



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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April 8, 2007
Easter Festival
Matthew 28:1-10
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Isaiah 25:6-9
Psalm of the Day: Psalm 118
Second Lesson: 1 Corinthians 15:19-26
Gospel: Mark 16:1-8

It Is Hidden In The Savior's Triumph

Could there possibly be a more glorious day than this day? Was the first day of creation more glorious when God said "Let there be" and there was? Or maybe the fourth day of creation when he put the sun and the stars and the moon in their places? No. Not even close. What about the last day when he returns in triumph; will that be more glorious? Not really when you think about it, because if it wasn't for this day, if he wouldn't have risen from the dead, when he came again, you and I wouldn't be lifting up our faces to see him now, would we? You and I who are sinners would know that he is coming to send us to hell.

So this day has a glory that passes any other day. A day that we get to celebrate over and over and over—the day of the empty tomb, the day of the resurrection from the dead, the day that we are certain that our sins have been taken away completely and absolutely, the day we learn to say "Christ is risen, he is risen indeed, Alleluia!" I believe everything I just said here or else I wouldn't have said it, right?

But like we have seen all through Lent this year, do you notice how on this most glorious day in the world Jesus once again hides his own glory? The one who was shining like lightning and his clothes were white as snow wasn't Jesus—it was an angel. Again we see Jesus' glory hidden and in reality, you and I could be thankful for it. The angel is the one who comes in glory. He is there and opens the tomb with the earthquake. These guys that have stared death in the face see this angel in his glory and shake and drop like dead men to the ground. The tomb is opened to show that the tomb was already empty. Jesus' body and soul had been reunited and Jesus was off revealing his glory to those in hell as he had his victory parade there, but not a glory there that you and I can see. Again his glory is hidden. The glory of the angel causes the women to fear. It causes them to be uncertain about what is going on. But again, it is the glory of the angel and not the glory of Jesus.

They get there and they hear this message from the angel, this angel who amazes them. They hear the message, "Look. It's empty. Christ has risen just like he said. Go and tell his disciples to go to Galilee, and there they will see him." It is the same message Jesus is going to give them later. And that is what is there on that first Easter morning. That is the glory that you see. And you might think, "Isn't that a bit of a disappointment?" We want to see Jesus in his glory. We want to see Jesus in his full glory. We want to see Jesus having his victory celebration. We want to see Jesus storm the center court, so to speak, like you see at basketball games, right? We want him to let everyone know he has conquered death.

But if he came in his full glory to those women, can you imagine what would have happened? There is Jesus in the full glory of true God from all eternity. If they were scared by an angel, what do you think the Son of God would have done to them? They would have dropped over dead right there and there wouldn't be anyone to go and tell the message.

So Jesus, in his love and in his mercy, comes in a state they would recognize as he appeared to them with a body—not in his full divine glory—but he appears with glory hidden so that they can hear the message and believe the message and be filled with joy. He doesn't intimidate them. He doesn't scare them. In love, he hides his glory so they can hear the glorious message—so that the message is where the glory is found, because after all, in 40 days his presence would be gone, but the message and the glory of the message of sins forgiven through the resurrection of the dead would remain.

Jesus' glory is hidden. It is hidden in words. Two short sentences he speaks to the women—"Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me." Don't be afraid. Isn't that a beautiful summary of the entire gospel? Isn't that a beautiful summary of the Easter message? When we are facing death, don't be afraid. When death is near us, don't be afraid. Christ conquered hell. Christ conquered the grave. And as he said, because he lives, we also will live.

Now we can know that truth, but maybe sometimes our conscience says to us, "Yes, but can that really be for me? I know what I have done. Can God still really love me?" So listen again and focus on the words he speaks and there you will find his glory. What does he say to the women? "Go and tell my brothers." My brothers—can you imagine Jesus calling these guys his brothers? What had they done a couple of nights before? They ran away like the wind, right? What did the one do who said, "All these louts will deny you, but I never will"? What did he do? He denied him three times even calling down curses on himself. Did any of them step up? No. Were they all scared and terrified? Yes. These are the guys that, when he said "watch and pray," they slept and snored. Yet, these are the guys that he goes to and says, "Go and tell my brothers." So when your conscience troubles you and my conscience troubles me, know that God calls us brothers and sisters also, because his perfect life in our place and his death in our place takes away our sins.

This is the glory of the gospel. He doesn't give us what we deserve. He calls us brothers. He calls us sisters. He calls us his loved ones. He calls us his sheep. He gives us all these blessings and then says to us, "Don't be afraid. By faith, you are mine. By baptism, you are mine. Through the body and blood in and under the bread and the wine, you are mine. I love you. Here is the evidence." This is the glory of Easter. It is hidden at times. It is hidden under words, but it is a glory that makes all the difference in the world for us as we live in this world.

But now notice also this hidden glory. Look for it and find it where he tells us to. Jesus knows how hard it is going to be for us at times. He knows how we are going to struggle. He knows how we are going to face difficulties because we live in a sinful world. We are going to face heartache. We are going to face uncertainty. We are

going to face loss. We are going to face grief. If the glory of Easter morning is only in how Jesus looked, think of how we would be lost today because his visible presence is no longer with us. But look at what he did that first Easter morning. He tells them to go and tell the disciples to go to Galilee and there he will meet them. He doesn't explain everything to them right away. He speaks this message to them and he says, "Now you go up there and up there we are going to have some more time together where we are going to learn some more, and you are going to get ready to go out and take the gospel message to the ends of the earth like I am going to tell you to do." He doesn't appear to them right away.

He wants them to take him at his word, trust in his word, hang on to that word, and have that word sustain them because soon his visible presence would be gone. Even on Easter morning Jesus is teaching us to walk by faith, not by sight. Don't rely only on what you can see. Rely on what Jesus has said to you. Put your trust and belief in who he is and what he has done for you. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding is really what he drives home. "Listen to my word. Put your trust in my word. Don't just focus on me."

That is what Jesus said to his disciples on the first Easter. On that first Easter evening, think of what he did with the Emmaus disciples—he didn't walk along side of them and say, "Hey, look! It's me! I'm alive!" He opened their hearts so they could understand Scripture and showed from Scripture why the Messiah had to suffer, die, and then rise again. If Jesus has put all this emphasis on his word, who are we to say, "God, I have a better plan." "I have a better plan, God. God, I will get closer to you by me talking to you and telling you what you should be doing through prayer." God certainly tells us to pray, but he also wants us to make it a conversation by combining it with his word—to dig into his word and then pray about what we read and about what we see.

If he thought the Word was so important, doesn't it stand to reason that it is vital for you and me to know and to hang onto and to grasp onto it like a drowning man grabbing on to a life preserver. So you too, walk by faith, not by sight. But don't walk blindly. Walk with the Word in front of you, beside you and behind you, guiding you, lifting you up, and pointing you to God's love time and time and time again. Walk with the Sacraments reminding you that you have been clothed in his righteousness and that your sins are forgiven. That is a certainty for us because Christ has risen. He has risen indeed!