

GRACE, MERCY, AND PEACE FROM GOD OUR HEAVENLY FATHER AND FROM OUR LORD AND SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST.

The text is John the twentieth chapter beginning at the first verse

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. 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." So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes.

Death stinks, literally. On one hand, I hope that none of you have to learn that the hard way. On the other hand, maybe it would be good for us. Death is almost sanitized in our society. It happens in video games and movies. When we do go to a funeral home, the body is prepared for us, rendered as neatly dressed and beautiful as possible. The stench of death is kept as far away from us as possible.

It wasn't possible two thousand years ago. Do you remember when Jesus came to Lazarus' tomb and said ***"Take away the stone."***, Martha countered with a reminder that there would be an odor. That was understatement. And that's why the women came to the tomb that morning, to bringing spices to mitigate the decay that they knew was coming.

Except it wasn't coming. I wonder when they remembered the Psalm,

***For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,
or let your holy one see corruption.***

It must have been hard to remember what the last past couple of years had been like, to think about the things Jesus taught them. The disciples and the women who supported them had committed everything to following Jesus and now they had lost their leader. More than that and what drew the women to the tomb that morning was that they loved him. They loved him because he first loved us. Notice that I just brought you into the conversation, because he first loved you as well.

And while it's not the same surprise for us, still I invite you to look into the empty tomb. In the comfort of your living room or wherever you're listening to this, remember what that Friday must've been like—the terror, the disappointment, the fear.

Yeah, the fear. What have we feared more than God? What have we chosen to trust more than the one who conquered death? Because we have. We have sinned against God in our thoughts, our words, and our actions. We have turned away from him into ourselves, into what would be a death Spiral, except—except that the tomb is empty. Christ is risen! Except that His blood was shed to wash away our sins.

When Mary saw that the the tomb was empty, she ran to get the disciples. She ran. She didn't understand what had happened, not yet, but she knew it was urgent, so she ran. She told the disciples what she had found, and Peter and John ran to the tomb. John got there first, looked in and saw the tomb was empty. John paused, but Peter rush straight in when he caught up. It was then John went inside, it was then **he saw and believed.**

John **saw and believed.** There was so much that would still happen that day, Jesus appearing at various times and places, most notably on the road to Emmaus and His appearance the to the disciples after that. In these events the disciples began to understand that all of scripture was pointing this time—the death and resurrection of the Christ. Jesus also gave them the Holy Spirit. What they saw, what they heard, what the Spirit revealed to them is now ours. Hold on it.

We celebrate Easter every year, and we need to. We must hold fast to the truth even as the world, the devil and our own flesh would distract us, even destroy us. So I invite you to look into the empty tomb every days in your studies and devotions, for the tomb is empty and we shall follow Jesus to the cross, to the grave and to the skies.

Christ is risen!

Amen

NOW MAY THE PEACE OF GOD WHICH PASSES ALL UNDERSTANDING,
KEEP YOUR HEARTS AND MINDS THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS IN TO
LIFE EVERLASTING.
