

APRIL 17, 2022 HE IS RISEN

Our Gospel comes from John 20:1-9

Happy Easter!

The tomb is empty. He is risen, Alleluia, Alleluia. I love Easter.

Easter is the foundation of our faith.

Once again, the tomb is empty, He is risen, Alleluia, Alleluia.

But do we really believe that?

The tomb is empty, He is risen, Alleluia, Alleluia, but do we really believe that?

I know we wanna believe that.

I know grandma really believed that.

I know my preacher really believes that.

But way deep down in my secret self, do I believe that, or do I just notice this?

How can I move from casual acknowledgement, through a possible maybe, to a just knowing?

You know, like I know that water is wet, like I know that the sun is going to rise tomorrow morning, you know, that kind of knowing.

The tomb is empty, He is risen, Alleluia, Alleluia.

How do I really know?

I mean, 'cause I wanna know, I really wanna know.

Well, this is what I wanna talk to you about this Sunday morning, as we celebrate Easter.

How can we move **from hearing, to doubting, to knowing?**

The tomb is empty, He is risen, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Well, let's start with that word Alleluia, what does that

word even mean, Alleluia?

Well, for starters, it's a Greek word, **Alleluia**.

Hallelujah is the Hebrew counterpart, and both those words are expressions of overwhelming gratitude.

For what?

For Jesus, and why? 'Cause the tomb is empty.

And by the fact that it's empty, that is testifying to the reality that through the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross, he defeated sin and conquered death, which is a very good thing given the fact that we're **all** sinners.

And by rising from the dead, He has made a way for us, who believe in Him, to do the same.

But again, how can I really know that?

How can I really believe that and know for sure, 'cause I wanna believe that, how can I know?

Is there good reason to believe that the tomb was in fact empty?

Is this belief historically accurate, is it factual?

Could a fair-minded investigator gather all the facts, and conclude justifiably, through reason and intellect, that the tomb was in fact most likely empty that first Easter Sunday morning? Or is it just a fable, you know, like a myth that's been passed from generation to generation?

Well, that's what I wanna talk about today, so let's get to it.

Let's start with what we know for sure.

It's a historical fact that a man named Jesus of Nazareth was crucified by the Romans, and died on a cross on a Friday afternoon about 2,000 years ago.

Of that, there is no doubt, there is ample historical account outside of the Bible to support that reality.

It's well documented, Jesus Christ was crucified.

Now as best as Scripture scholars can figure, if they go back with the calendar of when Passover would've been, they calculate that he died on Friday, April 3rd, the year 33, at three o'clock, which by the way, has a whole lot of threes, which makes sense, because of course, three is a magic number.

Now Jesus Christ is crucified, and as far as crucifixion goes, it is, by design, **brutal and violent**.

And most victims are thrown into a common graveyard, reserved for criminals.

And they're the lucky ones, if you can believe in that.

Others were left on the cross for scavengers to feed, which is done on purpose, because they served as a gruesome reminder, "You mess with Rome, buddy, this is what's gonna happen to you." But in the case of Jesus, it was different.

Jesus was buried, according to the Scriptures, in the tomb of **Joseph of Arimathea**, who was a member of the Sanhedrin.

Which is an odd thing given the fact that the Sanhedrin are the very people that orchestrated his death, leading some to speculate that this is Christian fabrication, made up, didn't happen.

But this is what the Scriptures say.

But like I said, it does seem a bit odd.

I mean think about it, if it's true that the body came up missing, which we know it did, 'cause the tomb is empty, He is risen, Alleluia, Alleluia.

If that's true, then the enemies of Jesus would know right away if he was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, exactly where to go to verify such a claim.

And given the fact that an empty tomb is very last thing that they would want, they could have very easily gone down there, produced some kind of body, and just nipped it in the bud.

But they didn't, 'cause they couldn't, 'cause the tomb is empty, He is risen, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Or as Paul would write in Corinthians 15:12, which by the way was written way before the Gospels,

"But if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, then how can some of you say there is no resurrection from the dead? And if there's no resurrection of the dead, then neither has Christ been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain. And if our preaching is in

vain, well that means that you're still in your sin and your faith is in vain."

In other words, it's just a fable.

It's just a myth, because if the tomb was not empty, well then Christianity was just made up.

But here's the deal, the tomb was empty.

He is risen, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Now understand, the fact that the tomb was empty, that has never been a dispute.

It's the how it came to be empty that is causing all the conversation.

I mean we know it's empty, and we can see proof of this in the 28th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew:

While they were going, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had happened. They assembled with the elders and took counsel. Then they gave a large sum of money to the guards, telling them, "You are to say that his disciples came at night, and stole him while you were sleeping. And if this gets to the ears of the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." The soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed.

