

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
Easter Sunday March 31, 2013
John 20:1,2,11-18 NASB



20 Now on the first *day* of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone *already* taken away from the tomb. ² So she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."

¹¹ But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; ¹² and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying. ¹³ And they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because 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*, and did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" 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, "Rabboni!" (which means, Teacher). ¹⁷ Jesus said to her, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'" ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and *that* He had said these things to her.

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God – the Risen Christ!

I really don't like snakes! In Nigeria they have the Black Mamba--one of the most deadly and fastest snakes in the whole wide world. One has escaped from his enclosure at the zoo in Pretoria, South Africa. He is 6 and ½ feet long and considered a cold blooded killer. The manager of the zoo says the escaped snake is probably on the roof of the service building behind the terrarium where he is supposed to be kept. *Probably?!* They say if they get one of those radiation sensors – they can probably figure out where he is – because those sensors are really pretty sensitive! Again, *probably?!* When you are dealing with something as terrible as a very venomous and very quick snake – the stakes are so high – nothing can be left to chance. When it comes to the devil and demons – the grave and eternal flames – only the certainty of Jesus' forgiveness will do. This Easter morning we think about one final:

Name of Wondrous Love – THE LIGHT

- 1. The night of sin is very dark**
- 2. Easter morning is glorious**

Good Friday afternoon was very dark. God's Word says **the sun stopped shining**. Jesus said, "**It is finished!**" Good Friday afternoon Jesus said with a strong voice – "**Father, into your hands I commend my spirit!**" With that he bowed his head and gave up his life. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. That curtain is not some thin piece of fabric like you might hang in your kitchen window. Some have suggested this curtain was as thick as your hand – thicker than any curtain I have ever seen. This curtain was torn in two – completely torn to pieces from top to bottom! What does that mean? Some theologians think this means our Heavenly Father has left the Temple – left it "**forsaken and desolate**"! That the High Priest – the Chief Priests, the Priests, the Teachers of the Law, the Elders – even the Scribes who so faithfully copied God's Word – letter by letter – had sinned so grossly – crucifying the Lord of Life – that was it! Others have suggested – the sin that had been like a barrier – between the LORD – in the Holy of holies – the most holy place – and

us was now removed. In Old Testament times – the Priests who served in the Temple – were mediators – the go-between – between the worshiper and their Heavenly Father. Now every one of us can go to our Heavenly Father – with our needs and our concerns! It’s kind of law and gospel – all wrapped up in this most powerful act! **The curtain in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus’ resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people.**” The planet itself trembled – as Jesus – true God and true man died! Think of that! The earth shook – rocks – huge boulders – as big as a Volkswagen bug cracked in half! Graves broke open – and people who died in faith – believing the Gospel promises of God – came out! After Jesus rose from the dead these people went into Jerusalem and lots of people saw them. By their very appearance they were powerful visual aids – proof positive that we have eternal life for Jesus’ sake! Jesus is indeed the first fruits of those who sleep in death!

20 v.1 Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone *already* taken away from the tomb. ² So she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.” Sunday morning – Mary Magdalene – out of whom Jesus cast seven demons – came in the wee hours of the morning – while it was still dark out! She saw/realized the Roman soldiers who were supposed to be guarding Jesus’ tomb were gone. She saw/realized the stone – which was very heavy – had been rolled away! She ran to find Simon Peter and John – the disciple Jesus loved – to tell them – they have taken Jesus’ body out of the tomb and we don’t know where they have put him. Simon Peter and John went running toward the tomb – to see for themselves. It was quite the panic that first Easter morning – people coming and going – bumping into each other – and just missing each other! What was going on?!

Fast forward – Mary is back at Jesus’ tomb. ¹¹ ... **Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; ¹² and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying. ¹³ And they said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.”** Mary is crying. Her vision most certainly blurred by her tears. Looking inside she sees two angels. Angels – messengers from our Heavenly Father ask her why is she crying? Because they took Jesus’ body away and she doesn’t know where they have put Him!

¹⁴ When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing *there*, and did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” 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, “Rabboni!” (which means, Teacher). Mary assumed Jesus was the Gardner – and asked him where Jesus’ body was. All Jesus had to say was her name. All Jesus had to say was “Mary!” – and she knew in an instant it was Him! You must have friends like that. People who call you on the phone and they don’t say their name. They just say, “It’s me!” – and you know who the *me* is. There are people that you are so close to – so familiar with them – they don’t even have to say, “It’s me.” They just start talking and you know who they are! **Jesus said, “Mary!”** And Mary knew it was Jesus! She called Jesus *My Teacher* – a title of great respect. Jesus had taught her God’s Word. Jesus is the Word of God made flesh. Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Jesus is the Light of the World. Mary – by the grace of God – understood and believed it!

