

Easter Sunday - April 21

Scripture reading for the day: Luke 24: 1-12

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." Then they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stopping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

We've heard it said, "There are only two things we can count on – death and taxes." Our devotional booklet isn't the place to debate our feelings on taxation, of course, but Easter Day is the time to tackle the reality of death head on. On Easter Day, God has something to say about the certainty of death. At the place where our greatest fear and our deepest vulnerability steal away all hope, God brings eternal life, light and love. This is the good news; we can count on God's resurrection power. Yes, death is certain. Yes, we know our earthly bodies are temporary. Easter is God's response to the fate we know awaits us all. We are raised up and nothing "will be able separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:39)

The theme of this devotional booklet has been the lasting nature of God's grace. This is God's gift and our acceptance of it brings the full impact of grace to our lives. Death and resurrection is a different expression of God's grace. At death, we no longer have the capacity to respond. Death, by its very nature, brings us to a place of nothingness. Yet, God's grace is incredibly powerful at the moment where we have nothing and can do nothing. God breathes life into us, again, and there is no expression of grace more beautiful than this. We're not left in emptiness. Resurrection is grace at its most powerful, as it calls us into a light and love that is forever.

I often officiate at funeral services. These are solemn occasions, when families and friends mourn the loss of one they have loved. I marvel at the way faith in the reality of resurrection strengthens those who grieve. I

see it time after time, our faith, and the assurance that death is not our end, brings comfort and peace. In this way, we experience the power of resurrection on this side of the grave and it prepares us to be confident about God's ability to gather us up in eternal arms on the other side.

And so, dear friends and followers of Christ, may the grace and power of the resurrection lift you up today. Let the message of Easter be your guide. Jesus lives so that we will live also.

Pastor Larry Brown

Prayer: Holy and creating God, breathe into us, once more, your spirit of resurrection and life. Give us courage to trust you and lift us up into your glorious light, now and all the days of our lives. Amen.