So, nobody's denying that the tomb was in fact empty. It's just all about how.

"On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb."

Now, that seems like a small detail but that stone being removed, it's an interesting detail, because archeologists have uncovered some of these stones that were used to seal such a tomb as this, and they're huge.

They estimate these stones to weigh about three tons.

And the way the stone was set is they would roll the stone up to the tomb, right next to the opening, but they would roll it to a higher ground.

So, when the time came to seal the tomb, a trench would be dug to allow gravity to roll the stone downhill, into place in front of the tomb.

So once the stone is set, that's kinda it, because to roll away the stone would require that it be rolled back up hill, and how's that gonna happen, especially from somebody who's inside?

That's impossible, but it was, why? Because with God, all things are possible. He is risen, Alleluia, Alleluia!

This is Daily Living with Father Chapin. You stick around, we'll be right back and we will continue to talk about this amazing gospel that comes to us here, as we consider God's word and how we might be able to apply it into our daily living.

(BREAK)

So, "On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was

still dark, and saw the stone had been removed from the tomb. So, she ran and went to get Simon Peter."

We're gonna see a whole lot of running in our Gospel today.

So, Mary of Magdala shows up, she sees that the stone's been removed.

She runs to tell Simon Peter, and the other disciple whom Jesus loved. Told both of them, "They have taken our Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him."

So, my first question is, well, why weren't they with her in the first place?

Where were those guys?

Of course, we know that they were hiding in the upper room.

But before we get all judgmental and start pointing fingers, let's be honest here, we hide from Jesus all the time.

I mean, every time we say, "My will, Lord, rather than Thy will be done."

But getting back to Mary, and Simon Peter, and John. In Luke's account, they didn't believe her. They thought this was the crazed rantings of a grieving woman.

But nevertheless, both Peter and the beloved disciple, who we can assume is John, ran to investigate the tomb.

"They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter, and arrived at the tomb first."

Now it's a small detail, but like I said, we can assume that this other disciple, whom Jesus loved, or the beloved disciple, is John, who just happens to be the writer of our Gospel today.

So, I'm thinking he just wanted everybody to know that he won the resurrection marathon.

"He bent down, saw the burial cloths were in there, but he didn't go in. When Simon Peter arrived after him, he went into the tomb, saw the burial cloths there, and the cloth that covered His head, not with the burial cloths, but rolled up in a separate place."

So, the whole thing sounds like a crime scene, and I guess it was.

But it's an interesting detail, because if in fact it was the case that somebody stole the body, why would they ever take the time to unwrap it?

Remember now, it had been three days, so there was **no embalming**.

So that didn't make any sense, really.

But anyway, so then the other disciple, you know the one that had arrived at the tomb first, again, do I remind you, okay, I get it, you won the race.

So, the other disciple comes, he saw and he believed.

Now probably should have just ended here, but it doesn't, because John adds this **curious line**, "For they did not yet understand the Scripture that He had to rise from the dead."

So that's confusing, to me at least, because it just said he saw and he believed, but now it's saying, "For they did not understand the Scripture that He had to rise from the dead."

So, my question is, well, if "he saw it and believed," believed in what?

Well, to answer that question, let's take a closer look at that word saw, or to see.

The oldest manuscripts that we have in the New Testament are written in Greek, and Greek is a much more exacting language than English.

And this is a prime example, because when it comes to that word, to see, or saw, in English, we got one word, one word, to see.

In Greek, three words.

Three words, and we see all three of these words used in this Gospel.

Beginning with Mary Magdala, or Mary of Magdala, when she saw that the stone had been removed, and John, when he saw the burial cloths there, but didn't go in.

The Greek word that is used is blepo.

And that word means to notice, to observe, to perceive, to be made aware, like for example, you would notice a bird flying by, or maybe you would notice the color of the flowers on the side of the road.

But blepo is something **you notice**, not necessarily something that you would focus on or contemplate, which is kinda how most of us in the world see God.

We notice, but don't contemplate. Leaving the building Maundy Thursday evening we all noted the full moon - always, a full moon in Holy Week.

Now when Peter arrives, and it says that he saw the burial cloths, the word changes.

Now the word saw becomes theoreo, which is where we get the word theater. Now theoreo means to study closely, to ponder intently, but not necessarily reach a conclusion.

Theoreo suggests confusion.

Now, we see this word change again when the beloved disciple goes in, and he sees, and it says he saw and he believed.

It changes for a third time.

Now the word becomes eidon, and eidon in Greek means to see with comprehension, to see and have understanding.

So, getting back to us, as we celebrate Easter Sunday morning, and we hear, "He is risen, Alleluia, Alleluia, the tomb is empty," most of us in our world, we blepo, okay, we notice, we observe.

