

**After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.**

**<sup>2</sup>There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. <sup>3</sup>His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. <sup>4</sup>The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.**

**<sup>5</sup>The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. <sup>6</sup>He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. <sup>7</sup>Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.”**

**<sup>8</sup>So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. <sup>9</sup>Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. <sup>10</sup>Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.” (NIV 84)**

Theme: Glory through Death

1. Death is Ugly
2. But Through death we are glorious

No one ever looks good dead. And yet, that is exactly what you hear all the time at funerals or viewings. A relative or a friend approaches the casket, and what do they say? “She looks good.” Another responds, “Yeah, they did a really good job.” And considering the circumstances, they are probably right—they did do a good job. But that body in the casket doesn’t really look good. Do you realize all the work that needs to be put into making a dead body look presentable? On average it takes about five hours. Without the gallons of embalming liquid, make-up, glue, stiches, and so on a dead body would be an ugly repulsive sight. Not to mention the smell of decay. Death is ugly. It doesn’t matter how good the mortician is—the body just doesn’t look right. There is no life, there is no breath. There is no glory in death. Death is ugly.

Just think of Jesus’ body. He was brushed and beaten. His flesh was ripped open by the flogging. Dried blood from the crown of thrones dripped down his head. The five wounds in his hands, feet, and side. There he lay lifeless. Stiff and motionless. Naked. The Almighty God had to be wrapped and prepared for a burial.

There is no glory in death. Not for anyone. I don’t care what people say. It doesn’t matter how you die. It doesn’t matter what you look like when you die. There is not glory in death. It’s unnatural. God never intended the soul to be separated from the body. So when you see it, you can tell something is odd, different, something is missing. Death is unnatural; so it’s unsettling; it’s ugly.

And so we are afraid of death. No one wants to die. No one wants to literally look like death. No one wants their body to decay and lay in the ground. No one wants their flesh to rot. The women in our text for today were afraid. They were afraid of death—if Jesus could die, what would happen to them?

But not just because we won’t like what happens to the body when we die. But because we are worried about what happens to our soul. The devil works hard to get to us fear death. He wants to cast that fear into our hearts. “What if I’m wrong—what if I believed the wrong thing? What about my sins, aren’t I too wicked and horrible to be saved? How could God possibly find my worthy of heaven?” There is fear of death because unnatural and unsettling. And there is fear of death because we don’t know exactly what lies beyond death.

But today that fear of death and all its ugliness is removed. Three days ago, Jesus died. But today he has risen. He lives! His body lay there in the tomb. But now it has life! His body didn’t see decay. David is talking for Jesus in Psalm 16 when he says, **you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.** Jesus died—but he didn’t remain dead. No he rose from the dead—his body restored to life!

So Jesus defeated death. He prophesied about it again and again. But the disciples couldn’t understand—couldn’t comprehend that such a thing could even happen. He even raised others from the dead. Showing them he had power over death. Still; they could not understand. Until he rose on that Easter morning. Until he showed

them that death has no power over him. That he has defeated death, and removed its sting!

So Christ defeated death and all its ugliness. But he does so much more—he also gives us his glory.

We just read about four the appearances Jesus made on that first Easter day. Did you notice something about the last three? They didn't recognize him at first. Perhaps it was because they were expecting to see him. It didn't even enter their mind as a possibility that Jesus could have risen from the dead. But it should have—Jesus told them that he would rise from the dead. And even that first night—in the locked room, stories were flying around that Jesus truly had risen; yet when he appeared to them they still didn't recognize him—they thought he was a ghost!

Why not? There was something different. Jesus was glorious. No longer hiding his divine glory. No longer making himself low. He looked different. They thought he was a ghost, a gardener, or simply another citizen of Israel. They didn't recognize Jesus until he allowed them to notice who was standing before them. The angles were described by Matthew in our text as having an appearance like lightning and clothes as white as snow. If an angel was this glorious—how much more Christ!

And it wasn't just his appearance. He was no longer confined to space or place. He came and went as he pleased. When talking to the Emmaus disciples he suddenly disappeared. When the disciples were behind closed doors, Jesus suddenly appeared in the room. Still with a body—able to eat and to drink. Still had marks in his hands, feet, and sides. But different—glorious. His divine glory, no longer hidden.

And Jesus still lives with that glory in heaven. For there he sits on his throne in his full divine glory. And he rules over his entire creation. And because Jesus lives, you will live. He will raise all bodies from the dead. Everyone will be brought to life—no matter how long their body had returned to dust. And through faith in him you will live with him. For all who believe in Jesus will dwell in heaven.

And there we will share in his glory. It doesn't matter how great and glorious a body was here on earth. It doesn't matter what the body looked like when dead—and beyond. It pails in comparison to what it

will be like in heaven. Paul talks about that in 1 Corinthians 15. **So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.** In heaven we will have a great and glorious body. Free from sin and its effects. A perfect life with a perfect body—forever. How glorious will our body be? We will be like Jesus and his glorious body. As Paul says in the third chapter to Philippians, **our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.**

How glorious will we be? We will be like Jesus. Free from sin. Free from death. Free from decay. A great, glorious, and perfect body awaits us. Far better than what we enjoyed before. There will be no pain, no aching muscles, broken bones, allergies, or any other health problems! Just a perfect body with our perfect Savior.

So Christ removes the fear of death. We don't have to worry about our bodies decaying. We don't have to avoid death at all costs. For we know that some day the Lord will return. He will come in his full glory. And he will give us a share in his glory. He will take our glorified bodies to join our soul. And so there is no reason to be afraid—of what will happen to your body. And there is no need to worry about your soul when you die. Just as Jesus said to the women in our text—**Don't be afraid**, he says the same to you. For salvation has been won for you—and is given to you freely. For Jesus is risen!

There is no glory in death. Death is ugly. And yet we have glory through death. Our bodies may decay and rot. They will eventually turn to dust. And yet Christ, who rose from the dead, will give life to our mortal bodies. He will give us a share in his glory. For Jesus, death ended in glory through his glorious resurrection. For us too—even though there is no glory in ugly death—through death there is glory. An everlasting glory—a glory with our Savior who died and rose and still lives. Amen.