

Matthew 28:1-10; I Cor. 15:1-4; He is Not Here I. The Surprise of His Resurrection II. The Shocking Declaration

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, what kind of sermon do you expect to hear this morning? I imagine most of you have some idea of what will be said this morning- and I doubt that many of you came expecting a sermon on the suffering of Jesus. No, today is Resurrection Sunday- right? The Day of Resurrection and life- good news- joy and light! Rightly so- but the women in our passage did not come to tomb expecting this good news! Rather, they were coming with hearts broken and dreams shattered. But the fact remains, good news will be heard in the morning! The cross is at the center of the gospel, but the cross is not the end of the matter! Yes, Jesus did die a cursed death to set us free from the curse and death; but praise God that this is not the end of the story! Nor is Good Friday the end of our story! We cannot have Easter without Good Friday- but we cannot stop at the cross if we hope to have everlasting joy and comfort! Today we are going to see that the empty tomb proves the power, victory and life of Jesus Christ. We consider this theme: Jesus Christ rose from the grave as promised in order to secure our everlasting life!

I. The Surprise of His Resurrection

In our first point we will focus in on the surprising nature of the resurrection. Although we expected this day to come, those in our passage surely did not. It is interesting to note that Jesus spoke repeatedly and openly about not only His death, but also the need for His rising again. There are at least 3 direct passages in the gospels where Jesus says- I am going to Jerusalem to die and then rise again as we find in Matthew 16. Added to this, He also indicated His eternal nature and continuous rule in other places as well. He being an everlasting priest and eternal son of God; it is necessary for Him to live! So Jesus was very open about His resurrection with His followers, but that does not mean that they were looking forward to this event taking place. What were the disciples doing on this Sunday morning? Well, they were hiding in fear or they were crushed with their disappointment. We find this in Luke 24:21- when Jesus meets two of His disciples on the road to Emmaus, they shared how they had hoped in Jesus and the redemption that He would bring. In

other words, the disciples were not preparing to meet Jesus, but rather their hope for redemption had been dashed. They were defeated and hopeless at this point. John 20 says that the disciples were meeting in secret because they feared the Jewish leaders. So there was no expectation of good news by the disciples. And what about the women who so faithfully followed and ministered to Jesus? Well, our passage opens with the woman going down to the tomb on Sunday, early in the morning on the first day of the week. They were going to grave- they went to see the tomb as v. 1 says. Who lives in the tomb? Well, dead bodies are found in the tomb. The grave is not normally a place of joy and gladness but of sorrow and loss. What were they going to the tomb to do? They were going to tomb in Mark 16 to anoint the body of Jesus. They were getting ready to put spices and oils on the dead body of their beloved Lord. Again, they were not going to the grave with joy and expectation, but with sorrow and loss. Prepared for their final parting with Jesus. As the angels ask them in v. 5- for whom are you searching for, ladies? Women, for whom are you looking? You are looking for Jesus who was crucified. They were looking for the body of a dead man- one who had been crucified and laid on the tomb. One whose body had been sealed in a vault with a stone door. They were expecting to encounter the dead in the place of the dead! Even the way to body of Jesus was shut- the stone door sealed and guarded by the power of Rome. There is little expectation of good news. This was a natural expectation- for the dead are found in the grave. But this is not where Jesus was because that is not who Jesus is! So there is going to be a cataclysmic change that takes place in our passage. The women will come with sorrow but they will leave with great joy as v. 8 says. They will come slowly walking but they will leave running quickly! They will come in subdued mourning ready to anoint the dead but they will leave to loudly declare and worship a living Savior! Now what would happen to change them so? What would take place to turn weeping into laughter? Sorrow into joy? Reluctance into worship! What had changed? What changes is this- there is a shocking declaration as the truth is made known! But before we get to this second point, we briefly apply this point by considering the change in the women's demeanor. When they thought that Jesus was still dead, they were sorrowful and filled with mourning. But after the resurrection they will

