

The Power of the Easter Promise

Resurrection of Our Lord – 04/20/25 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Luke 24:1-12 Pastor Keith Besel

v.6, [The angel's words to the women,] **"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 delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise."**

Introduction

✧ Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!

✧ A couple once bought a leather sofa, and the company that made that sofa made this promise: if you buy a warranty to repair damage to the leather but you don't end up using the warranty, then in seven years you will get a credit for \$180. The husband and wife talked about it, and they bought the warranty. The husband forgot about the promise, but the wife did not.

➔ Well, seven years went by. The couple did nothing (except live their lives and sit on the sofa). At the end of the seven years, the husband completely forgot about the promise. In fact, he didn't believe his wife when she told him about it. But they went back to the store where they bought the sofa, receipt in hand, and they asked for the promise to be kept – which it was! So, with that \$180 the couple bought a nice wooden bookcase that stands, to this day, right next to the sofa in their living room. Seems like a pretty bland story, I know. But today, when that husband walks through the living room, he says that he regularly sees the bookcase, remembers how they got it, and is still amazed at the power of that promise. He didn't believe it; he didn't even remember it for a time. But the promise and its power was real – it never went away – whether he believed it or not.

✧ The Gospel Reading before us on this Easter morning prominently puts the power of a promise right in front of us all. It's a promise that was absolute because of the One who made it. It's a promise that was good, even though people forgot that it was made; even though, once it was placed before them again, some people still didn't believe that the promise was any good.

➔ But the angel – God's own messenger, said to that group of at least five or six women, "Remember." Remember how Jesus spoke to you. Remember what Jesus said would happen. Remember the promise.

➔ As we see in Holy Scripture, it is a promise filled with – and fulfilled – with great power; then and now! So, let's ponder for a bit this morning at the power of Jesus' Easter promise.

I. A Promise is only as good as one who makes it

✧ We'll start with something obvious. A promise is only as good; only as powerful as the person who makes it. So, looking at our Gospel text, "Who is the powerful person? Who are the powerful people in these verses?"

➔ Though we might be tempted initially to say that it is the holy angel, it's not. Angels are powerful, but not in themselves. The word "angel" means messenger. And that's all that this "dazzling" figure does when he speaks to the women – besides terrifying the women as well. The promise's power doesn't come from the angel.

➔ Here's another obvious thing, and this one is more important. The powerful people in this story are not the women; not the apostles; nor the others with them that day. In fact, what this reading shows us regarding those people is their weakness; how utterly helpless they all are – both the women and the men. And you and I – we need to make sure we keep our own pride in check and don't think that we somehow know better than them, just because we have the unfair

advantage of knowing how the story plays out. No, if we had been there that day, we wouldn't have reacted any different.

- ✘ Luke writes that the women rested on the Sabbath, which is what they *normally* would do, since that's what God created the Sabbath for. Then on Sunday, it was time to return to work; time to do their duty, on that day, for Jesus' corpse, since in their thinking, evil had now done away with their teacher and master.

➔ It's beautiful in a way – brave and loving, what these women were doing, but still completely wrong. It makes us wonder, did they even know that He was the Lord? When they entered the tomb, Jesus' wasn't there! But, did they believe? Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

- ✘ The angel's words reveal how truly unaware, helpless and confused they were. "Why are you seeking the living among the dead?" (v.5). "The dead" – that's the only thing they were expecting to see in this place with tombs. After all, the Romans had this crucifixion thing down to an art. They didn't make mistakes. They didn't just "accidentally" allow someone to survive (as unbelievers today have tried to suggest). These loving, confused women absolutely believe that Jesus is dead. They saw it, night before last, with their own eyes. So, these ladies had nothing at all to do with Jesus' promise. In fact, they are living as if the promise has no power; as if the promise has never been made.

- ✘ And the apostles – they come off even worse. The women simply tell them what they found – an empty tomb, and then what the angel told them about the promise. But it does no good. Verse 11 says, the women's words "seemed to them an idle tale." Peter; he wants to see it for himself. He runs the half mile or so to the tomb and he sees; Jesus' corpse is not there. All he can do is "marvel" as he goes home. Is that marveling unbelief, awe or just plain confusion? Either way, he clearly doesn't get it – not yet.

➔ So, here's the point again. The power of a promise does not reside in, or depend upon, the people to whom the promise is made. The power comes only from the one who makes the promise. So, in a beautiful way, this Easter story confirms God's truth that no one is saved because of his/her own efforts or sincerity or anything else within them. The promise was there with all of its power, but these women and men had nothing to do with providing that power.

- ✘ The power comes from the One who made the promise. And that's why the women are told, "Remember!" Remember what you have forgotten; remember what you didn't believe. Remember that Jesus told you earlier when you were still in Galilee that these things must happen; they had to happen.

