



President Walton's April 2019 Message

A New Creation



As I write this the sun is shining and the temperature is close to perfect—not too warm, not too cool. There's not a cloud in the sky, and I can see some flowers blooming. The signs of Spring are all around us. In fact, right now my grill and outside chairs are covered with a thick layer of yellow pollen—one of the few downsides about life in the South. Growing up in the north, I remember feeling the exuberance of walking outside in a light jacket and breathing in the warm air of Spring. In the South it is often

subtler, but none the less welcomed. There is a great joy that comes from seeing the earth come back to life in its own unique way. It can be seen all around us. It's a new creation. That new creation points us to Easter, which is still a few weeks away. Like the parent talking to the kid riding in the backseat of the car, we're almost there. It is always wise to prepare and that certainly is what Lent is all about. However, in the next few weeks we will experience the transition from Lent to Easter, like moving from winter to spring.

I have always marveled at how God's timing with the celebration of the Resurrection provides us with such a visual representation of new life. Like the transition from winter into Spring, the joy of the Resurrection of Jesus is seen in the new life all around us. I don't simply mean the flowers and the budding trees, but the new life within us as we anticipate that wonderful good news that the Crucified One is alive forevermore. That Easter joy serves to encourage each us in our own life to let Jesus be seen in 2019! This is an expression of our Easter joy!

Look at Luke's account of that Easter morning. He writes: "But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." And they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened" (Lk 24:1-12).

Imagine how that journey went. The women, overwhelmed with grief because they had

seen Jesus crucified, come in love early in the morning, at the first chance they can, to respectfully care for His broken, abused and lifeless body. They probably hadn't thought about the stone that covered the tomb. They simply knew they couldn't leave the body of this loved one unattended to. I imagine they anticipated a body already beginning to decompose, which would have made their task more difficult, but none the less one they would tenderly tackle, not out of obligation or duty, but rather primed by compassionate love. Their expectation was further shattered when they arrived to find that the tomb was already opened. The obvious thought was that in addition to murdering Jesus, they were desecrating His body. It had to be unbearable.

Their fears were confirmed when they peered into the tomb, only to find it empty. The immediate conclusion they drew had to be that the body had been stolen and their nightmare would continue. If only the Jewish law had allowed them to come sooner, maybe the body would have been okay. Just as they were about to abandon hope the angels appeared to them. As perplexed as these ladies were, I think the angels were also perplexed. Their question was simple: "Why are you looking for the living among the dead?" It almost seems that they were confused that these ladies, that His disciples, that the world, failed to grasp the truth which Jesus had shared with them—that He would rise again. Even before the invention of the lightbulb, I think one must have gone off in their heads as they remembered His words.

The Jesus who has suffered such merciless abuse and hatred; whose life and presence threatened people to the point where they wanted Him dead; whose ministry of love and grace brought hope to many, and fear to others; could not be defeated by death. The gates of hell could not contain Him. Like the old black and white movies that were colorized, Jesus brings new life into the situations that seem so bleak. It was true for those women who came to the tomb, and it is still true for each of us today! Even now, He unexpectedly enters into the dark places in our lives, and brings new and renewed colors and life.

The Apostle Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." These words always point me to Easter! What a great reminder that though I sin and betray my faith in Jesus, I simply need to turn to Him, remembering my baptism, and know that no matter what I do, or how I feel, in Jesus I am a new creation. He takes my often black and white life of failure and turns it into magnificent colors that often astound me with Easter joy.

The same is true for you. I certainly realize that we church people get awful busy over the weeks leading up to our celebration of the Resurrection. It is so easy being busy for the Lord that we forget about celebrating the Lord for whom we are busy! His call beckons us to slow down and hear the news once again, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen." Our Jesus has risen for you, and in that He has made you His new creation. Let this Jesus be seen in 2019 and beyond. As you do, He continually recreates us to become His radiant resurrection people—a new creation, equipped, empowered and engaged to connect people to Jesus!

Celebrating the empty tomb with you,

Greg



UPCOMING EVENTS:

- [70th Anniversary Challenge](#)
- [National Youth Gathering](#)
- [LCMS Synod Convention](#)
- [Volunteer Opportunities at the Synod Convention](#)
- Pastors Conference - Sept. 23-25
- Educators Conference - Sept 25 - 27

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