be joyful as they spread the word. They go from thinking they are anointing the dead to actually worshipping the risen Lord! The fact is, sometimes our worship looks more like the women before the resurrection and less like the women after the resurrection. Would it be more fitting to resemble those going to a grave side burial service or those who are sharing the good news that Jesus is alive? I submit to you, the resurrection of Jesus is what turns our worship from sorrow to joy- and motivates us to become spreaders of this good news. As the angels told the women to go quickly and tell the others- which they did with great joy- so our worship and our lives should be lived in this joyful sharing of the good news! He is risen! There is good news! The grave is not the end of the story! Knowing that Jesus is not here in the grave is a truth that should awaken our hearts and fill them with joy as well!

II. The Shocking Declaration

As we find the angels say in v. 6- He is not here, for He has risen as He said! My dear ladies, why are you looking for Jesus here? Why do you search for Him among the tombs? Why are you looking for the crucified dead man? Notice where Jesus is not. He is not here- He is not in the grave! He is not sealed behind the tomb- His body is not wearing these grave cloths. He is not in a humbled and lifeless state. He is not on the cross and not in the sepulchre. But that raises a really important question. Why isn't He here? Why is the body of Jesus no longer present in the tomb of Joseph? Was His body stolen or moved? Did the Romans take and hide it or the Jews move it so that the disciples could not steel it? Did grave robbers come and carry His dead body away? Why is the body of Jesus no longer here? Did we come to the wrong tomb- has there been some mistake? No- He is not here because He has risen! He is not dead but alive! He is not in His humiliation but rather exaltation! This is just as He said. As I stated earlier, Jesus gives us 3 clear teachings in the gospel concerning His future resurrection. As Mt. 12 states, the Son of Man will be 3 days and 3 nights in the earth. So the resurrection of Jesus will fulfill the sign of Jonah. And in Mt. 17:22- the Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men and they will kill Him, but He will be raised on the third day. Or in John 10- Jesus has the authority to lay down His life and to take it up again. But not only

were the very words of Jesus being fulfilled, the resurrection is also taught in the OT. As Psalm 16 puts, the Father will not let the holy One see corruption. Even the sparing of Abraham's son, Isaac, would be a picture of both Jesus' death and resurrection- being received again after death. As I reading from I Cor. 15:4 puts it, Christ died for our sins, was buried and he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.

But this resurrection of Jesus seems so far off- so long ago. Do we doubt that Jesus rose? Like Thomas- if I don't see it, I won't believe it. The seed of doubt and unbelief seeks to choke our joy and comfort. Let me ask you- did Jesus rise just as He said? He had promised to do this- and He did it! Let me also ask- has Jesus promised that where He is you will also be? Why Yes, He has! Do you doubt this? Do you believe that after you die, you will be with Jesus? You should- because Jesus promised to bring you to His home in glory after you die! Once more- do you doubt that Jesus will come back? That just as He ascended, He will also descend on the clouds of glory on the last day? Well, did Jesus promise to do this? Yes, He did- and He will! Resurrection Sunday proves that Jesus keeps His promises! He will do as He said! He will not leave us nor forsake us- we can only be brought closer to Him as time progresses! It was necessary for Jesus to rise because He said- I will rise! He is in fact the Lord of Life! He is the resurrection and the life! He has true life in Himself- and He gives everlasting life to those who follow Him! He promises to take us to glory- as He Himself is in glory! He promises to raise us from the dead- as He himself has been raised from the dead! The resurrection proves that the Father has accepted the sacrifice offered by His Son- truly it is finished! His resurrection proves that He has power over death- the Gates of Hell will not prevail! His resurrection proves that He has granted us the rights of children and entrance into glory- today you will be with me in paradise! He laid down His life- and He took it up again!

As we close, Resurrection Sunday is our assurance of a blessed and eternal future. As our theme states: Jesus Christ rose from the grave as promised in order to secure our everlasting life! Sealed tombs and Roman soldiers at the ready cannot hinder His going forth! Death no longer the stronger- the bars of the grave have been broken! Hallelujah- what a Savior!