➔ Jesus told you He would be delivered into the hands of sinful men, He would die on a cross, and on the third day ... that's today, by the way ... on the third day He would rise. That means: no longer dead. Never to die again. Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

II. The Father's plan all along.

- ✘ This was the Father's plan all along. Jesus promised it. And it happened why? because, as we have been reflecting during the whole season of Lent here in the Gospel of Luke, Satan and Pilate and everyone else *Meant it for evil ... but God meant it for good*. Yes, evil's plan did just what Jesus said would happen. He was betrayed into the power of sinful hands; hands belonging to sinful men; hands that were strong; that only knew evil, sinful things. Sadly, we understand that part all too well, because our own hands are too often sinful as well.

➔ Because of that; because of our guilt, the evil injustice; the mockery and blasphemy meant the innocent Son of God had to die. It was necessary, even though no one knew why at the time. God's plan had to play out this way, because none of us; no one in all of mankind

possesses the power to overcome the guilt of our own sin. One who is sinful – that is filled with sin, cannot possibly do what only an entirely righteous and innocent person must do.

➔ That's why God's plan depended solely upon Jesus, the only one in His own category in all of history – pure, holy, perfect, innocent, righteous. He had to take our place; to die when He didn't deserve to die; to take the evil of the world upon Himself ... so it would not be able to have its way with you and me. God's plan was that the evil would be fastened to Jesus, when Jesus was fastened to the cross.

✘ And then, for the power of God's plan to reach its final goal, Jesus had to rise back to life! Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

➔ Evil and death had to be undone; overthrown. The tomb had to be open and empty! No body could be there, because this is Jesus ... the Lord. This, my friends, is the power of His promise. It means innocence in the place of guilt; forgiveness in the place of sin; life in the place of death. All of that requires immense, almighty power; power that can come only from God Himself! That's what Jesus promised; God the Father's plan, worked out in the flesh of God the Son, and applied by grace through faith to the souls of sin-filled, yet humble men, women and children by the power of God the Holy Spirit.

➔ You see, the power of this promise can never be about the women, or the apostles, or you or me. It's all about the One who made and kept the promise. And just as He promised, Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

III. The Transforming power of the promise

✘ Yet all of that power was *for* them, just it is *for* you. Yes, that promise from Jesus had the power to absolutely and entirely transform lives. It might seem obvious, but the first one it transformed was Jesus Himself; from a lifeless body of death into the resurrected and living sacrifice for all sin – past, present and future; from the shamed and despised imposter in the eyes of both the Jewish and the Roman authorities into the victorious King of kings and Savior of all mankind!

➔ Verse eight then, in our text, shows us when and how the power of Jesus' Easter promise began to transform the lives of mankind as well. When God's message through the angels called the women to "remember" Jesus' promise that He must be delivered, crucified and "on the third day rise," what does Luke say, "...they remembered His words."

➔ This doesn't mean only that in their brains they recalled what Jesus had said. It is that they "remembered"; they realized; they now believed. And that changed everything! Their agenda was gone; their plans vanished in a flash. Verse nine literally says in the Greek that they "turned around" in spirit; in mind; and then physically. "They told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest." Though I'd love to know what those women said to each other on the way back, Luke only says they were changed; "turned around". That's what happens when Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

✘ And the eleven? Well, our reading for today stops at verse 12. We could read further into Luke 24 and see that the promise began to transform them as well. But stopping here gives us a chance to remember something very important about promises that are filled with power; about promises of any kind, really. A promise – any promise – is an invitation; a call ... to trust, to faith, to extend an open hand.

➔ This promise here from Jesus, because it comes from the One true God who has the power to create all things and now transform and re-create all things back to His original design and plan – this promise from Jesus says, "You have nothing – let Me give you everything."

✘ But the mystery is that not everyone trusts this promise from Jesus. The women began to trust right away, but it took some time, on that first Easter, before the apostles began to be

transformed. Why? I don't know, and no one else knows, either. Why do promises come to some people, but the power never takes affect? That we know, because it is not met with faith? Why that rejection? None of us knows. All you and I can do is remember and speak the promise, and trust in its power from God to transform our souls, just as it says it will; just as it transformed the apostles and countless others throughout the years in God's history of salvation.

Conclusion

- ✧ Dear friends, that power is available today; this morning, because the promise has never changed and it never will. It can't change because the One who made the promise is, as Scripture declares, "the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb. 13:8). By His power, Jesus broke the power of death. And by that same power, He promises to forgive and restore and preserve all who believe His promise to change them; to change us from being dead and lost in our sin, to being alive and embraced by God's unconditional love. That promise is for everyone ... right here; right now!
- ✧ Just as the angel declared it at the empty tomb, so I say it to each of you here today, "Remember what Jesus told you He must do." It is His promise; His invitation to you today. Remember and believe it; trust it once again. Just as He was raised by the transforming power of God, He promises, that He will raise you from the dead on the day of His glorious return.
 - ➔ But in the meantime, His powerful promise is still active here and now as well. For His gift of new life is already yours. It's the promise of true life with God and with one another here in His family of resurrected souls. You can count it. This promise will never fail, because Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia! Amen.*