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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
April 12, 2020
Easter Sunday

Scripture Lessons: Job 19:23-27, 1 Cor. 15:12-23, Matthew 28:1-10

Hymns: 210, 201:1-3; 188; 200:1,2,5,7,8; 207:2

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

Sermon Text: John 20:1-18

Now the first *day* of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw *that* the stone had been taken away from the tomb. ²Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."

³Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. ⁴So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first.

⁵And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying *there*; yet he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying *there*, ⁷and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed. ⁹For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples went away again to their own homes.

¹¹But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down *and looked* into the tomb. ¹²And

she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

¹³ Then they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?"

She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him."

¹⁴ Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing *there*, and did not know that it was Jesus.

¹⁵ Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?"

She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away."

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary!"

She turned and said to Him, "Rabboni!" (which is to say, Teacher).

¹⁷ Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.' "

¹⁸ Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and *that* He had spoken these things to her. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

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

In Christ Jesus, our Risen Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Jumping to Conclusions!

We have all done it in life, and all too often when we did jump to a conclusion it wasn't the right conclusion. That can lead to disappointment. Sometimes the disappointment is not really all that consequential. I like to go to the occasional Twins game, and it often happens that by about the 7th inning stretch people start getting their things together to leave the game. They have jumped to the conclusion that they know how this game is going to end. They think that for all practical purposes the game is

over. Sometimes they are right, and I have sat through some pretty awful last innings. However, there has been more than one occasion that they had jumped to the WRONG conclusion and they missed out on something special; as the Twins rallied in the bottom of the ninth.

That isn't really such a big deal in the big picture of life. Sometimes jumping to the wrong conclusion can be devastating! Jumping to a conclusion about a driver being safe to drive when he isn't can end in a terrible loss. Jumping to the conclusion that some medical treatment is a hoax, or that a hoax is a legitimate medical treatment can end in great sufferings or even death. Jumping to conclusions can lead to great sadness, and it happens when people think they know the truth when in fact they don't!

That was what happened long ago in Jerusalem when Jesus died on the cross. In the inspired record we see how so many disciples were stuck in grief and sadness because they had jumped to conclusions that simply weren't true.

It happens yet today. In fact it happens across the globe today that people draw their own conclusions about sin and death, about heaven and hell and about life and salvation; conclusions that are not grounded in the truth of a crucified and risen Savior.

THEME: Jesus' Resurrection Leads from Sadness to Joy.

Our text presents exactly how --

I. False Assumptions Produce Great Distress.

We know that Mary Magdalene didn't start out for Jesus' grave alone, but she alone turned back from the tomb as soon as she saw the stone that had sealed Jesus' tomb had been moved out of the way. She made some very sad false assumptions. She assumed that somebody had broken in to steal Jesus' body and moved it to some unknown

location. She then acted on this false assumption. She ran back into the city to the place where Jesus' disciples were gathered and shared with them the "fake news" that someone had taken Jesus' body!

That initiated an urgent response from Peter and John. They went quickly, John even running ahead to get to the tomb to check this out for themselves. What they found should have caused them to pause and question whether what Mary had said was true. But they didn't do that. They looked into the empty tomb; they saw the linen cloths that Joseph and Nicodemus had used to wrap Jesus' body, they saw the head scarf that had been wrapped about Jesus' head neatly folded and set aside. That evidence didn't lead them to the truth that Jesus was risen from the dead. It led them to believe Mary's "fake news" that someone had taken Jesus' body. Our text reminds us that at this point *"they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead."* (v.9)

All three of them, Mary Magdalene, Peter and John were seeing with eyes of this world. They were drawing false assumptions because they thought they knew things from the experience of this life. They knew that dead is dead! Jesus was dead and buried, and they were convinced that was the truth. Of course that was so because they judged the "truth" of this world as superior to the truth of Scripture. Their false assumption left them spiritually and emotionally devastated.

That, my friends in Christ, is where all of us are by nature. We have eyes that see how things are in this world. The world that we see is the world that has been corrupted by sin and death. By nature that is what we know, and so the truth of one who died ends right there, and we jump to conclusions that are false. We jump to conclusions that lead to devastation beyond one's imagining. For the natural man the truth of this world is far more believable than the truth of Scripture which tells us of a very

different conclusion that is brought to us by the truth of a risen and ever-living Savior!

