

He's Alive!
John 20:1-18

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the words of my mouth and the ears of our hearts be open to the Word of God this day. Amen.

How many of you know Martha Thompson? Obviously not many of you. How about Mary Grumbine? No. Perhaps Adam Young? Or D.L. Kolb? Any of these people familiar to you. No. Why not?

Let me tell you what I know about them: Martha Thompson was a baptized member of St. Mark and died Nov. 25th 1872 and is buried. Mary Grumbine was a baptized member of St. Mark and died November 5, 1876 and is buried. Adam Young was a baptized member of St. Mark and died October 29, 1880 and is buried. D.L. Kolb was a baptized member of St. Mark and died July 15, 1863 and was buried. All of these people are past church members and community members that lived and died and were buried through this church family. Each one of these people were children, born to parents that dreamed big things for them, they went to schools and learned English and math, and some history. They worked at jobs and some began families of their own. Perhaps they were Sunday school students or teachers. Perhaps they were married in the old church building, and served on a council or board. Then each one of these people became sick and their bodies failed them and they died and were buried. That is death. That is what comes to each person.

For Martha, Mary, Adam, D.L. and everyone else that have lived and died and are buried in cemeteries around the country and around the world, in graves long since forgotten and lost, these are people who knew what it was to have lived and then entered into death. Each and everyone of them experienced death.

But for the living we remain, knowing our time is coming, but still fearful of it and mournful of it. We fear it because it is one ailment that is common to all men and woman. We might have different jobs, different hair color, different clothing sizes, live in a different times, but death is one thing we all share in common. No one gets out of it. There is no price set nor is there a check list we can get that when finished gives us that get out of death free card. No, death is something that will come to us all, and yet people fear it. We fear death in the sense that it puts an end to life as we know it here. We fear and mourn death because it doesn't allow us to talk with our loved ones, hug them or see their smiling faces anymore. We

fear death because we fear being alone. We fear death because of the unknown darkness that seems to always surround the idea of it.

But today there is new light that breaks into that darkness. There is hope that breaks down the sadness. There is joy that does away with the mourning. There is excitement where there was fear. There is life where there was death. Because we know that today is Easter Sunday. The words of Christ stand ringing in our ears, when he said in John chapter 11, "I am the resurrection and the Life" This day we experience those words once again and hear the story of the empty grave, the tomb that stands open and the Lord standing alive once again, victorious even over death itself. It is a glorious day to give thanks and praise.

I am sure that is how Mary Magdalene and the other Mary must have felt when the Lord Jesus Called out to them and they knew that he was alive. Imagine how the surge of joy, excitement, hope, and love, in that one moment, must have washed over them. They went to the grave expecting death, just as we read names from long ago of members who have died and remember those who have gone before us. But what they find instead is life, the resurrection and life eternal. Suddenly they stand knowing a life that goes beyond death. Jesus changes them from death to life in that one word, from sadness to joy, from fear to thanksgiving all when he simply calls out Greetings and they know him alive, resurrected.

Imagine how they must have felt going early before sunrise, while it was still dark our text tells us, they went out to see the grave, to be near it, to cry and mourn perhaps. Or perhaps they went simply to be close to where Jesus' body was laid. Some of the other gospel writers say they went to take care of Jesus' body in the proper way before burial since they didn't have much time on Friday before the sunset and the Sabbath began. For whatever reason they go, I would assume they went with great sadness. There was no hope, no anticipation, no excitement.

It had been just a few days before that the people of Jerusalem had welcomed Jesus as the Messiah, as their King. They had waved branches of palms and cheered his coming. He had raised Lazarus from the dead and people were just starting to believe and turn to following his teachings.

But then just after the Passover dinner, Jesus had been arrested, and beaten, tortured, tried unfairly by false witnesses and sentenced to death that he didn't deserve. A horrible death. And now he was dead, buried in the grave of darkness. I am sure they wondered about all these things as they walked down the pre-dawn streets towards the

graveyard crying in despair filled with sorrow and anguish. The one they loved was dead. They went expecting to see death and darkness.

But we know in our reading that instead of the darkness, instead of death, a miracle takes place. With the force of an earthquake and the radiant glow of an angel from heaven rolled back the stone and sat on it, beaming with glory and joy, that the dead are not here, but Jesus is alive and going ahead of them. Then going to tell this news to the others they meet Jesus in the flesh, breathing and alive right before them again, declaring the life over death.

In that moment they are changed. All that sorrow and grief, all those tears are immediately forgotten, because the joy of seeing him, alive, bodily alive again is just so much. They went filled from there with that Easter Joy and became the first preachers of the Gospel message, proclaiming that the one who is dead is now alive. Imagine the joy and excitement they felt as they went to tell the good news, Jesus is alive and death has no control over him, he is alive forever and going ahead of us.

That is the joy and celebration that brings us here today. That is the joy and celebration we continue to give thanks for each and every day we serve the Lord. I started today asking if you knew Martha Thompson? Mary Grumbine? Adam Young? Or D.L. Kolb? Each and every one of them were born back two centuries ago and died over 130 years ago. While we do not know them and their lives have been forgotten. There is one who does not forget them. There is one who never forgets and has overcome death and will call each of them by name one day. Jesus, the resurrected one, the one who has gone into the Father's kingdom to prepare a place for each of us, will one day call each of them by name, He will call out to Martha, Mary, Adam, D.L. and greet them in the resurrection joy. And they like these women at the grave will suddenly in that moment will be changed, they will see life again, where there was death. Where there was darkness suddenly this new light of Jesus' glory will break in and surround them in the Lord's power. And they will rise again along with all people before the Lord. That is the Gospel message that we receive this day.

Jesus said "I am the resurrection and the Life" Jesus who died is alive, forever. Death no longer has a hold on us. The grave is not the end. We celebrate that promised Resurrection this day. We have light in Christ where there was darkness. We have hope where there was despair. We have joy because Jesus Christ is Risen, He is most certainly Risen Indeed! Alleluia!

May the peace and grace of God fill you with great joy and hope this day and throughout the week to come. Amen.