

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. (NIV 84)

Theme: The Life of Christ is the Death of Fear

1. His life removes the fear of death
2. His life gives us joy in death

One of the fastest growing and most popular genres of movies nowadays is the horror movie. Many people actually enjoy being scared—they want to be startled. They love to moan and groan at something disgusting or jump at something unexpected. But that is just a movie.

But no one really wants to be scared. No one wants to live their life in fear of anything. And yet, we all have fear. We are all afraid of something—heights, public speaking, close spaces, spiders, and so on. But today we see that the life of Jesus Christ is the death of fear. For his life removes the fear of death and his life gives us joy in death.

Jesus didn't have that long of a ministry. He preached for roughly three years. But in that short amount of time he had gained quite a following. Thousands followed him all at once. He had a few close followers—the 12 disciples. He had a good number of women

followers as well. A week ago, on Palm Sunday, Jesus entered Jerusalem to great fanfare. Many people sang his praises. But they soon abandoned Jesus. Late Thursday evening he was arrested and put on trial. Some of his disciples fled. Others denied that they even knew him. Then on Friday, Jesus was crucified. Nailed to a cross. And on that cross he died. After six hours on the cross, he body was lifeless. His disciples saw him die. A few of his other followers took his body down from the cross. They wrapped him in spices and burial clothes. Placed him in an empty tomb. And rolled a large stone in front of the entrance to the tomb.

The next day was the Sabbath. No one was allowed to work. That day Jesus followers spent in mourning. The one they had followed for three years was brutally beaten and murdered. They thought he was the promised Messiah. They thought he was going to rescue them. But now he was dead. And so was their hope. What was going to happen to them? Where they going to be killed, just like their teacher was? He said that he was the resurrection and the life. They thought he had power over death because he was able to raise people from the dead. But now he is dead—he wasn't able to save himself. Was it all an elaborate joke?

As Jesus' followers felt after his death, we too have fear. We fear many things. Each person fears something different. And the intensity of the fear is also unique to the individual. But there is one there that people fear more than anything else. This is one that people are deathly afraid of—death. Death is permanent. There is no coming back—no second chances. It is the great unknown. No one knows what happens at death. No one has come back from the dead and has given us an eye-witness account. There are no pictures or videos of what happens. So we don't know for sure.

But what we do know for sure is that no one can avoid it. It doesn't matter who you are. Young or old, male or female, rich or poor, healthy or sick. You can't defeat death. Sure you can avoid it for awhile. You can workout, eat healthy, take medicine, get surgery and so on. But in the end you will die. You can spend all money in the world. But you can't bribe death. No matter how strong you are, or wealthy, or healthy—you will die. And so you are afraid. What is going to happen to you when you die?

The women in our story for today were afraid, and yet they still woke up early on Sunday morning to give Jesus a proper burial. As they were heading to the tomb they realized that they forgot about big rock that was rolled in front of the tomb. They were so busy thinking about how they could serve Jesus that they forgot all about the rock. They wondered who could move it for them. But then they looked up and saw that the stone had been rolled away. With excitement and bewilderment they rushed inside the tomb. And to their amazement they saw a young man, dressed in dazzling white clothes, and whose face shined like lightening. We are told elsewhere that this was an angel. And this angel said to the women, **don't be alarmed**. There was nothing for the women to be alarmed, or afraid of. Sure they were staring at an angel—which would be enough to alarm anyone. But that angel came with good news. **You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.** Jesus, who had died three days earlier was no longer dead. The women saw where he was laid in the tomb. He had died; was buried. But now they are told that he has risen from the dead! How could this be possible? The women's minds were racing. They weren't sure what to make of Christ's resurrection.

Christ's resurrection means that we don't have to fear anything. The fact that Christ rose from the dead proves to us that he is God. He has power over death. When he rose from the dead he defeated death. Death can no longer affect us. It has no power over us. As Paul says, **Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?** Death's sting is that death is a permanent end. But death isn't the end of everything. Death is the beginning of eternal life.

That is what Jesus' resurrection means for us. Because he lives, we too will live. Because Jesus rose from the dead, we know that we too will rise from the dead. Even though we die, we will live forever. Therefore, we don't have to be afraid of death. It has no power over us. Death has no control over us. Sure, all of us will die. But we will not remain dead. We will live in heaven forever.

So there is something after death—heaven awaits. But the question is, how do you get there?

Well, you could do what you always do. Take care of it yourself. You're a strong and capable person. You're independent, and have solved many problems by yourself before. You figure that if there is life after death, then there must be something you can do to be saved. You must be able to please God some how. So you lead a good life, you are nice to others. You always try to be considerate. But your not always that way. Sometimes you fail, you get upset, you look toward your own interests before anyone else's. And so you begin to wonder, if you have done enough. Am I pleasing to God? Did I do enough and did I do that right things to please God and make him save me? And fear sets in. You know you have failed many times and in many different ways in the past. And you begin to wonder if you have failed once again in your quest to earn eternal life.

Even though you know that Jesus' resurrection means eternal life, you still have fear. And so did the women. The angel told them to go and spread the news about Jesus. They went out with joy, but also with fear. Mark tells us they didn't say anything to anyone. They were too afraid. They were still afraid because they were confused. They didn't quite understand what Jesus' resurrection meant. They didn't know how to apply it to themselves.

We find out in Matthew that on their way back into the city, Jesus appeared to them. He said to them, **Do not be afraid**. When they saw him they were overjoyed. And their fear was removed. Jesus truly was alive. He had defeated death. That means he has power over death. Everything that he said about himself was true.

And he said about himself, **I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live even though he dies.** Jesus proved that he is the resurrection and the life. For he rose from the dead. And he lives forever. It is only through him than, that we live. It is not on our own. We cannot do anything to live forever. No matter how hard we try we cannot please God enough to make him save us. Our eternal life does not depend on anything you have done. It depends solely on Christ.

All the pressure, then, is taken off of us. We have nothing to fear. We don't have to worry about doing enough, or the right things. All the pressure was put on Christ. And he took care of it. Through his death he removed our sins. Through his resurrection he leads us to heaven.

And then he worked faith into your hearts through the gospel. And all who believe in him—no matter what sins they have committed, will join him in heaven.

After Jesus appeared to the women, they did as Jesus and the angel told them. They joyfully went and told others. They specifically went and told Peter. Before Jesus died Peter, one of Jesus' closest disciples, denied that he even knew Jesus. It was obviously weighing on Peter's heart. So Jesus was concerned about Peter and his spiritual wellbeing. He wanted Peter to know that there was nothing to worry about. He had died to remove his sins. He had risen to take him to heaven.

Jesus is concerned about your spiritual wellbeing as well. So he comes to you in his Word. And he assures you that there is no reason to be afraid of death. For he has defeated death. And he promised eternal life for all his believers. So now, we don't have fear, but joy. Joy in knowing that he doesn't hold our sins against us. Joy knowing that we will join him in heaven one day. And this joy leads us to sing God's praises today, and every day. Joy that makes us do what the women did—spread the word so others may have this same joy. Jesus has arisen. And he brings eternal life.

Death is scary for many people. It is the end of life here on earth. But it is the beginning of eternal life in heaven for those who believe. Christ's life is the death of fear—it is the end of the fear of death. For we will not die, but we will live. And this leads us to have joy in death. For it is not just an end of life, it is the beginning of life eternal. Amen.