

Welcome to our church family and any new attendees to our live stream for Easter Sunday.

Today, I want to start by sharing a few more items of encouragement that I have received this past week.

First, I want to thank all of you who are providing feedback on our Sunday service and ideas to add into the service each week. We hope to bring more isolated people to you each week, so it feels a bit more like fellowship. So, if you would like to participate, contact any of the Elders (Ian, Leonard and Terry).

Second, I have been hearing how many of you are reaching out to others with calls, skype, facetime and emails. Keep up this much needed contact – it will help all of us get through this hardship.

It is amazing how a huge struggle can bring people and families back together – even if it is electronically.

Barb song “Jesus Paid It All” – sing along with the words!

I want to start off this Easter Sunday Service with a children’s story that I have told over the years. I did not have the source of the story and I am adapting it for us this morning. The title is simply “**Three Trees**”. ¹ **Tell Story** – end it by reminding the children of what Jesus did for them. ****Hold up my Picture and explain the extra special effects and what they meant to me.**

Let’s Pray!

¹ Word4life, The Three Trees

Sermon Outline for FBC Apr. 12, 2020 Easter Sunday

Today the message is entitled **“The Grave is Empty!”**

We are going to look at the empty cross and empty grave after Jesus’s death and consider what it means for us. The focus is that both the cross and the tomb are empty but mean nothing without a risen savior. Also, that our lives without Jesus are empty.

As we just heard in the Good Friday service and now in the story of the Three Trees, the cross is where life changed for all mankind. The cross is empty, so what does that mean? It means the job is done that Christ came to do.

That was to die sinless to take the punishment for our sin. Jesus was the last sacrifice, the ultimate sacrifice! Jesus’s death was the end, as He said it at the last moment, “It is finished”.

Then came several days of misery, grief, loss, and confusion. Also anger, for the loss of Jesus and at Jesus, because He did not lead the nations to peace before He died.

Just a week ago, they were celebrating Jesus’s entrance to Jerusalem. Now they are leaving in grief and disbelief. A fog settled in on the people, on Jesus’s disciples, and His followers. They felt defeated and lost.

****Read “Satan’s Waterloo” from Robert Morgan’s “Nelson’s Book of Stories.”² As an aside, this book is like a written “Google” for stories.**

The Tomb meant defeated – the empty tomb was victory.

Now we read what happened that Morning after the Sabbath when some went to Jesus’s tomb to finish the burial rites.

Mark 16: 1-8 NIV

1 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.

² Robert Morgan, Pg 252

2 Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb

3 and they asked each other, “Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?”

4 But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away.

5 As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

6 “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.

7 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.’”

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

So, we have an empty cross and an empty tomb. What does this mean to us? It means we have a choice to make – do we believe that Jesus died on that cross and that He walked out of that tomb alive? Do we desire to know Him and to start a relationship with this God who made us and who beat death forever?

The apostle Paul believed and desired to grow with God. He saw growth happening by sharing what he believed with the rest of us.

1 Corinthians 15: 3-5 NIV

3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

5 and that He appeared to Peter, and then to the twelve.

****Read God’s Great Story (He is Risen Daily Bread – last two pages).³**

Jesus, before He died, had to deal with the death of His friend Lazarus. When Jesus got there, He found Mary and Martha grieving over the loss of their brother. Martha talks with Jesus and Jesus talks about this belief that Paul talked about.

³ Our Daily Bread, “He is Risen”

John 11: 25 -27 NIV

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies;

26 and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

27 "Yes, Lord," she told Him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."

What a testimony for Martha to share with those around her. Her belief was vital in her future after Christ's death and resurrection and ascension. Do we have a testimony we can share with all those around us? Yes, we do!

1 John 5: 11-13 NIV

11 And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Eternal life with God! What a hope that is for any who believe in the empty cross and empty tomb. Hope for those who believe in a living God who promises to be with us in every struggle and good time.

Hebrews 4: 14-16 NIV

14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.

15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.

16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Jesus died for our sins; He rose from that grave to show us life with Him is forever. We can have a new start in this life just by saying yes, to the inheritance and power, that God has provided for those who will accept. This power, given through the Holy Spirit, gives us the strength to go through grief and pain, trials and temptations, and emerge strong in our belief in Jesus Christ, God almighty.

1 Peter 1: 3-6 NIV

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade - kept in heaven for you,

5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

We have heard the stories, songs and read God's Word, the Bible, to learn about what Jesus did for all of us. We understand the sequence of the events of that weekend so long ago. How come an event over 2000 years ago is remembered with so much dedication and celebration?

Dr. James Allen Francis wrote a poem long ago that has always been the reminder to me of why I celebrate Jesus's life, death and resurrection that weekend.

****Read Poem "One Solitary Life" by Dr. James Allen Francis ⁴**

Barb song "Amazing Grace – My Chains are Gone"

We were going to look at the empty cross and empty grave and consider what they meant for us. I hope that this message has given you a desire to consider what it all means and to look at what God has for you.

The truth is that both the cross and the tomb are empty and mean nothing without a risen savior. Also, that our lives without Jesus are empty.

How can you hope for life after death if you do not know personally the one who opened the way to that life.

We celebrate this weekend, called Easter, to remember what Jesus did, why Jesus did this and who Jesus did this for – all of you!

Let's pray!

⁴ James Allen Francis, pgs. 123-124

Bibliography:

The Experiencing God Study Bible (Broadman & Holman Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee, 1994)

The NIV Study Bible, 10th Anniversary Edition Copyright © (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1995) All rights reserved

The Holy Bible, authorized King James Version (World Bible Publishers, USA)

“Scripture taken from the the Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.”

Robert J. Morgan, Nelson’s Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations & Quotes (Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville Tenn., 2000)

Our Daily Bread, “He is Risen,” (Our Daily Bread Ministries, USA, 2018)

Word4life, The Three Trees (Online, Prathana Center, 2020)

James Allen Francis, One Solitary Life, original essay in “The Real Jesus and other Sermons, pgs. 123-124 titled “Arise Sir Knight (Judson Press, Philadelphia, 1926)