



THE SERVANT

The monthly newsletter of Servants of Christ Lutheran Church, a congregation of The North American Lutheran Church serving the Cedar Rapids area

Meeting at Robins City Hall Community Room, 265 South Second St., Robins, Iowa 52328
Worship: 9:00 am; Fellowship & Coffee: 10:00;
Bible Class and Sunday School: 10:15
Ronald Voss, Pastor cell: 563-206-4611; land: 563-682-7359

***** **April 2021**



The Empty Tomb



Dear Servant of Christ,

If you had to pick one symbol to represent Christianity, the vast majority would probably pick the Cross. It's in churches (all over); it's in cemeteries; it's on clothing; currently, it's found on face masks. And crosses of all shapes, sizes, and colors are used for jewelry, specifically necklaces. But the empty tomb, discovered by the women and disciples on Easter Sunday? Not so much. And I'd wager you have never seen a necklace with an empty tomb pendant. Even unbelievers recognize the cross, but if an empty tomb necklace was worn, people might lean closer, squint eyes, and finally even ask, "What is that?"

And yet, as much as the cross represents our salvation through Christ, the empty tomb proclaims as much, if not more, of that message. The joyous proclamation on Easter is "He is risen! He is risen indeed!" which means Jesus is alive . . . which means the tomb is empty!

Many Christians believe, or have even been taught, that the stone was rolled away so Jesus could "get out." If you really think about that, you have to laugh. The Creator of the world (along with the Father and Spirit), the Son of God, the Alpha and Omega, needs *help* getting out of a confined space??????? In reality, the stone was rolled away not so Jesus could get out but that we, His followers, could be invited in.



The empty tomb invites us in so we have visual proof that Jesus is not there. The women went early to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus, found the stone rolled away, heard Jesus was alive, and ran back to tell the disciples. Luke 24:11 reports the reaction of the disciples: "They did not believe the women." So Peter and John took off, running towards the tomb to "see for themselves." (next page)

John 20:3-10 shares that John got there first but came to a screeching halt and only peered in. Impetuous Peter ran right in, stopped and stared bug-eyed at the grave cloths . . .the *empty* grave cloths. The “visual proof” was in many ways no visual but rather a tomb minus a body. The empty tomb was a precursor to the next 40 days as Jesus would appear to the disciples in the Upper Room: visual proof. He appeared a second time to help Thomas in his doubt, even showing Thomas the nail wounds on His body. Visual proof. Jesus built a fire on the lakeshore and cooked fish for his disciples as they unloaded their boat . . . visual proof. He had dinner with two followers from Emmaus . . . visual proof. St. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians that over the 40 days Jesus appeared to over 500 (yep, 500). Empty Tomb:Visual Proof.



The empty tomb invites us in to remember the promises of Jesus.

Mark 9:31 records, "For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, 'The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.'" The same promise is recorded in Luke 24:7. You have heard the phrase "in one ear and out the other?" That seemed to happen a lot to the disciples. But the empty tomb provided a “flash backwards” of things Jesus had said and promised. There is not enough space to list all of Jesus’ promises, and that’s okay. Because the empty tomb doesn’t require a perfect memory, just a big smile of gratitude.



The empty tomb invites us to anchor our hope.

Again from St. Paul, 1 Corinthians 15:57: Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Or how about those words of assurance from John 14? “My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” Pull out the LBW and read again the verses of hymn 294, “My Hope is Built on Nothing Less.” That hope leads back to that empty tomb.

If you find a lapel pin or necklace displaying an empty tomb, let me know. But remember, the important thing is you wear the empty tomb in your heart and live in its proof, promises, and hope every day of your life. “He is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!” Thanks be to God.

Sharing the hope with you,
Ron



The NALC 2020 Vision: a 10-Point Plan

The NALC is a mission-minded, mission committed church.

The following represents a 2020 Vision for the North American Lutheran Church. The development of this Vision has included input from NALC Staff, Executive Council, Mission District Deans, the NALS President and Board of Regents, and other appropriate parties. This was approved by the NALC Convocation this past August.

This plan supports the Four Core Values of the NALC. It also represents the commitments we are striving to accomplish withing the next four years. By the year 2023, we see . . .

4. A Continuing Education emphasis that supports the ongoing development of all NALC pastors and lay leaders. The immediate goal is the expansion and promotion of continuing education opportunities.

Encourage pastors to take at least one continuing ed class each year.

Offer courses in various disciplines (preaching, discipleship, stewardship, etc.).

Consider offerings to encourage pastoral self-care, including emotional, spiritual, and physical well-being.

Mission Giving for April

NALC General Fund: \$667 (2021 support for this outreach is \$8,000)

NALC Seminary: \$1,000

Water Mission: \$500 plus Lenten offerings plus Thrivent gift

Our 2021 Mission Spending Plan has been expanded to \$24,550, a \$10,000 increase from 2020.

The Gospel of Mark

Study continues in March

Topics include:

The Messiah Arrives
Who Speaks for God?
Fruitful and Unfruitful Soil
Fear and Faith
The Training of the Twelve
Unclean?
The Unexpected Mission
The Right Question
The Fruitless Tree
What Matters Now
Betrayal
End and Beginning



Join us following worship each Sunday.

Holy Week Schedule at Servants of Christ

(all services held in Robins City Hall Community Room_

Palm Sunday: March 28, Procession of Palms

Maundy Thursday: April 1, 6:30 pm, worship and Holy Communion

Good Friday: April 2, 6:30 pm, worship

Easter: the resurrection of our Lord: 9:00 celebration worship



On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." John 7:37-38

One of the I AM statements about Jesus is His claim to being "living water." He alone can satisfy our ultimate thirst for life, hope, forgiveness, renewal. Having said that, we all know that drinking water is an essential for life. We can go without food for days, even weeks, but without water, life can end in three days.

As Christians we are called to proclaim the Living Water, Jesus Christ. As Christians we are also called to provide physical water to our fellow human beings. That is why Servants of Christ supports Water Mission, a ministry that provides clean water to those in need around the world.

WATER MISSION

Remember in prayer our missionaries in Madagascar, Tsaramana: Daniel and Josoa Omena.

Be Faithful In:

Worship

Daily reading of Scripture

Inviting others to worship with you

Tithing

Responding to the needs of oth-