leave you or forsake you. He is with you all the way to the end of your life; His promises are true. And when your body is laid in the grave, you're coming back out. It will be a glorified body, but it will be really you. What other news compares to that?

Jesus' resurrection is the most significant event in all of human history. What war, what leader, what discovery, what invention, what decree, what treaty, what event has had, still has and always will have world-wide impact in every generation like Jesus' resurrection? Alexander the Great is considered the greatest military leader ever. But what has he done for you lately? Lincoln saved the Union but how is Lincoln at work in your life today? What else in the history of the world has greater meaning for your life personally than Jesus' resurrection? St. Paul declares that everything depends on Jesus' resurrection. Without it there is no substance to our faith; no hope, no meaning. "If Christ has not been raised then our preaching is in vain, your faith also is vain" and he says it again, "if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless, you are still in your sins." Could he be any more blunt or clear? If Christ was not raised from the dead, how can YOU hope to be raised from the dead? But Paul emphasizes, "Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive."

Friends in Christ, "What's a little cold weather with gray skies on Easter?" If the resurrection of Jesus could lift even the spirits of miserable Job, if the resurrection of Jesus could erase in the minds of sad and dejected women who could only think about "how His body was laid"; can't the resurrection of Jesus be your help when you're sad and discouraged? No cold and gray day of any kind is the last word for those who believe in Jesus. Because Jesus lives, you too shall live; forever. Discouragement and sadness are bound to come...but they just can't hang around permanently when you believe that Jesus is alive and is with you. Rejoice, people of God. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.