

## Remnant Life Church

April 21, 2019

Easter Sunday

### God Speaks to Us from an Empty Tomb

Isaiah 53:1-9

In the comic strip, Calvin and Hobbes, Calvin is at school, and his teacher is attempting to teach the class. She begins, “If there are no questions, we will move on to the next chapter.” “I have a question.”

“Certainly Calvin, what is it?”

“What’s the point of human existence?”

“I meant questions about what we were just talking about from your work book”

“Well, I’d really like to have this issue resolved first before I expend any more energy on those other matters.”

**BUT THAT IS WHY WE CELEBRATE THIS MORNING – IT IS GOD’S ULTIMATE ANSWER TO OUR LIFE.**

- Not that God hasn’t revealed himself throughout human existence
  - We see God’s power in creation; a creation that can fill our souls with wonder and awe
  - Certainly, we see that answer in the entire life and ministry of Jesus Christ as God’s power and love was made manifest in human form, to heal and set free
  - But perhaps nowhere is God’s ultimate word of response more settled and made clear than at the empty tomb.

Tombs will often tell us a about the person who occupies them.

- Tombstones give us some information although now so expensive that we can barely afford the dates of our birth and death
- Archaeologists will tell you that perhaps the greatest tomb discovery was that of King Tut in Egypt.
- King Tutankhamen was the 13<sup>th</sup> pharaoh of the eighteenth dynasty at the beginning of what became known as the New Kingdom
  - He ruled from 1332-1324 BC beginning at the age of 8 or 9
  - So much wealth in the tomb it took nearly 2 months to get the treasures out!

Now, consider by contrast the opulence and grandeur of a boy who was king for only 10 years with the simple tomb of Jesus that changed the world.

#### 1. HIS POWER IS ULTIMATE

- a. The pyramids of Egypt are famous because they contained the mummified bodies of ancient Egyptian Kings. Westminster Abbey in London is revered, because in it rests the bodies of English nobles. Mohammed’s tomb is a noted stone sarcophagus where the bones remain. Arlington cemetery in Washington, D.C. is revered for it is the honored resting place of many outstanding Americans. But the Garden Tomb of Jesus is famous because it is empty.

- b. The empty tomb of Jesus is the ultimate demonstration of God's power in Christ.
  - i. It was also the final fulfillment of hundreds of prophecies of Jesus including not only how he'd been born but how he would die...be buried...his grave...and his resurrection.
  - ii. One of which we read from Isaiah was 1,000 years before Christ; 600 years before the crucifixion was developed as a means of execution.
- c. And it was that power that transformed fearful lives
  - i. It began in those 12 men hiding following the crucifixion infusing them with courage and hope
  - ii. 12 men who took a message to the furthest parts of the then-known world, all but one martyred for what they now knew to be true, proclaiming a living, risen Savior...and it changed the world.

In spite of the evidence of an empty tomb some suggested there were other explanations –

#### JESUS WASN'T REALLY DEAD...

- He was beaten and tortured until unable to stand
- then nailed to a cross
- pierced through...from which came blood and water (pericardial).

Consider for a moment what would have meant – Jesus wasn't dead and left the tomb

- Joseph of Arimathea was a member of the Sanhedrin (the Jewish high court) who was a secret believer in Jesus and he offered his personal tomb in his garden to bury Jesus ([Matt 27:57-60](#))
- When Jesus was taken down his body would have at the very least been wiped down before being wrapped
- Would those doing this not have been desperately searching for any signs of life?
- The stone was rolled in front of the tomb would have been very large weighing between 1½ -2 tons, rolled down a channel (it took 20 men to remove such a stone.)
- Guards were placed at tomb...imprinted with Roman seal.
- Jesus dealt with all of that and, after all that he had just physically endured, simply walked out unseen?

#### DISCIPLES STOLE JESUS FROM THE GRAVE

- These cowering, fearful men are now going to overpower the guards
- Move the stone (12 v 20)
- They were now suddenly 12 Rambos which would have also made the account of Jesus appearing to them in the room a lie

#### WRONG TOMB

- In order for that to be true Joseph did not know which tomb was his
- The women who returned on Sunday morning, in 1 ½ days would have forgotten the most important thing they had ever witnessed
- Remember - not a graveyard but one grave in a garden.
- And if that were true the Roman guards could have squashed the rumors by simply showing the real tomb and producing the body of Jesus



- No! The truth was Peter could stand forty days later at Pentecost and proclaim undisputed the reality of the resurrection. ([Acts 2:14-40](#))
- The apostle Paul could speak of Jesus appearance to over 500 many of whom were still alive as he was recounted the story! ([I Cor 15:6](#))

But the resurrection has also changed the minds of modern man as well...

