

Repent: Turn To Jesus!
For Resurrection And Life

A Sermon on Luke 24:1-8
Year A - Easter
16 - April - 2017

JJ¹

What are your expectations for Easter Sunday? Do you expect the pastel colors and spring dresses? Kids, do you expect the basket full of candy and egg hunt? Maybe your expectations are the egg bakes and ham. Maybe your expectations for Easter encompass more music in worship, two services and maybe a longer sermon.

If that has become the extent of your expectations for Easter, then your expectations aren't too far off from the expectations of the women we meet on that first Easter. You might be wondering, "Pastor, how can you say that? All those things you just mentioned are bright and cheery! The women were filled with gloom." If you're thinking that, you'd be right. But that's not the comparison I'm making. The comparison I'm making is this: the bright and cheery things I mentioned and the gloom of the women are both the same because those expectations are world-based expectations that forget about God's clear message.

To a degree, that's expected. From a human point of view tainted and harassed by a sinful nature, what Easter is really about isn't what's expected. It wasn't for the women that first Easter, and it isn't for us who are so easily distracted. So,

friends, let's take some time from the busyness of life in general and even from all that's going on yet today. Forget about the meals. Forget about the candy. Forget about your clothes and what everyone else is wearing. Forget about the bulletin. Forget about the music, even what's yet to be played and sung. Let's slow down and turn to the clear message of Easter. **Let's TURN TO JESUS FOR RESURRECTION AND LIFE.**

Luke's account of the first Easter begins as you would expect. "On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb."

The women who had cared for Jesus' needs and the needs of his disciples all this while, were now going to Jesus' tomb to fulfill one last need they thought Jesus had: a proper burial. A general rule of thumb I think we'd all agree with is that cemeteries are an awful place to go. Who likes going to cemeteries? Sure, we do what we can to spruce them up so they aren't as dreary above ground as they are below. We can look out at our own cemetery and think *about how pretty the flowers are, how nicely mown the grass is, and how beautiful the memorial stones are. But deep down we know that we can't spruce up death with pretty flowers and a well-manicured*

¹ JJ is the acronym for *Jesus Juve*, which is Latin for "Jesus Help". It is a short prayer used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the beginning of their work.

lawn. Jesus' tomb was a brand-new one—loaned to him by a rich man named Joseph of Arimathea. But even Joseph's Cadillac tomb could not compensate for the fact that Jesus' battered, lifeless body lay inside on a cold stone slab.

Consider how awful it must have been for those women! Everything that had happened to Jesus before he died would have left his body an ugly mess, barely resembling the one they knew and loved. But even worse was that they were expecting to bury all their hopes of salvation! They were going to prepare Jesus' body to remain in the tomb, and then leave the tomb to begin picking up the pieces of their lives and figure out how to live life without Jesus.

This is exactly what you would expect in any other situation. *A dead man, a grave, and a group of mourners wanting to say a final, fitting farewell. If St. Luke ended his account here, we would have no reason to celebrate Easter. This morning would be a colossal waste of time. If the account ended here, then our dreams for heaven would be dashed and we would have just come face-to-face with the death of the Christian faith!*

But St. Luke's account did not end there. Very quickly the women's expectations are pushed aside as they arrive at the tomb and experience the first Easter.

"They found the stone rolled away from the tomb..." This is totally unexpected. Who would do this? Why would they do this? How could they have even done such a thing with Roman soldiers guarding the tomb? But the soldiers are gone too. Why would they leave their post?

The unexpected continues as they enter the tomb: "...but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about

this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third

day be raised again.' "

The women's world-based expectations are shattered with the truth they should have expected, but had forgotten. In a way you could say Jesus' tomb became the first New Testament era church and the stone slab where Jesus' body once lay became the first Easter pulpit. *Instead of the silence of a tomb and the stillness of death, they listened to the first Easter sermon—short, sweet, and to the point. A sermon that*



*literally changed the history of the world:
“He is not here; he has risen!”*

The angels’ sermon shows the women that their world-based expectations were all wrong because their expectations needed to be Word-based. “Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ‘The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’ “ Then they remembered his words.”

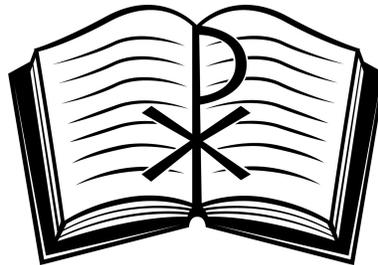
Today, friends, set aside your world-based expectations for Easter. Set them aside for Word-based expectations, the expectations of what Easter is truly about and have eternal impact on your lives.

Just consider for a moment what we’d be left with if everything had gone as the women expected, with world-based expectations. We would still be lost to sin, stung with death and stuck with hopelessness both now and forever. The Apostle Paul makes this crystal clear in 1 Corinthians 15, the great resurrection chapter: “...if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has

not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost” (1 Cor. 15:14-18).

That’s how empty Easter would be for you today if Christ has not been raised. That’s how empty Easter is for all those whose expectations are world-based. Therefore, friends, let your expectations be Word-based, because when they are Word-based everything changes.

When we turn to the Word, we see that Easter is the proof that Jesus’ sacrifice for sins actually paid for sin. In Jesus’ suffering and death, he wrote out a check in his own blood for the sins of the world. When he rose from the dead, the check cleared. *Turn to Jesus for his forgiveness! He died and rose again to forgive your every sin!*



When we turn to the Word, we see that Easter is the proof that Jesus lives, and that changes all our expectations at the funerals of Christians, and at our own funeral one day too. For the Christian, death and the grave are not the end. *Because Jesus lives again, we can be absolutely sure that death is but a sleep. My alarm wakes me up every morning. And so does yours. Our living Lord will one day wake us up from our graves, just as he himself did. In Jesus—the resurrection and life—we live even though we die. Turn to Jesus! His resurrection ensures your resurrection!*

When we turn to the Word, we see that Easter is the proof that we have real hope now and forever. Why? Because *your hope for daily life and eternal life isn't placed in a dead guy! Christ is alive, which means that we have all kinds of hope to bring us through this life and into the next. Your living Lord is with you every second of this life until he takes you into eternal life. Turn to Jesus! His life is your life!*

Jesus for resurrection and life. Turn to Jesus. He is risen! Always Jesus. He has risen indeed! Amen.

SDG²

So, friends, what are you expecting to get out of Easter? That depends on whether your expectations are world-based or Word-based. *If the forgiveness of sins and victory over death aren't really that big of a deal to you, then there is no pressing reason to come and worship him again any time soon. Then the best you can hope for today is a chocolate bunny, spring dresses, a ham, and a nap. But if Christ walked out of his tomb—truly, bodily, powerfully—then you have every reason to worship him as often as you can! Then the best you can hope for today is full forgiveness for all of your sins, complete removal of all of your guilt, God's truth to drive out your doubts, joy as you live for Jesus now, hope of eternal life in heaven, and the assurance of your own bodily resurrection when the last trumpet sounds.*

Friends, until that last trumpet sounds, may our risen Lord Jesus keep you in a living Easter faith—a faith that continually turns to

² SDG is an acronym for *Soli Deo Gloria*, which is Latin for “To God Alone Be The Glory”. This is a statement of humility used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the end of their work to let themselves and others know that it isn't about getting glory for themselves, but about giving all glory to God.

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