

Sermon for The Funeral for Wanita Aileen Pfeifer

Date: January 25, 2020

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: Isaiah 65:17-19, 24-25

Epistle Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:19-26

Gospel Reading: Luke 24:1-10



Sermon Text: Luke 24:1-10

Sermon Title: Not Better. New!

Hymns:

LSB 739 – Precious Lord, Take My Hands

This World Is Not My Home

LSB 744 – Amazing Grace



Pastor James Groleau
St. John's Lutheran Church
1200 13th Avenue NW
Austin, MN 55912
Office: (507) 433-2642
Shepherd@JamesPlace.net
StJohnsAustinLCMS.org
FaceBook.com/StJohnsAustin
Twitter.com@StJohnsAustinMN
FaceBook.com/Shepherd.James.Groleau
KAUS 1480 AM Sun. 9:00am



Text: Luke 24:1-10

Very early on Sunday morning the women went to the tomb. They were carrying the spices that they had prepared. They found that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb. When they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were puzzled about this two men in clothes that were as bright as lightning suddenly stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed to the ground.

The men asked the women, “Why are you looking among the dead for the living one? He is not here. He has been brought back to life! Remember what he told you while he was still in Galilee. He said, ‘The Son of Man must be handed over to sinful people, be crucified, and come back to life on the third day.’”

Then the women remembered what Jesus had told them. The women left the tomb and went back to the city. They told everything to the eleven apostles and all the others. The women were Mary from Magdala, Joanna, and Mary (the mother of James). There were also other women with them. They told the apostles everything.

NOTE: Copyright information.

Bible Translation: GOD’S WORD®, © 1995 God’s Word to the Nations. Some readings have been adapted to better reflect the original Greek or Hebrew.

Credit for Images:

Pronunciation for difficult words are contained in { }

© 2020 James Groleau.

Permission is granted to use these sermons for any non-profit purpose. I only ask that credit, as to their origination, be noted appropriately.

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

There is a lot of talk that the role of religion is to make this world a better place. Whatever the religion, whatever the beliefs, however it is taught, it is said that the goal and purpose of religion is to improve ourselves and to improve the world.

Here's the problem. Jesus did not come to make this world a better place. He made this world a very good¹ in the beginning. Then we ruined it with our sin. Adam, Eve, you, me, the list of sinners is long and distinguished. You are in good company.

Now if Jesus had come to make this world a better place, you know what? We would just mess it up again. It happens in our lives, it happens in the world. Sin breaks our lives, our relationships, everything. Sin tears people apart and causes division. Sin causes strife between nations. Sin always seeks to divide, to conquer, to use and manipulate, to connive and scheme.

The religions of man, the religions of the world, say we need to overcome these things. They say we can, and we must. Through fellowship, through greater effort, by reaching down into the good that is in us all.

Well that's been tried before, a number of times, and it has failed every time. For thousands of years it has been tried, and it has failed, every time. It cannot be done. The poison of sin's affect on us runs too deep, and always breaks out everywhere and anywhere it can.

In spite of our good intentions, in spite of our best intentions, trying to stop sin is like the little boy who tried to plug the leak in the dam by sticking his finger in the hole, only to have another hole pop open, and then another, and then another, and soon the whole thing comes tumbling down.

That is what sin is doing to everything in this world. That is what sin's affect was on Wanita. Sin kept poking holes in her trying to tear her down. Sin pokes us, it picks on us, it kills us.

That's the real problem! You see even if we could fix every other problem we cannot fix that one. We cannot fix death. Death is that thing that comes for all of us. It's coming for you too. So do you really want Jesus to make this world a better place? Not really. Because 'better' still ends in death.

1 **Genesis 1:31** – God saw everything that he had made and that it was very good. There was evening, then morning—the sixth day.

That is why St. Paul says:

If Christ is our hope in this life only,
we deserve more pity than any other people.²

What small and insignificant hope that would be, for Jesus to make this world a better place. It sounds good at first, but the truth is it wouldn't really be very good. That is why Jesus has not come to make this world a better place. He came to rescue us from what we have done to this place. To rescue us from our sin. To rescue us from the death that is a result of our sin,³ and to rescue us from Hell that is our only destination because of our sin. What a pitiful future it was for us.

