

Why are we celebrating Easter today, Christians? What makes our celebration different from the rest of the world? Because a lot of people celebrate Easter for a lot of different reasons, but we are called to be different. We are called to be separate from the world and set apart to God, so if there is no difference between us and the rest of the world today, then why are we here? Easter for us cannot be about throwing a party. It can't be about Easter supper, because even people who don't go to church can do that today. That's not what makes us different. And Easter cannot be for us about candy or Easter eggs. They've had candy out in the stores for quite a while now. That's also something that the world can do. That's not what makes us different. We might say what makes us different is that we remember today. We remember what Jesus has done. We remember that he has risen from the dead. We remember that he now lives. And that's a good answer. But what do we mean by "remembering"? What does it mean to remember what Jesus did, and how does our remembering set us apart in the rest of the world? That's the question that we need to answer today.

And to answer that question, let's look at our Gospel reading from the Gospel of Luke. Luke tells us that on that first Easter morning a group of women went to the tomb of Jesus. And in that group were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary, the mother of James, and several other women besides. But why have they come? Luke tells us: because they remembered that they had something they needed to do. They were going to the tomb to tend to the body of Jesus. And they were bringing along with them some spices which they had prepared. These spices, Christians, were meant for part of burying somebody in those days. It was just what you did. We're told in John chapter 19, for example, that "Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight." These spices, this myrrh and aloes, helps to embalm the body. It helps to dry it out. But they were very expensive, especially myrrh. Myrrh comes from trees, and it had to be imported from a long ways away, so it would've cost them a lot of money to bring these spices to Jesus. But that shows that they have a great love for him. They're willing to put up with this expense. They're willing to pay this great cost. Even getting up very early on Sunday morning at the crack of dawn in order to go take care of the body of Jesus. They had come to put these fresh spices on his body as a way of remembering him, as a way of memorializing what he had done. And I'm sure as they went to the tomb on that Easter morning, they were thinking about all the things that he had said and done in the past.

Is that what we mean by remembering, Christians? Is that what it means to remember what Jesus has done? That we look back to the past and think about it, maybe even fondly, thinking about all these things so that we have it all clear in our heads. Because that's certainly what the women were doing that Easter morning. But if that's all that remembering means, Christians, then why are we here? Because if we are simply reminding ourselves of what happened to Jesus long ago, we're still no different from the world. The world can remember the past just as well as we can, even if they don't want to. If Easter is just a history lesson for us, then Jesus might as well still be dead. Because carrying spices to his tomb, no matter how lovingly we do it, is not what we are called to do. That is not why we are here today.

And this is what the women learned on that first Easter morning as well. Because when they came to the tomb, they were shocked at what they saw. The stone had been rolled away! This great stone that took several men in order to move it had just been tossed aside. And inside the tomb, Jesus's body was no longer there! Where had it gone? Had somebody taken it? Where

could it possibly be? And while they were puzzled about these things, trying to figure out what happened, they were in for the greatest shock of all. Because two angels stood beside them dressed in dazzling clothes, practically blinding them as they brought to them a message of great joy. Luke tells us in our reading that they say: "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful man and be crucified, and on the third day rise." It was as if the angels had said to the women: "Why are you here, ladies? What have you come to do? Is this a place for the living? Can you seek the living among the dead? Of course not! Because Jesus is not dead. Jesus has risen! He is not here, as you can plainly see. Remember, ladies! Remember what he told you. Remember what he said to you. Remember how he said that he must suffer and die, and he certainly did. Remember how he said that he would rise again on the third day, and he certainly did. You have forgotten what he told you! If you had remembered, you would not be here with your spices. If you had remembered, you would not still be weeping like you are. Remember what he said! Remember what he told you!"

And to their credit, after the angels go away, the women do remember. Luke tells us again: "They remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest." Now that they truly remember, they go and they tell the disciples. Because they have truly remembered, they're no longer concerned about their spices. I wouldn't be surprised if they left them behind! Because they have remembered, they're no longer concerned about the tomb. They practically run away from it. Because they have remembered, they are no longer fearful and afraid. But confident and hopeful, they go to tell the others of what they have seen and heard. And their lives would never be the same again.

Easter is, therefore, not just about remembering what happened long ago, as if we're just here to get all these facts straight into our head. Easter changes us, Christians. Easter makes us different from what we were before. Easter shapes the way that we live. Because when we remember what he said, we will not seek the living among the dead. When we remember what he said, we will not weep as if Jesus was still dead. When we remember what he said, we will not give in to fear. When we remember what he said, we will be able to face all things confidently. Because Jesus lives! Even now, Jesus lives, never to die again. The same Christ who rose from the grave on Easter morning is the same Christ who now reigns in heaven forever. Think about what that means, Christians! Think about what that means for your daily lives. Jesus lives! There is no reason to fear anything in the world. Jesus lives! He will wipe away every tear from our eyes. Jesus lives! There is hope in the midst of your suffering. Jesus lives! There is comfort in the midst of your grief. Jesus lives! Even if everything else is gone, he is still yours. Jesus lives! And you will live also. Not even death can take that away from you. Jesus lives! And we will become like him in all things. That's what makes Easter different for us, Christians. That's what separates our Easter from the rest of the world. The world can have their Easter supper. The world can have their Easter eggs. The world can have their Easter candy. But the world cannot have Easter joy. Easter gives us hope. Easter gives us peace, because Easter makes us Christians, the heirs of heaven.

Therefore, Christians, let us remember what Jesus said. And remembering what he said, let us leave here today different from what we were before. Let us celebrate Easter as Christians, and then we will live every day to come as the children of God.

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, who raised Jesus from the dead, help us to remember all that you have done for us through your Son, so that we would walk in him until that day when you will raise us from our graves to everlasting life. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.