

Revealed

(Sermon by Rev. John Dieterly, April 4, 2010, Sunrise Service)

Hear the news of the day, the Good News, as told by one who was there, John, the beloved disciple: (John 20:1-18)

¹Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been taken away from the entrance. ²She went running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and told them, “They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”

³Then Peter and the other disciple went to the tomb. ⁴The two of them were running, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent over and saw the linen cloths, but he did not go in. ⁶Behind him came Simon Peter, and he went straight into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there ⁷and the cloth which had been around Jesus’ head. It was not lying with the linen cloths but was rolled up by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in; he saw and believed. (⁹They still did not understand the scripture which said that he must rise from death.) ¹⁰Then the disciples went back home.

¹¹Mary stood crying outside the tomb. While she was still crying, she bent over and looked in the tomb ¹²and saw two angels there dressed in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³“Woman, why are you crying?” they asked her.

She answered, “They have taken my Lord away, and I do not know where they have put him!”

¹⁴Then she turned around and saw Jesus standing there; but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵“Woman, why are you crying?” Jesus asked her. “Who is it that you are looking for?”

She thought he was the gardener, so she said to him, “If you took him away, sir, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him.”

¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!”

She turned toward him and said in Hebrew, “Rabboni!” (This means “Teacher.”)

¹⁷“Do not hold on to me,” Jesus told her, “because I have not yet gone back up to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them that I am returning to him who is my Father and their Father, my God and their God.”

¹⁸So Mary Magdalene went and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord and related to them what he had told her.

What would it take to make you believe in the resurrection of our Lord, Jesus? Of course, we all think of ourselves as believers, but each one of us have those moments of doubt, like that centurion who cried out to Jesus, “I believe, help my unbelief.”

So what would it take to remove all doubt from your mind? If a trusted friend came and told you that Jesus has risen from death, would you believe? The disciples didn’t. Luke tells us that when the women came back from the tomb and told the disciples about the empty tomb, they thought it was an idle tale and didn’t believe the women. Except for Peter and John – they had to run and see for themselves. And when John saw that the stone had been rolled away, and when Peter went into the tomb, followed by John, they believed, even if they didn’t fully understand. If you could see the stone rolled away and see the empty tomb, would that be enough for you?

It wasn’t enough for Mary. Even when she looked into the empty tomb – and saw TWO ANGELS sitting there, she continued to cry. Even when Jesus spoke to her, she didn’t recognize him, and blamed him for taking the body away. But then, when Jesus spoke her name, she realized it was him, that he had come back to life. For Mary, she had to be called by name, and then she believed. If you were called by your name, would you believe, would that be enough for you?

It wasn’t enough for Thomas. All his friends, the other disciples, told him that Jesus himself had come and stood among them. They told him that they had seen Jesus, they had seen his hands, his side – but that wasn’t enough for Thomas. He wanted to see for himself, and even more, he wanted to touch Jesus. If you could touch Jesus, would that be enough for you?

How would Jesus need to be revealed to you to remove your doubts and answer your questions?

This is the day we gather to celebrate the resurrection of our Savior. Listen to what you friends tell you; listen, and believe. Watch and see the stone rolled away, watch, and believe. (Pause for rolling of the stone) Touch the body and blood of our Lord as you receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion, touch, and believe. Listen for your name to be spoken to you in blessing, listen, and believe. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Amen.