

A CASE FOR THE EMPTY TOMB
Subtitle: “Don’t Stay Stuck At the Cross”
Preacher: Rev. Dr. Neichelle R. Guidry, Ph.D.
Bible Passage: Matthew 27:62 – 28:6
Date: April 16, 2023

Scripture:

⁶²The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate ⁶³and said, “Sir, we remember what that impostor said while he was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise again.’ ⁶⁴Therefore command the tomb to be made secure until the third day; otherwise, his disciples may go and steal him away and tell the people, ‘He has been raised from the dead,’ and the last deception would be worse than the first.” ⁶⁵Pilate said to them, “You have a guard^[a] of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can.”
^[a] ⁶⁶So they went with the guard and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone.

²⁸After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ²And suddenly there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³His appearance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow. ⁴For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. ⁵But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. ⁶He is not here, for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he^[a] lay.

Sermon Notes:

INTRODUCTION: Rev. Guidry began by telling us the church is still in the resurrection season. We are the children of resurrection! Resurrection is who we are and what we do. What happened at the cross was a dark and evil moment, and the cross symbolizes that darkness and evil. The cross became a symbol of struggle and betrayal. It symbolized the evil of state disapproval and violence. It has come to represent all the evil that fills the human heart. The cross of Jesus symbolizes contemporary violence and injustice and it represents the realities of violence and power intertwined.

As a symbol, the cross of Jesus is unable to remind us of the abundant life; it is unable to remind us of the renewal and resurrection available to us. Conversely, as a symbol, the tomb of Jesus reminds us resurrection is possible even when we are fixed upon a cross.

Sermon Points:

Three things happened at The Tomb:

1. THE ENEMY WAS SILENCED!

The Bible tells us the authorities made a point of sealing and setting guards at the tomb where Jesus was buried. The enemies of Jesus were intimidated by Him and His power. Some were even religious but missed the point of their religion: to love and serve one another. They became mean and petty and insecure. They EVEN became perpetrators of Evil. But at The Tomb, none of it worked. An angel from heaven opened the tomb they sealed and guarded because resurrection is God’s work and God’s work will always be completed and fulfilled!

2. THE WOMEN REMEMBERED!

At The Tomb, God’s angel spoke words of resurrection, comfort and purpose to the women who came. They remembered those words and became witnesses to resurrection and the things Jesus had already said to them. The Women (and we) come to The Tomb thinking it is a place of death; but it is the place of

resurrection. And it is the place from which we (like the women) are sent to tell of story of God's work. The preacher told us to be like those women who "just couldn't keep it to themselves.

3. JESUS GOT UP

The Tomb is the site of the resurrection, therefore, it is the site or the resolution of the story. Clarity does not come at the cross but at the empty tomb. If we press on from The Cross to the Tomb we get to the good part of the story: Jesus got up! The cross was never meant to be the END of the story. For children of the resurrection, the tomb is the END of the story. We can be like Jesus and get up from being stuck in struggle and suffering

CONCLUSION: There was a Moment when Jesus wakes up inside the tomb and sees he was resurrected from death. He sees that all His wounds had become scars and all His scars bear witness to His resurrection. He did not go back to the cross and he did not address the people who put him there. Instead he went back to the people who loved him and told them, "Peace". And he told them to tell the story of His cross and what happened three days later! He told them His story does not end at the cross; His story ends in glory!

The preacher comforted and encouraged us: our stories do not end with our struggles and sufferings. The preacher exhorted us, "Don't Stay Stuck at the Cross"

Discussion Questions

1. What did you think about Rev. Guidry's description of "the cross?"
2. How did you describe/think about "the cross" before today?
3. Can you describe a "cross" you pick up daily and try to follow Jesus?
4. Have you been "stuck at the cross" before –what happened?
5. What do you believe is God's work during your struggles and sufferings? Have you shared your belief with anyone, not kept it to yourself?
6. How did the sermon impact how you will live your life going forward?
7. What does it mean to be a child of resurrection?