

Welcome to the Empty Tomb

Easter Sunday
April 9, 2023
Pastor Matthew Ude
INI – SDG

Matthew 28:2 And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it.

The angels roll back the tomb and they sit there. Who are they waiting for?

In the gospels it is the women who come first to the tomb. They see the empty tomb and hear the angels, but the tomb is empty, and the angels are sitting there. Anyone could come to hear and see.

It is really a sad thing that no one else comes. The women come of whom there were at least five but could have been more. Peter and John come. Other than that, we don't know that anyone else came to look at the tomb.

One would think the other apostles would come and look especially after Peter and John bring back news.

One would think the leaders of the Jews would come and look, to make sure the body was really gone.

Christ's tomb is open, and the angels sit waiting for anyone who wants to come, but only seven people ever come to check it out.

There is an ancient sermon given around 400 AD by a pastor known as John Chrysostom. In this sermon John welcomes everyone to the Easter service.

He welcomes the dedicated, those who have fasted throughout lent and have been to every service. That means not just Maundy Thursday and good Friday but every day of the week and the easter vigil. They were up all night. Now, they receive the reward for their dedication.

He welcomes the catechumens, those who are just learning about Christ and now ready to be baptized. It was common back then for people to be baptized on Easter Sunday. In fact, the word Easter might come from an old Germanic word meaning "to wash." So welcome to those who have been waiting to be part of the church and now have the chance to be baptized into Christ.

Welcome to those we haven't seen in a while. The ones who show up for church maybe just on Easter day and aren't really seen at church the rest of the year. They are welcome.

Welcome to the penitent, those who left the church because they preferred to live sin, but now they wish to repent and return to the peace of Christ. They too are welcome.

Welcome to the strangers, those who maybe just wandered in off the street.

All are welcome, for Christ is risen from the dead and the tomb is empty. There is no more sin and there is no more death. There is no difference between the penitent and the catechumen, between the faithful and the stranger for all are washed clean in the blood of Christ.

The angels sit there waiting for anyone who wants to come and to see that the Lord is risen indeed.

One of our young men here was talking the other day about how when he was young, he always wanted to go to Wednesday Lenten services. His mother would only take one child, so it was always special when it was his turn. We were joking about how we should only let VIPs into church and then people would really appreciate coming.

But of course, that is not how God does things. The tomb of Christ is not a place for exclusivity, it is wide open for all to see that it is empty.

So welcome all. Welcome those have been steadfast in faith, and welcome all who have failed, and fallen and slipped up. Welcome to the empty tomb, to the day of the Lord's resurrection, to the forgiveness which God gives to all, and to the life which is ours through Jesus Christ.

Come to the tomb and see that the Lord is risen indeed, and death is vanquished.

Come to the congregation of the firstborn and know the fellowship of those who live with Christ.

Come to the embrace of the Father who has received His lost children with joy.

Come to the morning star and the dawn of heaven to the beginning of eternity.

Come to the victory of the Lamb.

For the tomb is empty and the Lord is risen, and the angels, and all the saints and the Lamb who was slain wait and wait for anyone who will come and see and hear.

1 Corinthians 15:55-57 55 "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.