

Examining the Empty Tomb
Easter Sunrise Service Message
Pastor Joe Davis - 4/16/2017

I want to invite you this morning to take a visit with me to the tomb of the resurrected Jesus. We're going to go back in time to the 1800s and read together part of a sermon given by Charles Spurgeon about the empty tomb of Jesus. He's going to be our guide as we go back even further in time to that beautiful morning of Christ's resurrection. Spurgeon invites us to enter the tomb with him and take a good look around. He says:

"Let us examine it with deep attention, noticing every circumstance connected with it.

"And, first, mark that it is a *costly tomb*. It is no common grave; it is not an excavation dug out by the spade for a pauper, in which to hide the last remains of his miserable and overworn bones. It is a princely tomb; it was made of marble, cut in the side of a hill. Stand here, believer, and ask why Jesus had such a costly sepulchre. He had no elegant garments; he wore a coat without seam, woven from the top throughout, without an atom of embroidery. He owned no sumptuous palace, for he had not where to lay his head. His sandals were not rich with gold, or studded with brilliants. He was poor. Why, then does he lie in a noble grave? We answer, for this reason: Christ was unhonored till he had finished his sufferings; Christ's body suffered contumely, shame, spitting, buffeting, and reproach, until he had completed his great work; he was trampled under foot, he was "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" but the moment he had finished his undertaking, God said, "No more shall that body be disgraced; if it is to sleep, let it slumber in an honorable grave; if it is to rest, let nobles bury it; let Joseph, the councillor, and Nicodemus, the man of Sanhedrim, be present at the funeral; let the body be embalmed with precious spices, let it have honor; it has had enough of contumely, and shame, and reproach, and buffeting; let it now be treated with respect." Christian, dost thou discern the meaning? Jesus, after he had finished his work, slept in a costly grave; for now his Father loved and honored him, since his work was done.

"But, though it is a costly grave, *it is a borrowed one*. I see over the top of it, "Sacred to the memory of the family of Joseph of Arimathea;" yet Jesus slept there. Yes, he was buried in another's sepulchre. He who had no house of his own, and rested in the habitation of other men; who had no table, but lived upon the hospitality of his disciples; who borrowed boats in which to preach, and had not anything in the wide world, was obliged to have a tomb from charity. Oh! should not the poor take courage? They dread to be buried at the expense of their neighbors, but if their poverty be unavoidable, wherefore should they blush, since Jesus Christ himself was interred in another's grave? Ah! I wish I might have had Joseph's grave to let Jesus be buried in it. Good Joseph thought he had cut it out for himself, and that he should lay his bones there. He had it excavated as a family vault, and lo, the Son of David makes it one of the tombs of the kings. But he did not lose it by lending it to the Lord; rather, he had it back with precious interest. He only lent it three days; then Christ resigned it; he had not injured, but perfumed and sanctified it, and make it far more holy, so that it would be an honor in future to be buried there. It was a borrowed tomb; and why? I take it, not to dishonor Christ, but in order to show that, as his sins were borrowed sins, so his burial was in a borrowed grave. Christ had no transgressions of his own; he took ours upon his head; he never committed a wrong, but he took all my sin, and all yours, if ye are believers; concerning all his people, it is true, he bore their griefs and carried their sorrows in his own body on the tree; therefore, as they were others' sins, so he rested in another's grave; as they were sins imputed, so that grave was only imputedly his. It was not his sepulchre; it was the tomb of Joseph.

"Let us not weary in this pious investigation, but with fixed attention observe everything connected with this holy spot. The grave, we observe, *was cut in a rock*. Why was this? the rock of Ages was buried in a rock—a Rock within a rock. But why? Most persons suggest that it was so ordained, that it might be clear that there was no covert way by which the disciples or others could enter and steal the body away. Very possibly it was the reason; but O! my soul, canst thou find a spiritual reason? Christ's sepulchre was cut in a rock. It was not cut in mould that might be worn away by the water, or might crumble and fall into decay. The sepulchre stands, I believe, entire to this day; if it does not naturally, it does spiritually. The same sepulchre which took the sins of Paul, shall take my

iniquities into his bosom, for if I ever lose my guilt, it must roll off my shoulders into the sepulchre. It was cut in a rock, so that if a sinner were saved a thousand years ago, I too can be delivered, for it is a rocky sepulchre where sin was buried—it was a rocky sepulchre of marble where my crimes were laid forever—buried never to have a resurrection...

