

Empty

The Good News of Easter

I. On Easter Sunday morning, Jesus' tomb was empty.

"Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. She ran and found Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. She said, 'They have taken the Lord's body out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!' Peter and the other disciple started out for the tomb. They were both running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He stooped and looked in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he didn't go in. Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen wrappings lying there, while the cloth that had covered Jesus' head was folded up and lying apart from the other wrappings. Then the disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in, and he saw and believed—for until then they still hadn't understood the Scriptures that said Jesus must rise from the dead."

John 20:1-9 (NLT)

Note: The stone wasn't rolled away to let Jesus out, it was rolled away to let His disciples in!

"Early on Sunday morning, as the new day was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went out to visit the tomb. Suddenly there was a great earthquake! For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, rolled aside the stone, and sat on it. His face shone like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. The guards shook with fear when they saw him, and they fell into a dead faint. Then the angel spoke to the women. 'Don't be afraid!' he said. 'I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead, just as he said would happen. Come, see where his body was lying.'"

Matthew 28:1-6 (NLT)

II. Because Jesus' tomb was empty:

a. We can be full of joy.

"Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand."

Psalms 16:10-11 (NIV)

"I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit." Romans 15:13 (NLT)

b. We can be full of power.

"I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms." Ephesians 1:19-20 (NLT)

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:8 (NLT)

"After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly." Acts 4:31 (NIV)

c. We can be full of hope.

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you...." 1 Peter 1:3-4 (NIV)

"I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, 'Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.' And the one sitting on the throne said, 'Look, I am making everything new!' And then he said to me, 'Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true.'" Revelation 21:3-5 (NLT)

"...if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins. In that case, all who have died believing in Christ are lost! And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are

more to be pitied than anyone in the world. But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died.” 1 Corinthians 15:16-20 (NLT)

d. We can be full of confidence.

“Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God’s presence.”
Ephesians 3:12 (NLT)

“For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead. You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.” Colossians 2:12-14 (NLT)

e. We can be full of life.

“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me--just as the Father knows me and I know the Father--and I lay down my life for the sheep... No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.” John 10:10-18 (NIV)

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“Jesus told her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying.’” John 11:25 (NLT)

“Because God’s children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying.” Hebrews 2:14-15 (NLT)

CONNECT GROUP QUESTIONS:

1. Share with your group a time when you were told something true, but at the time it seemed unbelievable.
2. Read Matthew 20:17-19 and 28:1-10. After being with Jesus for three years, why do you think the disciples doubted that He had risen from the dead?
3. What keeps people today from believing the promises of Jesus?
4. Read Romans 1:16-17. In your opinion, what makes the Gospel “Good News”?
5. Read John 10:7-10. How would you define the full, abundant, and satisfying life that Jesus is describing?
6. Read Philippians 4:10-13. What is the secret that Paul learned about walking in faith in this difficult and frustrating world?
7. Read Ephesians 3:12 and Hebrews 10:23. What doubts are keeping you from fully trusting God to fulfill all His promises in your life?