

Series: **FOUR MESSAGES OF THE CROSS**

Title: The other side of the cross is the Empty Tomb

Text:

Just outside of Dayton Ohio there was an Easter egg hunt in a mall. Parents were so rude and overbearing to those children that they were pushed and shoved. In the end the mall said they would no longer hold a hunt for eggs there in the future. "There will no longer be a hunt for eggs".

Today many families will be hunting for eggs in their yards. I would like to say that there is a much greater prize to hunt for on this day than a colored, boiled egg.

It is the Hunt for the treasure of heaven, our Lord Jesus Christ. The ladies came to the tomb looking for the Lord in a tomb... but did not find Him there.

- "I Rise to a Question of Privilege," Who Is Mark Twain?
 - If I could, I would make such havoc among the shams of Palestine that I would leave little there for men to feast their eyes and feed their fancies upon save the Hill of Calvary, and the lesson it carries to the most careless heart that pulses in its presence.
 - I would leave it to tell of Him who suffered there, and to suggest the picture of the Crucifixion more vividly than the multitude of its surroundings, which are at best of questionable holiness, can ever do.
 - All things must pass away but that one Figure, and when they do, the world will be none the loser for it. ... the Teacher of Nazareth, standing upon the height of Calvary -- sacred because the theatre of the noblest self-sacrifice man has yet conceived -- shall say to them that mourn this desolation, "Peace! I am the Resurrection and the Life!"

"Our old history ends with the cross; our new history begins with the resurrection."

- Watchman Nee

The question was asked of a pastor years ago as to what day was greater, the crucifixion or the resurrection.

- Many branches of Christianity focus enormously on the cross, yet fail to emphasize the resurrection. Others focus on the risen Lord, but spend little time on the work of the cross.
- The answer to this question is as Paul says in many places that the gospel is the good news of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - We speak of both gladly for if there were no resurrection, His death would have no bearing on our need to have victory over death. And if there were no cross, there would be no payment to cover the sins that we have committed and therefore no access to God.
 - It is both the cross and the resurrection that we preach. For it is the good news of heaven for our sake and yours.

The last four messages have been focusing on the messages Jesus gave moving up to the day of His crucifixion.

- Last week I addressed the brutality of His crucifixion
- Countless have been crucified in history. When asked, people will all point to Jesus' crucifixion. Some may bring up Peter; some may bring up the thieves on the cross. Yet when the word is used today... All thoughts go to Jesus.
- His death paid the price that was needed to redeem those who would look upon Him and receive Him

Today, I would like to speak about one of the most significant events in human history – the resurrection of the Messiah, the empty tomb of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

- This tomb is a testament to the power of God, the ultimate sacrifice of our Lord, and the undeniable truth of His resurrection.

Paul says to the church in Corinth,

1 Cor. 15:14-19

¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. ¹⁵ We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

Let us begin by contemplating the tomb.

- It was a simple stone structure, carved into the rock, and sealed with a massive stone.
- This tomb was the final resting place of our Lord, who had been crucified on a nearby hill.

The tomb was guarded by Roman soldiers, who were tasked with ensuring that the body of Jesus remained inside.

Matt. 27:62-66

⁶² The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate ⁶³ and said, “Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise.’ ⁶⁴ Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, ‘He has risen from the dead,’ and the last fraud will be worse than the first.” ⁶⁵ Pilate said to them, “You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can.” ⁶⁶ So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.

But even the might of the Roman Empire could not contain the power of God.

- On the third day, the stone was rolled away, and the tomb was found empty.
- The guards were astonished, and many were left trembling in fear.

Matt. 28:2-4

² And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴ And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. The empty tomb was a sign that something miraculous had taken place.

Some skeptics may argue that the tomb was empty because the body of Jesus had been stolen.

- However, this explanation does not hold up to scrutiny.
- The Roman guards were highly trained and disciplined soldiers.
- If anyone had attempted to steal the body, they would have been caught and punished severely.

