

Luke 24:1-8

Easter Festival, April 16, 2017

Theme: Remember how he told you!

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. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. 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? 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 over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'" Then they remembered his words.

INJ It is Easter. Alleluia! Welcome happy morning. Today is a day of all smiles and big energy and wonderful happiness. Unless, of course, it isn't, for you. Do you come with heavy burdens and thick fears? Are there worries hanging over you that threaten to crush you? You don't have to put on a fake face for Easter. Jesus rose from the dead to give you comfort and strength for just these difficult times. Remember how he told you!

The women walking to the tomb hadn't had a joy-filled Easter morning. They were on the way to finish the burial rituals for a beloved teacher and friend. They had some big fears and worries! What would the ruling authorities do to them now? How could they go on without Jesus? Were they to give up? Press on? Who would lead them? Where would they go? What would they say? With sadness and uncertainty they trudged toward the tomb.

Your burdens are more significant than a hectic schedule and worries about health and harmony in your family. Guilt over the things you have done wrong. Shame because you know better. Fear of what will happen – not just with people but with God. Walking with the women today, we carry a load as heavy as theirs.

What can we do about it? The Lord urges us to return to Jesus' words. Remember how he told you. What do you remember about Jesus? The highlights of your Christian education should come to mind. Jesus is

the perfect Son of God. He was teacher who always spoke with authority. The gentle, kind leader. The consistent and persistent encourager. Jesus had fed thousands and healed hundreds. He has come to be God's messenger and the cause of our salvation! Don't you remember?

On the other hand the world wants us to forget. It calls out to us, and teases us with things that seem desirable, but are not. It leads us with logic that seems irrefutable, but is not. We walk a little bit along the path of the world and nothing drastic happens. We get comfortable there, and we lose sight of Jesus. What we have come to consider fun and normal and fine is really opposed to Jesus and offensive to God. How did we get here?

Jesus calls us back to his words. He shows us our sin. He paid its debt with his holy, precious blood. This is what the cross is for, he says. Return. Repent. Jesus is as close as the words he has given!

We are distracted so easily by the temptations of our own sinful flesh. Those things that God hates are things I don't mind so much. But then: "How could I be so stupid as to fall for that?" Now I have to live with the consequences. With the guilt and sadness. What happens next?

Or, maybe I haven't been so crude and crass. I mind my own business and I behave decently. The temptation of pride is always ready to sneak into my heart. Look at my accomplishments. Consider my example! Jesus gets pushed away then, too, doesn't he? If I am doing fine on my own, then why do I need to remember Jesus?

The words of Jesus call us back. See him as he is beaten and mocked by the soldiers and cruelly put to death on a cross. Hear his anguished cry as he feels the curse of God and the forsaken-ness of the Father. He endured it for you. He removed the curse from you. Return. Repent. Jesus is as close as the words he has given!

Satan won't give up on us. He keeps the pressure on by filling the calendar too full. By fanning the fire of fear and worry, and anger and pain. By making everything else more important. Jesus is so easily replaced in my heart by my goals and my desires. Jesus doesn't get to be involved in my entertainment or my activity. My life is mine.

Jesus doesn't give up on us, either. See him laid in the tomb. It was a hurry-up job for the people involved, because the Sabbath began in just a few minutes. They would come back later and finish. With spices they would wrap the body and leave it to decay with dignity.

So early Sunday morning, the women are on the way back to the tomb. Events had happened so quickly! At the Passover meal things were normal: Jesus, the disciples, food and good conversation. But in less than a day, they had seen arrest, conviction, crucifixion and burial. Who would

roll the stone away? Would the guards give them trouble? How could they have prevented this from happening? Who should they blame?

While we walk with the women to the tomb today, notice that they found some unexpected surprises! The stone they didn't know how to move – it was already rolled away. The soldiers were nowhere to be seen. The body they came to embalm was gone. What would you think if you were there? Luke records that they “wondered about these things.” Is that a little bit of divinely inspired understatement?

What had happened? Of all the possibilities that could have crossed their minds, they never thought of this one: angels appeared to them. Angels! God's holy messengers! They were in clothes that gleamed like lightning. Their holiness was impressive! In fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground. What would happen to them? God surely wouldn't be happy about the way they had handled things. Sinners encountering holy angels ought to be painful.

The angels said, “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 over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’”

Remember how he told you. Jesus had said all this will happen. Don't you remember how he spoke about it? He mentioned the arrest and the suffering and his death. Several times, even, he had talked through such things. But life right then had seemed more important to the women. What Jesus was talking about didn't seem possible in their minds. But now it had all happened, just as he said! Those events were not tragedies or accidents. They were foretold by God. Remember how he told you!

The events of the past week are familiar to us, now. Remember how Jesus told you this had to happen? He is God who entered human flesh. He carried the burden of guilt for the world when he died. He paid the price of sin completely by shedding his blood. Jesus' death was not failure or defeat, but the sacrifice that brought reconciliation and peace with God.

“Why do you look for the living among the dead?” Those sparkling angels spoke the truth. Jesus had said he would rise from the dead. Now he has done it! Remember how he told you: his resurrection means that the Father has accepted payment for your sins. It means all the things Jesus said are true: he is God, your Savior! You who trust in him will also rise to live with him forever. We sing and shout Alleluia not because we are superficially or emotionally happy, but because we stand justified before God. We are forgiven. Alleluia! Remember how he told you!

Jesus' resurrection is the most important, the most astounding event of our Christian faith. Because he lives, the victory is ours. The world does not hold anything better. My sinful flesh has been crucified with Christ and now I have a new nature. Satan has been crushed. Jesus lives! Go away, death. Go away fear and dread. Go away despair. Since my Jesus has risen, I have forgiveness of sin. I have peace with God. With confidence and certainty, with determination and joy we shout Alleluia!

The women remembered what Jesus had told them. How could they have gotten so distracted? But they had. Now, they remembered. You remember now, too. Easter is a special day for remembering. We don't look for a dead Jesus, but a living Savior. We have come not to mourn a lost friend, but to worship our Redeemer. We aren't surprised by an empty tomb, but we expect it. Remember how he told you.

Soon the distractions will be back. You will find yourself in all kinds of places where it isn't easy to remember what Jesus told you. You will feel like what Jesus says isn't important or doesn't make sense. You might wonder how Jesus could make a difference in your troubled life. The habits and routines we follow don't often take us back to the empty tomb on Easter Sunday. We don't remember how he told us. We don't remember.

So I am telling you again. Jesus rose from the dead so that you have the victory over sin and death. You have forgiveness for all your sins. Jesus is risen and you have access to the Father who hears all your prayers and who answers every one. Jesus has defeated Satan and all his lies are exposed. Jesus has overcome death, and now it is the door to life eternal. Remember how he told you!

Our busy life will always get in the way, and our memory is always spotty. Let it be your determined goal to walk with the women to the tomb again and again. Not in despair, wondering what you will do next. He is not here; he is risen! Walk to the tomb to be reminded of what Jesus said. To remember how he told you. Remember what the resurrection means. You have peace with God because Jesus is not dead, but alive.

Alleluia is such a joy-filled word. It is not a fake word used to cover up the ugliness of our lives. Alleluia expresses confidence. We remember what Jesus told us. We know that we are his people, and he is our God. He has taken the ugliness of our sin and removed it forever. The truths of the Christian faith are clear. Jesus was delivered into death for our sins, but he has been raised to life and we are free. We are free from sin's curse and its condemnation. We are free to live for our Savior every moment. We are free to ponder the love he has shown to us. We are free. Remember how he told you! Alleluia! SDG Amen.