

It's Not Too Late, Part 1

Scripture: Mark 16:1-8 -- When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

"Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"

Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

Introduction: Many years ago, I received an invitation in the mail to a wonderful banquet. The menu sounded amazing and appealing, the entertainment sounded out of this world, the people invited to attend were people one would want to spend the evening with. However, as I looked at the date, there was one problem – one major problem. The date for the banquet had already passed. The delicious food had already been devoured. The entertainment had already been enjoyed by a crowd of wonderful people. By the time I received the invitation, it was too late to enjoy the delightful evening that had been scheduled.

Have you ever had this happen to you? Have you ever received an invitation too late? Or have you ever been too late for an event or party – or worship service?

Early one Saturday morning in September 2018, the phone jarred us out of a sound sleep. My brother Tom was supposed to meet our father in Warrensburg for a town-wide garage sale, but he was not at the designated meet-up spot. Tom called us as he did not have our father's cellphone number. After numerous attempts on our part and on my brother's part, my husband decided to go over to my dad's place to see if he had actually left for Warrensburg. His car was still there, and upon entering the house, my husband found that my father had passed away in his sleep. Too late. It was too late to help him – too late to get him medical care.

I can imagine how Mary and Martha felt as they watched their brother Lazarus struggling with an awful sickness. They sent for their friend Jesus who had miraculously healed so many others, but He didn't come, and He didn't come. If He had healed so many others, you would have thought that He would have been compelled to go heal His good friend. But Lazarus kept getting sicker and sicker and finally died. Jesus finally arrived – 4 days too late. Lazarus had been dead and buried for 4 days before Jesus finally showed up. Too late! (But, as we discover, when Jesus comes on the scene, it's never too late!)

The various Gospel accounts give us different details in regard to Jesus' resurrection from the dead. It's helpful to remember that the Gospel writers were not contradicting each other but sharing individual experiences and thus adding to the overall story. Just imagine, though, the pain and heartache and frustration of Jesus's followers. As far as they knew, it was too late – too

late for Jesus to set up His earthly kingdom, too late for Him to perform any more miracles, too late for Him to accomplish His work. Too late.

1. It was not too late for the women going to the tomb.

After the Sabbath was over, on the first day of the week, the ladies made their way to the tomb, and soon discovered that they were too late. They had brought spices to anoint Jesus' body and complete the burial process. However, they had given no thought as to who would roll the stone away, so they could gain access to the tomb. Now that was a bummer. They had carefully planned what they were to bring with them to complete the burial process, but they had given no thought as to how they were going to get into the tomb. Have you been there and done that?

This reminds me of an incident I witnessed recently. I was in the parking lot at Lowe's. A man came out of the store with a cart filled with plywood. I watched in amazement as the man tried every which way he could to maneuver the sheets of plywood into the back of his little, tiny car. Just like the women going to the tomb, he had failed to plan ahead. He needed a truck – not a small car.

But look again. Even with their poor planning, the women were not too late. The stone had already been rolled away! God had taken care of it! As they got closer, they discovered that not only had the stone been rolled away, but Jesus' body was not there. The tomb was empty. They were too late! Or were they?

2. It was not too late for the angel's message of Good News

Mark 16:5-7 -- As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"

It's hard for us to comprehend all of the emotions that these women were struggling with at this point in time – the loss of their Master and friend, the grief, the sadness, the agony. And now to find that the tomb where Jesus' body had been placed was now empty. Not only was the tomb empty, but to add to their confusion, an angel appeared to them and gave them the message that Jesus was not there, because He had risen from the dead.

Not only did the angel have Good News for the women, but he had really good news for the disciples. In fact, the angel admonished the women to make sure they went and told the disciples – and especially Peter – the wonderful news that Jesus had risen from the dead.

Mark adds a note: "Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid."

3. It was not too late to meet the risen Jesus!

Mark 16:9-11 – "When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons. She went and told those who had been with him and who were mourning and weeping. When they heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen him, they did not believe it."

John 20:10-18 -- Then the disciples went back to their homes, but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

They asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?” “They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don’t know where they have put him.” At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

“Woman,” he said, “why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?”

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”

Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher).

Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her.

The Gospel accounts record various encounters with the resurrected Jesus – Mary Magdalene, the 10 disciples, the 10 disciples plus Thomas, the 2 on the road to Emmaus, Peter. Each of those encounters was life-changing. For these individuals, it was certainly not too late for them to meet the risen Lord.

Conclusion: The good news of that first Easter was that it was not too late for the greatest miracle of all time!

Whatever else you might miss this Easter Sunday, don’t miss the miracle. Don’t miss the wonderful news that the tomb is empty! Don’t miss the wonderful truth that Christ has risen! Don’t overlook the amazing news that our Savior is alive! But most importantly, don’t miss the amazing miracle He wants to work in your heart and life!

The greatest news for you on this Easter is that it’s not too late for you! It’s not too late for God to do in your heart and life what only He can do. He can bring new life. He can bring healing. He can bring peace – and joy – and hope.

I pray that you will know today that it’s not too late for you to experience an encounter with the resurrected Jesus and to experience the miracle and the wonder of His love and grace in your heart and life. Your hopelessness can indeed be changed to hope. Your sorrow can be changed to joy. Your despair can be turned into a reason for living. You can be changed forever when you meet Jesus for yourself.