Josh McDowell, a man who, as an agnostic pursuing legal studies to enter politics, set out to publish an academic paper that would disprove Christianity through historical evidence, was later asked by a student, "Prof., why couldn't you refute Christianity?"

"For one simple reason," he replied, "the resurrection of Jesus Christ." After more than seven hundred hours of study and investigation the evidence would only lead him to God.

Thomas Arnold was a late 1700's to mid 1800 English professor and historian.

- He was the holder of the chair of modern history at Oxford, authored a history of the Roman empire and was a leader in examining and determining the validity of evidence
- This great scholar said, "I have been used for many years to study the histories of other times, and to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them, and I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort, than the great sign which God hath given us that Christ died and rose again from the dead."

The literary scholar, C. S. Lewis, former professor of Medieval and Renaissance literature at Cambridge University

- When writing about his conversion to Christianity, indicated that he had always believed Christians simply "to be wrong." And the last thing Lewis ever wanted was to embrace Christianity.
- Finally, contrary to his life-long strong stand against Christianity, Professor Lewis was forced to make a decision:
- "You must picture me alone in my private study, night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet was there. That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the third term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and I knelt and I prayed: perhaps, that night, the most reluctant convert in all of England."

The empty tomb tells us of God's ultimate power to change the hearts and minds of man.

## 2. HIS PRIORITY IS PEOPLE

- a. In the tomb of King Tut were possessions of this world in contrast Jesus' was empty
- b. Jesus said [Luke 19:10](#) – ...*the Son of Man has come to seek and save the lost.*
- c. He described the King of Hosts as the shepherd leaving the 99 sheep until he finds that one lost sheep....and when found, all heaven rejoices. ([Luke 15:4-7](#))
- d. And not only is His priority people, but God knows your value and your worth – enough to pursue you with His love

Illus - A gem dealer was strolling the aisles at the Tucson Gem and Mineral Show when he noticed a very ordinary looking blue-violet stone the size and shape of a potato. He looked it over, then, as calmly as possible, asked the vendor, "You want \$15 for this?" The seller, realizing the rock wasn't as pretty as others in the bin, lowered the price to \$10. The stone has since been certified as a 1,905-carat natural star sapphire, about 800 carats larger than the largest stone of its kind., It was appraised at \$2.28 million. It took a lover of stones to recognize the sapphire's worth. It took the Lover of Souls to recognize the true value of ordinary looking people like us.

### 3. HIS PEACE IS BEYOND CIRCUMSTANCES

- a. Do you remember the very first words Jesus spoke to His disciples following His resurrection?
  - b. They weren't words of admonishment or rebuke
  - c. His first words were, *Peace be with you.* (Luke 24:36)
  - d. It is, as we know, a peace that passes all understanding (Phil 4:7)
  - e. In the face of tragedy, sorrow, confusion, anger, despair, hopelessness
- We know that peace because of God's presence
    - The tomb may have been empty but the presence of God, in the person of the Holy Spirit, remains here today for each of us.
    - I read once that killing Jesus was like trying to destroy a dandelion by blowing on its white furry seeds.
  - As I bring our time together this morning to a close, consider again the discovery of that other tomb in Egypt.
    - Howard Carter, on November 4, 1922, finds the first step. He quickly covers it up, secures the area and prepares for the fulfillment of his life's work.
    - He had taken 10 years of digging to find this tomb... and spent a vast sum of money in the effort.
    - Returned with teams...all gathered around...dug along the steps to the door...the diggers called for Carter to be the first to look in
    - He looked in but said nothing until finally, someone called out, "What do you see?" He said just 2 words, "Marvelous things."
    - Went to the top of steps...put his head in his hands and began to cry. (They assumed he was simply overtaken by the joy and enormity of the moment)
    - Then he said, "10 years ago I dug 18" from that step." 10 years of his life had been lost ...because he missed what was so close.
  - Don't miss Jesus this morning.
    - God is speaking to you, to each of us through an empty tomb
      - To know His ultimate power to overcome the world
      - To know that you are known and loved by Him
      - To know that His peace is beyond your circumstances
    - Jesus said, as recorded by John in Rev. 3:20 - *Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.*