

# "Easter Footsteps"

John 20:1-18

April 16, 2006

**There is a real problem with Easter. .... Oh I suspect that you are anticipating that I am going to come down on all of the commercialization - the whole Easter Bunny thing - the Easter 'egg' candy, jelly beans, yummy chocolate crosses and all of that stuff. No – bring it on. The problem with Easter is that we have become all too familiar with the story. It has become Christian ritual filled with beautiful flowers and wonderful music that we leave at the church and go home to daily life as though nothing has happened.**

**I read about the experience of a group that showed a movie covering the life of Jesus in many places in third world countries. The response of those viewing the movie was astounding. Here, where we have so much and expect so much, the drama doesn't seem to have the same power to move us as it did for the third world people who had little, expected nothing and lived with death as a constant reality. Here we have heard it all before and it is like it is just another Hollywood production - if we find time to attend, we rise quietly and say - 'ya, that was pretty good / nice special effects.' There when the movie showed Jesus being arrested the crowds rose and booed loudly, - when He was crucified they wept openly, - and when they saw the risen Christ, cheers of joy filled the area as those people hugged one another and shared their excitement.**

**Today again we make the announcement that Christ is risen. Most of us have heard that announcement many times. And we seem somewhat detached from the whole thing. It's a nice story and we may believe it but we weren't there and perhaps we don't really believe that it has anything to do with us personally. We didn't walk those dusty roads with Jesus and see the miracles that He did. We weren't in the garden when He was arrested or at Calvary when He was crucified. Those who witnessed the events would naturally have a much greater emotional attachment. Perhaps for us it is really little more than a good story from long ago. - - -**

**Where are you at with this old, old story? Is it just an old and familiar story? Does it have a real effect on your life? Are we not witnesses of this joyful Easter message in many other ways? Have we not seen the power of the cross and resurrection in the lives of people who have experienced the power of God. Have we not been witnesses of the resurrection in people we know when that spark of God's light and life break in where darkness and death have prevailed? - - - - We have heard the story - we have seen the affect it has had on people we know – Will this story and the risen Christ move us today so that we walk in His footsteps?**

**It is a great story. At Jesus request from the cross John has taken Mary away from the scene of the crucifixion. With the Sabbath upon them when no work could be done the body of Jesus was quickly laid in the tomb. And all that Mary and the others could see was that same thing that we see when faced with the death of one that we love. Disciples hid in fear and sadness somewhere in Jerusalem. And there is a deep, emptiness of sorrow mixed with weariness and endless questions. We have stood with Mary and the disciples - we have felt that weariness and emptiness in our lives.**

**Elsewhere, soldiers had been put on alert to guard the tomb. Can you imagine how silly the assignment must have seemed to these rough, highly trained fighting men? They must have laughed and kidded around as they sets up for the nights watch at the tomb. "What do they think - this guys just going to get up and walk away? No one would ever believe that he rose from the dead." But there came a moment when that all changed for these first Easter witnesses. When the blinding light broke the darkness it terrified the brave soldiers so much that no one remembered what time it happened. The huge stone simply began to role away from the opening of the tomb and the light blinded them. I'm sure that it wasn't so that Jesus could get out - it was so that the witnesses could look in. We have perhaps all been where those soldiers were. Sometimes it can all seem a bit silly and meaningless. But then there are those moments when we witness something amazing. Will we believe?**

**Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early on that day. Imagine her surprise and confusion when the stone was already away from the entrance. And imagine the greater surprise and bewilderment of talking to the two men in dazzling apparel who tried to explain what Jesus had said earlier about rising on the third day. As we stand with Mary and the other women who went to the tomb to find it empty will we respond as they did?**

**The disciples didn't know what to believe - but they went and checked it out. We say we believe - but then close the book on the story as though it doesn't matter. I understand how difficult it can be. There is so much that is all too real, immediate and pressing in our daily lives for us to worry about that old Bible story. In comparison to the pressing daily issues, the story almost becomes dull stuff. It's kind of like an old rhyme that poke fun at preaching - one says: --- "My pastor's eyes I've never seen, Though light from them may shine; For when he prays he closes his, And when he preaches he closes mine."**

**Christ is risen!!! The proclamation has been made down through the centuries by many who, like the women at the tomb, hidden disciples and perhaps even soldiers awakened by a moving stone and brilliant light, have come to believe that the power of God can and has overcome the most devastating of enemies. We have heard the story and must consider if we believe or not. We must ask if the God whom we say created all things can possibly raise the dead and provide the gift of eternal life. We are called to believe what is humanly impossible and incorporate that belief into our busy lives by walking in the footsteps of a risen Jesus. And if we do, we will find that**

**this God not only has the power to raise the dead but also to bring life and hope and peace into the specifics of our daily walk.**

**Christ is Risen - may we not only believe but walk in the new life God can give.**

**AMEN**