

The women had an early start to make it to the tomb. This was their first chance to take care of Jesus’ remains. It doesn’t take much to imagine what was on their minds that early morning. Much of it was concerned with the wounded body that hoped to handle. The women had been there. They had seen Jesus’ head with the crown of thorns jammed into his brow. They could probably still hear the sound of the scourge with its harsh lashes. They would never forget the cold metal nails, the soldier and the spear, the water and the blood, the men who came and took Jesus’ body to a nearby tomb. They followed Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus as they placed Jesus’ body and rolled the stone over the tomb entrance. They knew exactly where they were going that morning. They never expected to see such violence when they met Jesus years before. But they really never expected to see what they saw this morning. The stone was rolled back. Jesus body was not there. Instead, the women met two angels.

<sup>11</sup> But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. <sup>12</sup> And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. <sup>13</sup> They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” <sup>14</sup> Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” <sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned and said to him in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher). <sup>17</sup> Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

Jesus had been publicly humiliated, and crucified for all to see, but now, here he was, completely alive and well. Behind the scenes, the gospel writers tell us, the most crucial battles in a spiritual war had just played out. Satan, sworn enemy of God, had done his worst. He had influenced religious leaders, politicians, and even Jesus’ own disciples to destroy the teacher from Nazareth. Satan was behind the violence and hate and fear. It appeared that he conquered at the cross on the hill of the skull. By Friday evening, Jesus was just another dead body. Yet, here it is, early Sunday, and there’s Jesus, having a conversation with Mary Magdalene. There’s Jesus, back from the dead, able to eat, able to be touched, able to breathe and speak. Satan had attacked Jesus with everything he could. Still, it was not enough. Jesus had been wounded to death for our sins, true. But it is a living Savior talking to Mary, outside his own tomb. What are you and I to make of this?

A movie called *Gladiator* came out twenty-one years ago, can you believe it? But the story follows a Roman general who is forced to be a Roman gladiator. This gladiator is terribly wounded before his final fight. The guards hide his wound by covering it up with his armor. But slowly, this wound drained the life out of the gladiator. Hidden wounds are dangerous because they are not taken care of; they are not dressed or addressed. And that’s one thing we all have in

common today: we all have hidden wounds. Some are battling physical trials. Others are not physical per se but drain the life out of you just the same. Rejection can be a horrible wound. When you try really hard to be accepted and appreciated and it goes nowhere, that can cut deep. Pressure to do things I know I shouldn't leaves its own bruises. We can even wound ourselves and cut ourselves off from God. Yet we put on the armor like it is all up to us—meanwhile the wounds underneath are festering, and our energy for life drips away.

Whatever your wounds are today, I urge you to look to Jesus. This morning we remember that Jesus suffered several mortal wounds. Any one of these would have been fatal. They cut into his body with nails and thorns and whip. He was cut off from his closest friends. He was cut off from God the Father, the deepest spiritual wound of all. He was utterly crushed by the sin of humanity. Yet here he is. Here he stands, outside his tomb, talking to Mary. But do not think for a moment of this story as merely a historical curiosity or some kind of neat parable. Jesus really died; he really resurrected; and here's why: Jesus overcame all his wounds in order to bring healing to yours.

This is the most basic claim of the Christian faith: Jesus died and rose again. You'll notice, this is not advice. It is news—news of a completed event. Jesus resurrected—meaning he is alive—meaning He is alive now for your sake—to be with you—to minister to you—to give you things you would not have without Him—to be accessible to you. No matter what wounds are there under your armor, no matter what you suffer, you have one who is with you who knows, who's had it all done to him, and He overcame it. He overcame it to give you healing. He shares his victory over suffering and death with you. And here's the glorious thing. He doesn't ask you to work for it. He doesn't ask you to earn this victory. He doesn't say, "Well, work really hard to be a good person and maybe when this is all over, you'll be rewarded. No, no, no. He wants you to believe He did it and is giving you the results as a gift. Christian faith is: trusting Jesus did it. He died. He rose. He won the trophy. He hands it to me. I get to stand with him in the place of honor. I didn't win the victory. Jesus did. He shares it with me. I trust that what He did counts for me. That is faith that saves. It is faith and trust in a living champion.

Today, Christians around the world celebrate that Jesus is alive. He is alive in special ways in his church. In the words of Scripture, we hear His voice. In holy baptism, we feel his embrace. At His table, a living Jesus hosts his people, giving you and me and all believers Himself. He gives us forgiveness and life at His Table because he is alive. And where Jesus is, there is healing. And yes, the resurrection of Jesus means that he shares every part of his victory with us—including our own resurrection. History records that those who trust in the resurrection of Jesus may be pressured, but are unstoppable; may take losses, but emerge victorious; may be wounded, but are healing. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.