

What is it that brought us here today? An empty tomb? That is not what brought these women. They came with spices. They came to care for the body of Jesus. An empty tomb is the last thing they were expecting to find.

These women were driven, not by faith, but by love. They loved Jesus. And so they came to anoint His dead body. But they did not believe that Jesus had risen from the dead, even though He had said that He would rise on the third day.

Love is greater than faith, for faith without love is dead. But love without faith is helpless. It cannot please God. It cannot save. It can do nothing, for apart from faith in Christ, it is nothing. These women had love for Jesus. What they need now is faith in Him. Not faith that He died. Faith that He had risen.

Again, I ask, what is it that brought us here today? Is it love or is it faith? We love Easter morning. Especially a beautiful morning such as this. We love to sing Easter hymns. We love to gather together on Easter to fellowship, to eat, to enjoy the day. And this is good. Easter love is a good thing. But it does have its limits. It is limited to Easter. After Easter it goes away until next Easter.

What we need is Easter faith. Faith in the Risen Lord Jesus Christ. This faith does not come from the empty tomb. It comes from the very one to which it clings, our Risen Lord Himself. And this faith does not go away after Easter. Not when it is fed and nourished in that place where we see Him. And that place is Galilee. "Go to Galilee," said the angel. "*Tell His disciples, and Peter, that He is going before you to Galilee. There you will see Him.*"

And so, my friends, welcome to Galilee. This is not that place outside of Jerusalem where they laid the body of Jesus. This is not the empty tomb. If it was, Jesus would not be here. Oh, but He is here. He is here for you. And this truth is what matters most of all.

You see, you and I resemble these women more than we might be willing to admit. Look at them. How scatterbrained. They realize along the way that they will not be able to enter the tomb because the stone guarding the entrance is much too heavy. Yet the stone is rolled away. They enter in and they see an angel. They are alarmed it says. In the Greek, the word means they are dumbfounded: bewildered, dazed, stupefied, stunned – take your pick. The angel tells them that Jesus has risen, and they should tell His disciples this good news. Yet they go out and flee from the tomb, and they say nothing to anyone because they are afraid.

Oh, that's not me, we say. I'm not afraid. And I am not dumbfounded. I may be scatterbrained at times, but I am in no way like these women.

Suit yourself. But we need to ask, what is the opposite of dumbfounded? It's this: casual, unemotional, bored, unimpressed, uninterested, indifferent, and so on. If we are not like these women, then when it comes to Jesus and His resurrection from the dead, rather than being dumbfounded, we are bored, unimpressed, uninterested, casual, and indifferent. And then I have to ask again, what is it really that brought us here today? And if it is not the same thing that

brings us here to Galilee Sunday after Sunday, then what brought us out this morning is Easter love and not Easter faith.

It is not a bad thing to admit, I am like these women. It is not wrong to say, "Yes, I am afraid, as were they. Afraid of too many things. And like them, I too often say nothing to anyone about Jesus." Are we too proud to admit such things? And to confess the real reason why we come out on Easter morning? That it's love and not faith so much?

Let's ask the Risen Lord Jesus why He is here this morning. And yes, He is here. For He has promised that where His words of life are faithfully proclaimed, and His Sacraments are truly offered and given, He is here in these holy things. As sure as His disciples would meet Him in Galilee, so sure and certain are we that the Risen Lord Jesus meets us here.

Why is He here? Not to condemn, but to forgive. It's why the angel specified to the women, "Tell Peter to go to Galilee." Because Peter had denied his Lord, and he was crushed with guilt. He needed forgiveness, and in Galilee Jesus forgave him.

That's why this is Galilee. Jesus is here to forgive your sins. Jesus is here to remove the load of guilt that is crushing you. He took your burden to the cross with Him. The very burden that you and I try to carry with us. But Jesus took it. It crushed Him. Your sin, with all its consequences, found its victim in Jesus. And it was buried with Jesus in His tomb. And it's still there. Jesus rose on the third day, but our sin and load of guilt did not rise.

So why do we act as if it did? Why do we believe in our risen and resurrected load of sin and guilt? Let's leave the tomb and stop digging around for our sins and the sins of our neighbor. Let's rejoice that this place is not the empty tomb, but that it's Galilee. And here with us is not our resurrected sin, but our resurrected Lord Jesus Christ.

And He says to each and everyone of you: You are forgiven of all your sin. You are forgiven. I took your sin and load of guilt, and I paid the price. It's over and done. I rose from the dead, but your sin did not. I live forevermore, and so will you who are baptized into My death and resurrection, because there all your sin is washed away.

Your baptism is Galilee. The Lord's Supper is Galilee. The word of forgiveness is Galilee. Because here in Galilee Jesus meets you. Not to crush you. To forgive you. Here in Galilee He gives you Easter faith. And not just on Easter and for Easter. But faith that day after day clings to He whom you love, your Risen Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.