

Overwhelmed

Text: Luke 24:1-12

Hymn: "I Know That My Redeemer Lives" (LSB 461)

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Well, this is not the Easter you were looking forward to — the one with the trumpets and the choirs and the decorations and the flowers and the pretty clothes and all the people and all the praise, the kind of Easter where you're just overwhelmed by it all. But maybe there is something to be said for having to celebrate Easter this year in a smaller, less grand way, in our own homes or apartments, with maybe a single lily, singing the hymns but hearing our own voices only or those of our family, an egg hunt just among our own children, nothing overwhelming. And yet it still can be, because even in our separate places we have what the women of the first Easter had—the good news of Jesus' victory!

You know, the women were overwhelmed that first Easter as they came to the tomb, but what they were overwhelmed by at first was grief. They had been futzing with the clean linens and the spices, ready to anoint the body they expected to find. But then they were refocused, refocused as we are this morning, focused on remembering. And as we remember, there is a new sense of overwhelming joy.

The women didn't find anything like they expected. The tomb was opened. The body was gone. The linens were left behind. It wasn't the way it was supposed to be, and suddenly their whole world changed in an instant.

Two messengers were there. We know who they are. They are angels. And they mildly scold the women, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" This is

the wrong place to be looking for Jesus. Then they announce it: "He is not here. He is risen." Then they give them a command: "Remember." "Remember what He told you in Galilee." And they remind the women of what He had said: "The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." And then we're told: "And they remembered His words."

And everything changed.

They remembered His words and they were overwhelmed with excitement and joy and every other human emotion, some that don't even have names. For the day of the Lord's salvation had come and they were the first to witness it.

Jesus had told them things in the past but now for the first time they are realizing what those words mean. What they mean for them now. In the present. And they realize that they are the eyewitnesses of the resurrection Jesus had promised. They are to go and tell of that resurrection. Suddenly they understand. Their eyes are opened. And they run to tell the disciples and the disciples don't believe them. (And it's not because they were women. If a bunch of men had showed up, the disciples wouldn't have believed them either.)

Now these women remember the words of Jesus and that changes their present and their future forever. They are going to be the witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus Christ for the rest of their lives. Their lives had changed. They are overwhelmed.

There are many things that overwhelm us in life. Unfortunately, Jesus Christ's resurrection isn't usually one of them. We're overwhelmed by 24/7 reports of infection rates and death rates, of suddenly living in a world where "How's the weather?" has been replaced with "What are you doing to flatten the curve?" We're overwhelmed by

the prospect of our health care system being overwhelmed by a deadly pestilence.

We're overwhelmed by the specter of a global recession or worse and that breeds fear and uncertainty. And all this on top of all the things that overwhelm us anyway—the hatred and bloody strife in the world, the human suffering caused by natural disasters and wars, all the pressures and demands of daily life. And all of it leads to being overwhelmed by worry and anxiety and confusion and fear and hopelessness and skepticism.

But remembering the resurrection and the words of Jesus Christ, that's different.

It's new. And it's powerful. And it's alive. And it's for you.

The world's got it all wrong. They think this resurrection stuff is old and antiquated. The Christian church needs to get with it. Come into the twenty-first century. Jesus Christ risen? His Words from long ago? How can they change my life? How can they make any difference? How can they guide my future? They're just ancient history.

But God says, "Remember." Remember that Jesus Christ said He would die and rise again. And He did. Remember that Jesus Christ is risen. Remember and, when you do, it is overwhelming. It is overwhelming when you realize that every mistake you've ever made, every sin you've ever committed, old or new, is forgotten by God, because Jesus Christ rose from the dead. It is overwhelming to realize and believe that you have a God that loves you enough to give up His own Son to death so that you could be with Him. It is overwhelming when you realize and believe you're not going to live 70, 80, 90 years—you're going to live forever in the perfect joy and presence of God. It's overwhelming to realize that every single day that when you get up, you start

over. Everything in your past is forgotten, you are brand new and you start over with infinite possibilities because Jesus Christ rose from the dead. It's overwhelming when we realize and believe that we have a purpose for our life every day. We don't have to search. It's to confess in word and deed that Jesus Christ is risen. He is risen for us. It is overwhelming when we realize and believe that we get to live for our Savior, who died and rose again for us, every single day.

When you read the Gospel of Luke, He says, "Remember." That's what He calls on us to do today. When the women came to the tomb, they were overwhelmed with grief. But that all changed. They were then overwhelmed by the joy, by the joy of the announcement of the salvation of the world: "Jesus Christ is risen!" We may not come to a building decked out in banners and bouquets and filled to the rafters with beautifully dressed Christians singing their praises, but we come to a place that overwhelms us all the same. We come again to the empty tomb. And there we're told, "Remember." And when we do, when we remember, it's overwhelming. Amen.

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