

“Fleeing from the Tomb”—Mark 16:5-8

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Fleeing from the Tomb”, is Mark 16:5-8. *Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. 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. 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.” 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.* This is the text.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

“Surprise! Surprise! Surprise!” Surprises are those experiences we encounter which affect us at times when we least expect them. Have you been “pleasantly surprised” when you’ve experienced an unexpected blessing? If so, it usually causes a response of joy and excitement. Then there are those “surprises” which are caused by others simply for the “shock value” as they watch our reaction. Problem is, while they’re “rolling on the floor” in laughter you don’t see what’s so funny. There are also those negative surprises which bring struggle or suffering which

disrupts your comfortable lifestyle, throwing you into confusion or even desperation.

Could it be possible that the negative “surprises” are experiences that can bring positive growth in our lives? The unexpected experiences which cause us a lot of struggle and suffering can work to mold us into the people that God wants us to be. We find those experiences so hard to deal with that we want to flee from them in an effort to get away from the struggle, confusion and pain. In the meantime, Jesus is calling us to embrace the struggle by faith in His life, death and resurrection.

Imagine the “surprise of their life” which the women encountered at the tomb of Jesus on the first Easter morning. As they approached Jesus’ tomb they came with the expectation to do some late preparations for the proper burial of Jesus’ body. It may be they came at this time to *anoint* Jesus’ body with *spices* because His interment happened so quickly before the Sabbath Day rest began (cf. Mark 16:1). Maybe they felt it was their last gesture of love which they could show Jesus and wanted to do so immediately but had to wait for the Sabbath Day to be over with the sunrise. At any rate, for them it truly was, “Surprise! Surprise! Surprise!”—and I mean that literally.

The first surprise they experienced was a “pleasant surprise” of sorts. Wondering how they would overcome the obstacle of the huge stone covering the opening to the tomb, they discover *that the stone had been*

rolled back, granting them free entrance and access to Jesus' body. However, even this "pleasant surprise" would have been confusing and could have caused them alarm. Obviously somebody already had been there. Were they still there? If so, was it safe to approach the tomb?

Luke 24:3 reveals their next surprise: *When they went in the tomb they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus*. Jesus' body was gone! What could have happened? Where was Jesus? John's account of the resurrection says Mary Magdalene concluded that someone had stolen the body of Jesus. When the Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem heard about it they payed off the guards to tell everybody that the disciples had come and stolen His body (cf. Matthew 11-15).

Verse 5 of our text records the third surprise for these women: *Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe*. They encountered an angel instead of Jesus? Their reaction is described as alarm. Now what? Who is this? Is this a vision? Are we having a dream? "Surprise! Surprise! Surprise!"

Verse 8 of our text says *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*. How do you flee from the empty tomb of Jesus after having experienced the resurrection surprises? Do you flee from the empty tomb like the women in our text—trembling with fear and astonishment, afraid to mention it to anyone?

The words of the angel to the women were meant to do two things. His words in verse 6 of our text were meant to bring encouragement and joy. *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.* First, they could have been encouraged simply by the fact that they had come to the tomb in which Jesus had been laid and weren't in the wrong place. While hard to believe, even the angel's words that *He has risen* were meant to encourage them. He was alive!

The words of the angel in verse 7 of the text were also meant to encourage them. *Go, tell His disciples and Peter that He is going before you to Galilee. There you will see Him, just as He told you.* The message that *He is risen!* was meant to be shared with others. Just think how encouraging this message would have been to Peter who had denied Jesus even after declaring before all the disciples that he would die with Him than deny Him. *Go, tell His disciples and Peter.* How encouraging that Jesus still cared for such a sinner as Peter. Certainly He continues to care for sinners such as you and me.

These words were meant to be words of encouragement and joy **to be shared with others**. As we flee from the empty tomb of Jesus, sharing the Good News of His resurrection and new life for us through faith in Him, we will discover that surprises constantly happen under God's power in our lives and they never end. We can embrace these

surprises, pleasant or challenging, because we know Who's in charge of them all—our resurrected Lord Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit is always working through the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a powerful way. Romans 1:16 says *the gospel . . . is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. The Gospel . . . is the power of God* through which the Holy Spirit creates faith in your heart. Through it the Holy Spirit brings you into contact with the accomplished work of Jesus. **The Holy Spirit will bring people to repentance and faith in Jesus, much to their surprise.**

Notice the many surprises which people experienced after Jesus' accession into heaven and the receiving of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. "Surprise! Surprise! Surprise!" In Acts 2 we read about the disciples receiving the ability to speak in the languages of the people to tell them about the wonderful Gospel of Jesus Christ. The listeners were surprised to hear Peter's sermon in their own language. Peter said in his sermon: *This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised Him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for Him to be held by it.* (cf. Acts 2:23-24) You killed Him but . . . "Surprise!" . . . God raised Him from the dead! And the surprises continued.

After these people heard this Gospel message look at what

happened in Acts 2:41 → *Those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls to the Church. This actually surprised the disciples because they had been expecting rejection as Jesus had promised when He taught them. “Surprise! Surprise! Surprise!” And the surprises continued.*

As Peter and John went to the temple to pray they encountered a crippled beggar sitting at the gate. Peter commanded him *in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth to rise up and walk!* As they helped him to his feet *immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. And leaping up he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God . . . and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.* (cf. Acts 3:6-10) “Surprise! Surprise! Surprise! Surprise!”

Actually being surprised when the LORD works in your life is a testimony to your lack of faith and a focus on yourself. It is a reminder of your need to confess in the words of one man whom Jesus asked if he thought He could heal his child. The man said, Lord, *I believe; help my unbelief!* (cf. Mark 9:24) It’s an opportunity to repent and experience the forgiveness of sin through faith in your resurrected Lord Jesus again! Some people are even surprised that Jesus forgives the terrible things they have done in their life. You need not be surprised because His

sacrifice on the cross was for all your sins, for all time! We are experiencing the surprises of God's grace and blessings all the time!

Actually, there is no need to be surprised about Jesus since God had told His people about it hundreds of years before it happened. Jesus told His disciples in John 14:29 → *I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place **you may believe***. Jesus wanted people to flee from the tomb in faith rather than fear, **believing in Him and living in new life obedience to Him**. Cling to His forgiveness, His resurrection and the new life power that is yours in the Holy Spirit. Flee from the tomb with excitement and joy and share with others this new life message. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

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