

## **First Baptist Church Smiths Falls**

April 21, 2019 - Easter Sunday Theme: The Risen Christ

### **Call To Worship:** Mark 16:1-8 (NIV)

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 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.

### **Scripture:** John 20:1-18 (New International Version)

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. 2 So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." 3 Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. 4 The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5 He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, 7 and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. 8 Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; 9 for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. 10 Then the disciples returned to their homes. 11 But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb.

As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; 12 and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. 13 They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." 14 When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she 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 in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). 17 Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" 18 Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

### **Congregational Prayer:** "Our Father"

Our Father, Which Art In Heaven, Hallowed Be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom Come. Thy Will Be Done, On Earth As It Is In Heaven. Give Us This Day, Our Daily Bread, And Forgive Us Our Trespases, As We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us. And Lead Us Not Into Temptation, But Deliver Us From Evil. For Thine Is The Kingdom, The Power And The Glory. Forever And Ever. Amen

### **Sermon** "Do You Love Me?"

#### Introduction:

- ▶ The sky was finally starting to show some sign of brightening. The sun has not made much of an appearance since we were assigned to this miserable job - who is hated enough to have to guard a grave? What did we three ever do to get this punishment?
- ▶ And no one has relieved us since the Sanhedrin sent us here on that dark and miserable day that this man died. Crucifixion. What a

terrible way to die. And if we don't do our job correctly, we will be next - all three of us. We heard that He was beaten so bad that His own mother could barely look at Him. We heard that He was ridiculed and they mockingly bowed down to Him even as they beat and spat upon Him.

- ▶ But why? Why did they murder Him? Who cares. It means we have this terrible assignment - long days in the doom and gloom, and very long nights as the sun seems to never want to break over the horizon.
- ▶ These people are terrible - I don't know who is worse - we Romans, or the Jewish leaders, the Sanhedrin who seem to be just as political, just as ruthless, just as self-serving as many say of us.
- ▶ The King of the Jews. That is on the sign that they posted over His grave. The same sign hung over His body on the cross. "The King of the Jews." Pilate made it. We don't know why. Was it a joke? Was it something that Pilate actually meant? Pilate: a Roman official, as mean and as terrible as anyone who ever led the people of Judea, Pilate could not possibly believe such a thing...

- ▶ And why are we here, sitting by this tomb, the stone rolled tightly against it? Why are we here, armed for battle, but awaiting even our first visitor to this horrible, forgotten place. Why would we be assigned to guard a dead man. Why indeed! We have all heard this Rabbi as He travelled around Judea and Galilee. He was gentle and yet forceful. He spoke with peace and authority. He was a Man of love and a true Man of God - we all agreed. And one of our garrison saw this Man of God do a miracle - He took a man with a withered hand, and, looking him straight in the eye, firmly said, "Stretch out your hand." Everyone thought the Rabbi was crazy or just trying to see if the beggar had a good reason to beg. But then... the man's hand came toward the Rabbi, and as it did, it changed. Before everyone's eyes, the useless fingers became strong and whole again. Our whole garrison talked about it for weeks. But The Man of God now is dead. Every now and then we stick our ears against the rock at the entry to the tomb and listen for... anything. Nothing. Silence. Eerie and overpowering.

- ▶ Oh, when will the sun come up? Sleep has eluded us, and here we are, on the third day, and the only hope we have is the coming of the sun with the new day.
- ▶ And then, the first beam of light came from the sky like a missile. It hit the tomb of Jesus with the sound of rushing wind, and knocked us all off our feet. We turned to see the sign, "The King of the Jews" light up, and then explode as did the huge stone blocking the tomb. We covered our faces, but could not help but look at the tomb. We were trained soldiers. We were told to fight or die. But we all huddled there paralysed in fright and in wonder.
- ▶ What looked at first like beams of light flooded into the tomb, but became angels as they entered. The lifeless body the Rabbi, of Jesus, of the King of the Jews, was brought out, and in an rush of sound that was more like a chuckle of joyous laughter, the Rabbi took a breath, held His arms outward as He praised the Father in Heaven, and He and the angels were lifted heavenward, leaving the three of us soldiers weak and yet strangely full of power and peace. Had we seen God? Somehow, had we seen God?

- ▶ That was the official report I tried to hand into the Centurion of our garrison. He tucked it into his satchel, and wrote these words instead: "Some disciples came and took the dead man's body in the night." I thought we were dead. But instead the Centurion told us to share this news with everyone from now on. What does it mean? What does it mean?

