



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

April 1, 2018

Pastor Randy Ott

Easter Festival Worship

First Lesson: [Isaiah 25:6-9](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 118](#)

Second Lesson: [1 Corinthians 15:19-26](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Mark 16:1-8](#)

Sermon Text: [Mark 16:1-8](#)

Rolled Away

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. Amen.

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

Easter is a day when a lot of families get together, right? Maybe travel a distance? Maybe have a big meal planned? Maybe a big get together and things like that? What do you do when you get together as a family and you haven't seen each other for awhile? I suppose if you are younger siblings, you fight, right? That's probably what you'll do later today. One of the things we do when our family gets together is that we end up telling stories. Quite often it's the same stories told over and over all the time when we get together, right? Do you guys ever do that?

Tim, my red-headed tall son that doesn't look like the rest of us, he is thin, he is engaged to Sheila. Sheila was an only child. So when our family gets together and she is there, she just loves hearing all the stories they tell about the stuff they did when they were growing up. Then when Paula and I enter the room, we have to say "Okay guys, we're in the room. Don't tell the stories you don't want us to hear yet." That's kind of how it goes.

I don't think it was that way the first Easter though, right? It wasn't a family get together. It wasn't a warm, fuzzy day at all, was it? These women get up early and as soon as the market is open at dawn, they go and buy the spices and whatever they need so they can go finish preparing Jesus' body for a proper burial. These are some of the women that had been following him for a number of years and were taking care

of his needs. Now he is dead. Their world is upside down. They aren't thinking about ham or turkey in the oven at home at all, are they? Their world is just so messed up at that moment in time!

As they go, they are so mixed up and so confused and so uncertain about things that they get partway to the garden tomb and then they kind of look at each other and go "Wait a minute! There is that great, big old stone! Who is going to move that thing away for us? How in the world are we going to get in?!" Then they get there and, lo and behold, it's **Rolled Away!** The stone was **Rolled Away**. So they walk into it. Think of how uncertain they had to be. What in the world was going on? They probably heard the reports that the enemies of Jesus had posted a guard there and sealed the tomb, and now it is open!

Then there is this guy, an angel of the Lord who says to them, "Jesus is risen!" I think those words made all the difference for them the rest of their lives, but I think at that moment in time, I don't know if they had the full import of what happened. I don't think they could digest it all, and they certainly didn't understand it all clearly, probably until Jesus opened the minds of his followers so they could understand Scripture as time went on.

But what do you think the rest of their Easter get togethers were like the rest of their lives? As they would get together and tell that story to their children, their children's children, and say, "We went there, the stone was **Rolled Away**, the tomb was empty and Jesus had risen!" Then later, over time, they understood what it meant. Do you think they ever got tired of telling those stories to their children and grandchildren?

That means YOU are forgiven. That means HEAVEN is open to YOU. That means Jesus' perfect life in your place, his death to pay for the guilt of your sins was acceptable to the Father. He was delivered over to death for our sins. He was raised to life for our justification, as we said earlier. Justification means we have been declared not guilty of sin, even though every single one of us here is incredibly guilty of sin, and there's no denying we are guilty of sin. Yet because of the life and death of Jesus and the empty tomb, we know for a certainty that our sins have been forgiven.

What about those women, as time went on, as they had to think and face a lot of difficulty? They didn't just have difficulty from Friday, when he died, until Sunday, when the open tomb came. They knew Jesus was alive. They saw him later. They grabbed his feet. They understood what he had done. Yet that didn't mean there still wouldn't be things that would keep them awake at night.

A little bit later on down the road, it wasn't all that terribly long after this, Stephen was stoned to death. They started fleeing away from Jerusalem because they were being

persecuted for being Christians. James, one of the Twelve, one of the inner circle that got to go up on the mountain of Transfiguration, that got to be there when Jesus raised the one girl from the dead, he was killed. Their leaders were arrested and thrown in prison from time to time and they would devote themselves to prayer and things like that, but don't you think they were a little shook up at times? Don't you think they had some sleepless nights where they were still worried?

Yes, they knew Jesus had risen, but man, life on this side of heaven is hard! There are a lot of other things in our lives that you and I need to have **Rolled Away** from time to time. Some of it is our doubt, our uncertainty, and our wondering "Why in the world did God let this happen?" You don't think they were asking that question as they continued in their lives? I have to believe they were.

So do you think they ever got in the habit of reminding each other that Christ is risen? "James is dead, but Christ is risen." "Peter and those guys are thrown in jail again, but Christ is risen." "Okay, it's time to pack up and leave Jerusalem because we're all going to be under attack, but Christ is risen." Don't you think they kept telling themselves that? Not just on Easter's to come but as they faced each and every one of life's challenges? "Christ is risen! We win! The grave was empty! Remember it? There was that angel there? Christ is risen! We win!" I have to believe they had to remind themselves of it over and over and over as they went through life.

When they came to that understanding, it didn't mean it was always in the forefront of their minds. They were sinners just like you and just like me. That's why God put them together in a community. And that's why he puts us together in this **Community In Christ**. Because you and I are going to face hard things on this side of heaven. You and I are going to have those nights when we put our head on our pillow and all we see are the images that haunt us, the thoughts that attack us, the doubts that assail us. You and I are going to have those nights when we don't sleep. Then even when we do sleep, we still think we're awake and it's restless and it's no source of peace for us. They are going to come. They are going to come often on this side of heaven. We're going to deal with the loss of loved ones. We're going to deal with issues in life that turn our lives upside down.

If you're going to tell the same story over and over to your family, not just on Easter but all the time that you need to hear it, have a story you repeat that centers in the stone was **Rolled Away**. The tomb was empty. Christ rose. We win! There are times it won't feel like it, but your feelings don't change the fact that your Lord loved you so much that he left heaven and lived and died for you. Your Lord loves you so much that he took something as simple as water and his Word and says, "I have baptized you into the Father, the Son and the Spirit. You are a forgiven child of God." Our God loves you so much that he gives you his body and blood in, with and under the bread and the

wine so that when you are doubting that the victory has been won, he says "Wait a minute! This IS the body. This IS the blood that took your sins away!" Tell each other that story often. Then live in that confidence, because life is hard enough. Don't face it on your own. Remind each other of these truths. Tell them to yourselves and to each other day after day. Immerse yourself in the love that your God has for you.

If the day comes that you ever are bored of hearing it, then you better look at what you are, because you are a sinner that desperately needs the love of Christ. And Christ is desperate to give you that love in his Word and his Sacraments.

So, today, maybe it's ham, maybe it's turkey, maybe you're going to go out to eat, maybe brunch, maybe you're just going to go to Burger King; I don't know what you're going to do for lunch today, but whatever you do, remind each other God loves you. Jesus rose! We win! Amen.