

ROOTED

Worship

Matthew 28:1-10

April 16, 2017

EASTER

When was the last time you were truly surprised? Was it one of those moments when you thought you were going to a quiet dinner and you ended up at a birthday or anniversary party? Was it when you decided to order what everyone was raving about and you discovered that it's not just good, it's phenomenal. Or was it a healing you didn't expect or a blessing in disguise that shocked and surprised you. Or maybe it was being the winner when you scratched off one of those lottery tickets. We go into a good many things in life with our hopes balanced by a combination of disappointment and surprising greatness. There's a phase...expect the worst, hope for the best and you'll never be disappointed.

The two Mary's, who are in the passage that we read today went to a tomb early in the morning not knowing exactly what they would find. This had the potential to be just an ordinary, quiet Sunday morning. But, while they were on this journey to see just what might have happened over night in the cemetery – they experience an earthquake (an event that has been historically proven to be factual), they bump into an angel and they run into Jesus himself. Their experience on that first Easter morning changed their lives forever. Let's look at exactly what happened according to Matthew.

[READ Passage: Matthew 28:1-10]

Matthew tells the story of Jesus' resurrection slightly different than Mark and Luke. Mark and Luke have the women carrying spices to finish the embalming of Jesus' dead body. Matthew does not have the women carrying spices. They are not going to see death. Instead they are going to see what Jesus meant when he said that he would rise from the dead after three days. They're not sure what they're going to find but, they're pretty sure they don't need spices for a dead body.

These two Mary's had been with Jesus for a long time, probably as long as the men who were called disciples. They had served Jesus and provided for him. As they had followed Jesus, they had heard Him say that he was going to be arrested, tortured, executed, and would rise on the third day. While the guy disciples didn't understand, or didn't want to believe that would happen to Jesus, the women showed up on Easter morning as believers.

The two women were making a journey of faith. They had heard what Jesus had said and they got up early on Easter morning to find out if it was true. They stepped out in faith and they discovered something wonderful.

Their faith leads them to be:

- **Focused on the task**
- **Undeterred by obstacles**
- **Determined to encounter Jesus**

Like the two Mary's were 2000 years ago, we have heard Jesus' promise that he would rise from the dead. Sometimes we aren't quite sure what this means for us today. We come to church on Easter morning and we wonder if we're going to hear the same message like all the other Easter's. As Christians, we get up each day wondering what Jesus might do today. We wonder if Jesus will answer our prayers, help us through a demanding day, keep our kids safe and give us our daily bread?

The two women, the Mary's, were anticipating the resurrection, even though they didn't fully understand what that meant. They acted on what they had been told by Jesus and they went to the tomb. There is an air of expectation in Matthew's story. So, let me ask you, what are you expecting God to do when you come to a time of worship like this, when you come to church? Can I just ask you that question? When you get up on a Sunday morning and get ready and make your way to church is your faith telling you that God can do anything and that means just about anything can happen on a Sunday at church. Or do you hang around the house thinking – what are my options today.

The act of faith of these two women led them on an adventure that put them in a brand-new place of worship in their lives. Did they know what they would find that morning, did they know they'd see fainting Roman soldiers, a real live angel, an empty slab where Jesus was lying last time they saw him, and did they know they'd see a stone rolled away? No, but they went to the tomb anyway. So many of us look at worship and see a cemetery. I'm going to let that sit there for a minute...know what I mean? These two women look at a cemetery and found life and worship because God can turn anything around. God can take dead things and make them come alive. Do you believe that today? Do you believe God can take your old, worn out thoughts about worship and change them into something brand new this morning? I believe that or I wouldn't be up here this morning. I believe that **we worship a God who can revive dead things**. I believe we worship a God who can bring the dead back to life. Do you believe that? Who knows what might happen? Oh, it's getting exciting now.

What the two Mary's found caused them to be excited. They had faith, they heard Jesus say he would come back and now they knew it was true. And their worship of God went to a new level that morning and I wonder, I just wonder if we get up on Sunday mornings thinking that God just might show up and do something amazing in our lives, that we might actually be surprised that God is still moving life blocking boulders, still surprising people on Sunday mornings. Come on! Is it true, is it possible? Turn to someone and say "somethings going to happen today."

All four gospels tell us that the women acted differently than the other disciples that morning. No one else got up that Easter morning and went to the tomb; everyone slept in. The women listened with anticipation, saw with eyes of faith, and they came to understand what had happened with lives bent toward expectation. The faith of these women was more than just simple belief. Their faith had been created over time by watching what Jesus could do. They saw him heal, they saw him melt the hearts of thousands on a hillside, they saw him touch lepers, and open blind eyes, and they saw the way his look penetrated their very souls. So, they got up on a Sunday morning, just like you did this morning, and made their way to a cemetery looking for life and they found it! They found an empty tomb and a risen savior...can you say amen!

Rarely will we see the risen Jesus, by sitting around polishing up our theological beliefs or discussing the depth of our church doctrine. We see Jesus when we get up out of our beds, shake off the night, and in anticipation, act in faith – run towards a brand-new day where anything is possible. That's the kind of worship I want in my life...is anybody with me? If we put our faith together with a deep sense of "anything is possible" then who knows what can happen.

Faith and anticipation results in worship.

After they had this conversation with the angel by the freshly moved boulder, the two women left the tomb expecting to see Jesus. They thought that they would see him in Galilee. Instead, they bumped into him in the garden. When the women encountered Jesus, they stopped and worshiped him. The events of the past days had proven that Jesus truly was the Messiah; the one who had come to establish the kingdom of God. And now, right in front of them, was Jesus – alive. The last time they saw him he was dead...make no mistake about that. And their new encounter with the risen Jesus would change their lives forever — and end up changing the world, too.

Can I ask you a somewhat personal question? Have you had a world changing encounter with Jesus? Worship changes drastically when you've had a run in with the Jesus who walked out of the tomb that Easter day 2000 years ago, because death could not keep him, the grave could not contain him, and those grave clothes – were not fit for a King. **An encounter with Jesus brings worship alive** like never before.

I do not know where you will encounter Jesus today or in the days and weeks ahead. I do know, though, that Jesus has been raised from the dead and that Jesus lives. As you live in faith and anticipation, Jesus will move powerfully in your lives. Worship is culminated when faith becomes sight.