

2024 Easter Mark 16 “Not Needed”

On any celebration day it seems like so many things are needed. The right decorations, the right attire, the breakfast foods, the big meal when we get home. And as a Church worker it’s especially easy to view this week, a meaningful week, as a list of things that need to be done.

But much of the beauty of Easter, especially, and God’s Work for us this week in the death and resurrection of Jesus, is the freeing truth that there is so much that is NOT needed.

The women show up to anoint Jesus. They would pour pounds and pounds of smelling spices and oil on the body to cover up the stench of decay. But that anointing is not needed on Easter. First of all, because Jesus was *already* anointed for burial. Chapter 14 verse 3: And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head.” They pestered her, saying they should have sold the oil and given it for a better cause. “But Jesus said, “Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me... She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial.””

The burial spices and oils weren't needed. And, obviously, not just because it was done beforehand, his anointing for death and his stay in the tomb, but also because, obviously, now on the third day, there was no decay to anoint anymore. He is healed, he is whole, victorious over death and its corruption. Even as he was anointed from before the foundation of the world to be the Messiah (which means anointed One). He is the Holy One of God, true God in the flesh, anointed to rise victorious over death and open to all eternal life. That you, when you die, and rot, you, his baptized and therefore anointed child, oh make no mistake, there will come a time when any further burial measures for you will not be needed. No you too, from specks of dust and ash scattered, you too will rise - healed and whole.

And if that seems ridiculous. If that seems farfetched and you, like the world, wonder if we only live on in memory, or in spirit or something... Let us remember that Christ is the firstfruits of the dead. He has come out, and he was seen by real people who gave their lives to proclaim it. And so if Christ is the firstfruits, and he is really, bodily risen, then following after him from the dead will be so many more who also bodily rise, even if they've been lost to dust and ash. Ezekiel 37: The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. 2 And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. 3 And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones

live?” And I answered, “O Lord God, you know.” Then he said to me, “Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. 5 Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. 6 And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord.”

7 So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. 8 And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them. 9 Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.” 10 So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.”

The burial spices are not needed on Easter, nor will they be ever again at your resurrection. God be praised.

The women come to the garden cemetery with another concern – another need. They need someone to roll away the stone. It’s so large, how will they get in to

even put on the spices and oils (which they don't need, of course)? But they soon find that they *need not* roll back the stone either.

It has been done already. The barriers of the grave and the dead are pushed aside already by the power of God and his ministers. And so they find the stone then not as a barrier between them and Jesus, or I guess more accurately, between them and the good news the angel patiently waits to give them since the Lord, risen again, leaves the tomb behind as he has promised we will do one day.

They came with one more thing to do. One more obstacle to overcome before they bowed to death's rituals. But it was not needed. They need not bow at all to death that day, nor do we today. The tomb, the grave, and the stone are not barriers to life nor could they hold Jesus. And they won't hold us forever either, we do not go to our final resting places at all, even as Jesus didn't. God be praised.

The final un-needed thing in our text today is fear. Or I guess alarm, or amazement (the Greek word is a bit ambiguous). Either way all of those words seem *completely necessary* on a morning like this. The women come and the stone is gone, the body is gone, and there's an angel waiting for them. And then he tells them they shouldn't be afraid or alarmed or amazed or afraid! This is like nothing they've seen before, the dead don't get up, especially the mutilated body of their

Rabbi. And yet they are supposed to believe he lives again like it's perfectly normal, come on!

But... didn't Jesus tell them *plainly* he would rise on the third day? No one processed that, no one! If they had, they wouldn't have brought the un-needed burial spices. But Jesus was not lying, he had risen, *just as he said he would*. And so the angel sits there smiling, I imagine, smiling because of God's victory, and smiling at the women because it's all according to plan.

Don't miss this point either folks: that there was no need for amazement. Don't miss that this was all part of the plan and if things go according to plan, why should we be surprised? Even more, If Jesus by some miracle of biology, or some retroactive grace of a divine being, was resurrected, then that is not necessarily proof that a victory has been won for us. He could have just gotten real lucky, or achieved some favor we never will.

But if he predicted it. If he called his shot. Then all of the sudden this is no random act, this is nothing retroactive at all, it is according to *His Word*. And if his Word is that sure, sure enough that not even the grave can stop it. Then suddenly, then suddenly his Word that he has for you just got a lot more credible.

He has said of you, you right here, right now sitting in that pew. That you are forgiven because of his sacrifice on the cross, where he cried out "It is finished".

He has said that you are his child in faith and baptism. He has said that nothing will snatch you away from him. He has said that he will give you eternal life and raise you up on the last day.

And because he is risen, just as he said, those words are true. That is a ground so solid and a promise so sure... there is truly then no need, *no need* for fear. There is nothing this broken world can do to you that will take you from him. Do not fear.

This also means there is no need for you to bargain with God, or to work your way to him. He has promised he has done all that is necessary to save you. He has promised that he will see to it. He has promised, and as we see on Easter: he keeps his promises.

So bring out the lilies and the hams. But know that you don't *need* them. All that is needed God has provided in the anointed One, the Messiah Jesus, and His Work and gifts and promises which are for you and your eternal life.

Amen.