

EASTER 2006 BECAUSE OF EASTER SUNDAY

Matthew 28:1-10

How important is Sunday to you?

Just how important is Sunday to the Christian faith?

A man by the name of George Hatch raised a large family of seven boys and five girls in the sand hills of northwestern Nebraska. One Sunday morning a neighbor rushed over to help the Hatches get the new-mown hay into the barn; clouds were rolling up in the West, and it was quite apparent that a rainstorm was coming.

"Let's get your hay up before the storm hits!" exclaimed the neighbor.

"Thank you for your kind offer," said Mr. Hatch,

"but this is Sunday, and I am going to take my family to church."

"But you'll lose your hay," pleaded the neighbor.

But the Hatch family went to church, and the rainstorm spoiled the hay.

"See, I told you that you would lose your hay," said the neighbor.

"Yes," replied Mr. Hatch, "I lost my hay, but I saved my family."

How important is Sunday to you?

Back in 1850 people could not ride the Boston and Maine trains on Sunday unless they were making the trip to attend church services.

And when the New York elevated transit line began operating, the people boycotted it because trains would run on Sundays.

Why did they boycott it?

BECAUSE THEY BELIEVED IN SUNDAY WAS IMPORTANT

And worship was essential.

Growing up in Olivet, South Dakota, I remember what Sunday meant to me.

IT was Sunday School. Church.

Observance of the Lord's Supper.

The singing of gospel hymns.

People confessing Christ and being baptized into Him.

Bible study groups. Youth meetings.

Sunday was important to me in that it shaped my life in a good and Godly way.

William Gladstone who was Britain's Prime Minister four terms said,

"Tell me what the young men of England are doing on Sunday, and I will tell you what the future of England will be."

Some people have asked, What happened to America that we

Have allowed so many things to come about.

It's like we have been asleep.

But ask yourself where are 76 million Americans on this Easter Sunday Morning.

Asleep?

Sunday happens to not only help shape up our lives,

but also our country. Sunday happenings are important!
Let look at what happened on the very first Sunday?

I. THE STONE ROLLED

¹ After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. ² There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it.

The angel of the Lord came down from heaven and rolled back the stone and sat on it.
I've rolled a lot of stones and I have picked a lot of stones and
and I've thrown a few stones in my time.

When I was about 10 years old I was showing off to the preacher's daughter who family had come for Sunday dinner. I picked up a big Indian head stone hammer we had laying in our front yard and I shot putted it out showing off my strength. And It slipped and I threw it right through the front window of our living room. Right where the preacher and his wife were visiting with my mother and dad.

Proverbs 16:18 came home to me.

Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. Proverbs 16:18

I sure didn't impress her or her parents that Sunday.

Much less to say what my parents thought of it all.

But friends God was rolling stones that first Sunday morning.
And He rolled one in the right direction and at the right time.

V. 2 "There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it."

The tomb of Jesus was closed with a stone wheel of granite
probably 8 feet in diameter and one foot thick.

It was rolled into a groove and perhaps weighed more
than 3-4 tons.

The Angel rolled the stone away.

Max Lucado wrote, "The stone was moved - not for Jesus - but for the women. Not so Jesus could come out, but so the women could see in."

When God rolls stones

He does a really good job of it.

He is still in the business of rolling stones.

Do you have certain stones in your life that need to be MOVED?

Stones of doubt, fear,
unconfessed sins, or dirty deeds.

A relationship that's gone bad, or a sickness that has resurfaced.

You have come to the right place

Because on Sundays-- God is in the business of rolling stones.

There is no need that cannot be met

No mountain that cannot be climbed.

No storm that cannot be resisted.

The Message Bible says: We take our lead from Christ, who is the source of everything we do. He keeps us in step with each other. His very breath and blood flow through us, nourishing us so that we will grow up healthy in God, robust in love. Ephesians 4:15b-16 Msg

God is in the business of rolling stones.

To quote Max Lucado again: "Don't give up. The check may be in the mail. The apology may be in the making. The job contract may be on the desk. God still sends angels. And God still moves stones."

That first Christian Sunday morning the
Stone ROLLED- second,

II. THE GUARDS FEARED

V. 4 "The guards were so afraid of him (the angel) that they shook and became like dead men."

THE GUARDS FEARED.

Friends that is important for us to remember.

Because it helps us understand that we live in a world
that is afraid of the Living God.

If we weren't we would not be trying so hard to eliminate all evidence of Him.

We don't want to see people praying.

We don't want to see people reading and believing the Bible.

We don't want to see our children learning the 10 commandments.

Why ?

Because we fear a risen God and what He might do to us.

And what He might ask of us.

And its probably good reason.

Because the Bible uses the WRATH OF God over 600 times.

Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will shake from its place at the wrath of the Lord Almighty in the day of his burning anger. Isaiah 13:13.

Sin has its consequences.

People don't want to believe that.

But the next time somebody says:

There is no such thing as sowing and reaping, rewards and punishment,

Give them a tennis ball.

And have them stand about 5 feet from a wall.

Then have them throw that ball as hard as they can against the wall.

You know that there are consequences.

For every action there is a reaction.

An old Virginian saying is: "What's down in the well comes up in the bucket."

The guards became as dead men.

Sunday is important to us because it should teach us the fear of God.

Sunday is a reminder that we will be held accountable for all our actions.

Jesus said: "But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoke. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned." Matthew 12:36-37

The guards were unbelievers. Not necessarily evil men.

