

Isaiah 65:17-25
1 Corinthians 15:19-26
Luke 24:1-12

Sermon April 17th Easter Morning

Jesus' Message Is Resurrected!

For three years, Jesus' message about God's hospitality, forgiveness, healing, and redemption spreads across the region of Galilee like a wild grass fire (**Image**). Influencing thousands of people to follow Jesus. Breathing new life into them. Giving them hope as they face persecution from the Empire. Inspiring them to proclaim this message in their communities.

For three years, Jesus' message is the dominant message in this region.

Then comes the garden scene where Jesus is betrayed and arrested. Most of the disciples scatter out of fear of being arrested too. Peter tries to follow Jesus to Golgotha, but ends up denying Jesus three times. Only a few women remain to witness the trial and death of Jesus on the cross.

In this grim moment in time that we recognize as Good Friday, Jesus isn't the only one who dies on that cross. Jesus' message dies with him.

The very people who are entrusted to carry on Jesus' message are paralyzed from fear and grief. The Empire's Crucifixion tactic is working. The disciples are silenced. And though Jesus said the stones would continue his message when he entered Jerusalem, all the earth is able to do when Jesus takes his last breath is let out a cry of grief in the form of an earthquake.

When the women come on the first day of the week to complete the burial ritual for Jesus. They are perplexed when they see the stone rolled away, and an empty tomb (**Image**). They can't understand why Jesus' body is missing. Did someone take it? Did they take a wrong turn, and stumble upon someone else's tomb? Their grief prevents them from remembering Jesus' foretelling of his resurrection.

On the cross, Jesus' message dies along with Jesus.

Now, we can relate to the disciples. Suffering. Grief. Fear. Guilt. Can stop us from remembering Jesus' message. Can paralyze us from proclaiming this message in our communities.

It is hard to remember Jesus' message about God's hospitality when we face rejection. Whether we are going through a break up or are left off the guest list at a close friends wedding or we are always the last one picked to be on a team. When we are right

there dealing with the raw pain of rejection it is hard for us to remember Jesus' message about God's hospitality.

It is hard to remember Jesus' message about God's forgiveness when someone has just said or did something really hurtful. When the wounds are still fresh.

It is hard to remember Jesus' message about God's forgiveness when we have done something terrible that we feel is unforgivable.

It is hard to remember Jesus' message about God's forgiveness when our guilt festers, and turns to shame.

It is hard to remember Jesus' message about God's healing when just a couple of days ago we were diagnosed with an aggressive cancer or we are dealing with a chronic condition that we can't seem to control or we are still haunted by the wounds of our childhood traumas.

It is hard to remember Jesus' message about God's redemption when the longevity of this pandemic has impacted us greatly. When the war in Ukraine has caused us much sadness, anxiety, and fear. When the death of a loved one has left a void in our lives. When we hear that our climate is changing more rapidly than we anticipated. When we see that our churches are declining at alarming rates (**Image**).

It is hard to remember Jesus' message about God's hospitality, forgiveness, healing, and redemption in the midst of our suffering.

On the cross all seems lost. Including Jesus' message.

Then Easter happens. The angels appear in the empty tomb and declare what Jesus had foretold about his resurrection. The women suddenly remember what Jesus had said. The women remember Jesus' message about God's hospitality, forgiveness, healing, and redemption, and are inspired through this message, to go and tell the others. Even though they will face ridicule for sharing this message. Unfortunately, because their witness isn't seen with much authority due to their sex.

But this does not deter the women from sharing the message of Jesus with the hopes of triggering the other disciples' minds. Because the women now see God's redemption. Jesus isn't dead, but alive. Their grief has turned into new life. Not only for themselves, but for the very message that has inspired them to follow Jesus. The women proclaim this message to anyone who is willing to listen. And as we see, Peter decides to go check things out for himself.

The empty tomb, the angels, the women, refuse to let Jesus' message die. If the physical Jesus can be resurrected from the dead, so can his message.

And even though they have not seen the resurrected Christ as of yet, the angels' words seem to have reignited the message of Jesus within them. The women believe, and are empowered to carry on this message to anyone who is willing to listen.

As we face grief, suffering, uncertainty in our world. God finds ways to trigger our memories, so to, remember Jesus' message about God's hospitality, forgiveness, healing, and redemption. Giving us hope that we can overcome these sufferings. Like Jesus does when he overcomes death on the cross. Like the women do when their grief is overcome with unexpected joy.

God triggers our memories through many different means. For example, pointing out stories in the Bible for us to read that reassure us of Christ's message when we are grieving. Have you ever picked up a Bible, randomly selected a section to read, and were amazed at how these words related to your current situation? Or do you read a daily devotional? Do you find that some days these devotions really speak to you in a way that is hard to explain? Or are there Sunday mornings where you feel the sermon is speaking directly to you? There are many times in my life where I feel God guiding me to a story in the Bible that gives me hope in God's message when I am suffering. Reassuring me of God's healing and redemption.

Or sometimes God invites people into our lives to help us reconnect with this message. Like running into a person or community who is very welcoming. I remember when I first met the Turkish Muslim community. I was moved so deeply by their hospitality. Meanwhile, I dealt with another Christian leader and community that rejected me, because of what I believed. Sometimes it is shortly after we have experienced rejection that God brings someone into our life who is very welcoming.

Sometimes God invites people into our lives to remind us of God's healing. Like a friend who walks with us in our fight with cancer. Like a family member who listens to us as we lament our heartache from a breakup. Like a person who offers us forgiveness when we didn't deserve it.

Sometimes God creates opportunities for us to remember God's message. Like a worship service where we remember this message when singing a lyric in a song or when listening to the sermon or during the prayers or when we participate in communion or when we witness a baptism (**Image**). We remember God's message from this service, which then refreshes us and empowers us to proclaim God's message in our neighbourhoods.

Or like a soup kitchen that helps us see that God is indeed working in this world through us to care for those in need (**Image**). Or another ministry we can think of where we experience God's hospitality, healing, and redeeming love working in and through us. Where we feel hopeful about the future of the church.

Or like a moment in our lives where God makes everything right. A moment we cling to when we come across the darkness once again. The Israelites remember God liberating them from slavery in Egypt whenever they face hardship. We, Christians, remember the Easter story. We remember Jesus liberating us from sin and death through his resurrection whenever we face hardship. God redeemed us once. God will redeem us again. Right?

Easter is the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus. Easter is the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus' message.

Through this resurrection narrative we hear on Easter morning we remember this message of God's hospitality, forgiveness, healing, and redemption. We are empowered by this remembering, to proclaim this message for others to hear. This message that reassures us of God's hospitality, forgiveness, healing, and redemption for our lives, and for our world.

Let us pray, gracious God, we give thanks for your resurrection that gives us new life. That helps us remember your message of hospitality, forgiveness, healing, and redemption. That empowers us to keep sharing this message with others. In Jesus name we pray, **amen.**

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