

Just Remember!
Remember what happened.
Remember what he said.
Remember what it means.

Grace mercy and peace are yours from God our Father through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ because Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

Brothers and sisters in that truth,

“Do you remember?” That’s a phrase that can end up in so many different ways, can’t it? It can have one effect when it’s spoken at a happy couple’s 50th wedding anniversary and a very different one when yelled in an argument, and a completely different effect from either of those when spoken at a funeral of someone you loved. Do you remember? Memories bring emotion. It’s as simple as that. Memories are why I usually can’t get through the hymn we’re going to sing after this sermon without choking up a little. Memories are why your best moments in life are so good. You remember what you went through to get there. And memories are why you find tears in your eyes when you least expect it. Do you remember? Yes, you do. It’s just a matter of what you remember, because memories change your life. **Just remember** – and things are very different.

That’s what we find out in our sermon text, our Gospel Lesson for this Easter Sunday. **Just Remember.**

It starts with some women remembering what they had been through the last few days. In order to understand this scene, just reading these few words doesn’t give you the whole context, the whole situation. You have to understand what they were feeling. So, I want you to first try to remember that feeling - conjure up some of your own memories – the ones you might probably rather forget. Remember a time when things didn’t work out at all like you had hoped – when, instead of huge success and popularity, you lost it all. Remember the rejection. Remember the loss. Remember the hole in your heart you felt at that funeral, the sense of pointlessness and emptiness. Just remember.

And now, in that context, read: **“On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.”** Remember that tomb? The last time they had been there, they had to hurry because they weren’t allowed to work on the Sabbath which was about to start. The last time they were there, they were helping Joseph and Nicodemus bury the lifeless body of their friend, their teacher, the One they had pinned their hopes on – now dead. They thought Jesus was going to be the One, but then that betrayer Judas gave him up, and the religious leaders handed him over, and the Roman Governor had condemned him. Nowhere was there justice, at least, that’s how they remembered it, even though they probably would have rather not.

So they went to the tomb that Sunday morning; arms full of spices, but hearts full of disappointment. Do you remember that feeling? Really, it still happens today whenever you remember all the challenges and see all the obstacles, but fail to remember who your God is. Have you had that feeling at the funeral of the loved one you depended on? Have you had that feeling when the bills stack up higher than the income? Have you had that feeling when friends fail and family judges and you don’t get your way? All you can remember, all you can see is the pain, the injustice, the hopelessness, the death.

You need to hear what those women heard. You need to remember what changes all that. There in the text: When the women got to the tomb – it was not what they had remembered. The stone blocking their access, separating them from their friend, was gone. The death that had been hovering had vanished. The darkness now was light – two angels as bright as lightning broke their darkness, not just with their appearance – but with their words. Let me read those. This is the really fun part of this job:

They said: **“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’”** Just remember what he said. He didn’t lose. That failure you thought you felt was victory. This shouldn’t surprise you, either. This is God. This is the Son of Man. This is the one who has and does and will keep every Word he ever gave you. You know that. Just remember it. When you get confused about what is going on in life, just remember. He said why he came. Jesus

had painted himself into a corner. If he was who they thought he was, he had to be alive. He had said what he would do. He said what it would mean.

Remember that? ...What he had said at Lazarus' about-to-be-empty grave... He told Martha: **"I am the resurrection and the life."** That's who he is. That's what he does. Remember what he said in that upper room just four days earlier, telling them that they wouldn't see him for a bit and then would see him, and then he said: **"Because I live, you also will live."** Remember?!

Those women came to the tomb expecting death because they didn't remember. They came, remember, with arms full of spices and hearts full of disappointment? But they left with hearts and lives exploding with Easter joy and real hope. What made the difference? They remembered. They remembered what had happened and put it in the perspective of what God said. So **just remember**. That's what makes the difference for you, too. Remember what has happened. Remember what he said. And remember what that means.

The Psalmist said it this way: Psalm 118, v. 17 – **"I will not die but live and will proclaim what the LORD has done."** Remembering the resurrection changes things. It changes what life is about. It changes what we are here for. Life is now about far more than distractions biding time until death.

I know, there are some times when we forget, when we live like this temporal life, this one that ends in death – with this body and this stuff and this to-do list – we live like that's what it is all about. And when we think and act like that – when my life becomes more important to me than His life – I really deserve to be separated not just from my life but from his life too. Because I am a sinner, I deserve hell. And you are right there with me.

That's when we need to go back to the tomb, we need to come back here to his Word, and hear the angels say it again: **"REMEMBER what he told you.** Remember what he has done. And remember why." Jesus went through all he did. He lived the perfect life and died the innocent death – to pay for your sins, to satisfy the demands of perfect justice for my failures, for my *forgetting* what really matters. Remember his cry of **"It is finished"**? Now live like he meant it. Live like those sins are really gone.

Remember what all this means. I stand before you today, dedicating my life to making you and me remember – because I am convinced that Jesus died. But he did not stay dead. He physically and actually rose from the dead and still lives with us and for us today. That is my certain hope. That is what defines me. That changes who I am and what I do. That changes my expectations, my priorities, my dreams, and even my sorrows. And God wants the remembrance of the reality of this resurrection to make all those same changes in your lives and in the lives of your loved ones and your neighbors, and really - all the world. That's why we're here as a church, isn't it? That's why we come back every Sunday and we dedicate time to studying God's Word – to remember, to put life in its real context. That's why we build our building, to give people a place to be reminded. That's why we get out and invite people to remember. Because remembering this really does change things – it took those women from the depths of despair to the thrill of sharing a victory (Without even seeing Him yet!) – and it does the same for us.

All that – because we remember. We remember that God punished his Son to free us. We remember that **God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.** Just remember what that cross, and that tomb, and that crown means. Remember what you know.

Job said it well. **I know that my redeemer lives and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh, I will see God. I myself will see him with my own eyes. I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!** Remembering that changed how Job handled things, didn't it?

So when your heart is broken, remember God's; when your body is weak, remember his strength; when you are standing at the graveside, remember his victory.

Remember Jesus' promises. Remember what he has done. Remember what you have coming. Remember that "all things are working together" for your eternal good. Remember that "nothing can separate you from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus." Remember, "When we are faithless, he must remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself;" and remember, He is preparing your place. Remember when love here fails, his doesn't. Remember that Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed. And that makes all the difference.

Alleluia! Amen.

Now may the peace of God that comes when we remember what he has done, the peace that passes all understanding – keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen.