

April 5, 2015
John 20:1-18

Easter Sunrise B
No Jesus to Yes Jesus

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our Resurrected Lord. Amen.

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! **He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!**

No Jesus...No Jesus on the Cross. Those are words of Hannah our two year old. We've been working on teaching her the Easter story, so far she's got that there is no Jesus on the cross after she colored an Easter picture with an empty cross and Easter lilies surrounding the base of the Cross. This is indeed a message of Easter. Jesus is not on the cross, and that is good news for us. That is great news for us actually.

However, we read in our gospel lesson today something concerning. Something is definitely not right here. Think about this with me for a moment. Jesus on multiple times has told His disciples that He was going to suffer, die, and rise on the third day. One would think that His inner group of disciples would have heard that, namely the twelve and the women that traveled with them.

Let's look to our text for this early Easter morning. We learn that Mary Magdalene has come to the tomb, early, while it was still dark. That meant it was before the sun rose. It also means that she is still caught in the dark. She sees that the stone had been taken away. She's quite upset right now. By now they would have known that they had sealed the tomb, she was going to have to find a way to open up the tomb to finish putting spices on the body.

Mary is overcome with grief. She assumes that the dead body of her Lord and Master is no longer there, since the stone was removed. We learn that she believes that "they" being the "Jews" have taken the Lord out of the tomb and that the women at the tomb don't know where they have laid Him. We learn this when she runs back to tell Peter and John what she has seen or really has not seen.

We've all encountered grief before. We've all lost a loved one, if you haven't you will. Death as we look at it, is so final. There's just a lifeless body that lays before us, that gets put into the ground. Death has already confronted Mary and the other women, who we learn went to the tomb with Mary in other gospels. When Death confronts people, sorrow and a sense of loss has overcome us. That's what happened to Mary and the others.

With this sorrow and sense of loss, Mary is overcome with grief, and now even more grief comes upon her, the body of Jesus is gone, and she is convinced that the body of Jesus was stolen. That's what she tells Peter and John. Peter and John run to the tomb and see that the body of Jesus is not in the tomb. They see the linen cloths and John has a sense of belief that something has happened, but they do not fully understand the Scripture at this point.

After Peter and John leave the tomb and return to their homes, Mary was back at the tomb and she was weeping. Mary was sobbing and with her eyes blurred with tears, they rest on the angels. The two angels are in the tomb dressed in white and one is sitting where the head of Jesus was and other at the feet.

Mary is still overcome with grief even though witnesses of heaven and earth have come together in the tomb to share the message that Jesus is alive. The angels ask Mary, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She again says, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." She is still looking through grief stricken eyes that someone has taken the body of Jesus and placed him someplace else. Her eyes are still blurred and blinded by grief to what has taken place. She fails to see the importance of the angels in the empty tomb, the heavenly witnesses to the resurrection, and also failed to see the importance of the linen cloths lying there. They weren't ripped or thrown in a heap, they were there and the head covering was folded. These are the earthly witnesses of the resurrection in the tomb. Jesus was no longer in the tomb...and they are showing that He is alive.

Yet she is still lost in grief. Mary continues to believe that Jesus is dead and that someone has removed him from the grave...making NO Jesus in the tomb. She is grieving where no real grief exists. And "we are often like her, grieving where no real cause for grief exists if only we would heed God and His Word which opens to us such fullness of joy. O these blinding tears that dim both eyes and hearts!"

Wouldn't we, too, be overcome by grief? She's gone through a painful weekend. Her Lord, her Master is dead. She believes that death is a finality. When we are overcome by grief, we too can become blind to what is actually going on. Yet the things are there telling her that Jesus is alive, the burial cloths, the angels, but her heart still grieves. She's not remembering the Scriptures, she is not heeding the Word that Jesus spoke.

It's troubling that we do that, too. We do that far too often. We do not heed God and His Word, so we grieve when no real grief exists. But for us it seems real. When we stumble away from God and His Word, there is no fullness of true and complete joy. We do this when we believe what we want to, do what we want to, and say what we want to and think what we want to. Our sinful actions, thoughts, and words reside in us and they take over causing us grief. When we don't listen to the Scriptures, our sinful flesh takes over.

That's what is happening with Mary, that is what is happening to us. Her tears have blinded her eyes and her heart. She is unable to see what is going on in front of her. She believes in her heart...there is NO JESUS anymore...someone has taken Him. "The dead body of her Lord is gone. This breaks her heart and closes her heart against what is before her eyes."

Now as Mary continues to sob she turns around and sees someone else, who she perceives as the gardener. Jesus says to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Jesus is giving her another sign that He is alive by asking whom,

not what. Mary now assumes that the gardener has taken away the body of Jesus...she still has it in her heart...that there is NO JESUS anymore. She answers him saying, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Now with just one word, Mary is changed.

Jesus said to her in His normal vocal inflection and tone, "Mary." She turned completely towards Him and in Aramiac says, "Rabboni" which means teacher. She knows who it is. She can now confess that Jesus is Alive. That YES JESUS is alive again.

Mary knows the voice of her Lord, her Teacher, her Savior, and her Shepherd. Our minds run to John 10 in this instance when Jesus says, *"To him the gatekeeper opens (the him being the good shepherd). The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice."* Mary knew the voice of her Lord. And the Living Lord Jesus who has come out of the tomb leads Mary out of her grief and pain, the very grief that was blinding her from the very fact that Jesus is Alive.

With that one word, Jesus instantly turns the grief of Mary into Joy. With that one word Mary turns from saying "No more Jesus"...to "YES THERE IS JESUS, and this JESUS IS ALIVE, just as HE SAID!"

Mary upon realizing it's Jesus and believing that He is alive, bows to the ground and wants to cling to Jesus in order to not let him go again. Jesus tells her not to cling to Him, but that she must go and tell the disciples that Jesus is alive and to report that He said, *"I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."*

Mary departed from Jesus with joy and went and announced to the disciples, "I HAVE SEEN THE LORD."

Even as Mary knows the voice her Shepherd and her Lord and with that voice of the Shepherd turns her mourning into dancing, even so He does for you and me.

We, too, know the voice of our Good Shepherd. We, too, know the voice of our loving and living Lord Jesus. The voice that is given to us in His Word once spoken to us and now written down for us to still hear the proclamation. For your living Lord Jesus still calls you by name and turns your grief into joy. Your Living Lord Jesus still calls you by name and lifts you out of a grief that is really only a blinding grief and not true grief. Your Living Lord Jesus walks out of the tomb for you.

What good is No Jesus on the cross...if there is a Jesus in the tomb, dead and buried, soon to be forgotten. That Jesus is of no value to us. What good is "no Jesus" in the tomb if that Jesus is stolen and placed elsewhere? That Jesus is of no value to us. The Jesus that has value to us is the "no Jesus on the cross", the "no Jesus in the tomb," and the "YES JESUS is ALIVE FOR YOU." This is the Jesus that forgives your sins, rescues you from death and the devil and promises a resurrection for you.

This Jesus is the one who lives for you. This Jesus is the one we celebrate today as the Living Lord Jesus.

So today, let's turn our "no Jesus" into a "Yes JESUS." It's true that Jesus is not on the cross and certainly is not in the tomb either, for Jesus is Alive and we celebrate that fact today.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ. Jesus Is Alive for you and promises to come back and resurrect everyone on the last day and live with Him forevermore, until that day, we get a foretaste of that feast to come in the Holy Supper of our Lord, which He has given to us to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of our sins. Today we feast on the crucified and risen Lord of Glory.

For my dear family of God, Jesus is ALIVE FOR YOU. Because of that we can say, "NO JESUS ON THE CROSS, NO JESUS IN THE TOMB, YES JESUS IS ALIVE AND LIVES FOR ALL ETERNITY!"

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia! Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus, our Living Lord and Savior. Amen.