¹⁷ Jesus said to her, “Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.’” “Stop clinging to Me...” I think this part is pretty understandable. Mary Magdalene had lost her Lord – saw Him die and saw Him put in the grave – and now she had Him back – and she wasn’t

about to let Him go again! I bet she was holding on to his feet – wrapped her arms around His ankles – and her fingers were making dents in his feet. **Stop clinging to Me...** It wasn't going to be the same. Jesus was going back to His Father in Heaven. He wasn't going to be with His friends and His disciples – 24/7 physically – obviously--the way He was before. Jesus would go back to Heaven to prepare a place for us. He was going to give them the great commission – to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing people – teaching people about the Kingdom of God. Jesus' work to redeem us was finished – so Jesus would be going back to Heaven! Don't hang on to Jesus physically – hold Him tight spiritually. Know that Jesus took all your sins away. Every once in a while – you learn something is much more serious than you thought. I heard the other day that a young man was sentenced to 90 days not saying the word "Bingo!" Apparently he was by a very big room of lots of little grandmas playing a very intense game of bingo – and he yelled, "Bingo!" – when in fact he didn't have Bingo! How big a deal is that? Apparently much more serious than I thought. He could have been sentenced to 90 days in jail and a fine of \$250! They say it's like yelling, "Out!" – during a baseball game – or blowing a whistle at a football game. It makes people think the play has ended – when in fact it hasn't. People could get seriously hurt – if they think you are supposed to stop – and everybody else keeps going! Who knew? I think the danger for me and for you isn't that we are going to make a mistake – and do something wrong when we didn't even know it was wrong. I think the greatest danger is – we say things – and think things – and do things we know full well are wrong – and still we sin anyway. The guy that was literally arrested – booked – taken to court – and given the sentence of 90 days not saying the word Bingo – has the attitude that says – I wonder what would happen if I go around for the next 90 days saying ognib!? Ognib – which is you know what I'm not supposed to say – *backwards!* Get it? That's part of the problem – the ♥--the attitude! Since Jesus died and rose again – we need to grow in our faith. We need to be more faithful – reading our Bible – worshiping with fellow believers – where we pray, praise and give thanks. We need to grow in God's Word – and then the sweet fruits of faith – the **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control** will be even more obvious. We will put our faith into practice. Husbands will love their wife like Christ loved the Church. Children will obey their parents and teachers. Fathers will not exasperate their children. Wives will encourage their husbands and not berate them and embarrass them and tear them down! People around us will know we are Jesus' students, followers, imitators because we very simply love and forgive one another!

¹⁸ **Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and that He had said these things to her.** Did the rest of the disciples believe Mary Madgalene? Did they believe Joanna, Mary the mother of James and the others with them who told this to the apostles? The Gospel of Luke says, **"But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense."** Luke 24:11 Jesus appeared again and again – showing Himself alive. Paul's first letter to the believers in Corinth – chapter 15 – the great Resurrection Chapter says, **"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance; that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, then to the Twelve. After that he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. 1 Corinthians 15:3-8** Doubting Thomas – demanded proof positive of the Risen Christ before he said he would believe. By grace alone Jesus gave Thomas that proof. It was then that Jesus said, **"Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."** John 21:29b We are the ones who have not seen the Risen Christ – and yet by the power of God's Word and the power of the Gospel have believed. We are sure and certain Jesus is risen from the dead – and because Jesus lives we know we too will live beside Him in Heaven!

Snakes! I don't like snakes! There was a snake the other day – in a lady's yard in Texas. She doesn't like snakes either – so she got some gasoline and splashed it on the snake. Then her son lit a

match and threw it on the snake! Not a good idea. The snake – literally on fire--slithered into the dry brush next to her house – set the brush on fire – and from the brush – the flames moved to the house. Her house burned down and her neighbor’s house was harmed too. Some 6,000 years ago – a snake perhaps walked into the Garden of Eden – and the hurt and harm that did – is incalculable! We are here in God’s House on Easter to celebrate the fact that Jesus crushed the head of that snake – and set us free from all our guilt and shame. Jesus died and rose again – so that we might live forever! There is no day happier than Easter – Jesus’ name of wondrous love – Jesus is the Light of Life. Jesus is the Risen Christ – our Lord and our God! Amen!

To God alone all glory!

Rev. Anthony E. Schultz