

What got them up so early that Sunday morning? These women walking out to the tomb, what brought them together doing what they were doing? It was the one they went to anoint. He was their master and friend. He deserved a proper burial after the hasty one done late on Friday. So they brought the spices and their tears. They came together for one final time to serve their master, Jesus.

What had the disciples cowering in fear that Sunday? These were Jesus' disciples who heard from the women something amazing about their teacher. But they did not believe it. What brought them together? Was it not protection because they didn't feel safe? Was it not fear of the unknown and fear of what might happen to them next? They needed the bonds of brotherhood to satisfy them that they would be okay. They came together and didn't believe what they heard about their master, Jesus.

Isolation works for some things and for some people. But largely people want to feel part of the group. They want to be included. So what brings you hear this morning? Negativity and despair? Fear of the unknown? Just wanting to be part of a crowd? It sure feels good to be part of our church family, our city, our state. This morning we look to the first lesson as we see what brought us into the group in a powerful way...

**Jesus rose again to be our Savior
He swallows up death
He gives salvation to rejoice in**

Describe the spread at your last big family meal. Ham or turkey cooking in the oven. Potatoes of various kinds. A luscious dessert baked or frosted or both. Buns, jello, fruit, vegetables. The fine dishes came out. Maybe you ate in shifts because there were so many family around the table. Not one of your big family meals could compare with the banquet the Lord Almighty prepared. **"On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines."** The mountain is Mt Zion, representing the dwelling place of God and the heavenly place where all believers will dwell. The feast includes the best of everything. The best was brought out for special occasions. The best brought people together in celebration. That's exactly what God is picturing, a meal in celebration of the Savior, our Savior and what the Savior accomplished.

Perhaps you've been to a funeral where someone was wearing a veil or covering. Long a part of funeral customs and mourning, women and children most often wear all black and wear funeral veils. Wearing these veils in public can last a long time. The custom has been observed in a large number of people in many different cultures. That's because every nation is affected by death. But here on the mountain of the Lord Almighty things change. **"He will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations."** The shroud and sheet bring to mind the idea of a funeral veil or covering. Death comes to mind, that great swallower that brings people together. A great swallower because death swallows everyone. It keeps coming until no one escapes. The Lord Almighty destroys this shroud. The funeral veil is lifted away. God destroys it. Literally destroys that which causes the veil in the first place. Our Savior destroyed death.

Death is a reality for us. Every day we may try and push it away but it's there. We send our kids out the door to school, trying hard not to think about the dangers they'll face once they get there. We get in our cars trying not to think about the dangers we face there. Still death strikes and always close to home. We veil ourselves in black and take off work and school to mourn. Some breakdown because of the heartache, most never get back to exactly the way it was before. Death causes others to want to celebrate life while they can. We can get involved in things we know are foolish. Gambling, pornography, or something else we feel will help us enjoy life while we can. Why limit ourselves. Enjoy life today because tomorrow we may die.

Today death and sin have met their match. The death that brings with it a veil, a shroud, a sheet that covers all nations in mourning has been swallowed up. **"He will swallow up death forever."** Jesus rose again to be our Savior and he swallows up death. The shroud and the sheet have no need anymore. Their purpose was because of death, but death has been defeated. Death, which so easily swallows up everyone has itself been swallowed up. Jesus destroyed death by death. His own death and resurrection brought the end of death. Friday our Savior was dead, but today he's alive. He rose and never will die again. He defeats death, destroys its grip and power, rips its hold on you so you are no longer under its control. Death doesn't have anything to say in your life. Not since your Savior, our Savior, Jesus rose.

Our Savior didn't stop there. So natural at funerals because death brings out emotions are tears. In some people just a few. In others maybe constant. Emotions are natural. Tears and mourning are personal. So the Lord Almighty, our Savior saves you from them. **"The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces."** Jesus Christ shows himself to be our Savior, sovereign Lord with great power. With power he rose from the dead. With power he came from the tomb. With power he conquered death for you. After that much power he then uses his compassion toward you. Jesus approaches with tender hearted care and with his gracious hands he wipes away the tears from your eyes. No reason for tears because there is no death and no sin. Jesus loves you and rose for you. His resurrection and conquering death mean the end of tears, the end of mourning, the end of death and sin. Our Savior has swallowed up death and given you the victory.

Death is universal. Everyone eventually has to put plans on hold or change plans because of death. Death changes everything in everyone. It unites all people together. But so does the death of death. It changes everything too and causes our plans to change. All people are brought together under the banner of salvation and eternal life in heaven. God did not disappoint. His Son rose again to give salvation for all. Christ rose again to be our Savior and to be our joy in our salvation.

Sadly not all receive this benefit. There is only one Savior for all. That doesn't stop people from looking in other places. Have we looked in other places? We might be looking at our list of accomplishments. Saying things like my good job, wonderful family, and nice things really do mean I have it all. But is that all? Others might rejoice in their own goodness. They look at the things they do for others and figure that's good enough for this life. Doesn't culture really tell us most important is helping fellow human beings? Leave the world a better place. That's enough to figure they'll be okay. But do good works make us okay? Some want to attach themselves to a particular church. They may even bounce around looking for the right church, the church they figure membership in will guarantee happiness forever. But can membership in a church really guarantee happiness?

Where is our salvation going to come from? Nice things, great things done for other people, or the right church membership? Our salvation comes only in one place. Our God, our Savior. He is for you and me. He is for all people. Christ Jesus is one of a kind. No other took up people's sins on himself and was rejected by his own Father. No other willingly went to the cross though he didn't deserve any of what he received. No other cried out it is finished and meant it. And no other went into the grave only to come out again three days later. Jesus rose again to be our Savior and he gives you salvation you can rejoice over.

We have the overwhelming proof in his Word. **"The Lord has spoken. In that day they will say, Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation."** The Lord has compassion and love for all people. He removes the veil of mourning from all people. He swallows up death for all people. He wipes away the tears from all people. Removes the disgrace of his people from all the earth. Not one person is left out, certainly not you. You can say Jesus is your Savior. You trust in him. You rejoice in the good things he's done for you. You are glad in his salvation. You have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. You are his people, Jesus is your Savior, our Savior.

That brings us back to what brings us together. Our Savior brings us together. Jesus Christ swallowed death by his own death and resurrection. Christ lives and now so do we. We are joined together looking forward to our resurrection from the dead and eternal life. Jesus gives us salvation we can rejoice in. And rejoice we have. We have rejoiced in fellowship, friendship, love as brothers and sisters. We have been joined as our church, our ministry, our joy in our Savior. Because of Christ's resurrection that will not change, cannot change. We trusted in our Savior and he saved us. We rejoice once again in our Savior's resurrection because it means our resurrection, our life, our freedom from sin. We are his people and he is our God, Jesus rose again to be our Savior.