

Feast of the Resurrection – Easter Sunday, April 12, 2020, Year A

**St. Andrew's Anglican Church – Douglas, GA**

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commins+ Rector

Scripture: John 20:1-18

***“He is Risen – Just as He Said”***

Heavenly Father, there is no way we can thank you enough for what your Son, our Savior Jesus did for us – as we remember these past few days, beaten to within an inch of His life, whipped, carrying that cross all the way uphill to Golgotha – to Calvary, but the best part, Lord, is because of your mercy and infinite grace – He got up and walked out of His tomb – risen from the dead – and we celebrate and rejoice in that today – because of your love, your mercy, your power and your grace. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts – be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, our strength, and our Redeemer. Amen.

It was Sunday morning after the crucifixion; the tomb had been sealed and a large stone wheel had been rolled into place. A guard was stationed at the tomb because they feared that Jesus' followers would steal the body. Jesus' disciples were hiding in fear for their lives, and were not even thinking about the Resurrection.

On Friday, before sundown, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, prominent Jewish leaders and members of the Sanhedrin, had hastily prepared Jesus' body for burial by bringing to the tomb “a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds” (John 19:39b) On Sunday, ladies set out for the tomb on that Sunday morning. According to Mark 16:1 - they were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Needless to say, these women, along with the other disciples were still in a state of shock from the horrible, brutal death of Jesus – and since the Shabbat, Sabbath was over – they could now come and show their love and respect for Jesus by attending to His body properly according to the Jewish tradition.

Mary, seeing that the stone was already rolled away ran to two Apostles who were coming – “*So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"*” (John 20:2) John and Peter went into the tomb and saw the grave clothes lying there, left as if Jesus had passed right through them. The headpiece was rolled up separately from the other wrappings that had enveloped Jesus' body. Jesus arose and left the wrappings lying there, empty. When John saw the grave clothes looking like an empty cocoon from which Jesus had emerged, he believed that Jesus had risen.

John's Gospel eyewitness account demonstrates that the disciples could not have "invented" the Resurrection in order to fulfill the Old Testament prophecies because they did not immediately see any Old Testament connection. The fact is that the Resurrection opened the disciples' minds to see that God had foretold His plan through the prophets.

Here are the words of one of the other eyewitnesses of the Resurrection – Peter – who wrote these words after receiving the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and then was able to see and know God's plan: “*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great*

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*mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you..."* (1 Peter 1:3-4)

Just the fact that the tomb is empty should give each one of us the absolute assurance that God's promises are very real – and we know that God keeps His promises! As Bible Believing Christians - we are blessed to know the whole story –from Genesis to Revelation - the whole truth - that Jesus arose from the tomb to defeat death and sin. If Jesus had not come out of that tomb, we would be just like every other religion in the world – we would be following a dead leader – whose tomb is still occupied.

My friends, let's face it - we are all sinners. The Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 3:23 that "*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" But you know what - the Good News is that "*God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*" (Romans 5:8) That is why He sent Jesus to die and then to supernaturally and triumphantly walk out of the tomb.

There is no other Name given under Heaven by which we can be saved; that name is Jesus, the Messiah, Jesus the Christ, Yeshua Ha Mashiach. Because His tomb is empty, we have the full promise of eternal glory with God – and it is fulfilled. Since Jesus died for our sins, when we stand in judgement - God the Father sees the righteousness of Jesus instead of our unrighteousness. Because the debt has been paid – once for all!

So, let me ask you - do you know Jesus Christ this morning? I did not ask you if you had heard about Him, I asked if you know Him and have a relationship with Him? Do you speak with Him all the time? Growing up, I loved Him, and revered Him - but I really did not know Him or have a true relationship with Him. If you do not know Him or have a relationship with Him - don't you think you should? Jesus says to us in the Book of Revelation 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.*" If you feel that you need Jesus in your life – ask Him in -ask Him to be your Lord – and to lead your life. He loves you – enough to die for you!

If you have already accepted Jesus or you have decided to have a stronger relationship with Him – or you want to start a relationship with Him – please pray this prayer with me right now. This is not the sinner's prayer – but a dedication prayer or a re-dedication prayer:

- Dear Lord Jesus – I receive you as my Savior,
  - I accept You,
  - I accept your forgiveness,
  - Because I need forgiveness.
    - I trust you with my life.
    - I place my trust in you!
    - In Jesus' Name – Amen.

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And now on this Easter Sunday - receive the freedom from doubt and emptiness – Jesus' tomb is empty. As the Angel said in Matthew 28:6 *“He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.”* To which we add - Alleluia, Alleluia!