

Pastor Joe Polzin
Mark 16:1-8
“Welcome Home”

Year B – The Resurrection of Our Lord – Easter Sunday
April 1, 2018

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! *He is risen indeed! Alleluia!* That is the glorious truth that we proclaim again and again, not only today, but every day as we live in our faith. Faith in that glorious news that our Savior is not in the tomb, but that he has risen. That’s news worthy to be proclaimed indeed.

Of course, there are many reasons why Easter is such a special day. And I don’t know about you, but there’s something about Easter, something about this holiday, that always feels like home. Perhaps it’s the time we spend in our church home with our family here. Perhaps it’s the traditions that get passed down from one generation to the next. Perhaps it’s the gatherings of loved ones or the connections we’ll share the rest of the day.

There is something, or many things, about Easter that reminds us of home—and rightly so! But I would say there’s something even more than all of that, something even more profound that connects us with our true home. And it took place when the grave was found empty that first Easter morning.

You see, the women went to the tomb very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, as St. Mark tells us. They were looking for Jesus, but not in the home of the living. They were looking at the place of his burial, the home of the dead. And of course, from their perspective this makes sense. After all, it was only on Friday that they had watched their Lord die on the cross. How terrible and tragic that must have been to witness. How crushing a defeat it must have been for them to suffer.

And in the midst of trying to figure out how to pick up all the broken pieces in their lives, they did the only thing that came to their mind. They knew they had to anoint the precious body of Jesus, to honor him, even in death. I’m sure they wished anything that his body wasn’t dead, that their Savior was still with them. I’m sure they had many hopes and dreams that all came to a devastating halt when they saw Jesus hang his head and give up his spirit.

People say, “Home is where the heart is.” And it’s true. On that Sunday morning, those women had found their home in the place where their hearts couldn’t help but dwell—a home in their pain, in their despair, and in their grief. Their home was found among the dead, as their hearts were set on finding the lifeless body of Jesus. And their future didn’t seem anything to them but eternally dark.

Today, on a day that is filled with thoughts of home, I’ll ask to you to consider, where is *your* home? And I’m not asking what is the address of your house. Where is your true home? Where does your heart currently reside? Today, it’s likely our hearts will be glad as we’re home with friends and family. But in a week from now, or in a month or a year, where will you find your heart to be? What will your thoughts be focused on? What will your faith be placed in? Where will you call *home*?

Many people assume this world and the things in it are their home, with no thought of God or anything else. Their goal in life is to be satisfied by the things they can do and

accomplish. They center their lives around themselves and making their lives happy. They trust in the things this world can give, which, in the moment, may even seem at times good.

But even the temporary pleasures of this world are fleeting. They do not last. Because this world also gives us the burdens of pain and sorrow. The burdens of life's hardships, financial struggles, illnesses. The burden of our sins, and the burdens of this sinful world. And the greatest burden that we will ever face will be death. Which means no amount of success or happiness that we generate on our own can ever truly be permanent. No long-lasting home can ever be found in what this world alone has to offer.

If we attempt to make our home in the transitory things of this world, then we, like those women on the way to the tomb, will come face-to-face with sorrow, with pain, with death, face-to-face with the realities of this sinful world, and we will have to answer the question, is this all there is? Do these things define my home?

In our Lenten series this year, we talked a lot about home, and being exiled from home. It started when Adam and Eve chose to reject their home of Eden, which God had created for them, but in their sin, they chose to go their own way. They were exiled, and their home with God was lost.

And ever since that day, we, too, have chosen to reject that which God gives, by our own sinful nature and our sinful choices. And so we continue to live in exile and in the pain of this world. And it's not as if this is a choice that's not so bad, a choice we can just live with. No, rejecting our home with God by our sin is the most terrible choice, and a choice that we must die with eternally. The wages of sin is eternal death.

But God was not satisfied with leaving us in exile. He was not satisfied leaving us to die. And it's why He sent His own Son, Jesus Christ into this world to rescue us from our deadly exile. Jesus came to rescue us from sin and death itself, and to show us the way to our new home with him. Restoring us once again to God, Jesus offered Himself in our place on the cross. But He did not stay dead. The grave was not his home. He promised that he would be raised three days later. And that promise was fulfilled.

The women who went to his tomb that first Easter morning, they weren't focused on that promise. All they could see and feel was death. That's where their hearts couldn't help but find their home. They were living as if the grave was the end of the journey for Jesus, and therefore the end of the journey for them, as well.

But right when they were trying to figure out who would roll away the stone for them so that they could anoint the body of Jesus, an angel appeared to them and said, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here." In other words, the angel told them, "The home of Jesus isn't among the dead. No, the home of Jesus is among the living."

Jesus did, in fact, enter into the exile of our sin and death when he came into this world. And Jesus did, in fact, enter into the grave when he gave up his life on Good Friday. But death would not be his dwelling place. Christ entered into our world, into our lives, and into our very death, so that he could claim his victory over them. And by his resurrection, he made the way for us to return home.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, many of you here today are in many different walks of life, many different places along your journey in this world. And all of us are trying to figure out how to deal with the things that life brings our way. Our hearts are pulled in different directions, and there are times when we feel that we aren't quite sure where our home is. Where our hearts should reside.

And what's more, we have all experienced days when we know full well that all is *not* right with this world. We've felt very deeply the effects of sin, and we've even had to endure the death of those around us, and the reality of our future death, as well. If these things were our home, if this life was all there is, then in days like these our hearts would be truly grieved, and we could only despair.

And that's why today, the Day of the Resurrection of our Lord is so important. Because our Savior shows you is that his home is not darkness and death, but rather light and life. And if his home is not the grave, then it is not yours either. Christ promised he would journey *through* death into new life, and he promises that you will follow him. That one day, you will know what it's like to make that journey, as well.

For a short time still, you will have days that are filled with both joy and happiness, as well as days filled with pain, and sorrow, and grief. You will have days that are good, as well as days that are bad. And eventually, the day will come when your own body will be laid in the grave, just as the body of Jesus was laid there, as well.

But it was not his home, and it is not yours either. Christ has power over death itself. And the day will come when Jesus will call you out from the grave, on the day of *your* resurrection, and Jesus will restore all the things in this world that sin has made wrong, and he will make them right and perfect again. He will swallow up death forever, and he will wipe away tears from all faces. And you will live forever with him, in your eternal home, rejoicing in his salvation.

Jesus Christ is our home, today and for eternity, because even today, our hearts reside with Jesus. And where he is, there our hearts will be, and there our home will be forever. He has given us a great hope. He has given us a great home.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! *He is risen indeed! Alleluia!*

Welcome home. In Jesus' name. Amen.

And now may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord.