

Easter Day

St. Peter's, Norfolk

Text: Matthew 28:1-10

Date: April 12, 2020

I woke up this morning really hungry, so I decided I would fix myself a three egg omelet, complete with turkey sausage bits, mushrooms, green onions, and spinach.

And as I was climbing out of bed, I thought to myself, ***“Hey! It’s Easter...why not have an egg hunt?”*** (These are the kinds of thoughts you have when you’ve lived alone for possibly too long).

So, I went to the kitchen, grabbed three eggs from the refrigerator, and proceeded to hide them. Then I grabbed a quick shower, dressed, did my morning devotions, and began to search for the eggs.

Now, I know all of this may sound a bit funny (maybe even weird) but I had fun with it....and I did pretty well. It only took me 15 minutes to remember where I hid all three eggs!

I’ve been thinking a lot about memory lately....at least when I can remember to! And I’ve been wondering- why is it that we can so easily remember some things but struggle to remember others? Can you remember what you wore last Wednesday? Do you remember what you ate for dinner last night? What about the gifts you received this past Christmas (that’s only 4 months ago)....do you remember what you received and who gave you what?

Why is it that I can remember the very first phone number I learned as a little boy in PA (374-1713) but I have trouble remembering my cell phone number when people ask me for it? I’ve read somewhere that blueberries are good for helping you remember, so why do I always forget to buy them?

Why is it that we remember some events and forget others?

Well, experts say that we remember an occasion or an event because it has greatly impacted our lives in some way. Conversely, if our lives are not impacted in some way, we tend to forget things or events.

Today (Easter Sunday) we recall and remember an event that should dramatically impact our lives- the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. The four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) piece together the all-too familiar story.

Mary Magdalene, Mary (Jesus' Mother) and the eleven remaining disciples had just been through the most tragic and disappointing period of their lives. Just two days ago, their lives and their hopes were crushed. Their leader and teacher....their friend and hero....had been brutally beaten and then nailed to a cross.

They're confused. Just one week earlier, the crowds in Jerusalem had welcomed Jesus into the city- waving palm branches and shouting ***"Hosanna! Hosanna!"*** And now Jesus was dead. They were right there and watched as the Roman soldiers drove the nails into Jesus' hands and feet and then set the cross upright. They had watched Jesus die.

They had watched as Jesus' body was taken down from the cross and was laid to rest in a tomb- donated by a Pharisee named Joseph of Arimathea. They had watched the whole thing and now....it was over....and Jesus was dead.

But today, the third day, the women were going back to the tomb with spices. They were going there to anoint Jesus' body. Mark tells us that, as they walked along, they wondered how they were going to move the massive stone in front of the tomb.

So, imagine their shock when they arrived at the tomb and found the stone already rolled back. Imagine their shock when they walked in and found the tomb empty!

Imagine their shock when an angel appeared to them and said (and I'm paraphrasing) ***"You're looking for Jesus....he's not here, he has risen, just as he said. Do you REMEMBER what he had told you? Do you REMEMBER that he told you he would go to Jerusalem...that he would be delivered into the hands of sinful men....and that he would be crucified....and on the third day, he would rise again....don't you REMEMBER?"***

Today, we would do well to heed the angel's advice and remember....remember the words of Jesus....remember Easter....and remember exactly what this day means. In fact, let me give you three things to remember about the meaning of Easter.

Remember first of all that Jesus died for **YOU**. When was the last time you remembered that....I mean really remembered it? I know we recite it in our liturgy each week, but when is the last time you actually took some time to ponder that....and what it means for you? The Bible tells us that Jesus died for all people. You and I are part of all people (aren't we?) We're not just a number in a big

computer in the sky, we (each one of us) has a name...we are (each one of us) a person...we are (each one of us) a unique individual created by God on purpose and for a purpose, and loved by Him, so much so that He sent His Son Jesus to die for you and to die for me.

Remember that. Remember that no matter who you are....no matter what you are like....no matter where you've been....or what you've done....no matter what your nationality or race...Jesus died for you. Remember that!

Second, remember that the tomb was **EMPTY**. The angel said, “...*he is not here.*” The tomb was empty that morning, it is still empty today, and it will be empty tomorrow. Why? Because “*he is not there!*”

Well, where is he? He is in Heaven. We say it every Sunday when we recite our creeds- “*he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father...*” But he's somewhere else too. He's here (heart) and he's here (mind).

Through His Holy Spirit Jesus is alive in us- to help us bear life's burdens, to give us hope when all around us, things seem hopeless....to lead and guide us into all truth, to empower us and inspire us to serve him and serve each other in his Name.

All across the world today, Christians are celebrating Jesus' resurrection...they are celebrating because the tomb is empty! And no matter what the name of the church....no matter what their style of worship....no matter what the location, Jesus is there. He is everywhere his people are gathered. **Remember** that!

And then, remember that Jesus is **RISEN**. Jesus is alive today. And that makes all the difference in our lives. This fact, more than any other, distinguishes Christianity from all the other world religions. Christians are the only ones who can claim that their Savior is alive today. And Jesus' rising from the dead and his being alive today, only serves to validate that he is who he claimed to be- the Son of God (God Incarnate). He is the one who makes life here on earth worth living. And it is only through faith in him that we, too, can be assured of eternal life with him in heaven and with all those who have died in the faith and gone on before us. **Remember** that....especially when times get tough....**Remember** these three things.

And while you're at it, here are some more things to remember:

Because Jesus has risen and is alive today, you can know that the One who conquered death is still at work in the world today, and He is working His will through all things (ALL things). And He will continue to do so because nothing can stop Him...not even death. And as you link your life with Him, and give yourself to His will, you'll know that you are doing the most important things in the world- things that have purpose....things that will bring you joy...things that will bring you fulfillment- even in the most difficult times of your life.

And because Jesus has risen and is alive today, you can know His power is working in you through His Holy Spirit, and so you have hope....boundless hope....undying hope. The kind of hope that may seem like foolishness to others, but to you it's the absolute assurance that, no matter what is happening in your life right now, there is a future. That Jesus can raise you out of the deepest pit...that He can heal any pain, that he can mend and restore any broken relationship, and He can help you overcome any obstacle. **Remember** that!

Before this current health crisis we are experiencing even began, we scheduled two baptisms for this morning- two infant children. We can't do that today, but they will be baptized some day soon (I hope) when we are able to gather again safely as a church family. And we will welcome them into the family of God.

But you'll remember that as part of the baptism liturgy, during the prayers for those being baptized, I conclude the prayers by saying this: ***“Grant, O Lord, that all who are baptized into the death of Jesus Christ your Son may live in the power of the resurrection- and look for him to come again in glory.”***

“That they may live in the power of the resurrection!” My dear friends, you can't get power from something that is dead. And we don't have to...because Jesus is risen and He is alive! Alleluia! and Amen.