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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
April 21, 2019
Easter Sunday

Scripture Lessons: Job 19:23-27, 1 Cor. 15:1-8, Luke 24:1-12

Hymns: 191; 200:1-2,7-8, 728; 193; 189; 730; 207:1-2

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Mark 16:1-8

Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary *the mother* of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. ²Very early in the morning, on the first *day* of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. ³And they said among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?" ⁴But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large. ⁵And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.

⁶But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. ⁷But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you."

⁸So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, our crucified and RISEN Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Mementos

We have been collecting mementos of Jesus' suffering and death for some weeks now. This week we held up as mementos of Jesus'

Passion the Cup of Blessing from the Lord's Supper, something we do in remembrance of Jesus. Then on Good Friday we considered the Soldier's Spear which pierced our Savior's side confirming beyond all doubt that Jesus had died on the cross.

On Good Friday we also read of the circumstances of Jesus' burial, how two members of the Jewish high council, the Sanhedrin who had been secret disciples had stepped forward to claim Jesus' body, to declare their love for Jesus, but only after His death. It was Joseph of Arimathea that had actually supplied the tomb where they laid Jesus' body. It was all ready for use, including the large heavy stone shaped to fit perfectly over the mouth of the tomb settling into a prepared groove and sealing the tomb.

So as we turn our meditation to the events of Easter morning, to the resurrection of our Savior we shall use this as a focus for our meditation; our memento of Jesus' resurrection is --

THEME: A Heavy Stone.

Early that resurrection morning it was that --

I. Heavy Stone Looming over the Hearts of the Women.

There was a group of women heading out to Jesus' grave, different ones are mentioned by name by the different evangelists. Our text speaks of Mary Magdalene, Mary the

mother of James the less, and Salome, the mother of James and John, who was also Jesus' aunt, a sister of Mary. These women were part of a larger group of faithful women who sought to serve the Lord during His life, following Jesus providing for His needs as He went from town to town preaching the gospel. Now they were intent to serve Him in His death.

When the Sabbath was over, (that would have been at 6:00 p.m. the previous evening) they went out and purchased spices to properly embalm Jesus' body. They rose early in the morning, before sunrise, to get to the tomb early; the earlier the better, before decomposition progressed any further.

You see, in spite of their faithfulness, in spite of their love of Jesus, the reality of death blocked the truth of Jesus' words of promise. As they walked out to the tomb they talked about the great stone that sealed the tomb, and wondered how they were going to move it out of the way. These women wouldn't be up to the task. Several big strong men, maybe, but these women knew the great size of that stone and they were worried about it.

I think it is a proper analogy to compare that stone that blocked the tomb with the stone of grief and sadness that lay upon their hearts. That great stone kept them from their Savior. No, not just the stone that sealed the tomb, but that stone that the grave brings upon the hearts of all who have been separated from loved ones by death. That stone of grief and sadness, that stone of separation that keeps us from holding our loved one in our arms, from expressing our love to them. That is the stone they had lying upon their hearts. Indeed they were fixated on that stone. In their minds Jesus was gone, separated from them forever by the pall of death.

And that is what death brings into the lives of mankind. The sense of loss and grief is universal. It overwhelms, and it is a heavy stone that lies upon the heart. This heavy

stone of grief often looms so large over the heart of even a disciple of Christ that it blocks the truth. All we can see is the shadow of death. All we can conceive of in mind and heart is the stone of separation that keeps us from our loved one. It was just that these wonderful, loving women failed to recall the words of promise that Jesus' had spoken for His disciples time and again. Yes, He would suffer and die at the hands of His enemies and be buried, but that **on the third day He would rise again!** The day of Jesus' death and burial was day one. The Sabbath beginning at 6:00 p.m. Friday and ending at 6:00 p.m. Saturday was day two. At 6:00 p.m. the previous evening day three had begun. But all these women could think about was the reality of that heavy stone of separation. There was no anticipation of resurrection.

What a shocking surprise awaited them!