But they ran in fear.

Because they did not believe in the living God.

Brothers and Sister you do not have to run in fear from the living God today.

The Bible says: The Lord is slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Exodus 34:6-7a

When we consider all the hatred, violence, the crime, wickedness, murder and terrorist activity. We wonder how it can be.

God is slow to anger,

But--there will come a Sunday morning when

The curtain of earth and sky will be removed.

And God will put His foot down and say, "Enough is enough!"

BECAUSE ON THAT FIRST SUNDAY MORNING

1- The stone rolled.

2- The guards feared.

III. THE WOMEN RAN

V. 8 "So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples." The women ran.

The church needs more women runners.

Running is good for a person.

It's healthy.

It's strengthens the heart muscle, increases energy, causes weight loss.

Everybody needs some exercise, but some people can't do it.

Most people can't run,

and some people can't even walk very far.

A retired couple decided that they should walk two miles a day to stay in shape.

They chose to walk a mile out on a lonely country road so they would have no choice but to walk back. At the one-mile mark on their first walk, the man asked his wife, "Do you think you can make it back all right, or are you too tired?" "Oh, no," she said. "I'm not tired. I can make it fine." "Good," he replied. "I'll wait here. You go back, get the car and come get me."

While the church may need more women runners,

I suspect that the men will just play golf!

The women ran,

But the Disciples were all 'Hold up in ONE''

"A golfer was playing a hole that had to be shot over water.

He got out an old ball and teed up.

A voice out of nowhere said, "Use a new ball."

He didn't see anybody, but he put a new ball on the tee,

and was ready to hit the ball when the voice said,
 "Take a practice swing." He took a practice swing,
 and the voice said, "USE THE OLD BALL."

The women ran, but the men played golf!
 The women ran to TELL THE GOOD NEWS
 THAT CHRIST HAD RISEN FROM THE DEAD!
 If Christ has indeed risen from the dead then
 Jesus is who He claimed to be and
 The world had its first TRUE SAVIOR.
 The women ran.
 Women like to tell good news.
 The women ran because they did not have the right
 To keep the good news to themselves.
 You and I have no right to keep the sweet music of Christ resurrection to ourselves.
 We must share Him with any and all!
 We must run with the good news....
 that Christ is alive and can save us from our sins and give us a home in heaven!

- 1- The stone rolled
- 2- The guards feared
- 3- The women ran

IV. THE SAVIOR APPEARED

V. 9 "Suddenly Jesus met them. 'Greetings,' he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him."

On that first Easter Sunday morning
 Jesus appeared to the women after His resurrection.
 They worship him because they needed to be convinced
 and assured that Jesus was alive.

Do you realize the significance of that for your life?
 Jesus has already faced what we dread most—Death
 Jesus has already provided what we need most--- forgiveness
 Jesus has already offered what we desire most—purpose and hope.

Jill Carroll the correspondent for the Christian Science Monitor was held hostage in Iraq for 82 days: When released she said: "I finally feel like I am alive again," She had been held by the same Islamic radical organization that had murdered her Iraqi translator. It's hard to imagine the mental anguish, the monotony, and at times the sheer terror of Carroll's ordeal. It's not surprising after all she has been through, when she stepped out into the sunshine of freedom she described it as feeling akin to rebirth.

"Alive again!" could have been the cry of Mary Magdalene as well, as she encountered the risen Jesus that first Easter.

Mary hadn't come to the cemetery bringing flowers or Easter lilies. She came bearing the things of embalment, the things of death.

When Jesus died all her hope died.
 We all know what its like to have sin claim our lives.
 To live knowing that we displease a holy God
 To know that our adultery, lies, gossip, greed, gluttony,
 Lust, anger, bitterness, bring us under the curse of death.
 And the wrath of God.

The one who seem to bring light to Mary's darkness had been crucified.
 She came to remember a fallen savior
 And a broken dream.
 But when Christ arose.
 He turned her cemetery into celebrations.
 Her museum of death into miracles.
 She was Alive again, in spirit and joy.

Jesus, resurrection meant her resurrection.
 We don't just celebrate that Jesus is alive.
 That would be of no help to us.
 We celebrate that He wants to make us alive.
 And that when we accept Jesus we can be made alive in Christ.

There was a young country boy who wanted more than anything to see the circus.
 So when the circus came to a nearby town, his father gave him some money for a ticket,
 and the boy rushed off early the next morning to see his first circus.
 He was so excited, so thrilled and anxious.
 But at midday, the boy returned home and he hadn't spent a penny.
 His father asked. "What Happened? Didn't you go to the circus?"
 "Oh, yes sir", the boy said, "the circus came right down the street,
 and I got to see it all and it didn't cost a thing. Nobody ever took my money."
 The father threw up his hands and said:
 No boy, you didn't see the circus you just saw the parade.
 You only got a glimpse of it. You missed the main event.

Don't let that happen to you today with Easter.
 Don't' just come and see a beautiful sanctuary,
 An Easter garden, a glimpse of the risen savior
 But Invite Jesus into your heart and see the main event.

If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. Romans 6:5

The song says: I serve a Risen Savior
 He's in my heart today.
 I know that he is living.
 Whatever Men may say
 He lives, He Lives, WHY?
 Salvation to IMPART. To Give.
 Lets join in this closing affirmation and pledge
 to make EASTER SUNDAY important for all of us today and every week.