

Easter Sermon

April 16, 2006

8:00 and 9:30

John 20:1-18

I've got good news for you today.
Great news!

Early,
on the first day of the week,
while it was still dark,
Mary Magdalene came to the tomb,
and saw that the stone had been removed.

Good news.

So she ran
and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple,
the one whom Jesus loved.
And they took off running for the tomb.
And John bent down to look in
and saw the linen wrappings lying there.

Good news.

Then Simon Peter got there,
he hadn't run quite so fast.
And you know Simon Peter,
he never hesitated,
even if it made him look bad.
He went right into the tomb.
And the linen wrappings were lying there—
—all neat and rolled up.
Grave robbers wouldn't have rolled the burial linens.

Good news.

Then,
after Peter and John had gone back home,
Mary stayed there.
And she saw two angels in white,
sitting where Jesus' body had been.

And they talked to her.
They said: "Woman, why are you weeping?"

You see, there's good news.

She hadn't figured that out yet,
so Mary Magdalene said:
"They have taken away my Lord,
and I don't know where they've laid him."

And when she turned around,
she saw Jesus standing there.

Really good news.

But she didn't know it was Jesus.
And Jesus said to her,
"Woman, why are you weeping?
Who are you looking for?"
She figured it was the gardener,
so she said:
"If you've taken him away,
tell me where."

And then,
the wonderful moment.
Jesus said to her:
"Mary!"
And then she knew.
Then she knew that it was true.
He was alive.
The grave couldn't hold him in.
Death was strong,
but God was stronger.

Good news.
Good news.

Christ is Risen!
He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Every year
we say that response.
It's an ancient thing,
to say that to one another.
And we say it
because it is such good news.

Christ is Risen!
He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Don't you wish you could have been there?
Don't you wish you could have seen Jesus
on that first Easter morning—
—just like Mary did?
Wouldn't that have been something?

It would have been fun.
It would have been exciting.
But it seems
that it doesn't make believing any easier.
It doesn't make it easier to
believe and understand.

You would think it would be easy,
wouldn't you.
Easy for Mary and Peter and John.
But it wasn't.

Seven times in these 18 verses,
words for “seeing” are used.
And the seeing results in some belief about what is seen—
—and that belief is usually wrong.

It's good that God is so persistent.

Mary **sees** the stone rolled away from the tomb. (vs. 1)
She **believes** that they have taken the lord (vs. 2)

John **sees** the linen wrappings lying there,
Peter **sees** the linen wrappings when he goes into the tomb.
And it says John **believed**,
but we're not sure exactly what he believed,
because they did not yet understand the scripture,
that he must rise from the dead.
And Peter and John just went home.

Mary **saw** two angels.
And she still didn't **believe** that Jesus was alive

She even **saw** Jesus,
and didn't even recognize him.
She **believed** he was the gardener.

Until finally Jesus called her name—
Mary!

I am so thankful that God is so patient
and persistent.
That God doesn't give up on us
when we doubt
and wonder
and don't get it
and believe all the wrong things.

Fortunately,
Jesus didn't just give up and walk away
when Mary and Peter and John couldn't figure it out.
He kept on telling.
He kept on sharing the good news.
His love wouldn't give up.
After all,
he'd gone to the cross.
Do you think confusion and lack of belief
would stop him?
He loved them too much.
He loves you too much.

Do you wonder sometimes?

Do you wonder what's real?

Do you wonder how to understand all this good news of Easter?

Do you wonder if you really get it?

I do.

It's hard to comprehend.

It's hard to believe.

It's hard to understand.

It's hard to figure out.

But you know what.

God won't give up on you..

God won't give up on me.

He keeps coming to us.

He keeps loving us.

He keeps showing us that....

Christ is Risen!

He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!

And it's such good news.

My Mom's here this weekend,

celebrating Easter with us.

As my brother and I were growing up,

my Mom and Dad used to do a lot of special things,

hoping that they would create memories.

So Mom will ask,

"Do you remember when we took this trip?"

And I'll say truthfully,

"No."

"Do you remember when we visited this site?"

"No."

I wonder what our boys will remember
when I ask them in a few years.

But one thing I remember
is that they used to wake us up on Sunday mornings–
–including some Easter mornings I would guess,
by playing music.
Instead of an alarm clock,
or a shake on the shoulder,
or pulling the covers off
(which is my favorite technique),
they'd turn on some music.
And we'd wake up,
listening and singing along.

I'm sure they played a lot of songs for us,
but one I remember the most,
was a record–
–I'm pretty sure it was really a vinyl record–
–I think it was John Ylvisaker.
And I can still hear
the guitar,
and jazzy piano.
And the voice singing.

It was quiet at first.
I was still in my bedroom.

**I will sing unto the Lord,
for he has triumphed gloriously.
The grave is empty,
won't you come and see.**

And then I'd crawl out of bed
and start making my way down the stairs–
–and the message was a little louder
and a little clearer.

**I will sing unto the Lord,
for he has triumphed gloriously.
The grave is empty,
won't you come and see.**

And then I'd get down to the stereo,
and I'd turn it up.
I was one of those kids
that liked to turn it up loud.
And the good news was loud and clear.

**I will sing unto the Lord,
for he has triumphed gloriously.
The grave is empty,
won't you come and see.**

Won't you come and see?
Like Mary.
And Peter.
And John.
Won't you come and see?
See that the stone is rolled away.
See that the linens are neatly rolled up.
And Jesus is no longer lying there.
See that the grave is empty.
Why?

Because...

Christ is Risen!
He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!

I hope you see it clearly.

But you know what's even better
than seeing.
It's hearing Jesus call your name.

Because Jesus calls his sheep by name.
And they know his voice.
And they follow.

This morning,
Jesus is calling your name.
He's saying,
Mary.
Peter.
John.

And he's also saying...
Steve.
Ellen.
Sarah.
Mark.

He's calling your name.
You.
Because Jesus loves you.
And he is alive for you.
And even when it's confusing,
and you don't get it,
and you believe all the wrong things,
Jesus never gives up.

He keeps calling your name.
Follow him.
He's alive.
He's leading the way into life today
and life forever.
It's good news.
Really, really good news.

Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

In Jesus' name,
Amen