

THE THING ABOUT SUNRISES**Mark 16:1-8**

Saturday evening, when the Sabbath ended, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome went out and purchased burial spices so they could anoint Jesus' body. Very early on Sunday morning, just at sunrise, they went to the tomb. On the way they were asking each other, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" But as they arrived, they looked up and saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled aside.

When they entered the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a white robe sitting on the right side. The women were shocked, but the angel said, "Don't be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead! Look, this is where they laid his body. Now go and tell his disciples, including Peter, that Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you before he died."

The women fled from the tomb, trembling and bewildered, and they said nothing to anyone because they were too frightened. Mark 16:1-8

He is RISEN!

- There is just something about sunrises!
- I can remember some that are imprinted on my memory.
 - Sitting on a deer stand, and bundled up against cold that would make this morning feel warm. The anticipation of what the day might hold is part of the beauty but most of it is the dazzling sun as it faithfully appears another day.
 - Driving east from New Mexico in August of 1978 and driving right into the rising sun in the early morning hours of a glorious Sunday. I was going to see my girl in just a few hours and I was stoked.
 - Any given Thursday morning when I have been meeting with my Mighty Men and we disperse to the day as the Sun rises over those trees behind me.
 - And any given Easter morning when we meet here just like this and the clouds stay away and we get to greet a new day.
- There is just something about sunrise.
- Yes, I know it's just a little above freezing but there is something incredibly exhilarating and exciting about a new day. The birds have anticipated it and they've been singing for at least an hour before we sang our glorious resurrection anthem which caused the poet to write,

*Morning has broken like the first morning
Blackbird has spoken like the first bird
Praise for the singing, praise for the morning
Praise for them springing fresh from the world*
- What is it then? Why is a sunrise so wonderful and why do we miss it when, because of clouds we can't see it?
- It's instilled in us by our maker – it's God's gift of a new day

*Mine is the sunlight, mine is the morning
Born of the one light, Eden saw play
Praise with elation, praise every morning
God's recreation of the new day*
- And it's also a gift that was renewed for all time when the faithful and courageous women arrived at the grave, probably before sunrise, to find it empty.
 - The night before, on the worst Saturday of their lives, they had prepared to finish a task that should have been done on Friday but the body of their dear friend Jesus needed to be buried before sundown. And Saturday, which was the Sabbath, when no work could be done, was just a day to sit and wait and grieve. Their beloved rabbi was dead.
 - After sunset on Saturday they were allowed to work, so they gathered the burial spices to anoint the body of their Lord and they wondered – how will we get the stone rolled away from the opening to the grave?

- But there was no need. The grave was empty. The angel there told them JESUS WAS ALIVE! Just as he had promised. And then the sun broke over the horizon!
- No sunrise would ever be the same again. No matter how dark the night is, sunrise comes with all the possibilities that come with the victory over death that Jesus brought.
- That's what it is about sunrise. Because of that sunrise (S O N R I S E) every sunrise ever after it is full of possibilities and promise.
- He is risen! HE IS RISEN! He is risen indeed! Amen!

Let's sing!

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, we have so much to be thankful for this Easter morning. In the chill of the morning air, we do feel the warm blessing of your Spirit. We can rejoice this day because our tendency toward disbelief is overcome by our capacity for faith. We are truly amazed that a cross of crucifixion has been transformed into a symbol of new life, a symbol of eternal life.

We are thankful that you come to greet us in a garden of hope, trust, and faith. We thank you that a dark and empty tomb has emerged into a garden of light and living. In all our days, help us to live for Christ, the resurrected and risen Savior. Amen.

BENEDICTION:

The tomb is empty,

Christ has risen.

As you journey in faith,

may your life be full,

your love be abundant,

and your hope be eternal.

Live this day and always for Christ Jesus

because the Risen Christ lives in you.

And all God's people said, Amen.