



## Sermon

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Last week I was speaking to our Clelian Height students, and they were talking about their excitement about Easter break and the following prom. As I went back to my office, I remembered those days of the prom. I remembered first of the crazy clothes and how some students had the most outlandish rides to the dance. Then I thought about how there was a whole network of people of one asking on behalf of other students. Though you are appreciative of the messenger, it's the message that matters. You remember when they told you, "If you ask such and such, they will say 'yes.'" Say WHAT? I thought, "That does not make any sense." How many time in our lives do we hear something, yet it does not sink in because we are perplexed? It is either too good to be true, or the reality makes no sense. Perplexed means, of course, completely baffled or very confused.

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So are the women in our Gospel passage this morning in the Gospel of Luke. They were heading to the tomb with burial spices. They were expecting Jesus' corpse to be there. Their main concern was on how to move the stone not on if He had been risen or not. In Jesus' time, the bodies of the dead were washed, wiped with mostly nard along with myrrh and aloe. Then they would bind the hands and legs and place a shroud on the corpse. The whole burial process would usually be within eight hours of death because this was a hot climate and the Hebrews did not embalm their bodies. The timing of Jesus' death being on Passover and the Sabbath meant it was three days before the body could be prepared. So the large amount of spices were needed to overwhelm the decomposition smell and to pay respect. When a person dies, they are given a kiss. Interesting how Jesus was kissed by Judas, who betrayed Him, and the hands and feet were bound similar to the way they are bound at birth.

The women went out of respect, but where were the Apostles, the other followers, and all those who had been touched by Jesus? Only three women went to the tomb to pay one more final respect to Jesus.

Only wait a minute: the stone was rolled away, the tomb was opened. The women rushed in only to find two men with clothes that were bright as lighting. Moreover, they now were fearful and perplexed. Unlike Matthew and Mark, in Luke's account, there is no fear. Rather a question: Why do you see the living among the dead? Jesus rises. What? They came to the tomb expecting

death and found life. It is an exciting theme throughout Luke's Gospel that characters do not understand until it is explained to them. The full impact of this revelation is right here in this chapter. The men in dazzling clothes are not important. It's their message that Jesus is risen and is alive! THE MESSAGE is how the woman came to understand. Isn't it interesting that here it is Easter Sunday, and we don't hear Jesus speaking. Only the message that He is risen, that He is alive. It is like the suspense building in a movie of a character being defined.

However, this is very important for us. The woman heard a message and was reminded of what was said, and they believed. It was from hearing the message and not from touching the hands and side of Jesus. They did not hear Jesus' voice, but instead the Message of God. This is for us. If I were to ask how many here today believe that Jesus is risen. Everyone would raise their hands. Alleluia! Now if I were to ask, how many of you think that Jesus rose from the dead because I said He did? I am not sure any of you would raise your hand. No, we don't believe because of what was said. Instead, we believe because we heard the message from God that He is Risen. The messenger is not essential, but the news is, and in understanding this message, we hear the very word of God.

Interesting how the woman went to the disciples, and they thought, oh boy, these women must have held the spices too close to their noses. However, Peter, who thought this story was so outrageous, had to see for

himself. You know, when you hear a story, and it is so far off, that it just might be right.

Today we wrestle with the same struggles as the disciples and the women. We struggle with the fact that this world teaches us that death is the end; it is final; it always wins. However, Jesus tells us that death is not the end; rather, it is the beginning of our life with Him in paradise. Death is real, but not final. In Jesus, life gets the last word. Life wins!

Not only that, but Jesus is with us, you and me today guiding us and showing us that we are on the winning side of life and death.

More significant than the feeling on a wedding day of wonder and disbelief of a new and more excellent life, so too, hearing the words HE IS RISEN!

Because He has risen, our ride is not in a hearse, but is Jesus raising us through the cross. Because He is risen, our clothes are not are a burial suit or a dress, but the white garment of God's family. Because He is risen, we go to the grave singing Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia. Moreover, WHY? Because WE HEARD THE MESSAGE: He rises, and we are, too. ALLELUIA!

Happy Easter!

Fr. Jeff+