“We have learned a little, then, with attention; but let us stoop down once more before we leave the grave, and notice something else. We see the grave, but do you *notice the grave-clothes*, all wrapped and laid in their places, the napkin being folded up by itself? Wherefore are the grave-clothes wrapped up? The Jews said robbers had abstracted the body; but if so, surely they would have stolen the clothes; they would never have thought of wrapping them up and laying them down so carefully; they would be too much in haste to think of it. Why was it then? To manifest to us that Christ did not come out in a hurried manner. He slept till the last moment; then he awoke; he came not in haste. They shall not come out in haste, neither by flight, but at the appointed moment shall his people come to him. So at the precise hour, the decreed instant, Jesus Christ leisurely awoke, took off his cerements, left them all behind him, and came forth in his pure and naked innocence, perhaps to show us that as clothes were the offspring of sin—when sin was atoned for by Christ, he left all raiment behind him—for garments are the badges of guilt: if we had not been guilty we should never have needed them.

”Then the napkin, mark you, was laid by itself. The grave-clothes were left behind for every departed Christian to wear. The bed of death is well sheeted with garments of Jesus, but the napkin was laid by itself, because the Christian, when he dies, does not need that; it is used by the mourners, and the mourners only. We shall all wear grave-clothes, but we shall not need the napkin. When our friends die, the napkin is laid aside for us to use; but do our ascended brethren and sisters use it? No; the Lord God hath wiped away all tears from their eyes. We stand and view the corpses of the dear departed, we moisten their faces with our tears, letting whole showers of grief fall on their heads; but do *they* weep? Oh, no. Could they speak to us from the upper spheres they would say, “Weep not for me, for I am glorified. Sorrow not for me; I have left a bad world behind me, and have entered into a far better.” They have no napkin—they weep not. Strange it is that those who endure death weep not; but those who see

them die, are weepers. When the child is born it weeps while others smile, (say the Arabs,) and when it dies it smiles while others weep. It is so with the Christian. O blessed thing! The napkin is laid by itself, because Christians will never want to use it when they die...

“And now, Christian brethren, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay," to learn a doctrine or two. What did you see when you visited "the place where the Lord lay?" "He is not here; for he is risen." The first thing you perceive, if you stand by his empty tomb, is *his divinity*. The dead in Christ shall rise first at the resurrection: but he who rose first—their leader, rose in a different fashion. They rise by imparted power. He rose by his own. He could not slumber in the grave, because he was God. Death had no more dominion over him. There is no better proof of Christ's divinity than that startling resurrection of his, when he rose from the grave, by the glory of the Father. O Christian, thy Jesus is a God; his broad shoulders that hold thee up are indeed divine; and here thou hast the best proof of it—because he rose from the grave.

”A second doctrine here taught well may charm thee, if the Holy Spirit apply it with power. Behold his empty tomb, O true believer: it is a sign of *thine acquittal*, and thy full discharge. If Jesus had not paid the debt, he ne'er had risen from the grave. He would have lain there till this moment if he had not cancelled the entire debt, by satisfying eternal vengeance. O beloved, is not that an overwhelming thought?

"It is finished, it is finished,
Hear the rising Saviour cry."

The heavenly turnkey came, a bright angel stepped from heaven and rolled away the stone; but he would not have done so if Christ had not done all: he would have kept him there, he would have said, "Nay, nay, thou art the sinner now; thou hast the sins of all thine elect upon thy shoulder, and I will not let thee go free till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." In his going free I see my own discharge.

"My Jesu's blood's my full discharge."

As a justified man, I have not a sin now against me in God's book. If I were to turn over God's eternal book, I should see every debt of mine receipted and cancelled.

**"Here's pardon for transgressions past,
It matter not how black their cast,
And O my soul, with wonder view,
For sins to come, here's pardon too.
Fully discharged by Christ I am,
From Christ's tremendous curse and blame."**

And I'll close this morning with another beautiful truth we can glean from the empty tomb, and that is the amazing reality that those of us who have repented of our sin and trusted in Christ as our Savior and Lord have also been set free forever from the tomb of spiritual death that all human beings apart from Christ are locked in. The stone has been rolled away from our graves! Listen to the words of Paul in Romans 6, verses 3 through 4:

3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

Jesus is alive and he's brought those who've trusted him to new life with him and filled each of us with the presence of power of his Spirit. The stone's been rolled away, the chains and are gone, and Jesus invites us to follow him now into a whole new way of living!