

New Creation - Easter Morning

by Michael Flowers

The sermon explores the theme of new creation through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, emphasizing hope and renewal for believers.

Duration: 24:57

Scripture: Genesis 3:9, Exodus 20:8-11, Matthew 28:1, John 20:2-19

Topics: "Easter"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the story of Mary Magdalene and the empty tomb of Jesus. He highlights the initial confusion and despair felt by Jesus' followers, including Mary, as they discovered the empty tomb. Peter and John rush to the tomb upon hearing the news, symbolizing the frantic movement in the midst of darkness that can be seen in our own lives. The speaker emphasizes the paradox of rejoicing in the resurrection of Christ while still living in a world filled with pain and darkness. He concludes by discussing the encounter between Mary and Jesus, where Jesus appears in a different form and instructs Mary not to cling to him.

Transcript

I want to speak about new creation. The past week, we journeyed through the rhythms of Holy Week, the week of Jesus. In John's Gospel, the sixth day of Holy Week, Jesus is accused as the man to be condemned.

And Pilate says, under unconscious inspiration, Behold the Anthropos. The same word used in the book of Genesis, in the Greek Septuagint. The man, the new Adam, who is coming to affect new creation.

Behold the man. And the sixth day in Genesis, human beings are created. And then creation is complete.

On John's sixth day, Good Friday, Jesus, the second Adam, offers himself as the perpetrator of the sins of the whole world. And on John's sixth day, the new Adam, identified as the man, is better understood as the human being. The new representative of humanity.

Not merely, but representative of all humanity. In Jesus Christ. On the seventh day of Genesis, God is at rest from his work.

And on the seventh day, in Holy Week, Jesus, crucified, died and buried, rests in his tomb. An unknown man, for a moment, descends into the realm of the dead at his death. You see this, somewhat, in the icon.

And now we come to the first day of the week after his passing. And as darkness is over the surface of the deep, on the first day of creation, in John's first day, we begin in great darkness. Great disillusion.

Literal darkness, for sure, because it's early. But, these intimate followers of Jesus, disillusioned in their mourning and grieving. And so, on the first day of the week, begins our reading, John chapter 20.

Mary angrily comes to the tomb, very early, while it is still. John is illustrating that the one who spoke all creation into being, the Word, the Word, in the beginning, was the Word, descended into the womb of Mary, and became a human being. Jesus Christ, the Word, made flesh.

And the very purpose of this descent, into the inner life of humanity, is to make all things new. New creation is John's whole storyline. Throughout his whole gospel, he's ripping, as it were, off of the story of Genesis, and he's pairing the first Adam, and the second Adam, and the events of creation, and showing that Jesus, our Creator, through whom all things were made, is the second Adam, the new humanity, coming to make almost a re-creation.

It's new creation. And this work of new creation begins in the glorified Jesus Christ. This is the beginning of the renewal.

In Jesus is the beginning. In the glorified Christ, the risen Word, is the beginning of new creation. What new creation is what? Mary saw that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb.

It was a gift. Her heart is broken. And yes, we celebrate this morning, and we enter into the story, not a story of the mere past, but we're entering in to the eternal story that is now in the eternal realm with saints and angels and archangels.

And Christ has brought us there. If you have been risen with Christ, keep seeking the things. And in this risen Christ, we have come to the spiritual Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, around the throne of God, and we shall partake this morning the feast of the resurrection.

Christ has died, Christ is risen, and Christ will come again. It's good news. You can ring a bell.

Come on, yeah. Yeah, there we go. You can ring a bell this morning for an amen.

It's okay. I'm the noisy guy. Last night I was so loud.

You can sing on key. Right, by the way? It's joyful noise. It's joyful noise.

Keep the joyful noise going. And that joyful noise is a joyful noise in the midst of paradox going on. We're here rejoicing, by faith, in the resurrection of Christ.

But we all know it's just heavenly life right now. We're living where God came into our existence and experienced what we experienced. You see, He's not a God who is some sort of spirit being in heaven.

He came down in the flesh, in human flesh, and became one of us with all of our great weaknesses. I don't know about you, but I am in touch with one right now. You know what I'm saying? Yeah, and in our weakness, Paul says, He has been strong.

God chose to become weak so that we could become like God. He chose to become like us so that we might become like Him. Now that's not a continuum, brothers and sisters, until we see Him.

So we're striving more every day based on this is the day that the Lord has acted, that we can, by faith, live in to the same. Only He is holy, and He shares His holiness, His being with us, and we are becoming more and more like Him in the image of light. It's so beautiful.

Christianity is not a one-off. Oh, you know, I prayed the prayer, and now it's over. No, you prayed the prayer, and it only began.

And you are in a constant state of becoming more and more like Him. This is the day that the Lord has acted. Amen? Amen.

Let me hear a bell. We're a little timid in the bell system. Come on.

But again, we go up and down on this, right? Great darkness. At the dawning of the first creation and at the dawning of the new creation, the tomb was empty, and His closest disciples didn't get it. So they were crushed.

They were disillusioned. They were heartbroken. And through Him this morning in the midst of all this, and the first discipleship, there's hope in our hearts.

And you may not even be in touch with that hope. That's okay, too. The stone.

There's a stone there, too, you guys. It symbolizes the great barrier, the great separation that death introduces. And the emptiness of the tomb increases the lack.

Okay? It just increases the lack. There is some closure. And Mary Magdalene, present with Jesus in His travels, crucifixion, and she's mentioned 12 times in the four Gospels, more than most.

