

The Lord's Message: What The Difference a Day Can Make!

Date: March 31, 2024

Where: Tilghman Methodist Church

Scripture Reference: Matthew 28:1-10

Have you ever had a day where everything went wrong? If you have, then you might understand how the disciples (men and women) felt about what has taken place with their teacher and friend, Jesus. Jesus has been betrayed by one of them, Judas, condemned to death on bogus charges by the religious leaders, whipped and flogged by the Romans, crucified on the cross, the sins of all human beings were placed on Him, He died and was buried in another's tomb. Their day could not have been worse.

Let us pray.

Before I begin, let me just say that in all 4 gospels it is women who see the empty tomb and meet the resurrected Jesus. Their testimony is proof of the resurrection, because in **Deuteronomy 19:15**, God says there must be two witness to confirm an event. These two witnesses have to be male. For the Gospel writers to say the women were the first to see the empty tomb and meet the resurrected Jesus, then God must be the one who is in charge and not the male writers. The Bible, especially the New Testament, even though written in a male dominated world, raises women to the same level as men.

It is the women, who are consumed by their grief, come to the tomb at dawn, **Matthew 28:1**. These are the same women who were at the cross. They stayed until Jesus had breathed His last. They even helped Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus prepare the body for burial. It was late in the day on Friday, just before the Passover, and they quickly did what they could. The job was not finished, so they came early in the morning to finish the job. There were major obstacles that stood in their way, a large stone rolled in front of tomb, the seal that Pontius Pilate had allowed the chief priest to place on the stone and the guards. God can make a way despite all the obstacles that we may encounter in life.

We are told in verse 2 that there was an earthquake that was caused by an angel of the Lord. This angel came down and rolled the stone away and then sat on it. This angel was dazzling in appearance, as it says in verse 3. In verse 4, we are told that the angel was so dazzling that it caused the guards to tremble in fear.

What is the first thing that angel said to the women? "Do not be afraid." Verses 5-7, the angels give God's message to the women.

The women who had come to the tomb filled with sorrow and dread are now filled with joy after receiving God's message. I would suspect that all through the Passover celebration, they were thinking of Jesus. When God told the Israelites to sprinkle the Lamb's blood upon the top of the doorpost and the sides so that the angel of death would pass over, they were wondering why God did not rescue His Son. They thought that they would be celebrating this Passover with Jesus. Some of you know how that feels. The one that you have celebrated life with is now gone. That person will not be at the Holiday celebrations or the birthdays, or the anniversaries anymore.

My heart this morning goes out to you. I have some idea how you feel. My mother passed away in 2017. My heart grieved, as I am sure many of you did, when you saw the video of the large container ship ramming into the Francis Scott Key Bridge. The result is that the entire bridge came crashing into the water with the loss of six construction workmen who were filling in the potholes on the bridge. My heart grieves for the families, the wives, the children, the sisters and brothers, mothers and fathers and extended family members. What a day that was.

What a difference a day can be. Easter is about the fact that God did not leave His Son in the grave. God resurrected His Son and all who believe in Jesus will be raised to new life in Heaven also. The Apostle Paul used a very important early Christian hymn to celebrate this fact, **1 Corinthians 15:55**. He goes on to say in verses 56 & 57 that the victory over death has been won.

Easter makes all the difference in this world, not because of a bunny, but because of an empty tomb. God did not pass over His Son but raised Him from the grave. By knowing the fact that Jesus was raised by the power of Almighty God, our loved ones, and we who believe in Jesus, can be raised as well. Sin was defeated at the cross. The consequences of sin, death, was defeated with an empty tomb, **1 Corinthians 15:55-57**.

In **Matthew 28:8**, The women who were once filled with sorrow and grief are now filled with joy and they cannot contain this joy. We are told that they run to tell the disciples. For a Christian, it is imperative that we not contain the truth of the resurrection but share it with everybody. If we do not, then we will lose that joy. The more that we share it the more that others are filled with joy and that joy flows back to us.

The amazing result of us sharing the joy of the resurrection with others is that along the way, we might meet Jesus. Look at verse 9. They grasped ahold of His feet to make sure that He is real and not a ghost. A ghost does not have feet. This was also a sign of worshipping Jesus. One would fall down and worship God. If Jesus were not God, then the women would be committing a sin. They would have broken the first two commandments in the Ten Commandments that you should not worship any other gods, **Exodus 20:1-6**. Since Jesus is God, then they were not committing a sin. Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, and the first and the last. Jesus lives!

In verse 10, Jesus gives them instructions to tell His male disciples about seeing Jesus alive. Jesus uses an endearing term for these disciples, He calls them, "My brothers" or in some Bible translations "My brethren." The disciples thought that Jesus would reproach them for deserting Him in the Garden and at the cross. By using this term, Jesus is giving His full assurance, in the most tender way, that all of that is buried forever.

We who have sinned, if we confess and repent of our sins to Jesus, can have those sins forgiven. The consequences of those sins, death, is gone.

What the difference a day can make! Amen.