

Easter Sunday – April 21, 2019

Luke 24:1-12

1 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. 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. 5 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? 6 He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 7 ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’” 8 Then they remembered his words. 9 When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. 10 It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. 11 But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. 12 Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

When it comes to the business of making promises, politicians have been known to make just a few. As candidates get out on the campaign trail, they make all sorts of promises in order to help win over voters and get elected. The big debate is always over who will keep their promise. Some have every intention of keeping their promise, as they make it a key part of their platform. Others have no intention of keeping their word, as they make promises to both sides of an issue that would be impossible to keep. Promises are always good to hear, but we can never know for sure whether they will come true until after they have served in office. Even those with the best intentions may run into resistance or a lack of cooperation so that their promises cannot be kept. Although we are not here on this Easter morning to discuss politics, we are here to talk about promises, specifically God’s promises to us and also to talk about the resurrection. As we look at our text from Luke chapter 24, we see that **The Resurrection Means...God Keeps His Promises**. Not only did God keep his promise on that first Easter morning, but he also keeps his promises throughout the rest of our lives.

Put yourself in the place of those women who went to the tomb early on that Sunday morning. They were probably pretty down and depressed. They had witnessed on Friday their Lord and Master being put to death on a cross. There had not even been time for a proper burial. Luke closes the previous chapter: “The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment” (23:55-56). This man they had followed all the way down from Galilee was now dead and they had now had a full day to sit around and think about it. And they could not wait, “very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb” (v. 1). But things only got more confusing. When they got there the stone had been rolled away and the body was missing. At least they could have mourned and grieved properly if they still had the body to take care of.

But then their day changed. Two angels appeared and although they frightened the women, they brought news that was better than they could possibly expect: “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 into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’ Then they remembered his words” (v. 5-8). Whether they had forgotten his words or misunderstood them, now it all made sense. Jesus had said that he would die and rise again and now he had kept his promise.

Consider the emotions those women must have felt, including those mentioned in our service: joy, certainty, and comfort. Who wouldn’t be happy and joyful to know that they didn’t have to finish up the burial process for a loved one, that person was alive again! They had the certainty of knowing that all that Jesus had done and taught had not been for nothing. Jesus was who he claimed to be, the Son of God. They also had comfort of knowing that they had not been abandoned or defeated, Jesus was victorious.

What if our celebration of Holy Week ended on Good Friday? We may not face the sadness and depression that those women faced because we understand that Jesus died on the cross to take away our sins. He took on the punishment that we deserved so that our sins might be forgiven. But what if that was it and there was no Easter Sunday? As it has always been, Jesus is under attack in our world today. Some view him as a great man who good teachings. They may admit that died on the cross for us, but to say that he rose from the dead? That’s just foolishness, just a myth, it couldn’t have happened. There is no scientific proof. Even the apostles, with whom the women shared their good news, “did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense” (v. 11). And in the face of all these ideas and theories that attack the resurrection, we may begin to doubt, we may begin to question. Maybe we need to come up with some elaborate argument to prove it once and for all!

But we have all the proof we need right here this morning in the words of our text. The resurrection means that God kept his promise. Easter Sunday morning is more than just a happy ending to the story. Jesus had said he would rise again on the third day and he kept his word. Consider in our own lives those three emotions that are all so closely related and work together. There is the joy of knowing that our Savior did not remain dead, but rose again and so someday we too will conquer death and rise to eternal life. There is the certainty of knowing that the Father accepted the payment made for sin by his Son on the cross. There is the comfort of knowing that Christ did not remain dead, but now rules everything on our behalf. By rising from the dead on that first Easter morning, God kept his promise and displayed his almighty power.

But the resurrection does not only have meaning for that first day of the week some two thousand years ago. Not only did God keep his promise on that day, but the resurrection is further evidence that God keeps all of his promises in our lives.

So what other promises has God made to us in his Word? We could spend the rest of the morning talking about those different promises, but let’s just focus on a few familiar ones. In Matthew chapter 6, Jesus says: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (vv. 25 & 33). Or at the end of Matthew, chapter 28: “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (v. 20). Or in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 10: “God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it” (v. 13).

These are all wonderful promises that God has made, but sometimes we wonder. Did God really mean all those things? How can they all be true when I look at my own life and see all the problems I have? How can I not worry with the financial problems I’m having, trying to support my family while struggling to make ends meet? Is God really with me as I or a loved

one battle through this disease or seemingly endless parade of setbacks to my health? Is God really not giving me more than I can bear as I struggle to deal with the relationships in my family and the temptations to react in anger when my patience runs thin? Everything just seems to keep piling up. God's promises must not be holding true for me right now!

But as we remember all of the promises that God has made, nowhere do we see that God has promised us a perfect life. While we live here on this earth, there will always be sin. Our own sinful nature and the effects of sin on the world around us will still affect us in our lives. We will still face financial problems and health problems and relationship problems and all sorts of temptations. God does not promise to remove these problems, but to help us get through them. We don't have to worry because God will give us what we need, he will be with us every step of our lives and will provide a way for us to stand up under all temptations. God will keep his promises.

Will a politician keep his campaign promises? Sometimes they will, sometimes they won't and sometimes we may never know for sure. But when it comes to God's promises we do know for sure. The resurrection of Jesus Christ on that first Easter Sunday morning means that he kept his promise—he did what he said he would do—he was delivered over to death and raised to life—all for our own salvation. Since he has kept that promise, the resurrection also means that God will keep all of the promises that he has made as well. He will watch over us as we make our way through our imperfect life on this earth to our perfect life in heaven. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Amen.