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April 1, 2018  
Easter Sunday  
Festival Service  
ILC, Wichita, KS  
Mark 16:1-8; "The First Easter Sermon"

Grace, Mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

My good friends in Christ.

**He is Risen! (wait for them to respond.)**

**Very good.**

My friends, we come together this morning to celebrate the core and the foundation of our Christian faith. That is, Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. That news brings hope and renewal to the lives of every Christian.

I would like to begin by thanking the musicians... the choir, the instrumentalists, the bells, the voices, ...all who helped with the Easter breakfast, ushers, altar guild, crucifers, acolytes, decoration committee, the Youth who helped me with Midweek Lent, the pastors... and our beloved parish secretary Phyllis who holds it all together.... and to all of you who have made our Holy Week and Easter Worship Services so meaningful.

As you and I hear the Word of God today in our Gospel reading we get a sense of mystery. Coming together on this holy day to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead lends an air of mystery to the air.

*Mystery and Easter morning...* they go hand in hand because... our God works in mysterious way.

I remember another Easter morning that had a great deal of mystery in the air.

In the 1980's.... I was serving a parish on a small island in the Florida Keys. Our church was only about a half a block away from the Atlantic Ocean and so we would gather on the beach for our early service. It was always spectacular to watch the sun appear in the East over the Atlantic.

But in 1981 God worked another mystery.

An adult, who had been taking instruction classes was to be baptized that Easter.

Learning that we had an early morning service on the beach he asked me if he could be baptized in the Ocean.

I said, "*Well, I have not ever done a full immersion in the Ocean before ....but it is a valid form of baptism.*" So we got ready. I put on my best drip and dry polyester suit and out we walked into the ocean.

-- I leaned him back the first time into the ocean, *in the name of God the Father.*

-- I leaned him back a second time, *in the name of God the Son.* -- When it came time to lean him back a third time a huge wave came in from the ocean and crashed over both of us...

.... pulling me under.

I came up laughing and coughing the salt water out of my lungs. One of the ladies of the Altar Guild later said, "*Pastor, the Spirit really baptized you this Easter.*"

Little did I know the truth to those words?

**MYSTERY**...Easter morning is all about mystery for one never knows how God might surprise us.

The women found out just how true that it.

The Marys' went out to Jesus tomb on that first Easter morning to finish the ritual of preparing Jesus body for its' final resting place. The Marys' asked each other: "**Who will roll the stone away from the entrance to the tomb? But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away.**"

**ANOTHER MYSTERY**...who could have rolled the stone away?

The followers of Jesus were not yet clear about the events that occurred on Good Friday. They must have been in a state of shock. The women, including Jesus' mother, had stood at the foot of his cross just a couple of days before. They saw the suffering and agony of our Lord. They heard him cry out, "**It is finished!**"

And they saw our Lord bow His head, breath His last, and die. The women had stood at the Cross as they took our Lord's lifeless body off of the Cross and carried it to the tomb. They had been there when the stone had been rolled in front of the entrance to the tomb.

Now... a shock! They come to the tomb and the stone had been rolled away from the front of the tomb!!!

**“As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. “Don’t be alarmed,” he said, “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here!”**

**MYSTERY...AND SURPRISE!** The women must have certainly been surprised!

Even though they were surprised **the women ran** and told Peter and John and asked them to go out to the empty tomb. Upon arrival John does no more than Mary had done. He stooped down to look into the grave. He saw the linen cloths lying there, but John did not go in. Then he looked a little closer and it became obvious to him that there was not body in the tomb. But the grave clothes remained. John saw the physical sight of the linen burial clothes, but there was no lifeless body.

### **THE MYSTERY REMAINED!**

Have you felt a similar type of mystery in your life?

There are times in our lives when each one of us will feel this type of mystery. We find ourselves filled with grief, filled with sorrow about an event that occurred or a problem with a family member or work... and it is easy for us to take an attitude that nothing will help, everything is lost.

We too, can become like the disciples and forget that God has promised that He will work every situation for the good to those who believe in Him.

In those moments of anguish... in those moments of confusion, my friends remember that God is always working for our good. **MYSTERY AND EASTER MORNING...** they will always be joined together.

- God worked for good in Bethlehem...when Mary gave birth to the baby Jesus;
- God worked for good in Jesus earthly ministry ...as our Lord traveled around the countryside healing the sick, feeding the hungry, teaching the good news of salvation.
- God worked for good in the Crucifixion.... for through our Lord’s suffering and death He has won for us forgiveness from our sins;
- God worked for good in the Resurrection....Since through Christ’s resurrection we know that if we remain faithful to Christ that we too will be raised from the dead and taken to heaven for all eternity.

**MYSTERY AND EASTER...** we do not always understand... but we can always accept that God is working for our good.

It is Easter morning my friends, God has accepted the sacrifice of Christ on our behalf, He has raised Christ from the dead as a visible sign to us of forgiveness and eternal life.

Now, take this good news of Easter back out into our world. As opportunity presents itself share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with others.

May God bless you this Easter as you have gathered to thank Him and praise Him for His victory over sin, Satan, and eternal death... and may every Easter hold just a little holy mystery for you. Amen.

He is Risen!

**He is Risen, indeed!** Amen.

Now may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

-- Offerings