

God Can Still Move Stones - Easter 2023

John 20:1 - Jesus Is Alive - 20 On Sunday morning while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance.

What symbolizes the stone that rolled from the tomb of Jesus?

- The significance of the stone is that God alone could remove it.
- It signified the sin Jesus defeated, & the power of God over darkness/evil.
- The meaning of the stone being rolled, which weighed over a ton and guarded by soldiers, Was God's ability to remove it.

John 20:11-18 - Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene - ¹¹ Mary Magdalene stood crying outside the tomb. She was still weeping when she stooped down ¹² and saw two angels inside. They were dressed in white and were sitting where Jesus' body had been. One was at the head and the other was at the foot. ¹³ The angels asked Mary, **“Why are you crying?”**

She answered, “They have taken away my Lord's body! I don't know where they have put him.”

¹⁴ As soon as Mary said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there. But she did not know who he was. ¹⁵ Jesus asked her, “Why are you crying? Who are you looking for?”

She thought he was the gardener and said, “Sir, if you have taken his body away, please tell me, so I can go and get him.”

¹⁶ Then Jesus said to her, “Mary!”

She turned and said to him, “Rabboni.” The Aramaic word “Rabboni” means “Teacher.”

¹⁷ Jesus told her, “Don't hold on to me! I have not yet gone to the Father. But tell my disciples I am going to the one who is my Father and my God, as well as your Father and your God.” ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene then went and told the disciples she had seen the Lord. She also told them what he had said to her.

- We gather here this morning to celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- To give praise to a God who moved the stone that day!
- And a God who still moves the stones,
- And he can still remove the trials of our lives.

What does Easter stand for?

And in the multitude of possible answers let me share some of them with you.

An empty Tomb that provides hope in a hopeless world.

- There are so many people searching for **forgiveness**, for **hope**, for **meaning**.

The good news of Easter is the empty tomb provides hope in a hopeless world.

Matthew 12:20-21 – says a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. **In His name** the nations will put their hope.

A bruised reed, a smoldering wick. **That describes many people here today.**

*Perhaps, you've been **bruised by** the trials of life.*

- Perhaps you were **bruised by** harsh words or by a friend's anger.
- Or **by betrayal** of a loved one
- Or **by your own failure** or the failures of those around you.

Perhaps, you feel like a smoldering wick.

- ***At one time your passion for God/for ministry/for life was flaming high!***
- ***But the winds of life have blown –***
- ***And now you feel one step away from the flame going out altogether.***

But what did Jesus say? *A bruised reed I will not break and a smoldering wick I will not snuff out.* In My name you can put your hope.

And the great message of Easter is that:

If Jesus Christ was powerful enough to move the stone and overcome the grave, then he is powerful enough to move the stones that are blocking your life.

- ***The resurrection gives us hope in the face of the unfairness of the world.***
- ***It gives us strength and courage in every situation that we face.***
- ***And we need that.***

The Resurrection which validates every promise Jesus ever made is ***the good news that gives us hope and encouragement***, when ***everything else looks bleak***.

There was an **Angel** who invited the women to look in the tomb - He said, ***“Come and see the place where he lay.”***

- **The evidence is** an empty tomb, undisturbed grave cloths, a 2000-pound stone that’s rolled away, and Over 515 eye witnesses.
- **The evidence shows that** he rose again.
- And **the tomb was empty**; the soldiers had no story.
- And millions down through the years ***will attest to this reality.***

2 Timothy 1:12 Paul wrote, ***“I know WHOM I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him for that day.”***

Now note that **Paul did NOT** say, ***“I know WHAT I have believed.”***

Paul said: ***“I know WHOM I have believed.”***

And millions of people down through the centuries ***have themselves met Jesus***, firsthand, and followed Him and let Him transform their lives.

After the angel invited the women into the tomb, they were told to ***go and tell this good news to others.***

- The command was given, yet this is the one that so many choose to ignore.

Go tell the good news to others.

- ***If you have received him as Savior and Lord***, it is our command to go and tell others.

90 to 95% of all commitments to Christ come after a person has accepted an invitation to attend church.

- A person invites another person to **come to church.**
- **Where they will hear** the gospel, repent, and be baptized in Jesus’ name.

***Like the woman at the well that went back to her town and said,
“Come and see a man who knows all that I’ve done and yet still loves me.”***

Now the responsibility for sharing Christ will still fall to each one of us.

What did Paul say?

- *I plant, Apollos waters, but **God gives the increase**.*
- **We do it together.**
- While we’re doing that, **God is working** in the midst of it.

The Holy Spirit is convicting people, circumstances are softening their hearts.

Can you imagine **the excitement that the woman felt** that morning?

1. **There are many of you that are living in a day of trials.**
2. And you are **getting hit on all sides**.
3. It’s here, it’s now. **Life is pouring in on you.**

***If you are in the midst of a trial, my encouragement to you is to maintain hope.
Because what a difference a day makes.***

- Many may be living in a day **like the disciples, confused at his death**.
- The one who said **I will never leave you has passed** and **so had their hope**.

The heat of **the trial may be over** but now is the time of - - -
confusion and frustration and discouragement.

Perhaps: your faith is weak. The future seems cloudy, the outcome is uncertain.

If that’s where you are, my encouragement to you is to maintain faith.

What a difference a day makes and all of us are facing those kinds of days.

- A Day of **victory**. A day of **good news**. A day of **renewed hope**.
- If you **aren’t there now**, be assured, **it’s coming**, Jesus has **won the victory**.

And on that third day he came out of the grave and gave us hope.

- Day three means a change of fortune and a change of future!!!
- Day three means victory, now or in heaven.
- But what a difference a day makes.
- Maintain your hope, maintain your faith and be encouraged and excited.

That's what the resurrection has in store for us. We will see the victory in our life.

But all of us that believe in Jesus Christ have a day that we will see his coming.

A day when we will go to be with him.

A day of victory. And we ought to be excited about that.

Only faith in Christ is valid because only Jesus rose from the dead.

No other religious leader defeated death so none other can make these claims.

- The resurrected Lord is the central event of our faith.
- It's the victory of Christianity.

The resurrection is not just another thing we believe as Christians; it is the very center of our faith.

The resurrection is just a word, Easter Sunday is a nice day with bunny rabbits and eggs...but When someone so precious to you dies, his victory over death becomes everything."

- An anchor in a fierce storm... A rock on which to stand... A hope that raises you above despair and keeps you going..."

Everything hinges on the resurrection - In our deepest, darkest moments –

- When we don't think it can get better.
- Maybe you're here this morning and you're feeling the same way -
- You need grace and forgiveness and hope.
- I guarantee you'll find it in a resurrected Lord named Jesus Christ.

Maybe you're here this morning needing to make a decision.

- Perhaps a decision to take Jesus as your Savior.
- Be assured that when you die, you will rise again & be with God forever.

You may be thinking, "I want that. What must I do?"

- The Bible says you **believe in your heart** that you need the Savior.
- The Bible says you **confess that with your mouth** that Jesus is your Lord.
- Ask God to forgive you of your Sin's. Repent!
- **Then get baptized in Jesus' name** and you will be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Peter replied-

Acts 2:38 - Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Just as he was buried in a tomb and rose again to new life, you can be buried in the water of baptism in Jesus name and rise again to new life.

This is what is symbolized in baptism:

Romans 6:3-4 - ³Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Are you ready to make that decision?

Galatians 3:27 - ²⁷for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ'

Remember this, "Not only did he rise from the grave, but he is also coming back to resurrect those who have trusted him with their lives here on earth."

Will you choose today to bury the old person and rise today resurrected w/Christ?