

“FOR EVERYONE”

Pastor Mike Corwin

EASTER SUNDAY

TEXT: ACTS 10:34-43

GOD’S WORD: LUKE 24:1-12

I – EASTER MORNING:

It’s a familiar story to most people by now. We call it the Easter story. Jesus had been arrested, tried, brutalized, and finally crucified until dead. It was the night the Passover was to begin so they buried him in someone else’s tomb without preparing his body as was the Jewish custom of the day. So when the Passover Sabbath was completed the women took spices and went to the tomb to give the body of their beloved teacher a proper burial.

But when they got there they found that the large stone sealing the tomb had been rolled away from the entrance and when they entered the tomb they discovered that the body of Jesus was gone. If the morning couldn’t get any more bizarre two angels appeared to them and they fell to the ground. These two angels then almost lecture the women asking them why they were even there. Why would a live person be hanging around in a sealed tomb? They tell them Jesus isn’t there; Jesus has risen from the dead! And O, by the way, didn’t he tell them this was what was going to happen? That he would suffer and die on the cross but would be resurrected on the third day! Let’s see now...Friday...Saturday...Sunday. Yep that’s three days. Yep, he did just what he said he was going to do. Would people ever quit questioning the statements of Jesus? Then it says they ran and told the disciples, but they didn’t believe it either. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb, saw it was empty, and returned wondering too.

But I want to look at a particular part of the resurrection story this morning. As I read it from Luke, as I get to the 9th verse, it tells me that not only did the women tell the 11 remaining disciples, but “and everyone else.”

II – IT’S FOR EVERYONE:

I look at this passage and I see that the hope and promise given to us from the resurrection is for everyone. Jesus was born a Jew. He was sent to speak to and bring salvation to God's chosen people. The Israelites, the Jews. Wasn't it their prophets who foretold of his coming and what it would mean to the people? Wasn't Mary a good little Jewish maiden, and Joseph a Jewish carpenter? Wasn't it in the Jewish temple that Jesus was dedicated? He was a Jew sent to the Jews.

And yet in those same prophets I see it proclaimed that Jesus would be for all the nations, not just the Hebrew nation. That his light would shatter all the darkness, not just a select place or nation. I see in his life that he modeled the fact that the forgiveness and eternal life he was bringing was for everyone. Didn't he reveal himself as the messiah to the Samaritan woman at the well? Didn't he heal the centurion's son? It seems to me that Jesus honored faith no matter where or in whom he found it. Wasn't his last instructions to his disciples, what we call the Great Commission to go into "all the world" and share the Good News with them all, making disciples and baptizing people. He may have come first for the Jews but as Luke points out, he came for "everyone else" too.

I love this Sunday because I get to not only tell the regular attendee's here the story, but I get to tell "everyone else" too. I get to tell the fact that Jesus' death on the cross, his resurrection from the dead, all of which brought us forgiveness of sins and eternal life...what we call "Salvation" ...was for everyone. Not just those I see each Sunday. He did it for all!

III – TEXT:

This is the same message I see in the text I want to share with you this Easter morning from the book of Acts.

Acts 10:34-43 (NLT)

³⁴ Then Peter replied, "I see very clearly that God shows no favoritism. ³⁵ In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right. ³⁶ This is the message of Good News for the people of Israel—that there is peace with God through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. ³⁷ You know what happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee, after John began preaching his message of baptism. ³⁸ And you know that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Then Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

³⁹ “And we apostles are witnesses of all he did throughout Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a cross ⁴⁰ but God raised him to life on the third day. Then God allowed him to appear, ⁴¹ not to the general public, but to us whom God had chosen in advance to be his witnesses. We were those who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² And he ordered us to preach everywhere and to testify that Jesus is the one appointed by God to be the judge of all—the living and the dead. ⁴³ He is the one all the prophets testified about, saying that everyone who believes in him will have their sins forgiven through his name.”

Peter was first and foremost a good Jew. He was raised in the faith and followed the Jewish teachings before he followed Jesus. We see him struggling in his early Christianity. He is having trouble separating his Jewish roots from the teachings of Jesus. He is still getting hung up on the Jewish laws such as not having anything to do with Gentiles, circumcision, not eating forbidden foods and all the other things he had learned over the years. But then God gives him a wakeup call in chapter 10 of acts. God has a Gentile named Cornelius send for Peter to have him come and preach to him and his household. In the mean time God gives Peter a dream where he lowers a sheet with all the unclean animals in it and tells him to eat. Peter protests that he has never broken the food laws of the Jewish people, has never eaten any of the unclean things in the sheet and he’s not planning on starting now. But God tells him that Peter should not call anything unclean if God has made it clean. It’s then the men from Cornelius arrive and Peter agrees to go with them and begins breaking his Jewish roots as he enters the home of a gentile.

Once in the house Peter begins preaching a sermon with more information about Jesus’ precrucifixion ministry than any of his previous sermons. He probably does so because he knows Gentiles may well need more of the details of Jesus life than a Jewish audience would have needed.

But it’s in this sermon that we find a critical turning point in the first century church. We see Peter learn and confirm that God’s plan for Salvation extends beyond the Jews to all the nations. Peter was sweeping away centuries of racial prejudice.

Peter proclaims that God shows no favoritism. He is the God of everyone. That Jesus is the Lord of all. He verifies that Jesus commanded them to preach everywhere and let them know that anyone who believes in Jesus will have their sins forgiven through his name.

This all broke through the traditional barriers between Jew and Gentile. Peter and the Church were changed forever and has never looked back.

IV – THE STORY OF EASTER:

The story of Easter goes far beyond a risen Jesus. It goes to the reason he was risen. He came to restore peace between God and God's creatures – us. He died and was raised from the dead to defeat sins and death in our lives. But not just ours – EVERYONES! The peace Jesus brought was to extend between us and others as well as God.

I look at the stories of Jesus and I see he led the way of tearing down boundaries;

- He touched and healed lepers
- He spoke to prostitutes
- He touched the lame, blind, and mentally ill
- He loved widows and orphans
- He looked after the poor
- He had a special place for children
- He ate with tax collectors and other “known scum”
- He talked to all people
- He loved all people
- He wanted all people to love him and his Father
- He had no socioeconomic, gender, or racial biases

So why do we?

Jesus came for us all. He loves you, he wants to live within your hearts, and wants you to be his follower. And the Good News of Easter is that he came for “everyone.” Including you!

V – GOD WANTS EVERYONE:

And the real good news is that God not only offers his love to all of you...he wants all of you.

Let me sum it up this way:

- Jesus died for everyone
- Jesus was resurrected for everyone
- We must tell everyone.

AMEN