

Title: Easter Day

Call to Worship: Isaiah 40:28

Scripture Reading: Luke 24:1-8

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable unto You O Lord on this Your day.

Today is Easter Day. And I believe that Easter fits the size of God at work. Touched by the power of the One who created the heavens and the earth comes the miracle we sang about today---Up from the grave He arose with a mighty triumph o'er His foes. He arose, He arose, Hallelujah Christ Arose. Just like the angels said to the women in Luke 24:6, 'He is not here He has risen.'

With Christ's Resurrection comes our Resurrection. With Christ's Resurrection came Satan's ultimate defeat. With Christ's Resurrection comes our victory, 1 Corinthians 15:54, 'Death has been swallowed up by victory.' With Christ's Resurrection is the victory of heaven over hell, of love over hate, of hope over despair, of forgiveness over sin. Like the early believers we are to share the joy of Easter's promise. Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed.

May I say what one believes about eternity is challenged when standing by an open grave of a loved one. Is the gravesite the final resting place for a loved one whose casket is about to be lowered in the ground? Or is the grave a historical location where we recall the person's earthly life? Grieve that the person will no longer walk with us on earth---then celebrate that our loved one now shares in the promise of Christ's Resurrection. Resurrection is the transforming work of God by which believers enter the space and time of heaven. At physical death, believers fulfill the baptismal promise of Resurrection, Romans 6:4, 'We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father we too may live a new life.'

With courage Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea had laid Jesus' body in the grave. Though they had received Pilate's permission the wrath of the religious leaders made it dangerous for these prominent men to risk their reputations, perhaps their lives, by removing Jesus' body from the cross wrapping it in linen cloth and placing it in a tomb. Watching them and noting its location several women disciples knew where to go once the Sabbath day had been fulfilled.

The Bible tells us in Matt. 28:1, 'After the Sabbath at dawn on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.' These grieving women went to the tomb where the body of Jesus was buried. Now that the Sabbath was over these women disciples went to anoint Jesus' body with their burial spices. These women had been transformed by Jesus, they had become His financial supporters, followed Him during His ministry, and wept as they witnessed His death at Calvary. Now they were ready to offer Him their final rite of obedience.

However the strange became stranger. When the women arrived at the cemetery they were astounded to see Jesus' tomb open. The heavy covering stone had been rolled away and the body of Jesus could not be found. Luke 24:2-3, 'They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.' Their minds couldn't keep up with the events happening around them. What they were seeing could not be explained by reason or by prior experience. The Body of Jesus was gone and they didn't know why or where. They didn't know what to do with this evidence of Jesus' absence.

Two men suddenly stood beside the stunned women. The men's appearance was described---Luke 24:4, 'dressed in clothes that gleamed like lighting.' The brilliance of their presence indicated that they were heavenly angels. Messenger is the Greek meaning for angel and these two men were ready to deliver a divine message.

And may I say the women's faith eyes needed sharpening to comprehend the miracle that was before them. The angels responded with 3 clarifying questions. First Luke 24:5, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead.' They needed to change their expectations of what they were looking for in order to see the truth about Jesus. We too at times need to change what we expect. Second the angels gave them the most glorious new---Luke 24:6, 'He is not here He is risen.' These seven words forever altered the course of history, not just for these early disciples but for our lives today as well. And third they said, Luke 24:6, 'Remember how He told you while He was still with you in Galilee.' You see Jesus had prepared them for what they were now experiencing. But the women had not connected Jesus' teaching of His Resurrection to life application.

Jesus prophesied His Crucifixion and still the disciples couldn't comprehend Calvary. Jesus prophesied His Resurrection and still the disciples didn't expect Easter. Only by remembering and understanding His words would their lives be transformed, and our lives as well. Jesus had promised them that He would rise from the dead. Matt. 20:17-19, 'Now as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem He took the 12 disciples aside and said to them. We are going up to Jerusalem and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn Him to death and will turn Him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day He will be raised to life.'

A promise is given to prepare one for the adventure of traveling into the future. God's promises prepare us to travel into His future. When these women remembered Jesus' promise to be raised again on the third day they realized that they were in the midst of that Miracle of Miracles. When Jesus rose on Easter morning all humanity was shown the glory and goodness of God.

The Easter message is not a recording. It is live. The living Christ is among us, in Person, longing for us to hear His song of Salvation as we have never heard it before. Longing for us never again to feel that there is no tomorrow. Longing for us never again to fall. Longing for us to respond to His offer of new life with a decisive 'Yes.'

Jesus is saying to each of us today I stand at the door and knock. Rev. 3:20, 'Here I am. I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door I will come in and eat with him and he with Me.' Jesus is knocking at the door of our hearts every time we sense we should turn to Him. Jesus wants to have fellowship with us and He wants us to open up to Him. He is patient and persistent in trying to get through to us---not breaking and entering, but knocking. He allows us to decide whether or not to open our lives to Him.

Now we say YES to the Lord Jesus Christ and forevermore we are bound for glory. Because HE LIVES Halleluiah HE LIVES.
Happy Easter.