

Written Copy: Mark 16:5-8 "Lifting the Veil"

Resurrection/Easter Sunday 2024

Sunday, March 31st, 2024

Text: Mark 16:5-8

⁵ And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. ⁶ And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. ⁷ But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you." ⁸ And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

The text's intent

Mary Magdalene, Mary-Jesus' mother, and Salome come at dawn Sunday morning after the Sabbath has ended to prepare Jesus' body for burial, a task that could not be accomplished on Friday because the Passover sabbath was beginning. Their worry about removing the stone from the tomb is for naught since the Lord has already taken care of that. Entering the tomb, instead of seeing Jesus' corpse where it should be lying, they see an angel looking like a young man dressed in brilliant white. He knows they are astonished at what they've found and tells them to calm down. Jesus is not here, but has risen, just as He promised He would. They are to go and tell the disciples, and especially Peter this, and tell them He will meet them in Galilee, just as He said He would before His suffering and death. The women leave, but their intention is not to tell anyone anything, since they are held in the grips of astonishment and fear, unable to make sense out of any of this.

Focus Statement:

Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection is the power of God to lift that veil of sin, sadness, guilt, and mourning from our hearts and minds. He comes to us personally as He did with the women and the disciples through our baptism, and then repeatedly through the means of grace. He gives us hope in the Lord's Supper of the foretaste of the feast to come on Resurrection Day, when we will be joined by all our loved ones who departed in faith to live out a perfect eternity with glorified bodies and souls. The veil of sin and death will be completely removed, along with all the evils that plague us now. It will be better than the greatest banquet you could imagine, and it will be forever.

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

Like the women and the disciples, we have a veil of guilt, sadness, and mourning that is spread over us. It can block the joy that the Lord would have us live in as His chosen sons and daughters in faith.

What the hearer should do as a result:

We are to work with the Holy Spirit to keep that veil removed through participation in Word and Sacrament, both here in corporate worship and Bible Study outside of worship. And we are to go and tell those around us who need that veil lifted from their hearts and minds by the Gospel Message.

Subject Sentence: Jesus Resurrection lifts the veil, Gospel gives victory.

Introduction: The Veil Spread Over Us

I'm guessing many of you have big plans for Easter Dinner, either at your house, or at the house of a family member or friend. Perhaps you're looking forward to such delicacies as ham, steak, lamb, or shrimp. Or, if you're like me, you're looking forward to one of my favorite meals, brunch. I get to enjoy that here with you now, and then later on at my daughter Sammi's house. There will be Easter baskets for the grandkids, and great photo opportunities there. But It's appropriate we gather here too for Easter brunch, because we are family, the family of God. And what do families do to celebrate? Enjoy food and fellowship. Whatever your plans are for Easter I pray that it's a great time.

But I know that not everyone is experiencing the same joy and anticipation about today. Many of us have a veil that is covering our hearts and minds, preventing us from seeing and experiencing the joy and happiness we know that we should have on Easter. For some that veil is the pressure, worry, and stress of getting everything done, and cooked, and ready for dinner. For some that veil is made up of grief and sadness over loved ones who will not be present with us for Easter, either because they've passed away, or have moved away and can't be here. Some have the veil of depression spread over them as they plan to spend Easter alone. And there are those who are not looking forward to the Easter gathering because of the veil of trepidation and fear concerning a gathering of family members that often do not see eye to eye, and struggle to get along together.

The Veil Spread Over the Women and The Disciples

The three women in our Gospel Reading have a veil covering them. It is made up of grief over the death of their beloved Teacher, who they watched being crucified for crimes that He did not commit. And it's made up of sadness and guilt that they couldn't properly prepare His body beforehand for burial. When they took Him off the cross it was almost sundown, when the Passover Sabbath began, and so the work of preparing His body had to wait. So now, early Sunday morning, the Sabbath being over, they are coming to prepare His body and thus honor Him in His death. But there is also the veil of worry. How will they roll away that huge stone?

When they arrive, they find that the problem of removing the stone has been lifted from their plate. But there is a new component to that veil, one of astonishment so great that they are out of their minds with wonder! They expect to find a corpse in the tomb. Instead, they find a young man dressed in a brilliant white robe. Imagine how that must've shocked their senses.

We know this young man to be an angel. And he has been given the knowledge from Jesus who put him there concerning what's going on in the minds of these women. He knows the veil of amazement covering them that makes them unable to comprehend what they are seeing. He tells them to calm down because He has something very important to tell them.

He tells them not to be alarmed because Jesus is not here. What is happening is exactly what Jesus told them would happen. He told them He would suffer terribly, be put to death, but then rise on the 3rd day. And the proof of this fulfillment is the empty ledge where he is sitting. There is no body, because Jesus is no longer dead. He has risen, never to die again!

This is good news. More than that, this is great news, fantastic news. This is news that should've made these women jump for joy, hug one another, leap in the air, and maybe even break into singing the Hallelujah Chorus. But the veil remains over their hearts and minds, and they remain uncomprehending. The angel tells them what's next to do: Go! Go and tell! Go tell His disciples, and especially Peter, that Jesus has fulfilled what He promised them would happen. And they are to head to Galilee where He will meet them in person, just as He told them He would before His suffering and death.

