

Easter Sunrise A, 2011

Text: John 20:1-18

Title: No More Tears

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Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

There is a time for tears. There is a time to mourn and be sad. There is a time to reflect on the pain and sorrow and anguish that fill this life, and to have a good cry.

But that day is not today. Today is not a day for tears.

Mary had been crying. It had been an exhausting weekend. She woke up Friday morning to hear that her nightmares had come true, and that her Jesus had been arrested. She had watched him stumble His way through the streets of Jerusalem. She watched them nail Him to a cross. And she stood at a distance for three long hours watching Him die. And she had cried every minute.

There wasn't even time for a proper burial, a proper time of mourning because of the Sabbath, and so she had to spend Saturday waiting and crying.

Even before the sun rose, Mary was up to go to the tomb and do what she could to show Jesus her love, but when she got there the body was gone.

Mary ran to tell Peter and John the terrible news and then slowly made her way back to the garden.

When she got back to the tomb, there was nothing left to do but cry.

But as she stoops to take a second look, she sees two angels. The angels ask her about her tears, and so she answers them and turns away from the tomb, only to see a gardener there.

But the gardener is Jesus, and when He speaks her name the nightmare ends and she has her Jesus back. No more crying for Mary.

What about you? Why are you crying?

What has given you reason to cry in the past year? Whatever has caused your crying, Jesus is here, risen today as the answer to your tears.

Have you been touched by death in the past year? Has someone near and dear to you died?

Last Easter at our sunrise service, Mary Dwyer was baptized. And then, four months later she died. In the past year James Hendler, Butch Breitbarth, Michelle Vaughan, Nancy Johnson,

Evelyn Luer, Bob Rafac, and Steve Johnson have all died, and we have mourned their deaths together.

Many of you have lost parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles recently.

And death is a time to cry.

Jesus Christ Himself wept at the death of His good friend Lazarus.

But Jesus Christ has come to put an end to death. His resurrection shows that He has defeated death and will put an end to it. Through His own death, Jesus has destroyed death itself, and now comes to bring life.

On Good Friday, Jesus put an end to the big death, eternal death, the death of our souls, the hell that our sins deserve. Jesus was abandoned His heavenly Father, and died the big death there on the cross.

Because of Good Friday, we do not receive the death in hell that our sins deserve. Because of Good Friday, we do not need to worry about eternal death in hell.

On Easter Sunday, Jesus puts an end to the little death, the death of our bodies, when our heart stops beating and our bodies return to dust. Jesus shows us that there is life after death, real life, physical life, so that even though we die, we know that we will rise again, just as Jesus has this Easter day.

Go ahead and mourn and cry at funerals or when you remember your loved ones.

But know this: Death has been defeated. Death does not have the last word. There will be a resurrection on the last day because of Easter Sunday. You and your loved ones will rise, just as Jesus rose from the dead. Death was not the end for Jesus, and so death will not be the end for you.

Jesus' resurrection is the answer to our tears in the face of death.

But there are other reasons why we cry.

Sometimes sin itself can bring you to tears. When you consider what you've done, the mistakes that you've made, and how you've hurt the ones you love, the tears will flow.

When Peter realized what he had done when He betrayed Jesus, when that reality hit home for him, He went away and He wept bitterly. Peter cried, too. Not for the same reasons that Mary did, but because of His sinfulness.

Even if you aren't moved to tears, your sin should make you sad and sorrowful. Sin is a big deal. Your sin put Jesus on the cross. It was your sin that caused Jesus to die. Not a single person here is innocent.

Your sin not only put Jesus to death, it wreaks havoc in your life in so many ways. Not only have you sinned by what you've done, you've sinned by what you've failed to do- people you've failed to help. You've sinned not only by your actions but by your words- selfish, hurtful, mean words, that tear down rather than building up. You've even sinned by your thoughts, whether thoughts of anger and hatred, thoughts of desire and lust, or even covetous thoughts, wanting what you don't have.

When you stop and think about the depth of your sinfulness, it can only lead to tears- often tears of desperation. How could anyone ever love someone like me?

Jesus does. Jesus rose for Mary, and for Peter and for you, too.

He died for those sins, and His resurrection shows that God the Father has accepted His sacrifice and you are forgiven. Good Friday is enough, no further death is needed.

Jesus bore your sins, and not only died, but rose again.

So it will be with you. You will not be able to stop sinning. You will never be free from sin in this life. But when you are raised from the dead, you will no longer sin.

Think of the joy that will bring you in the resurrection! You will never hurt anyone again. You will never fall short and disappoint others. You will never lie or break your promises. What joy there will be to live like that!

Sin and death cause us no end of tears in this life. You have cried, and you will cry again. But not today.

Today death has been conquered by life. Today sin has been answered for.

Sing, shout for joy!

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!