

## INI-SDG

In the Name of Jesus – To God Alone the Glory

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*4.12.2009 Easter Sunday – St. Stephen Lutheran (West Bay) Mountain View, CA – Pastor N. Radichel*

Dear friends in Christ. The Third Commandment says “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it Holy.” In other words, God’s Word is the most important part of your life. No question about it. Not keeping it as top priority is a sin. End of story. What we do on the Sabbath day (or what we’d say we do here on the day set aside each week to worship our Lord with fellow believers) is not all that different than in the days of Jesus Christ. What’s the focus? It is now, like it was then, to remember the covenant or promises of the one and only true God. But here comes our problem. Sundays, will come and go. Life goes on. In fact, the reality of life that seems to only really ground people in God’s promises (quite literally) is death... whether it is with others, or especially facing our own. We’re about to read a section of God’s Word that I believe well reflects, really the embarrassing forgetfulness of human beings in light of God’s promises to us.

**Mark 16:1** When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus’ body. **2** Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb **3** and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" **4** But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. **5** As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. **6** "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. **7** But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'" **8** Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

This is the Word of God written so that we might look on the One whom we pierced and nailed to the cross, and take joy in the FACT that even death could not hold Him. And so we pray... Lord, sanctify us by Your truth, for Your Word is Truth. Amen.

When someone dies, those who are left tend to remember the different characteristics about the person. Things they did. Things they said. A lot of joy can be found in such recollections of the past. For the women we just read about, the Sabbath was over. One might think that they might have spent more of the Sabbath day recalling what Jesus Christ, God’s Son, had did and said. Maybe what He had spoken about Himself rising from the dead? But they were, in their minds, on their way to anoint His lifeless body in the tomb. How easily we might picture ourselves here for a moment with these women. And it’s really embarrassing isn’t it, how soon we might forget the Lord’s promises? When tragedy or disaster strikes our own lives... how quick are we to turn to the only source of true comfort... God’s Word? That’s why God’s Third Commandment also serves as an important Guide for all Christians in their lives. To REMEMBER, the Day of the Lord and what He promises to us each day we honor it in hearing His Word. Jesus had died... His body was physically grounded, but His Word of truth and promises certainly hadn’t seemed to be grounded into these women or His disciples.

**2** Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb **3** and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" We might think, sure the stone would have provided some trouble, but what about all those guards the Roman governor Pontius Pilate had allowed the Jews to station at Jesus tomb? What happened to them? The Gospel of Matthew testifies that when they had seen the angel it says *the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.* And they fled in fear in view of the angel that they saw. But the women’s reaction wasn’t quite the same was it? When they saw that the stone was rolled away they went inside and verse 5 goes on to say that **they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.** We might guess that not only were they surprised to see Jesus’ body gone, but an angel sitting there.

God's Word help's us this morning to remember what happened when there was an appearance like this. When the Angel of the LORD appeared before Gideon, Gideon thought for sure he would die. But the LORD said to him ***Peace be with you; do not fear, you shall not die. (Judges 6:22,23)*** When an angel of the Lord appeared to Zacharias and Mary they both were told ***Do not be afraid.*** And of course we might remember the shepherds in the field when ***an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. 10 Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. 11 "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:9-11)***

The Angel of the LORD and other angels in these few examples brought "good tidings of great joy" to those who heard it. Likewise, the angel sitting in Jesus tomb spoke to the women in verse 6 ***"Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. 7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"*** What good news did this messenger of God have to bring? The Savior of the world was no longer dead, but had risen to life! He had conquered not only sin once and for all in His sacrifice on the cross, but He had conquered death as well. What does all that mean? You know. Turn your bulletin over to the good tidings we read earlier from the apostle Paul, God's messenger to the Corinthians. ***19 If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. 20 But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. 22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.*** Not only do we live in the joy that our enormous debt of sins have been paid completely by our Savior Jesus, but we look forward to eternal life with Him in heaven because of that payment.

So I ask you, did the women hang out there in the tomb? No. ***8 Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.*** But where did they go? Matthew reveals further how ***the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell His disciples. (28:8)*** To stand gazing into the empty grave would serve no purpose: there is something to be done- go, spread the news! In our hearing this morning we have probably the two greatest fears in life wrapped up into one message. They are: death and speaking with others. But ***There is no reason to Fear...*** to speak to others about what Christ has done for us as it is an EASY message when it becomes so personal. Why did the angel tell the women to go quickly and tell Peter? Peter is singled out because he was personally grieving about denying his Lord on the night of the betrayal. And what a message for sorrowful Peter to hear!

How are you and I any different? Upon viewing your sins resting on Jesus' shoulders the day of His death on the cross, you ought to be very disappointed in yourself every time you also deny your God given name "Christian." We disappoint our Heavenly Father when we break His commandments and loving instructions for our lives. And in view of this disobedience we deserve eternal damnation in hell! But, ***There is no reason to Fear.*** We have already spoken of how even when it comes to death... ***There is no reason to Fear.*** In honoring the Third Commandment we continue to hear our Lord teach us about how ***in Christ, death has been swallowed up in victory!*** So will you and I can just stand here today, and today only, starring at the empty tomb with wonder and amazement, OR, will we do as the angel instructed. Go and tell. On a tombstone, a short hyphen represents a life that has been grounded at its end. If we're going to be concerned about being grounded, be concerned about being grounded in the Word of God. And continue to declare the death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Just as we sang earlier:

**Then sing your hosannas and raise your glad voice;  
Proclaim the blest tidings that all may rejoice.  
Laud, honor, and praise to the Lamb that was slain,  
Who sitteth in glory and ever shall reign. Amen.**

*The peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard and keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.*