

Sunrise

The story that we heard today took place in a garden. I don't know about you, but when I think of a garden I think back to my parent's garden. They always grew tomatoes, carrots and lettuce. Other people plant flowers and rose bushes and beautiful plants, but my mom enjoyed the fresh vegetables more than flowers.

Every spring we would go out and plant the seeds and before long, we would see life spring up out of that garden. But, no matter what is planted, veggies or flowers, when I think of gardens I think of life.

Our story today took place in a garden – but here in this beautiful garden, filled with life, was a tomb – the symbol of death.

But this tomb turned out not to be the symbol of death, but a symbol of new life, a symbol of resurrection!

Every Gospel has a little bit different account of exactly what happened that morning, but they all say the same thing, that He is risen!

And that in itself is a great message. Although Jesus was part God, he was also part man. So the fact that he rose from the dead shows that not only did the Godly part of him rise, but the human part rose as well.

This is a great message for us. On Good Friday we discussed how Jesus, dying on the cross, meant that he took our sins with Him, and died for us. This means that if we accept that sacrifice, if we accept Jesus dying for us, and therefore accept him, we will rise up as well.

This is the cornerstone of our Christian beliefs. This is the foundation of Christianity.

But sometimes we have doubt, or we question our beliefs, or we may even deny our faith from time to time. Where does that leave us?

Let's look at the disciples of Jesus for some answers. Before Jesus was taken away by the Jewish authority, He had told Peter that on that very night Peter would deny he knew Jesus 3 times – even before the rooster crowed.

Of course Peter, who was the head of the Disciples, said that he would never deny Jesus. Well, that night, when Jesus was taken away, the rest of the disciples scattered – they disappeared.

But Peter followed along – because he believed. That is until someone actually confronted him and asked if he was one of Jesus' followers. Of course, Peter stood straight up and said, "nope, don't know him."

Peter denied he knew Jesus on three different occasions that night – and then the rooster crowed.

Brave, strong men. When Jesus was taken to the cross, the Bible tells us that his mother Mary was there, and so was Mary Magdalene, and Salome. Three women watched Jesus die. Where were the other disciples? They scattered – their lives had been changed.

Here they were beginning to believe that this Jesus guy was the Messiah – the one that was going to save them all. But they never understood that the Messiah wasn't there to save them from the Romans, but to save them from themselves.

The Messiah was there to forgive their sins – to give them the opportunity to have everlasting life.

So I think it is only fitting that in our Gospel reading today we hear how the 3 women went into the garden – very early – about the time the sun was rising – they went into the garden, a place of life, and they were told by an angel that Jesus was no longer in the tomb, but that he had risen.

Then the angel tells the women that Jesus will appear to the disciples in Galilee. But the best part is that the angel says to go tell the disciples and Peter.

The disciples just ran away, but Peter flatly denied that he knew Jesus and said that he definitely wasn't one of his Disciples.

So the angel said, tell Jesus' disciples, and Peter, that he has risen and he will see them in Galilee.

I think there is a good message in that scripture for us. Although Peter denied Jesus, Jesus didn't deny Peter. He still wanted to have a relationship with all of the disciples, even Peter.

Through our times of doubt, about Jesus, through our times of speculation, through our times of questioning, Jesus doesn't doubt us. He is still there saying, "Tell my disciples and Peter", or "Tell my disciples and Mark", or "Tell my disciples and _____," - insert your own name.

Even if we have times of doubt or even denial, let's remember that Jesus loves us and still wants to have a relationship with us.

Christ died for the sins of the world – to get us right with God. He then rose from the dead to give us everlasting life.

Today as we watch the sun rise, let's remember that the Son of God has risen - for you and me – He has risen indeed!

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