

# “The Easter Promise” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Easter Sunday March 31, 2024

- I. **Luke 24:8** - <sup>8</sup> And they remembered His words.
- II. **I want to start by telling a story about the power of a promise.**
  - a. I read about a couple who bought a leather sofa, and the company that manufactured the sofa made a promise.
    - i. It went like this: If you purchase a warranty to repair any damage to the leather, but never need any repairs, then after seven years you get a credit for \$180.
    - ii. The husband forgot about the promise... but not the wife.
    - iii. Seven years goes by, and the couple did nothing... well except live their lives and sit on their leather sofa...
    - iv. At the end of seven years, the husband had completely forgotten about the promise... and in fact, didn't even believe the wife when she told him about it!
    - v. But they went back to the store where they bought the sofa and took their receipt with them (because the wife was also very good at keeping records) and asked for the promise to be kept.
    - vi. The store kept the promise and gave them a \$180 credit.
    - vii. With that money, they saw a really nice bookcase on sale and used the money to buy it... which stands in their living room next to their leather sofa to this day.
    - viii. Every time the husband walks by that bookcase, he remembers how they got it and is amazed at the power of the promise – even though he didn't believe it!
    - ix. The promise was powerful, whether he believed it or not.
  - b. Our reading this morning from Luke 24 shows us the power of a promise.
    - i. It's a promise that was good because of who made it.
    - ii. It's a promise that was good...
      1. ...even though some people forgot about it.
      2. ...even though some people just assumed it was no good.
      3. ...even though some people didn't believe it at all.
    - iii. However, as the women went to the tomb early on that first Easter morning, a couple of angels reminded them of the promise.
      1. Remember... remember the words that Jesus told you about what would happen... remember the promise.
  - c. The promise came true back then, and that same promise is true today.
    - i. The Easter promise is that Jesus would die on a cross to pay for our sin but would rise from the dead in victory.
- III. **Promises, promises**... (sigh)
  - a. You've probably heard someone say that before, and you know it means that all kinds of promises in the world aren't kept.

- b. It makes sense that many of us cynical when it comes to promises kept.
  - i. We are headed into an election in November, and the promises from politicians will flow freely... yet very few will be kept.
  - ii. How many times have our friends or family... our employers or businesses... or even members of our church made promises they did not keep?
  - iii. Even we have made many promises we couldn't keep – as we look over the past and remember where we fell short of promises we made to others... or even ourselves.
- c. Sometimes the promises are broken because of outside forces...
  - i. For example, a company goes bankrupt and their promise to fix a broken product becomes void.
  - ii. Covid was the cause of many broken promises – whether it was birthday parties, weddings, graduations, house warmings, and celebrations of all types canceled... trips and vacations postponed... and who knows how many other promises could not be kept because of the pandemic.
- d. When it came to Jesus, evil was trying its best to stop Him from keeping His Easter promise...
  - i. Satan was behind all kinds of people and situations that were meant for evil.
  - ii. The religious leaders did everything in their power to stop Jesus... and they succeeded in getting Judas to betray Him, get Jesus arrested falsely, have Him beaten and tortured, and condemned by the Roman government.
  - iii. And even His own disciples abandoned and denied Him in His final hours.
  - iv. Satan and the power of evil did everything possible to break the Easter promise.
- e. But I want to remind you again, the power of a promise is based on the one who made the promise.
  - i. When the power behind the promise is God, nothing can break it, not even evil.

IV. **As the women approached the tomb, their hearts were heavy.**

- a. Maybe you've heard of the person pronounced dead but it was a mistake?
  - i. Recently in the news here in Portland, a man was pronounced dead because his stolen ID was in the pocket of someone who overdosed.
  - ii. The family was notified of his death, but he called his sister and she couldn't believe it... he was actually alive!
- b. This is not the same situation, because Jesus really was crucified, died, and was buried.
  - i. The women going to that tomb were expecting to take care of a body, which was placed there at sunset on Friday.

- c. Yet, the first sign was the stone was rolled away from the tomb... then... no body to be found... and finally the angels give them the news.
  - i. He is risen! **He is risen indeed, Alleluia!**
- d. Our Lord Jesus took all our sin and all the evil in the world upon Himself... dying as the innocent Son of God...
  - i. We call it the great exchange – He died to pay for our sin, while we receive forgiveness, and life, and salvation in return.
- e. But as I always say in our lambs’ lesson, “He didn’t stay dead!”
  - i. And He had to rise.... He had to, because Jesus came to bring light into darkness, and to drive back the power of evil.
  - ii. And the most unexpected... amazing... saving promise meant that God would take the evil and use it for good.
  - iii. Death was undone... The tomb was opened and empty.
  - iv. This is the promise, and it happened because of the one who made it—Jesus did, in the power of the Father’s plan.
  - v. Easter is not about the women, or about the apostles, or about you or me... It’s all about the One who made and kept the promise.
  - vi. As He promised, Christ is risen! [**He is risen indeed!**] Alleluia.
- f. A promise... any promise... is an invitation to trust... to faith.
  - i. The promise says, “You have nothing—let me give you everything.”
  - ii. Evil may try to separate you, but when you have faith, nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:39)
  - iii. This promise is for everyone here—and that means that even if you have not believed the promise, you have sinned against God and your neighbor... or any other evil that has come from you... God will forgive you, for Jesus’s sake, because the Lord died and rose.
    - 1. Your sins are removed, you are forgiven through the Easter promise.
- g. What happens when you go from here?
  - i. No one knows except God, and yet, I wonder, if God is able to take all the world’s evil and use it for good – what can He do with someone like you... or someone like me?
  - ii. This is the power of the Easter promise... Because God made the promise, and He meant it for good. Amen.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sermon based on: “You Meant It for Evil, but God Meant It for Good: An Ash Wednesday through Easter Sunday Sermon Series. Based on the Gospel of Luke”, Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Gibbs, Concordia Seminary Publishing, St. Louis, 2022