



Smith Rock
COMMUNITY CHURCH

Community
Group

Easter
SUNDAY

**For the week of
12th April 2020**



As we start into the third week of sheltering at home, our desire to see the end of COVID 19 is growing, but we don't know when it will end or what it will be like when it does.

Jesus had been crucified, He had died, and had been laid to rest in the unused tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. What was going to happen next? Will Jesus be raised in three days as Jesus said He would, or would the stone in front of the tomb remain closed for evermore? Some were hoping it would and that they could get back to business as normal, while His disciples were clinging desperately to the hope Jesus would do what He said He would, but to be honest they were skeptics.

Many different views surrounded the tomb that day, as they still do today.



62 The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate
63 and said, "Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise.' 64 Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last fraud will be worse than the first." 65 Pilate said to them, "You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can." 66 So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.

28 Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. 2 And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow.

4 And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. 5 But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. 6 He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you." 8 So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9 And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."

11 While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. 12 And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers 13 and said, "Tell people, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.' 14 And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." 15 So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.

16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.

Matthew 27:62–28:17 (ESV)

Commentary

The passage starts with the chief priests and the Pharisees forming a coalition to petition Pilate. Mostly chief priests were Saducees, and they did not see eye to eye with the Pharisees, but in this case it was in both their mutual benefit to see that Jesus remained in the grave. Not that they gave any credence whatsoever that Jesus was coming out of the grave, at least not under His own steam, but they were afraid that Jesus' disciples would come and steal His body and claim His resurrection. They remember Jesus' claims that He would be raised on the Third day, and so they come to Pilate on the day after preparation, which would mean they are breaking the sabbath to make sure they get what they want! Pilate agrees to a guard, and presumably they are Roman soldiers rather than temple guards, because later on the soldiers are promised protection from Pilate which they would not have needed if they were local.

If only they had known the state of mind that Jesus' disciples were in, because they need not have worried about setting a guard against them at all! The disciples have lost hope, and the chief priests and Pharisees want to keep it that way. The stone door is rolled shut and it is sealed, a mark to show nothing has tampered with it.

Early in the morning of the day after the Sabbath the two Marys approach the tomb with spices to give Jesus' body the embalming it deserved rather than the hurried job Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had performed. Possibly they were worried about how they were going to get into the tomb with the heavy stone door rolled shut and officially sealed; perhaps the soldiers

will help them. But as they get to the tomb there is an earthquake and it no longer matters getting help to roll the stone away because it has been dislodged and rolled away, not that soldiers would have offered much help because they have become paralysed.

On top of the stone sits an angel who has the appearance of brightness, and he tells the women that he knows who they are looking for; Jesus who was crucified, but He isn't here because He has been raised. They are welcome however to go into the tomb and have a look and see where Jesus was laid. Jesus had already left the tomb prior to the stone being rolled back, it was not to let Jesus out but to let the women, the disciples, and the world look in. No doubt the women had heard Jesus speaking prophetically of His resurrection after three days, and now here is an angel confirming it. Not only that, but the angel commissions the women to be the bearers of this good news to the eleven and that Jesus is going to Galilee which is where He will meet them on a hill.

One of the marks of authenticity of the Gospel writers account of the resurrection is the women who play such a pivotal role as witnesses giving their testimony, considering women were not given any legal authority. The women leave with mixed emotions as we can only imagine, in obedience to the angel's command. As they are on their way Jesus Himself meets them a cheery "good morning!" The women seem to recognise Jesus and they bow down and worship Him.

Jesus confirms the angel's instructions to them; they are to send the disciples off to Galilee.

As the women are heading to the disciples the soldiers and heading for the chief priests and Pharisees with the news of what has just happened. The worst news for the leaders is there wasn't a male disciple of Jesus in sight and the tomb had remained sealed right up until the public opening of it by the angel.

Nevertheless it did not stop the chief priests bribbing the soldiers to put out a story where they admitted to dereliction of duty by falling asleep and allowing the disciples to come and break the seal, stealing away Jesus' body. If the soldiers had been asleep on duty how would they have known it was Jesus' disciples. The guards are offered protection in case Pilate hears of this story that they have been asleep on the job.

The scene switches to Galilee, away from Jerusalem and the lies which are being perpetrated there, to the truth of the resurrection. We can imagine the disciple's anticipation at seeing the risen Lord, although considering how they had deserted Him the last time they had seen Him they might have had some concern too. Jesus appears to them and their reaction is to worship Him although Matthew tells us some doubted, or hesitated. Perhaps they were uncertain in how to react to Jesus, just as when the Peter, James and John had witnessed His transfiguration and had not known how to respond on that occasion.

The response to the disciples worship and hesitation is Jesus' assurance that He has all authority, and despite their short comings He is commissioning them to be His witnesses to the whole world!

Group Study

Open the group with prayer and discuss how you have used your application from last week's study in your life, and what you have learned from it.

