

April 16, 2017

Easter Sunday

Matthew 28:1-10

“Now What?”

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A very blessed and happy Easter to all of you! Today we're using the ancient Easter greeting that proclaims the most important fact of our faith. The Lord is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!* But I'd like to add something today. Let's try it this way. The Lord is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!* Now what?

Jesus rose from the dead, and he's alive. Now what? You made it to church this morning, you're wearing a great outfit, you found a place to sit. Now what? You hear the story of Christ's resurrection. But now what?

Our question for today is a simple one. Now what? For many of us, honestly, the answer is “Nothing.” Nothing changes. Nothing happens. There's no real impact on our lives, and nothing's really affected by Easter.

That may be an honest answer, but guess what? That answer's not good enough. That answer's awful. Not because I say so, but because Jesus Christ says so. Jesus Christ, the risen Savior, has a better answer for you! It's right there in the Easter story.

These women go to see the tomb of Jesus, first thing Sunday morning. He's been crucified. He's the one they all thought was the Son of God, the Messiah. But he's dead now. He's buried in a tomb. They get there, and suddenly there's an earthquake. An angel of the Lord rolls back the stone in front of the tomb, and sits on it. He's bright as lightning, terrifying to see.

And what does the angel say to the women? “Jesus isn’t here. He has risen from the dead. He’s alive!” Incredible good news! So, now what? Right away, before the women even have time to process the resurrection news, the angel says, “Now go tell the disciples to meet Jesus in Galilee.”

The angel gives those women the answer to the “Now what?” question. He says, there’s work to be done, ministry to make happen, great news to share!

Then, suddenly, Jesus himself appears to these women. They get a quick hug in, and they’re thrilled to see the resurrected Lord. But right away, **Jesus** also gives them the answer to the “Now what?” question. He instructs them, “Now go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”

Jesus, on the first Easter, makes sure the women know there’s work to be done, ministry to make happen, great news to share!

Now it’s Easter Sunday 2017. You’re here in church. Now what? Do you know the answer?

I think every Christian should ask Jesus today, “Now what? Jesus, you’re alive! You died on the cross to pay for my sins. You sacrificed your life, so I can be forgiven. You rose from the grave. You conquered death. Jesus, you came to save me for all eternity! You did all that for me. Now what? Now what do you want me to do? Now what’s supposed to happen in my life? Now what’s the impact of Easter in my mind, in my heart, in my actions? Now what?” Every single one of us should ask Jesus that question today. Ask it thoughtfully, reverently, earnestly. Now what?

He may send an angel to give you a specific answer. Jesus may nudge your heart in some unmistakable way. He'll definitely speak to you through his Word, the Bible. He'll absolutely send you his Holy Spirit to lead and guide you. In some way, Jesus will give you his answer. After all, there's still work to be done, ministry to make happen, great news to share!

There are people in our lives every day who need care, need help, need a listening ear, need understanding and sympathy. We meet people all the time who don't know where God fits into their lives, folks who haven't connected with Jesus, souls who are lost in the spiritual woods. It's great that you're here to celebrate Christ's resurrection. But now what? Go and tell those people about Jesus! There's work to be done, ministry to make happen, great news to share!

It doesn't matter if you're a child or a youth, a grownup or an old fogey. It makes no difference if you're a life-long believer, a brand-new believer, or a lapsed believer. You may be energetic in your faith life, or a spiritual slacker. But Jesus has something for you to do today.

Help the needy. Teach the young. Invite a friend to church. Tell a co-worker you're praying for her. Sign up to help out at church. Support a missionary. Welcome a visitor to worship today. Swing a hammer at a Habitat home site. Join us in Lumberton on Friday. Get to know Jesus a little better this year. Get to know one of the thousands of new home owners in our neighborhoods, and ask that person if they've found a church home yet. Easter's here, you're here, now what?

I think every one of us should ask Jesus, "Now what?" And I think every church, starting with ours, should ask Jesus the same question. This is our twentieth Easter at Hope, Lord.

Now what? We've got a great church building, a perfect location, a super congregation, talented leaders, committed members, lots of newcomers joining our church this spring. Now what, Lord?

And do you know what his answer's going to be? I do. Reach more people for Christ. Help the needy. Teach the young. Impact your community. Connect people to Jesus. Be a church that's inviting, inclusive, warm, and welcoming. Care more about people out there who don't know Jesus than you do about yourselves. Be a church that's energetic and intentional about reaching more people in your community for Christ. Work to be done, ministry to make happen, great news to share!

Easter's here, we're here together, now what? The risen Christ gives us the answer. Amen.