... but then came that day, Resurrection day, Easter day! That was not the day Jesus fixed this place. That was the day He took a hammer to the walls of Hell! He came to destroy the devil,⁴ to destroy his work and his kingdom. It is because Jesus came to save us from sin, death, and the power of the devil that death no longer has power over us.⁵

He didn't give us a patched up, a repaired, world but a new kingdom, a new heaven and a new earth.⁶ Jesus says to us, "See I am making all things new."⁷ Jesus came to give us something so completely new and completely different that we could not live in it with these old bodies. We need new bodies, resurrected bodies.⁸ New, with sin removed.⁹ New, with sin, death, and the devil banished forever.

St. Paul wrote:

Christ has been raised from the dead.
The firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.¹⁰

That means that Jesus is just the first of those who will rise from the dust of eternal death, which now is nothing more than rising from sleep.

2 **1 Corinthians 15:19**

3 **Romans 6:23** – The wages for sin is death, but the gift that God freely gives is everlasting life found in Christ Jesus our Lord.

4 **Genesis 3:15** – ... He [*Jesus*] will crush your head [*Satan*], and you will bruise His heel."

5 **Romans 6:9-11** – We know that Christ, who was brought back to life, will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him. When he died, he died once and for all to sin's power. But now he lives, and he lives for God. So consider yourselves dead to sin's power but living for God in the power Christ Jesus gives you.

6 **Isaiah 65:17** – I will create a new heaven and a new earth.

7 **Revelation 21:5** – He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." He also said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

8 **Romans 6:5** – If we've become united with Him in a death like His, certainly we will also be united with Him when we come back to life like He did.

9 **John 1:29** – Behold! This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

10 **1 Corinthians 15:20** – Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

St. Paul continues:

Since a man [*Adam*] brought death, a man [*Jesus*] brought life back from death. Just as everyone dies because of Adam, so also everyone will be made alive because of Christ.¹¹

So yes, our bodies too will rise from the sleep of death, they will be made new, made to live in the new heaven and the new earth, with Jesus, in righteousness and purity forever.

What other person or power could accomplish that? What other person or power could deliver us from such enemies? What other person or power could promise us such a future? There is no other. Jesus alone is our hope in life, in the sickbed, and in the grave. When enemies threaten and foes growl, when burdens loom large and seem about to crush us, they cannot win. We have the One greater than them all. He is risen! He is risen indeed! He has won the victory!¹²

In your Baptism you have been given this victory and new life. Just as Pharaoh and his army could pursue Israel only to the Red Sea and no further, but were drowned in those waters, so also your sin can pursue you to the waters of Holy Baptism, but no further! There they are drowned and pursue you no more. You are forgiven. You are free. Free to live your life, your new life. A life in Christ.

So we can rejoice! We rejoice with the angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, as we join them, and they join us, at the Holy Supper of our Lord, where our risen Lord gives us His Body and Blood to eat and drink, forgiving our sins, and making us new.¹³ Putting into us that Life that cannot be extinguished, that Life that died and rose again, that Life that trampled Satan down, that Life that left the grave behind and ascended into heaven, where we one day too will rise. There and then our journey complete, but our life just beginning.

The thing is, as you live this new life here and now, you do make this world a better place. Wanita made this world a better place while she was here. Better for the people she loved and cared for. As you live the life of Christ, as you speak the Word of Christ, as you give the love of Christ, and as you forgive with the forgiveness of Christ, you too make the world a better place. In all these ways you are showing the world that new life, that better life, that life of the world to come. How can that not make a difference?

11 **1 Corinthians 15:21-22**

12 **1 Corinthians 15:57** – Thank God that he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

13 **John 6:54** – Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will bring them back to life on the last day.

So rejoice this day! Because Christ has made you new. Jesus has changed everything. Wanita now enjoys that victory and life perfectly, and forever.

He is risen! He is risen indeed!

Alleluia!

Amen.