What is the best view you have ever seen? What made it so good?

Have you ever seen something that you thought was too good to be true, and you didn't believe it for a while?

500 years or so before Jesus was in the tomb, a man went to see what God had done behind a sealed door.

Read Daniel 6:16-24

If you have been one of the two women, describe how you might have felt when you saw the scene at the tomb.

Jesus foretold His death several times:

22 As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men, 23 and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day." And they were greatly distressed.

1Matthew 17:22–23 (ESV)

Why do you think it was such a shock to everyone when it actually happened, and why do you think they found it so hard to believe?

Have you ever had a time in your life when you thought you had lost something for good but you got it back?

How did it make you feel?

The chief priests and the Pharisees did everything they could to “flatten the curve” of the spread of the Good News that the tomb was empty and Jesus had been raised from the dead.

What are the ways the enemy uses today to get people’s eyes off the empty tomb and its implications?

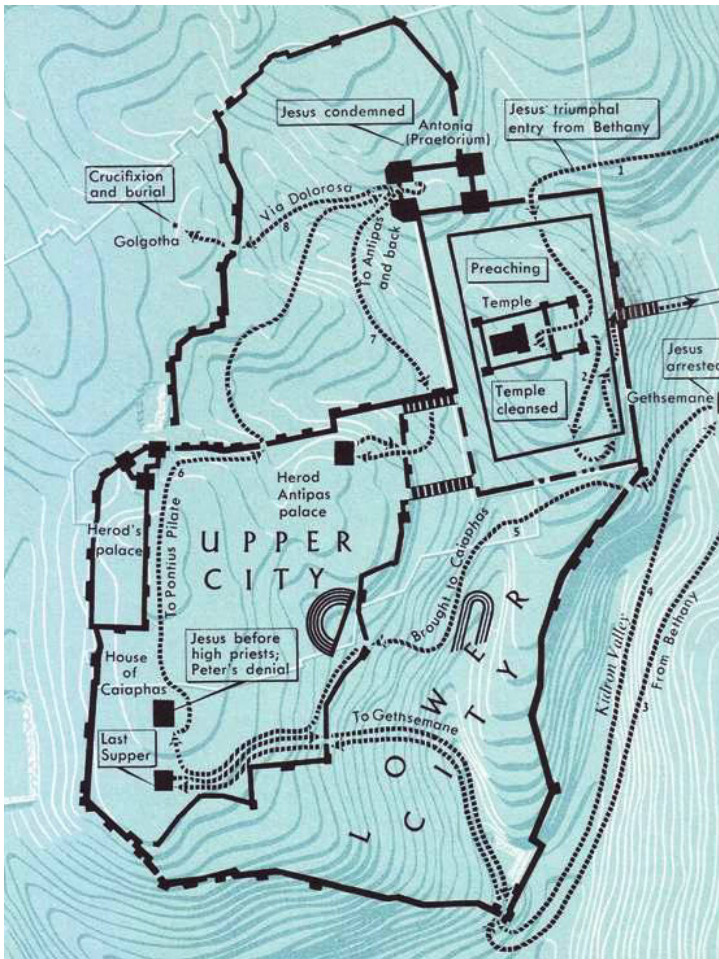
How can we help get peoples gaze back on the empty tomb at this time?

When the disciples get to be with Jesus on a mountain in Galilee, Mattew tells us:

And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.

What were they doubting?

Read Mattew 14:22-33 and discuss how faith and doubt can exist together.



Personal Study time

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.

1 Corinthians 15:3–5 (ESV)

Why is Christ's death, burial and resurrection of "first importance?"

Read the following passages.

The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

1 John 3:1–2 (ESV)

17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

1 Corinthians 15:17–19 (ESV)

Why is a bodily resurrection key to the Christian faith?

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KIDS CORNER



Because He Lives!

1.What's your favorite part of Easter?

Easter can be such a fun holiday! With all the bunnies, candy, and colorful easter eggs, it can truly be an exciting time of the year. But even without those festive things, Easter still celebrates the most exciting thing ever! It's the day of Jesus' resurrection! The word "resurrection" means coming back to life after having died. Often, when we think of rising from the dead, scary things - like zombies - come to mind. But that's not what true resurrection is. When someone resurrects from the dead, they are fully, completely, and wholly alive. It's not scary at all; it's wonderful! That's what Jesus did on the very first Easter Sunday, and it's why we celebrate this special day.

But Jesus' resurrection isn't the end of the story. He didn't come back to life only to watch us eventually die in hopelessness. The power He displayed over death is the same power that enables us to live forever with Him! Once we've asked Him to be our Savior from our sins, we have the promise of being fully, completely, and wholly alive in Heaven! This is why Easter is so important. When Jesus died for the bad things we've done, He rose again! And now, because He lives, whoever belongs to Him can have unshakeable hope in the future, knowing that it will be full of joy and life with our Savior forever!

2. Why do you think Jesus' resurrection is exciting?