But the women, who are still covered in this veil of shock, sadness, and unbelief instead flee from the tomb with the intention of saying not a word to anyone. And if that had remained the story, you and I would have also have the same veil of sin and sadness spread over us this day, just as much of the world does, with no reason to celebrate this day as more special than any other day, except for very temporal and earthly reasons that the unbelieving world has of chocolates and Easter Bunnies; things that quickly fade when the food is put away and the company has gone home.

Jesus Comes to Lift the Veil

But Jesus is not going to allow that to happen. So, He comes to them. Matthew's Gospel account of the Resurrection tells us Jesus met these women on the way back to the city. He shows them and proves to them without a doubt that He indeed is no longer dead but has been resurrected just as He told them He would be. And He repeats the angel's charge to tell His disciples to meet Him in Galilee. So, the women go and tell. But their witness doesn't move the disciples to follow through on Jesus' command.

It does move Peter and John to get up and go investigate the tomb. Even though Peter finds it empty, the veil is not lifted from his heart and mind. Jesus has risen just as He promised, yet Peter doesn't get it. What is the veil that is covering Peter? It's the same veil of depression and guilt that is covering the rest of the disciples. They watched their Teacher, the one they left everything behind to follow, suffer and die. They watched their hopes and dreams of His reign and rule in Jerusalem be dashed to pieces. There is the veil of fear that just as the Jewish Ruling Council had Jesus put to death, they might be next. And Peter has the additional weight added to his veil of denying three times he was a follower, or even knew who Jesus was.

Jesus doesn't want Peter to live the rest of his days with that veil covering over him and weighing him down. In our Epistle Lesson Paul tells us that Jesus made a special one-on-one visit with Peter. And what was Jesus' purpose? To lift that veil from Peter through the gift of faith and knowledge that is the Gospel Message. To assure Peter that all of his sins had been completely forgiven. That is what the testimony of His resurrection is. He came to Peter to share His love and forgiveness that drove Him to the cross, and the tomb, and was the power behind His resurrection.

He shares that wonderful Gospel Message not just with Peter, but with the rest of the disciples who still have not left Jerusalem for Galilee. They are still living under that veil of unbelief, sorrow, and sin. He comes to them twice, once to breathe on them and give them the Holy Spirit, by whose power they can hold fast in faith to the Gospel Message that Jesus' resurrection is for them. And then a 2nd time so doubting Thomas, along with the rest of them, can have visual confirmation of His bodily resurrection. All this so that they can be His witnesses here in Jerusalem, in Galilee, and out into the Roman Empire and beyond as they establish and grow His Church.

Jesus has come to you to. He has come to lift the veil from your heart and mind. He came to you in your baptism and lifted the veil of sin, guilt, and death from your heart. He came to give you all the wonderful gifts He won for you in His death and resurrection. Through the Holy Spirit He poured into your heart and mind forgiveness for all of your sins and freedom from the guilt they cause, salvation from a life lived apart from God now and for eternity, and the gift of a life lived with God now that continues on for all eternity.

As we live out our lives here in this fallen world, we allow that veil to continue to be spread over us. It has been lifted partially but not completely. This is because sin still exists in our hearts, and the effects are still there in our lives. There is the guilt that it causes us to have, the brokenness it causes between our loved ones, the stress of coping in a world where things just don't go the way we want them to, and the doubt that creates in us regarding God's handling of things.

That's why Jesus continues to come to us through Word and Sacrament. He reminds us not just of our need for Him because of our sin, but that His suffering, death, and resurrection is the power to lift that veil once again. He did so for you this morning as you heard Paul's testimony from **1 Corinthians 15:3-5** ³ **For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures,** ⁴ **that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,** ⁵ **and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.** Jesus' death was not evil and the devil triumphing over Him. It was all part of God's plan and purpose from the beginning where He took what the devil meant for evil and turned it into the greatest good for you and for me. And through your participation in the Means of Grace, He is at work through all those things that make up the veil spread over you, to lift them off. And not only that, but to make them the means to strengthen your faith and see His all-powerful presence and work in your life.

And He comes to you with His promise. Just as He promised His disciples He would rise on the third day, and fulfilled that promise, He makes a promise to you and me through His resurrection. The promise of the complete lifting of the veil from among us. The promise that will be fulfilled on Resurrection Day. On that day we will stand in His presence given new glorified bodies and souls. Gone from our lives forever will be sin and all that it causes: anger, crime, hate and arguments, suffering, doubt, and death. Gone forever will be our grief over those loved ones who have gone to be with Jesus because we will once again live with them in the New Heaven and New Earth. With the veil completely gone we will live an existence that is beyond our imagining: at perfect peace with Creation, with one another, and with God, who in Christ Jesus will be really and truly present with us. And all the tears will be wiped from our eyes.

Conclusion

This is the message the Lord has given me concerning His death and resurrection. It works to lift the veil that has been spread over my heart and mind this busy Lenten Season. And it's not just me sharing it, but the Holy Spirit is present and active sharing it with you. And what does the Spirit want you to do? Keep coming here where through the Means of Grace that are His Word and Sacrament, He can work in your life to keep lifting the veil from your heart and mind. Keep coming here to rejoice in His resurrection victory that is our purpose every Sunday. Allow Him to work on lifting that veil during the week through private devotional time and Bible Study. Then, with Him walking with you, go and share this wonderful message with those in your life who are struggling under that veil. Go and be His means to lift that veil of sin, sadness, guilt, and depression, even as He continues to work the same miracle in you. Amen.