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Athens Methodist Church—Rev. F. A. Reed, Pastor

**TEACHINGS FROM THE TOMB OF JESUS**

*"He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay."—Matt. 28: 6.*

Much thought was given to the Easter services. The pulpit and altar were tastefully decorated with choice flowers. The singing of the children in the morning was bright and sweet; that of the regular choir in the evening was strong, joyful and triumphant. The services were well attended, notwithstanding the inclement weather.

The subject of the morning sermon was Easter Joy; the text—"Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." The joyful effect of Christ's resurrection upon his disciples was explained, and reasons were given for their exceeding great joy. His resurrection fully convinced them that His word could be relied upon; that His work had not been a failure; that victory was on the side of righteousness and truth, and that they had not really lost their best friend after all. For having conquered death and grave He had risen and returned to be their ever-abiding Lord and Master. In referring to His resurrection as the secret of Christian joy today, it was said "We commemorate this event with joy, for without it Christianity would have been a failure, a powerless creed, ending in defeat, death and the grave, but because of it Christianity had become a success, a power, a victor. The empty tomb is the joy of the whole church."

It was then shown that upon this fact the whole Christian system rested, and that it had given a new touch of divine authority to the teaching of Christ, brought a new hope into the world, and made it possible for our Risen Lord to become an abiding presence with his people, and the great source of joy in worship, work, life and death.

The text for the evening service was, "He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay."—Matt. 28: 6.

These are the words of an angel. They were addressed to a few devoted disciples. They were uttered in a private cemetery, and upon an occasion so important, and amid surroundings so solemn and impressive, that we feel like treading softly as we approach the place to which the text invites us. It says, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." In this text there are two things to be studied—the place and the fact.

First, mark the place. It is a sepulchre hewn out of a rock. It may be found in a quiet retreat, just outside the walls of Jerusalem, not far from Calvary. But it is a beautiful spot, situated in a rich man's garden, where flowers—sweet flowers—bloom and throw their fragrance around it, and lily shrubs bend over it, and sweet voiced birds sing.

It is an interesting place; because it is the place where our Lord lay. It was interesting to some one before the body of Jesus was entombed there; but now it has become interesting to every one.

It is an impressive spot; for here the beauties of nature and the terrible effects of sin are brought together in striking contrast. The flowers bloomed and looked gay but humanity looked sad and crushed in death. What could form a greater contrast than those beautiful flowers and the sorrow-stricken, mutilated remains of the Son of God?

But it is a solemn place. The cemetery is always solemn; but the tomb of Jesus is awfully solemn. For it tells us that the Son of God was slain; that the Prince of Life experienced death; that the Impassive suffered; that the Immortal died; that the Innocent took the place of the guilty, and that the Lord of Glory was clothed with shame. It tells us too that He died whom none could kill; He died whom no disease could touch; He died whom had given life to millions and had even raised the dead. Oh, wondrous thought! Oh, solemn spot! This is the place where the Lord lay.

This tomb was the gift of a rich man—Joseph of Arimathea. He had had it carved out of the solid rock for himself, but had placed it at the service of his dead Lord and Master. Previous to this he had been a secret disciple, but now he openly acknowledges Christ by asking Pilate for his dead body, and by taking it carefully down from the cross and placing it in his own tomb. The same spirit of loyalty called forth another secret disciple, Nicodemus by name. And together they removed the blood from his brow, his face, his hands, his feet, and his

wounded side; and embalming the sacred body in myrrh and aloes, laid it to rest in the tomb of Joseph—that brave and loyal man, whose generous gift has perpetuated his memory to this very hour.

But this is a joyful place. For the words of my text is the language of heartfelt gladness, dawning hope and conscious triumph, brought by one of the swift-winged messengers of Glory, to the ears of the Infant church, in the most trying hour of her history. "He is risen" said the angel. A redeemed woman heard the message, saw the proof and flew from the dewy garden crying "He is risen." The message was soon caught up by a little band of ransomed men and confirmed by repeated appearances of their Risen Lord. Then on the day of Pentecost, having experienced the power of his resurrection in their own hearts, they rushed forth into the public square shouting "He is risen." These new-born souls caught up the cry and all Jerusalem heard, and Antioch, and Alexandria, and cultured Corinth and haughty Rome. The forests heard it, the mountains told it, the waves of the great sea repeated it, and the heavens echoed it back to earth, till with ringing bells and pealing organs, and chanting choirs, and beautiful flowers, the glad tidings of a Risen Saviour have filled the world with joy.

It is an instructive place; because it reveals the awful depths of human depravity and the tremendous cost of sin, and also teaches us the greatest fact on record in the history of the world, namely, the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. For on this doctrine rests the whole system of revealed truth.

How does this empty tomb establish the fact of his resurrection? First, the tomb was hewn out of solid rock, having only one entrance. Then the body of Jesus was placed within the tomb on Saturday afternoon. The great stone door was closed and sealed with the seal of the Roman Emperor, which was the declaration of death to any intruder. A guard of sixty soldiers, with spear and javelin, was set to watch the tomb. And yet on the morning of the third day, we find the seal broken, the tomb open, and the body gone. What explanation can be given? Humanly speaking, none. Therefore the empty tomb is a convincing proof of his resurrection.

But his resurrection does not depend wholly upon this evidence. For it is supported by other infallible proofs which he gave to his apostles, and by the testimony of many other witnesses. To his apostles, he showed himself many times, and permitted them not only to see him but to hear his voice, to touch him, to feel the nail-prints in his hands and examine the wound in his side. He also ate with them, walked with them and expounded to them the scriptures. Then we have the testimony of the five hundred who saw him in the mountain in Galilee, according to previous appointment, and the testimony of the sixty soldiers who were present at his resurrection, and were so terrified that they fell like dead men to the ground. And when they arose they fled to the city and were the first to announce the fact. Then we have the testimony of Mary Magdalene and the other women who saw him on the morning of his resurrection, and of Peter, and of the two brethren who saw him on the way to Emmaus, and of James the less, and of those who witnessed his ascension, and of Stephen, and of Paul and of John on the Isle of Patmos, and of the angels of God.

Moreover Jerusalem remained in comparative peace for nearly half a century after this, giving the most favorable conditions for the investigation of this question, and during which time the doctrine of our Lord's resurrection came before every tribunal in the civilized world. It was well known in all Judaea, reported to the Roman Senate, discussed at Athens and Corinth, and became a recorded fact in history; and all without being contradicted by any historian or any other author. Therefore the Resurrection of Christ is one of the best established facts of history.

But his resurrection was a necessary. It was necessary to establish His victory. Because He had not only predicted His own resurrection, but many other things which could not have been fulfilled if He had not risen

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