II. The Heavy Stone was Already Removed.

The heavy stone was removed from the door of Jesus' tomb. It was not removed by Jesus, It was not removed to let Jesus out. It was certainly not moved by grave robbers. Poor Mary Magdalene didn't come near enough to take in the whole scene. She jumped to a false conclusion that the stone being moved must mean that someone had stolen the body of her Lord! She reported this "fake news" to the disciples in Jerusalem. Peter and John, after checking the tomb for themselves, believed her, and the disciples refused to believe the report of the other women, calling their eye witness report of Jesus' resurrection idle tales.

You see, the rest of the women went right up to the entrance of the tomb and there they saw that angel sitting, waiting for them. The angel had a most spectacular message, a message of such great joy it left them speechless and even afraid, for who had ever heard of such a thing as a resurrection, who had ever seen such a thing as a holy angel sitting in the tomb where the body of Jesus was supposed to be! No, where the body of Jesus **used** to be, where the body of Jesus was **not** supposed to

be! It was all too much for them to grasp, and so they were afraid!

The truth of the resurrection is so amazing it is beyond human experience. That which is beyond human experience is hard for us to grasp as real. We who have been led by the Holy Spirit to know and believe this glorious gospel of a Risen Lord still can hardly grasp its full implications for us in our lives, and we still often struggle with the heavy stone of grief and sadness. But hear the words of the angel and know the glorious truth of resurrection life.

Mark 16:6-7 “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. ⁷ But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.”

Yes, they were seeking Jesus who was crucified, who had died and was buried, but Jesus was no longer in the tomb. Jesus had risen from the dead! The tomb was empty! This was just as the Lord had told them it would be. And that was the message that was to be shared with the disciples, especially Peter! All things had happened as the Lord had taught them! He would be with them in Galilee!

Jesus’ word is true! It was necessary for the Son of Man to suffer and die, and the third day rise again that we might have life in His name! And that message included those who were ashamed because of their sin. It included Peter, and this hope of the resurrection includes also us.

The assurance of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead is twofold! Since it confirms that all Jesus said is most certainly true – all He said would happen happened just as Jesus had told them --then we know that all the blessings of Jesus’ resurrection are secured. **First**, the debt of sin has been paid, God has assured us of full and free forgiveness. You also have been reconciled to God by the

death of His Son. Jesus' resurrection proclaims that decree of justification for all mankind! **Secondly** and most gloriously, Jesus' resurrection proclaims the reality of resurrection, not just for Jesus but for us all. We have the hope and comfort of everlasting life in Jesus and His resurrection. Paul wrote of this wonder of grace and life in the resurrection chapter of 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 15:20-23 "But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since by man *came* death, by Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. ²³ But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those *who are* Christ's at His coming.

Man brought death into the world with the fall into sin. No, in spite of all that theistic evolutionists teach, God didn't bring death on us because He was so poor at the work of creation. Man brought sin into the world and death by sin. "*Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.*" (Romans 5:12) By Jesus resolving sin's curse, the curse of death is removed for us also. By this man Jesus, the Son of God and the Son of Man, resurrection is the reality that awaits us, and for all who believe it shall be the resurrection to eternal life. Christ is the first fruits, the first and the very best! The first fruits always come to us with the promise of so much more! And so it shall be with the resurrection. At Jesus' coming we too shall rise!

So then this morning's memento completes our collection. While the rest of our mementos were of Jesus' sufferings and death, this morning we have a wondrous memento of Jesus' resurrection, that big **Heavy Stone**! No longer is that stone the stone of grief and sadness because of death, the death of a loved one or the death of our Lord. That stone was blown away by the angel to show Jesus has risen from the dead. Now this is the Stone memorializing

Jesus' victory over death. **He is Risen Indeed!** This Stone has become the chief Cornerstone of our faith. In Jesus' resurrection we know joy and gladness and the sure hope of our own resurrection to eternal life.

Psalm 118:22-24 The stone *which* the builders rejected
Has become the chief cornerstone.

²³ This was the Lord's doing;
It *is* marvelous in our eyes.

²⁴ This *is* the day the Lord has made;
We will rejoice and be glad in it!

AMEN.

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Amen. (Romans 15:13)

The congregation will respond with the singing of Hymn 189:
He Is Arisen, Glorious Word!