

Sermon for March 27, 2016
Easter Sunday
"Get it?' 'Got it!' 'Good!'"

John 20:1-18

I need your help today. The Easter sermon is probably the most important sermon that a preacher preaches each year. Its message is central to the Christian faith. The Good News of Jesus' resurrection and new life is a message that everyone needs to hear. That's especially true in this age when so many lack hope.

The problem is that I am never quite sure if I've gotten through. The Easter message is so important, yet I am never sure it is heard and understood. I know that some people miss the significance of the good news that Jesus is alive. I know that because they leave church on Easter Sunday unchanged.

So I need some feedback. I need you to tell me when you have gotten what I am saying. At key points in the sermon I will say, "Get it?" If you get the point, then you respond, "Got it!" If you don't get the point just sit there and stare back at me blankly and I will get the point. Based on the enthusiasm of your "Got it," I will decide how best to proceed. If I feel enough of you are sure you got it, I will say, "Good!" and move on. I say, "Get it?" If you get it, you say, "Got it!" If you don't get it, you say nothing. If you get it, I respond, "Good."

"Get it?" "Got it!" "Good!"

Jesus was nailed to a cross and crucified. It was late Friday afternoon when he finally died and they took him off the cross. It was so late that they had to rush to get his body in the tomb before the Sabbath started at sunset. There wasn't time to properly prepare his body for burial. So early Sunday morning Mary Magdalene set out for the tomb to finish anointing Jesus' body for burial.

To her amazement the tomb was open; the stone was rolled away! She saw two men dressed in white, angels. They said, "Why are you weeping?" Then she ran into Jesus herself. Jesus living and breathing in the flesh.

He is alive! That is the good news of Easter! He had died on a cross, but now he lives again! His heart was pumping blood. His lungs were breathing air. His brain was actively comprehending its environment! All his vital organs were functioning properly! Jesus may even have still been bleeding a little from the wounds that had killed him. Jesus who had died on a cross was a living breathing walking talking person again!

"Get it?" "Got it!" "Good!"

But at first Mary didn't get it. Instead of being excited she ran thinking that his body was stolen. That is what she told Peter and the other disciple. They went to see for themselves and they believed; not that he was risen but that his body was stolen! But something more had happened here than just the resuscitation of Jesus' corpse.

Let me take you a step further into the significance of the resurrection. Imagine that someone very close to you falls critically ill. Perhaps a spouse or parent or child; it

is someone upon whom you depend at deep emotional level. Now imagine that you watch them die. The end is near and the family gathers. Maybe it is in a hospital or at home. The friends and preacher are there too. And this loved one dies. The doctor pronounces them dead and they take the body.

Then, the morning of the funeral, you go to the funeral home for a last look at the body. There in the room, where the night before you had received comfort from friends, stands an open and empty coffin. And there stands a man in a white suite. He doesn't look like any of the funeral home employees you have seen before. He says, "Don't be alarmed. You are looking for So and So who died of cancer" or "heart disease" or "in an accident." "She is not here," or "he is alive!"

You see Easter is about more than one man rising from the dead. It is about the promise that all who believe will rise again. The Bible says that Jesus is the first fruits of the resurrection. The Good News of Easter is that God promises eternal life to any who will embrace it.

"Get it?" "Got it!" "Good!"

But wait, there's more. Imagine that you are critically ill. You are dying. You feel your life slowly slipping away. Then the darkness closes in on you and the noises of the world seem farther and farther away. Then the blackness of death separates you from reality.

But imagine that suddenly there is a flash of light. And a man in a white coat is standing over you. He doesn't look like any of the doctors or nurses you remember. He says, "Don't be frightened. A minuet ago you were dead, but you're alive now!"

The Bible says that we were all dead because of our sins. Yet, we have been made alive together with Christ. We were all spiritually dead, but those who believe are alive. The Good News of Easter is not merely that Jesus rose again. It is the Good News of our resurrection, or at least the potential for our resurrection. Easter is not just about Jesus' new life, but it is about our new life as well. And it is not just resurrection to life after death but it encompasses resurrection in our current lives to new and abundant life full of meaning and purpose.

"Get it?" "Got it!" "Good!"

If you really do "get it," you will leave here a different person. The Good News of Easter has a cosmic significance. When that cosmic significance is truly realized, it changes a person's life. If you are not sure you "got it" then I urge you to talk to a Christian friend. They can pray with you and help you "get it."

Easter is not just about Jesus coming back to life. It is about us coming to life. If you really "got it" then live it. Live your new life for Christ!

Don't be bewildered or frightened. But go and tell the others. Tell them not only that He is alive. But that He made you alive too!

"Get it?" "Got it!" "Good!"