

Christ the Lord is Risen today! Alleluia!

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. ² There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. ⁴ The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. ⁵ **The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.”**

⁸ So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.” **This is the Gospel of our Lord!**

Dear Fellow Believers in our Risen Savior,

The last few years I have seen a story circulated around the time of Easter. **The author is unknown but the story is called *The Empty Easter Egg* and goes something like this:** There was a boy named Jeremy who was born with a twisted body and a slow mind. At the age of 12 he was in the second grade, seemingly unable to learn. His teacher, Doris Miller, often became exasperated with him. He had a hard time sitting still and often irritated his teacher, but every once in a while he spoke clearly and distinctly, as if a spot of light had penetrated the darkness of his brain.

Once Miss Miller tried to convince Jeremy’s parents to send him **to a special school**, but there were none nearby and his parents explained how it would be a terrible shock for Jeremy if we had to take him out of this school. “We know he really likes it here.”

Time went on and soon Spring came and the children talked excitedly about the coming of Easter. Doris told them the story of Jesus, and then to emphasize the idea of new life springing forth, she gave each of the children a large plastic egg. "Now," she said to them. "I want you to take this home and bring it back tomorrow with something inside that shows new life. “Do you understand?” “Yes, Miss Miller,” the children responded enthusiastically -- all except for Jeremy. He listened intently -- his eyes never left her face. Had he understood what she said about Jesus' death and resurrection? Did he understand the assignment? Perhaps she should call his parents and explain the project to them.

That evening, Doris' kitchen sink stopped up. She called the landlord and waited an hour for him to come by and unclog it. After that she still had to shop for groceries, iron a blouse, and prepare a vocabulary test for the next day. She completely forgot about phoning Jeremy's parents.

The next morning, 19 children came to school, laughing and talking as they placed their eggs in a large wicker basket on Miss Miller's desk. After they completed their math lesson, it was

time to open the eggs. In the first egg, Doris found a flower, “Oh yes, a flower is certainly a sign of new life,” she said. “When plants peek through the ground, we know that spring is here.” A small girl in the first row waved her arm. “That’s my egg, Miss Miller,” she called out. The next egg contained a plastic butterfly, which looked very real. Doris held it up. “We all know that a caterpillar changes and grows into a beautiful butterfly, Yes, that’s new life, too.”

Little Judy smiled proudly and said, “Miss Miller, that one is mine.” Then Doris opened the third egg. She gasped. The egg was empty. Surely it must be Jeremy’s she thought, and of course he did not understand her instructions. If only she had not forgotten to phone his parents. Because she did not want to embarrass him, she quietly set the egg aside and reached for another. Suddenly Jeremy spoke up. “Miss Miller, aren’t you going to talk about my egg?” Flustered, Doris replied, “But Jeremy, your egg is empty.” He looked into her eyes and said softly, “Yes, but Jesus’ tomb was empty too.”

Time stopped. When she could speak again, Doris asked him, “Do you know why the tomb was empty?” “Oh yes,” Jeremy said, “Jesus was killed and put in there. Then his Father raised him up.”

The recess bell rang. While the children excitedly ran out to the schoolyard, Doris cried. Jeremy had taught them all a lesson they would never forget. Three months later, Jeremy died. Those who paid their respects at the funeral home were surprised to see 19 eggs on top of his casket, all of them empty.

Jeremy understood, “**The Message of the Tomb.**” This morning as we consider the words of Matthew we will want to look at, “**The Message of the Tomb,**” for it is a “**Message of Joy,**” and also “**A Message to be Shared.**”

I. Our text tells us that at 1st light some women were headed for the tomb of Jesus. Their journey to the tomb was a lot different than ours. They expected to find a body there and they were going to the tomb to finish the burial preparations that had been left incomplete on Friday. They expected to find a sealed tomb and soldiers and wondered how they would roll the stone away from the entrance. They expected to continue to mourn and be sad and there was a lot of uncertainty in their lives. The Messiah they had believed in had died and they had not understood what he had told them about his death nor his resurrection. Then the earthquake took place.

There had been an earthquake only a few days before – when Jesus died. They didn’t understand that the earthquake on Good Friday was an announcement that His work was finished – sin had been paid for and now this morning, this earthquake was announcing how death had been defeated and Jesus lives. So when the women got to the tomb, the message was better than they ever expected.

The angel had rolled the stone away from the tomb so they could see that Jesus wasn’t there; he had risen! The guards had been afraid of this messenger of God so much so that they had fallen over and looked like dead men, but the angel told the women not to be afraid of him or his message. For he brought “A message of Joy.” He reminds them Jesus rose just as he said he

would and even invites them to come and see that he is not there. “The Message of the Tomb” is a “Message of Joy” for us because it assures us that the price for our sins has been paid in full, it assures us that we no longer have to fear death because Christ has defeated death for us, it assures us that our Savior brings us eternal life through faith. Paul wrote to Timothy, **“God’s grace has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.”**

Easter morning is a time to celebrate the gift of salvation Christ won for us on the Cross. It is a time to get excited about the Gospel and to be rejuvenated in our faith. In a way it reminds me of driving in my car when the gas tank is almost empty, I pull in to a gas station to fill-er-up before I run completely out. Once the tank is full again I feel peace and confidence.

Many of us are here to fill our tanks up with the Gospel. As we hear the glorious message of the resurrection and the assurance of forgiveness it brings us we are rejuvenated and through faith we have the assurance we won’t get stranded in hell. To fill your gas tank at the pump can be expensive, but to come and be filled with the Gospel doesn’t cost a dime because Christ has paid the price for us. That is what God’s grace and mercy are all about – Jesus has done it all for us. So don’t wait until Christmas or next Easter to be filled with the Gospel, come in every week and receive the true peace that can only come through God’s Word – the true peace that can only come through the forgiveness of sins.

II. “The Message of the Tomb” brings us joy every day through God’s Word and it is also, **“A Message to be Shared.”** The angel tells the women to go quickly and tell the disciples that Jesus has risen from the dead. This is great news that is meant to be shared. And to reinforce this message the women met Jesus as they were leaving and he also told them to take this message to his disciples.

What a great day! The women not only heard Jesus had risen, but they actually saw him and took hold of his feet. He wasn’t a ghost or spirit – he was real and he was here. What a great message they had to share with the disciples so they too could see how what he had said had come to pass. So that they could see their Lord and Savior once again in the flesh, so they could know the same joy the women felt.

This is the same message we want to share with those who don’t know their Savior. Jesus Christ died for the sins of the world – for your sins and for mine – and he has been raised to life to assure us of our salvation. Because he lives, we too will live. The Holy Spirit works through those words to create faith, and that faith will bring the same joy and blessings the women and the disciples shared in. The peace of forgiveness and the sure hope of eternal life with our Savior in heaven.

“The Message of the Tomb” is “A Message of Joy.” Jeremy realized that and shared that message with his classmates and his teacher by reminding them the tomb was empty on Easter morning. May that same message, “The message that Jesus Christ has risen,” bring us joy not only today but every day through God’s Word and may we share that joy with others. Amen.

Now may the joy of salvation fill your hearts today and always. Amen.