#### Part 1: The Story of Easter #1: Jesus the Victor

- ▶ This day is indeed special - it is the day in which we remember the great gift of God when he sent His Son to die for us. The death and resurrection of Jesus was not an accident. This was not unplanned. This was a gift - a holy gift from God almighty. In His love for us, He wanted to send down the gift of His own beloved Son, to bring a removal of the debt of your sins and mine.
- ▶ The Bible puts this deliberate action of God this way in John 3:16: *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have life everlasting."* What a gift that He gave too - the gift of Jesus dying

for us means that our sins - those things that separate us from God - our sins are forgiven.

- ▶ But God does not thrust this gift upon us, forcing us to accept it, to use it, to want it, even. The gift is for us only if we want to accept it. No longer do we have to come to God through a person (a priest) or through a sacrifice, but instead we are called upon to give our hearts to Jesus. We are called to give ourselves to Him. We are called upon to present ourselves as a living sacrifice unto the living God. We are called upon to walk away from our love of ourselves, of our sins, of our wish to control our lives, and become a slave to Master of the Universe, the Lord of life, the Saviour of the world.
- ▶ And in so doing, our sins will be forgiven. In so doing we will no longer be separated from God's love, for today and for eternity. In response to this wonderful good news this Easter Sunday we should all be saying a loud and proud, "Hallelujah!!."
- ▶ This day is also special because we have witnessed 2 baptisms. In obedience to God's call, we have seen Henry and Sebastian profess their love of God and to everyone in the waters of baptism. On this

day of days, to be able to witness this blessing in our Church community, to see the fullness of God's love in the life of these two, is such a powerful testimony to God's incredible goodness.

- ▶ Baptism is a mighty way to celebrate the fact that our Lord has Risen indeed. He has defeated death to give us newness of life - life for this very moment, and life eternal. New life. That is the story of Easter.

#### Part 2: The Story of Easter #2: Do You Love Me?

- ▶ Will you turn to another story of Easter, today from John 21:15-19.
- ▶ This story is as important to the story of Easter as any other.

Without the disciple Peter, the Church would not have had its first leader. It was Peter who was the first pastor of the Church of Jesus Christ. It was Peter who was appointed by Jesus to be the apostle's first leader. It was Peter who recognized and verbalized the fact the Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed one of God, the long awaited King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. It was Peter who would be the first one to speak a glorious sermon, recorded for us in Acts chapter 2, who solved the puzzle of linking Jesus to the Old

Testament, and did so in such a way that many believers came to love Jesus.

- ▶ But Jesus had to bring Peter back into the fold. Three times, one time for every time that Peter had denied knowing Jesus (John 18), Jesus asked Peter, “Do you love me?” Three times Peter had to answer Jesus, “Yes! Lord, I Love You.” And three times, Jesus gave to Peter the commission: “feed my people.” He was told to feed the lambs and the sheep of God - those whom God had created and loved, and wanted forever to be with Him in paradise.

### Part 3: Story of Easter #3: Your Commitment

- ▶ This glorious Easter Sunday, you too are asked that same question by the victorious, risen Saviour, by Jesus the Lord of all, “Do you love me?” Do you know how many people say, “Yes” to that question, but do not know Jesus in their heart? Do you know how many people believe that there was a person named Jesus, but never invite Him in? “Behold,” says Jesus as recorded in Revelation chapter 3 verse 20, “*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and*

*will sup with him, and he with me.*” You see Jesus is asking you the same question that He asked Peter, “Do you love me?” For Sebastian and Henry and for all of you who have been obedient to Jesus in the waters of Baptism, the answer has been, “Yes, I love you Lord Jesus, and I choose it now!” And that is the only answer that Jesus demands of you, to open the door to your heart, to invite Him in, and to say, “Yes, I love you Lord Jesus!”

- ▶ If you have never said those words, then may I challenge you to say them today. Don’t say them to me, don’t say them to your neighbour, but say them to Jesus, “Yes, I love you Lord Jesus!” And if you have said those words already, part of Easter is to confirm them to Jesus today, “Yes, I love you Lord Jesus!”
- ▶ Then, as those who were baptized today and before hand, we too are to take on the challenge and commission that Jesus laid down to Peter. We too are called upon to feed the sheep. We too are called upon to feed the lambs. We too are called upon to feed the hungry souls of the world that they too may know Jesus, may hunger for Jesus because they have seen Jesus in our lives.

Conclusion:

► Can you say today, “Yes, I love you Lord Jesus!” Will you say,

“Yes, Lord, I too will feed your lambs!” Jesus has risen!

Hallelujah! May His name be praised, and may we respond in

thanksgiving, giving our hearts to Jesus by opening the door to our

heart to Him and daring to live your life for Him! Now, you know

what it all means!