

## **Sermon for Zion, April 4, 2021 - Resurrection Sunday**

**Hymns:** 243 – Jesus Christ is Risen Today; Lord, I Lift Your Name On High; In Christ Alone; 254 – Jesus is risen from the grave; 255 – Now Let the Vault of Heaven Resound

**Scripture:** Mark 16:1-8; Matthew 28:1-10; Luke 24:1-11; John 20:11-18

**Sermon Title: The Easter Miracles**

### **Mark 16:1-8**

*When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"*

*But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.*

*"Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"*

*Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.*

They didn't expect it, you see. They didn't expect to find what they found – or didn't find, as it turned out.

What they expected to find was what any sane person would expect, when visiting the tomb of a person you had seen die, die in the most graphic and convincing of ways, just a few days before. What they expected, that Sunday morning, was to find the hastily buried body of Jesus, sealed in the tomb of their friend, Joseph of Arimathea. They expected to properly complete the burial rituals which had been, by necessity, rushed on that Friday afternoon. They expected to grieve, they expected to weep, they expected to remember how wonderful it had been to be with Jesus, they expected to mourn over how it had all gone so wrong. They expected to have trouble rolling the stone away. What they didn't expect was what they found.

The tomb open. A young man in white. The young man, speaking: *"You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter..."*

*"Trembling and bewildered," we read, "the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid."*

And that's where Mark leaves us in his Gospel; the women running from the tomb, trembling, bewildered, afraid. And that's not what we expected either. We expected, from Mark, something a little more reassuring, something a little more pious, a little more... well, a little more. But Mark gives us a precious gift; he gives us fear and confusion, wonder and joy;

he gives us the gift of the unexpected, he gives us the gift of feeling what they were feeling on that day.

We come on Easter Sunday, expecting the same old story we have heard 100 times. But on that first morning, it wasn't the same old story; it was new, brand new, completely unexpected. Can it be that way for us again? Can we break through our familiarity, and see the story as the earth-shattering, world-changing, heaven-rejoicing event it was and is? Maybe then, our hearts can be filled with the light of the Resurrection morn, as together we declare: "Christ is Risen; He Is Risen Indeed!"

**Hymn 254** – Jesus is risen from the grave vss 1,2

1. *Jesus is risen from the grave (x3)*  
*Hallelujah!*
2. *Jesus was seen by Mary (x3)*  
*Hallelujah!*

**Matthew 28:1-10**

*After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.*

*There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.*

*The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."*

*So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."*

For Matthew, it was a day of miracles. THE day of miracles. A violent earthquake. An Angel of the Lord. Guards, Roman guards, hard men, so frightened they shook and fell to the ground as though dead.

This is a miracle, says Matthew, a day of miracles, and the greatest miracle of all is announced by the angel: "*Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.*"

The women, as in Mark, hurry away from the tomb, running, afraid, yet also, says Matthew, "*filled with joy.*" And then, another miracle: *Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him.*

We, too, have come to worship the Risen Lord. We, too, are filled with joy. And as Matthew reminds us, another miracle: we, too, are in the presence of Jesus. Suddenly, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are in the presence of Jesus. Suddenly, we realize, Jesus is among us. Jesus is here. We are in the presence of the Risen Lord, who greets us, who tells us to not be afraid. A day of miracles. Then, as now. And so, together we declare: “Christ is Risen; He Is Risen Indeed!”

**Hymn 254** – Jesus is risen from the grave vs 3,4

3. *Peter will soon be smiling (x3)*

*Hallelujah!*

4. *Thomas will stop his doubting (x3)*

*Hallelujah!*

### **Luke 24:1-11**

*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. They found the stone rolled away from 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.’” Then they remembered his words.*

*When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense.*

For Luke, it is all about the eyewitnesses. He began his gospel by saying so (Luke 1:1-4): *Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you... so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.*

Luke has talked to the eyewitnesses, to the women who visited the tomb that morning. He has spoken with “*Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James,*” and some others. He has named them, so others could verify his account. But what more verification could we need of the truth of Luke’s telling, than the reaction of the Apostles themselves, those good, pious and holy men, hiding out in the Upper Room, afraid the authorities might go looking for the followers of the Jesus who was crucified for treason just three days before? For how was the testimony of “*Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James,*” received? “*They did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense.*”

The best, the most conclusive proof of the truth of the testimony of the eyewitness women is precisely this skepticism, this ridicule, this scorn, faithfully recorded by Luke. Can’t

you see these women sitting across the table from Luke, as with parchment and quill, he takes his notes? *“Those apostles, those men, didn’t believe a thing we said. ‘Nonsense,’ they said. ‘Hysterical women,’ they said. ‘We all saw him die,’ they said. ‘Nobody comes back to life,’ they said. But He appeared to us! First! Jesus showed them...”*

And Jesus did show them. One by one, eyewitness by eyewitness, name by name, Jesus showed them. Showed them he was Risen. Showed them he was Alive. And so they, eyewitnesses to the miracle of the Risen Lord, proclaimed to all the world, proclaim to us, the words we together declare: *“Christ is Risen; He Is Risen Indeed!”*

**Hymn 254** – Jesus is risen from the grave vs 5,7

5. *Jesus will meet his people (x3)*

*Hallelujah!*

7. *Jesus will live forever (x3)*

*Hallelujah!*

### **John 20:11-18**

*Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. They asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?”*

*“They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don’t know where they have put him.” At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.*

*He asked her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?”*

*Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”*

*Jesus said to her, “Mary.”*

*She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher”).*

*Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”*

*Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her.*

Mary of Magdalene. Heartbroken Mary. Mary, whose life of waking nightmares had been transformed by Jesus into a life of purpose, of hope, of light, was now in darkness again, hope and purpose and light crushed, extinguished by the death of the Jesus she loved. Mary, standing outside the tomb, crying, crying.

*“Why are you crying?”* It is angels she sees, seated in the tomb, but in her grief, through her tears, they are simply men. *“They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don’t know where they have put him.”* She turns away, trying to hide her grief-stricken face.

Another voice. *“Why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?”* It is Jesus. It is Jesus she sees, but in her grief, through her tears, it is simply a man, maybe the gardener. Again, she turns away.

*“Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”*  
Jesus said to her, *“Mary.”*  
She turned toward him and cried out, *“Teacher!”*

It is Jesus. It is him. And Mary’s life, Mary’s world, is changed, forever changed. Hope, purpose, light. All hers again. Darkness and death made powerless by the light and life of the Resurrection morn.

Through her grief, through her tears, through the struggles and problems and complications and confusion of her situation, she did not recognise Jesus, until he spoke her name. Until he spoke her name.

And now Jesus speaks your name. It is your name he speaks. By the power of the Holy Spirit, it is your name Jesus speaks, into the struggles and problems and complications and confusion of your heart. Jesus speaks your name.

Will you, like Mary, turn to him? Will you, like Mary, embrace Jesus, and never let go? Will you embrace hope, and purpose and life, in the light of this Resurrection morn? Will you proclaim, together with Mary, together with us together with those who have gone before and those yet to come: *“Christ is Risen; He Is Risen Indeed!”* Amen.

Christ is Risen;  
    *“He Is Risen For You!”*  
Christ is Risen;  
    *“He Is Risen For Me!”*  
Christ is Risen;  
    *“He Is Risen Indeed! Hallelujah!”*