But then we learn from our text how

II. Tears Can Blind One to the Truth.

Mary returned to Jesus' tomb, and she was overwhelmed with grief and sadness. The angels appeared to Mary there. *"But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. Then they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him."* (v. 11-13)

Through her tears Mary couldn't discern the truth. Angels were in the sepulchre! Angels! They talked to her, but even that didn't make the slightest dent in her grief and sadness! Through her tears Mary didn't recognize Jesus when He was standing there next to her. She assumed, again jumping to the wrong conclusion, that this must be the gardener. She didn't even consider that it might Jesus. How could it be? He had died on the cross and had been buried! In that moment, and by the grace of God it was for only that moment, Mary's grief over the death of Jesus blinded her to the truth that Jesus was risen from death.

Tears can and do distort things for people. Grief hits hard. It hits us all hard, and in the tears of grief many have lost sight of the hope of the resurrection that is ours because Jesus rose again on the third day and lives forevermore.

Many can't see this truth, this wonder of grace, because it has not been presented to them. What is left in the face of death, in the face of grief and sadness is the bitterness. We even hear of people who declare that they no longer believe in God because of the death of a loved one. Indeed without Christ what else is there? Without knowing Jesus'

resurrection, when one's tears blur one's vision, what is left but even more tears and sadness. How then can one find one's way through the grief to joy and gladness? The world offers platitudes, like "It will get better with time." Only Jesus, our risen Savior, can truly dry our tears.

III. A Living Savior Calls Us from Grief to the Joy of Faith.

John 20:16-18 Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him, "Rabboni!" (which is to say, Teacher). ¹⁷ Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.' " ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and *that* He had spoken these things to her."

I suppose some might be tempted to say the Jesus called Mary to her senses. But that wouldn't be completely accurate would it? He had already spoken to her, and she hadn't recognized Him. She wasn't ready to believe in Jesus' resurrection. Calling Mary to her senses didn't work. Jesus called her by name, and as He did so Jesus called Mary to **faith** in a risen and living Savior. Then Mary saw, **saw with eyes of faith**, eyes no longer blinded by tears of sadness. Then Mary cried out Rabboni! Then Mary wanted to cling to Jesus and not let go. She had her Lord alive again! But that was not to be the purpose of her faith. It was time for the truth to be told. It was time for the false assumptions of this world, the false assumptions about the finality of Jesus' death, the false assumptions about death and the grave for everyone to be dispelled!

Don't think that it was all that different for Mary than it is for us. Jesus knows us by name too. He knows us every bit as well as He knew Mary Magdalene. He knows us by name! He has known us since before the world began. It was to save us sinners that Jesus came into the world and lived a perfect sinless life. He offered up Himself as the perfect sacrifice for sin, the only sacrifice that could

appease the wrath of God for the sins of the world. In the greatness of His love He delivered us from death and the devil by Jesus Himself going to the cross, and dying and being buried. The grave that screams finality, well Jesus fixed that too! By His own resurrection from the dead the grave has lost its victory.

Jesus lives! He rose triumphant Easter morning at the early purple dawning! Jesus lives forevermore! As He called Mary to faith in this glorious truth of His resurrection, so Jesus has called us to faith in His name, to faith in Him as our Redeemer, and we know that our Redeemer lives.

Jesus told Mary that she had news, real and wonderful news that she was to share. Yes, this was the news of Jesus' resurrection, and the wonder of His ascension! His mission of salvation was complete. Mary in great joy and gladness went and told that news, that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these wonderful truths to her.

Now, we also see Jesus with eyes of faith. That makes it no less real. It makes the truth of our salvation no less certain. It makes our joy every bit as full as the joy Mary knew. We too have news to share. **He is Risen! The Lord is Risen indeed!**

"I know that my Redeemer lives;
What comfort this sweet sentence gives!
He lives, He lives, who once was dead;
He lives, my ever-living Head.

"He lives triumphant from the grave,
He lives eternally to save,
He lives all-glorious in the sky,
He lives exalted there on high.

"He lives to silence all my fears,
He lives to wipe away my tears,

He lives to calm my troubled heart,
He lives all blessings to impart.”
200:1,2,5)

(The Lutheran Hymnal

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. (Romans15:13)