

4-19-2014, COTR Texarkana

Title: The Empty Tomb

Purpose: Provoke people to embrace the historical reality of the empty tomb and embrace its meaning in their life.

Spiritual Truth: The empty tomb changes everything.

Text: Matthew 28:1-8

Topic: Easter, Resurrection, Faith, Fear, Apologetics

The Empty Tomb

- I. Introduction...I'm honored that you're here. There are so many great churches in Texarkana.
 - A. The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ are two of the most celebrated events in human history. Jesus death made it possible for our sins to be forgiven. His resurrection boldly declares that Jesus is the Son of God and His words are true.
 - A.1. Romans 4:25 (NLT) He was handed over to **die** because of our sins, (NCV) and he was **raised from the dead** to make us right with God.
 - A.2. Listen to messages @ChurchOnTheRock.org or on the COTR iPhone/ Android app.
 - A.3. Last week we learned why the cross was important.
 - A.4. Today we'll talk about the empty tomb. It was a place where (1) fear turns into faith (2) skeptics must pause, (3) doubters become believers, and (4) failure gets a 2nd chance. Today's message is not just a history lesson. It has power to change our life.
 - B. Video: SS "Salome at the empty tomb": one of the 1st people to see the empty tomb.
 - B.1. Let's talk about the significance of the empty tomb for us today.
 - C. Title: The Empty Tomb
 - D. Purpose: Provoke people to embrace the historical reality of the empty tomb and embrace its' meaning in their life.
 - E. Spiritual Truth: The empty tomb changes everything.
- II. The empty tomb is a place where fear turns into faith
 - A. Matthew 28:1-8 (NLT) Early on Sunday morning...Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went out to visit the tomb. 2 Suddenly there was a great earthquake! For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, rolled aside the stone, and sat on it...4 **The guards shook with fear** when they saw him, and they fell into a dead faint. 5 Then the angel spoke to the women. "**Don't be afraid!**" he said. "I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. 6 He isn't here! He is risen from the dead...8 The women ran quickly

from the tomb. **They were very frightened but also filled with great joy**, and they rushed to give the disciples the angel's message.

- A.1. There was lots of fear at the empty tomb: Roman soldiers were shaking, disciples were hiding from the Romans, women who saw the angel were afraid.
- B. 2 kinds of fear: (1) The guards shook with fear, a picture of terror when an unbeliever confronts the reality of a Holy God. They're smug and confident when they have health, \$ and feel in control. It's different when they're on a Malaysian airliner about to crash...
- C. (2) Life makes us afraid, e.g. the disciples were afraid the Romans would kill them.
 - C.1. There's a lot to be afraid of: terrorist attack, stock market collapse, cancer, kids getting hurt, robbers, tornadoes, etc. Fear tells us the worst will happen but a follower of Christ can find peace in fearful circumstances, e.g. Knee surgery LaNell holds hand...then I was alone Is. 41:10 (ESV) **fear not, for I am with you**; ((NLT) don't be discouraged), for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you...
 - C.2. Where do you go when fear comes knocking? Fear turned into faith at the empty tomb; our fears will grow weaker when our faith becomes stronger.

III. The empty tomb is a place where skeptics should pause

- A. Where did the body go? There's no question that Jesus existed. There's no question He died. The Journal of AMA in 1986, commented on crucifixion and said that Jesus was dead before the sword pierced his heart and lungs, so what happened to the body?
- B. There are only 4 likely possibilities:
 - B.1. Disciples: if they took Him why would they die a martyr's death for a lie? They faced beatings, imprisonments, and death. No sane person suffers for what they know is false. Under such pressures, liars confess and betray their cohorts.
 - B.2. Jews: they were the ones who killed Him to protect their power. Why would they perpetuate a lie? They got soldiers to guard Him. If they had the body, they would have produced the body on Pentecost when Peter preached on the Resurrection.
 - B.3. Roman soldiers: 16 of the best equipped and trained soldiers in the world. They'd face death if a prisoner escaped. (Catch all argument) If theft was suspected, soldiers would have tried to find the body. There's no evidence a search was made.
 - B.4. He was resurrected by the power of God just like He said. Therefore, Jesus is the Son of God and His words are true.

B.5. Our culture has produced a culture of atheists and agnostics. The empty tomb demands an answer to the question, ‘where’s the body?’

IV. The empty tomb is a place where doubters become believers

A. John 20:25–29 (NIV) So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he (*Thomas*) said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands...and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.” 26 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and... though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them...27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. **Stop doubting and believe.**” 28 Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” 29 Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; **blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.**”

A.1. There was lots of doubt around the empty tomb. They’re like us. Facts, experts and experience mattered more than faith. After all, dead people don’t leave the cemetery but when a man who was dead talks to you, you become a believer real quick.

A.2. Jesus said, “Blessed are those who have **not seen and yet have believed.**” That’s us. We’d be better off if we stopped doubting and believed what God’s Word says.

A.3. Faith in God will help you face the future no matter what life brings. E.g. 18 months ago LaNell was diagnosed with breast cancer. After the Dr. told us I held her and said, “You’re more than just a boob.com; God isn’t done with you. You’re going to be ok”. We had faith for a miracle and no surgery; then we had faith for the right treatment plan and successful surgery. We had faith for a clean PET scan. John 20:29 **blessed are those who have not seen yet believe.**

A.4. What if nothing worked and she was dying. Our faith would say 2 Timothy 4:6–8 (NLT)...The time of my death is near. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. 8 And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord...will give me on the day of his return...

A.5. Not even death can stop our faith. The empty tomb says doubt your doubts and have faith in God and His Word.

B. New series “Voices” Noah. Involvement in a local church will help your spiritual life.

V. Conclusion: The empty tomb is a place where our failure gets a 2nd chance

A. Matthew 26:34 (NLT) Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, Peter...before the rooster crows, you will deny three times that you even know me.”

A.1. This was ultimate failure. He said he’d die 1st; he cursed when a girl accused him of knowing Jesus. Jesus is about to give a failure a 2nd chance.

B. Mark 16:5–7 (NCV) The women entered the tomb and saw a young man wearing a white robe...6 But the man said, “Don’t be afraid. You are looking for Jesus... He has risen from the dead; he is not here...7 Now go and tell his followers **and Peter**, ‘Jesus is going into Galilee ahead of you, and you will see him there as he told you before.’ ”

B.1. When we fail to be the person God wants us to be we feel ashamed, unworthy and ready to quit. Peter’s story tells us that Jesus doesn’t throw us away, He recycles us.

B.2. All of us have failed to live the life God intends us. It’s called sin. That’s why we need a Savior. Jesus forgave Peter and He wants to forgive us, too.

B.3. When Jesus called Peter ran to the tomb. He responded to Jesus invitation. It’s the same today. Jesus is calling us to follow Him. No matter what we’ve done, no matter how bad we’ve been Jesus can forgive and give us a new life.

VI. Response for Souls: He’s calling you. Now is the time to answer.