

Easter Sermon, April 12, 2020  
"They Didn't Get It! Do You?"  
John 20:2-10

Easter is a season of joy. Christians around the world sing: "I know that my redeemer lives", not because a grave contained a linen shroud with no body. No! Christians sing "I know that my redeemer lives" because this Jesus, who was crucified, secured in death by professional Roman soldiers, showed himself alive, with a resurrected, glorified body.

As Christians, we know the story of God's love for us. He created our world. He created each and everyone of us. He created human beings to be in a relationship of love and friendship with their creator. God's love demanded that human beings, men, women and children be given a free will to chose or reject his love. Satan offered Adam and Eve an opportunity to be their own god. They chose to disobey God and Satan gained a momentary victory by bringing death into the world.

The Bible tells us that God himself came to rescue and restore Adam and Eve to a place of harmony, forgiveness and peace through the sacrifice of one. Jesus stepped into the public arena to proclaim, "Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." He backed his words with a perfect life. He healed every kind of sickness and disease. He raised the dead to life. Enormous crowds followed Him. He offered forgiveness and proclaimed that He and the Creator God were one in the same."

Sadly, this Easter day greets a world that is filled with hundreds of millions of people who just don't get it. Some have never heard of Jesus. They can't get it! Some know the name Jesus, but only as a curse word. They won't get it! Some don't get it because they refuse to believe that a man who lived and died and rose from death 2000 years ago can have an impact on their lives. Whatever the reason millions don't get it.

Our world is filled with souls who remain lost. They reject salvation and refuse God's offer of forgiveness. They could be free of the shackles of sin and the fear of death, and Satan. Because they don't get it, on this Easter Day they will remain down cast, depressed and despondent. Don't let this Easter pass without hearing God's offer of eternal life.

Good Friday seemed to be the end of the story, but three days later, when some of Jesus' followers came to pay their respects, they found that the guard was gone. Had they run away in fear. The stone had been rolled away and the body of Jesus was gone. Had somebody stolen the corpse. Maybe somebody has moved the body. The one thing they did not think was that Jesus had risen from the dead. They didn't get it. You can hardly blame them. We all know that death is final. At least it's supposed to be.

But when the women heard the words of the angel they ran to tell two of Jesus' closest friends, Peter and John. Let me read from the Bible what happened next. "So Mary ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him" So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running

together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes." Peter didn't get it. John saw and believed. John got it.

John did not understand all of scripture. Not yet. But John got it. His "getting it" would become more complete when a living, breathing, eating, talking and touchable Jesus appeared to him and the other disciples. Standing in the empty tomb looking at the collapsed linen, John knew for certain that Jesus Christ, the Son of God was alive. The question, this Easter Sunday is, "do you get it?" Your eternal residence, heaven or hell will be decided on whether you believe Christ is risen.

The death and resurrection of Jesus is real. The linen cloth is only one, very small bit of evidence to the greatness of God's grace. Do you really think these disciples would have been martyred, holding fast to the preaching of a prank? Do you think these ordinary citizens and fishermen could be turned into lions for the Lord if they had not seen the living Jesus?

Let me close with a story. Philip was born with Down's Syndrome. As a result, he never was part of the group. He was pleasant enough but he looked different and sometimes acted differently than his eight-year-old-classmates. Easter Sunday that year, Philip's Sunday School teacher gave each of her students a plastic egg and instructed them to bring them back with a symbol of the resurrection.

The following week the eggs were opened and each child explained the meaning of the symbol they had brought. One egg held a pretty flower; another held a butterfly. The children squirmed to see that one. In another, there was a rock. The last egg was empty. Nothing. If you had listened carefully, you would have heard things like, "That's stupid" or "he didn't do his homework." Philip confessed, "That egg belongs to me. It's empty, because Jesus' grave was empty." Philip got it!

That summer Philip got something else, an infection. Most children would have shaken off such a little thing. Philip's body couldn't. At his funeral, nine eight year old children, accompanied by their teacher, brought a gift and placed it in his casket. You know what it was? Elementary, isn't it? Almost as elementary as knowing God has given His Son to save you. The linens, the empty tomb prove it.

May this day find your heart saying with the rest of the Christian world...."Christ is risen! He is Risen, indeed. Amen.