We've heard the story, we all know about Jesus and what He did, but we don't necessarily contemplate it.

You know, God's not really a part of our lives, but then life comes, and we theoreo, we contemplate,

we ponder, we wonder, we're confused, we have no real comprehension.

But then some of us, as we look at the empty tomb on this Sunday morning, we eidon, we see, we do understand, we have comprehension.

So, here's my question, how can we move from blepo, through theoreo, to get to eidon?

How can we move from perception, through confusion, into understanding?

Well, the same way we believe in anything, evidence. Next week, we're gonna be talking all about Doubting

Thomas.

I love Doubting Thomas, that's next week.

What did he say?

"Unless I see the nail marks in his hands, and put my finger in His hand, and my hand in His side."

What was that? It's evidence.

Hear me when I say, this Easter Sunday morning, we have a faith that is an evidence-based faith.

Consider your life, I mean, seriously, look back over your life.

If you really look, can't you see the fingerprints of God all over it?

Times where it could have easily gone the other way, but it didn't.

Do you really think you're that lucky?

Now, isn't it odd that even though we can look back on our life, and we can see the fingerprints of God all over it, why is it that when we look one day ahead, we see nothing but blackness?

Why is that?

It's almost like we were drowning in the middle of the lake, Jesus swam out to rescue us, only to drag us up on the beach, and beat us up.

I mean, it's crazy, but this is what we are, this is what we do, we are such a fearful people, which is why next week we will hear, "Peace be with you," not once, not twice, three times in one Gospel.

If we could just get that one, "Peace be with you." Thomas didn't get it.

Thomas does not arrive to eidon until he's presented with evidence.

And remember what he said?

He said, "**My Lord, and my God,**" which by the way is the highest **Christological** statement and all of the Gospels.

And what did Jesus say?

"Have you come to believe, because you've seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen, yet have believed."

You know who he's talking about?

Us.

We have not seen Jesus, yet we have come to believe.

Do you believe?

I wanna believe, but Jesus is not here in body to show me His wound, so how can I really believe? I mean, I need evidence.

How can I move from blepo, through theoreo, to eidon?

Well, let me tell you, it's in my favorite chapter of all the Bible, John 14, "If you love me, you will keep my commands, and I will ask the Father, and He will give you another helper, the Advocate, the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth, which this world does not know. But you know it, for it is with you."

Remember, He was standing in front of them when he said it, "It is with you," but it will be in you.

You wanna go from blepo, through theoreo, to eidon, let me tell you how you do it.

Holy Spirit.

Because this is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Hear me when I say, it is only through the Holy Spirit that true faith blooms.

It is only through the Holy Spirit that we can actually see.

It is only through the Holy Spirit we can actually come to comprehend.

And that's a one-on-one situation, my friend.

And it all begins with blepo, which is when we notice. But oftentimes in the beginning, it flies by, like a bird.

It comes and it goes, but it's not really our thing.

You know, it's just one of those things we know about, but then life comes on life's terms, because life is not easy.

And as we struggle, we theoreo.

I've heard it said, and I believe this is true, that a man is

only truly introduced to himself in the darkness.

Through the struggle we ponder, we wonder, we struggle.

We theoreo, we try to put it together.

And how exactly do we do that?

We read His Word, because His Word is alive. We listen to the Sunday message, we contemplate.

We wonder, but even still, so many of us have a difficult time trying to comprehend, because we are plagued with doubt.

We'll be talking about that next week. We wanna believe, we hope it's true.

Remember when Jesus came off the Mount of Transfiguration, remember that boy that had all the issues, and the disciples just couldn't seem to help him out?

Remember that boy?

Remember that boy's father?

He begged Jesus.

He said, "If you could, please heal my son."

And Jesus looked at him and he said,

"If? If I could? Do you believe?"

And I'll never forget what that man said.

He said, "Yes, I believe, but help me with my unbelief."

In other words, "I'm stuck in theoreo, my friend, help me get to eidon," and boom, his son was healed immediately.

My friends, hear me when I say, you might be going through confusion today.

You might be stuck in theoreo.

You might be in need of some kind of healing.

If you ask Him, he will do the same for you, because the tomb is empty, He is risen, Alleluia, Alleluia.

So, my friends, what have we learned?

How can we apply what we have learned today into our life?

Well, maybe you might find yourself stuck in theoreo today.

Maybe you're seeking, maybe you're contemplating, but you're confused.

Look to the Lord, ask Jesus, and just simply say, "Lord, I believe. Help me with my unbelief. Send the Holy Spirit upon me," and He will.

"Seek, and you'll find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you."

So, you can cry out this Easter Sunday morning, and say,

"The tomb is empty, He is risen, Alleluia, Alleluia."



Blessings to all - Rev. Katie Dailey
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