Mary Magdalene carries a dramatic testimony having been delivered by Jesus. And now it would appear that the darkness of the morning points to the darkness of the moment. The emptiness of the tomb describes the emptiness.

At sight, the heavy stone removed from the tomb, she begins to run. She ran. Came the leader, John, and said, They have taken away the war.

They've taken it out of the tomb. And we don't know where they've blamed them. Defeat.

It seems for all of Jesus' followers, including Mary, that what was so hopeful is turning back. Death's dark reign seems to have the final word. Everyone seems to be running in this early morning light.

His followers have not yet understood. Peter and John, you know, they were racing each other. This frantic movement in the midst of darkness, doesn't it say something about our lives this morning of just trying to just make it through? We're running and not realizing.

And while they grieve, Christ is glorified. While they despair, Christ is the victor. He's the victor over sin and death.

And isn't it so in our dark moments? While we grieve, Christ is glorified. While we despair, Christ is the victor. At this very moment, Peter and John run to the tomb and scoot down to see neatly folded cloth.

Something about Jesus. It's not like my office. Or my door.

You know, I'm told I find where all his socks, I mean, if I was David, I'd know. Because I knew he was a disciplined person. And I aspire to that.

But I'm hopeless. It would be great to scare him, because if I were to pull out your door, he should walk through mine. But I guarantee, your door doesn't.

Yeah. First of all, we're on the same team. We're going to the same place.

Amen. And so, notice this. Those two running together, Peter and John.

Peter runs slightly. He's weighed down with guilt. His three denials of Jesus.

And John, the loving one, the petulant one, runs more actively. But, you know, John is less troubled. And upon arrival, John confers, even though he gets there first, and allows Peter to enter the tomb.

The two disciples see the same scene, but with differing conclusions. Peter is weighed down with his failure, and he sees the cloth, but fails to understand. John sees the cloth, and Scripture says, and he believes.

Perhaps he muses, who would rob a tomb and clean up behind it? It doesn't make sense. You don't have to be spiritual to even think about it. I've had my car broken into, and I get it cleaned up after.

Everything out of my glove box, and everything. But not Jesus. He cleans up.

Where it is necessary, right? Yep. He cleans up. Yay! Ha ha ha! Okay.

Yeah. But they both run away. They both run away, and abandon Mary right there in her grief.

Mary is visited by two angels. See, the guy is weighed, and then the angels come. Ha ha! That's what happened.

They left, because they did not understand her pain. They left her. Some pastors, they are, right? They would become better, but they failed to care for her.

Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will scatter, and live away. And so they run home, these two super apostles. And these two angels appear, and ask her a question.

All these beautiful questions, like, Adam, they've taken away the body of the Lord. And when she said this, Jesus appears, a different form. He appears as, as a worthy partner.

The gardener of the new Eden. John is not wasting any words here. Still back in Genesis 1-2.

And so she wants to know Jesus from the past, and reach it out, out in a different form. Someday he will. He only says, do not clean.

So come Lord. He does not appear vindictive. He's not reappearing to.

He said from the cross, he called a whole host of angels. Human weakness. Unto the end.

And so he appears to Mary, holding her in the garden. One on one. Resurrection, encounter.

Brothers and sisters, we will continue. Resurrection, encounter. Let the gardener come.

He is the vine. He is the true vine. And we are his branches.

And he does some pruning. Yeah. We need the pruning.

Let the gardener do the pruning. It's Adam's love. Kind of a little barren.

You ever feel, what the word has done in your life? It's good for the season. Man, the flowers. Season of singing.

So Mary, she is told to announce the gospel to the one who abandoned her. Think about it. You're a woman.

You're Mary Magdalene. And you're the one to go back to the super apostles in 7th century. Hey, after you left, the Lord appeared and showed up.

And had a couple of angels too. Too bad you left, right? That's not the message. That's not the message.

St. Augustine calls Mary the apostle. And Mary was the apostle to the apostles. Being the first to see that she hung out.

That's why we were the last, we were the last three to leave last night. But it was only rain. Yeah.

That's what the building does for you, right? We didn't do that, so. No, we went out to the barbershop. So you get the message, don't you? Christ is rising.

Christ is rising. He's coming in between the final coming. There's many comings.

He will come and glory in the church. I'm going to end with something here that I think you'll enjoy. From the liturgy of St. Basil.

I just want you to hear the proclamation of the gospel. Be glad, O heavens, sound trumpets o'er the foundations of the earth. Sing gladness, O mountains.

Behold, Emmanuel has nailed our sins to the cross. Granting life, he has slain death. He has resurrected Adam as the lover of man.

Today, hell cries out, groaning. I should not have accepted the man born of Mary. He came and destroyed my power.

He shattered the gates of brass. As God, he raised the souls that I had held captive. Glory to your cross and resurrection, O Lord.

Today, hell cries out, groaning. My dominion has been... I received a dead man as one of the dead. But against him, I could not... For eternity, I have ruled the dead and behold, he raises all.

Because of him, do I perish. Glory to your cross and resurrection, O Lord. Today, hell cries out, groaning.

My power has been trampled down. The shepherd is crucified. I have been deprived of those whom I swallowed in my sleep.

I have pained enough. He who is crucified has emptied the tombs. The power of death has been vanquished.

Glory to your cross and resurrection. The great Moses, mystically fortunate, when he said, God bless the seventh day. This is the blessed Sabbath.

This is the day of rest on which the only begotten Son has gone, by suffering death to forfeit, by returning again to what he was. He has granted us eternal life. For he alone is good and the lover of humanity.

Glory to the Father and to the Son, as it was in the beginning, is now, world without end. Amen.

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