THE HISTORICITY OF THE EMPTY TOMB

- Furthermore, the historicity of the crucifixion of Jesus is well-documented. Numerous sources, both Christian and non-Christian, attest to the fact that Jesus was crucified by the Romans.
- 17 outside sources point to the historicity of Jesus life and death and many refer the resurrection
 - Publius Cornelius Tacitus (c. AD 56 – c. 120), a Roman historian who served under seven emperors states in his writings, *The Annals*:
 - “Nero had sacked Jerusalem in 70 AD in order to remove blame from himself fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and **a most mischievous superstition**, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judæa, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, ...”
 - His death was not a myth or a fabrication, but a real and brutal event that took place in human history.
 - And what was the superstition Tacitus was alluding to? That Jesus rose on the third day and lives!
- When Mary Magdalene, Salome, and the other Mary went to see the tomb, seeing it empty, they saw an angel. The angel spoke to them, saying:

Matt. 28:5-7

⁵ “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, ...

Luke 24:6-8

⁶ He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷ that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.” ⁸ And they remembered his words...

All four gospels speak of His resurrection; outside sources verify the message of the empty tomb. It is historical, not a myth, lie, or fable.

TRANSITION

It is not simply the historicity of the empty tomb that must be remembered and noted, but also the testimony of the empty tomb.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE EMPTY TOMB

What of the testimony of His resurrection?

The testimony of those who saw Him alive.

The Bible tells us that Jesus appeared to His disciples and many others after His death.

1 Cor. 15:3-8 ³ *Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures,* ⁴ *that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,* ⁵ *and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.* ⁶ *Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.* ⁷ *Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.* ⁸ *Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.*

These witnesses were not hallucinating or making up stories.

- They were real people who had seen and spoken with Jesus after His death.

The Testimony of the Transformed Disciples

The testimony of the resurrection is further supported by the transformation of the disciples.

- Before the resurrection, they were fearful and confused.
- But after seeing the risen Christ, they became bold and confident, willing to preach the gospel even in the face of persecution and death.

Acts 3:13 *Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.*

- This transformation is evidence of the reality of the resurrection and the power of God.
- They had scattered.
- They had denied.
- They had hidden.
- Yet now..... They are bold and fearless.

TRANSITION

There is a clear written history of the empty tomb from believers and antagonists who did not believe. Yet they recorded the event in history.

There is a clear testimony by the witnesses of Jesus after His resurrection and the massive shift in the nature of the disciples as they went from fearful, runaway weaklings to fearless, relentless witnesses.

But not only are there historical verification and testimonial verification. But there is another identifier that shows us the truth of the resurrection.

It is the veracity of life that comes to the followers of Jesus because of the empty tomb.

THE VERACITY OF THE EMPTY TOMB

So finally, let us consider the veracity of life for His followers.

The resurrection of Jesus gives us hope for eternal life.

- It shows us that death is not the end, but a beginning of a new life.
- As followers of Christ, we have the assurance that we will one day be raised from the dead, just as Jesus was.

John 5:24

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

The resurrection of Jesus brings victory over sin and death.

The empty tomb is a symbol of the **victory of God over sin and death.**

- It shows us that nothing is impossible for God, and that we can place our faith and trust in Him.

1 Cor. 15:50-57

⁵⁰ I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹ Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass 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.*

- Death has no victory over you. Death has no sting for you.
- We have new life in Christ and eternal life in Christ

The resurrection of Jesus calls us to live a life that **honors God**.

1 Cor. 6:19-20

¹⁹ *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰ for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*

Rev. 19:7

Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; ...

- It is a call to all of us to live our lives in a way that honors God.
- We are to make ourselves ready for His return,
- To offer up ourselves to Him as a living sacrifice – it is our spiritual act of worship.

The resurrection of Jesus **compels us to spread the good news of the gospel** to all who will listen.

2 Tim. 4:1-5

¹ *I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ² preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. ³ For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. ⁵ As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*

- Proclaim His Word
- Be ready at all times

- People have turned away from sound teaching
 - Their own passions
 - No truth but wandered into myths
 - Do the work of an evangelist

Romans 1:16-17

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the empty tomb of Jesus is not only a powerful and life-changing event that should be celebrated and remembered by all Christians.

The empty tomb holds the powerful life-changing truth to all who would come to Him.

- It is a testament to the power of God, the ultimate sacrifice of our Lord, and the undeniable truth of His resurrection.
- Let us come to the Lord and give our lives to Him.
 - You can come today and believe on Him.
 - You can move from a status of being on the outside to one who is on the inside and receiving abundant life and eternal life.

- Let us all live our lives in a way that honors Him and shares the good news of His resurrection with the world.

BELIEVE AND BE FREE

Let’s Pray