

The year was 1928. A scientist named Alexander Fleming was in his lab putting together a study on bacteria. Bacteria in some situations is good, not so good in others. You have good bacteria in your body all the time. But even a little of the wrong kind of bacteria can do serious damage. If you've ever had a bacterial infection you know. Fleming was out to make that a thing of the past. It all started with a single tear falling quite by accident onto a petri dish full of bacteria he was working with. The tear seemed to beat back the bacteria. He set out to isolate the particular compound in the human tear that did that, hoping he had found the miracle cure.

His research and experimentation quickly went nowhere. Fleming was growing bacteria called *staph* but everything he was trying brought no results. After months of working he literally walked away with petri dishes full of the *staph* bacteria stacked up in a corner of his office. When he came back those same petri dishes were a science experiment of another kind. Messy, moldy, gross, like leaving leftovers out in your refrigerator for a month, things were growing. Fleming and his assistants gathered them all up and threw them into a sink of soapy water. There were so many some couldn't even sink into the water and stayed on the top. As Fleming lifted one of them out before it touched the soapy water which would have washed away the bacteria he noticed something. A ring had formed around some of the mold. In that ring was all dead *staph* bacteria.

What Fleming found was the first antibiotic which he named after the strain of mold called *penicillius*. The penicillin that Alexander Fleming stumbled upon changed the world. Millions upon millions of lives have been saved because of this miracle drug. Certainly the doctors have prescribed for you to take penicillin or an antibiotic like it for bacterial infections. Of course what changed the world for you and me was discovered completely by accident. Fleming was studying something else and was coming up with failed experiments. He was only going to clean up dirty dishes when he discovered this powerful medicine. It led Fleming to say of his happy accident, "One sometimes finds what one is not looking for."

The women with the spices were looking for Jesus. Last they had seen him he was hanging from a cross with nails in his hands and feet. Jesus being executed would forever be the image in their minds. The women watched closely as his dead body was wrapped and put into a tomb with a big stone in front. Any hope they had of finding something different was sealed inside. **"On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb."** Spices were for dead bodies. That's just what they were looking for, the dead body of Jesus to anoint, rewrap, and rebury. They were fully expecting to find disappointment, a failed experiment, nothing but a mess to clean up.

Something was wrong at the tomb. The stone they were looking for blocking the entrance was thrown down. The soldiers they were looking for guarding the tomb weren't there. What was there was emptiness. **"They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them."** The angels asked the ladies what they were looking for. But really these two angels already knew what the women were looking for. They were looking for the wrong thing. Like Fleming, the women thought there was just one more mess to clean up, a Jesus who needed prepping for full burial. But definitely a crucified and dead Jesus.

One sometimes finds what one is not looking for. **"Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he is risen!"** They were looking for the wrong kind of Jesus. The crucified and dead Jesus wasn't there. They weren't looking for the Jesus who was. These women were looking for the Jesus they thought would be there, the one they thought him to be. Suddenly these women were thrust into the truth of what you and I already know. Jesus is alive.

Are you sometimes looking for a Jesus who matches what you want him to be? You've got expectations and you figure he'll match them. At different times we want Jesus to be different things. Sometimes we want Jesus to be on the spot for us, there when we need him so we can get something from him. Prayer requests largely go up asking for things. Healing, money, security, peace, respectable kids, the list goes on and on. We put in the request and expect to get it. Or we might go to Jesus expecting to find the one who can clean up our messes, like Mr. Clean. We only bring him into the situation when it's absolutely necessary, basically when the mess is more than we can clean up. When I've ruined the relationship, hurt myself badly, or destroyed my good name. Only then do I feel it right to take my mess to him. Other times we just want a good friend, a buddy, someone there when I want but out of sight when I don't want him around. We want Jesus to tell us when we're doing something good and like any good friend look the other way when we're doing something bad.

We go looking for the wrong kind of Jesus. That might work for a dead Jesus. A dead Jesus doesn't care if you only come to him with your requests for things. Doesn't care if you only bring him out when the mess is way beyond your ability to clean. A dead Jesus doesn't mind being the friend who pats you on the back for doing good and looks the other way all the rest of the time. But that's not the kind of Jesus who is real. Jesus isn't dead. The angel was surprised the women were there looking for a dead Jesus.

Surprised because that wasn't part of the plan. The plan called for Jesus to come and fight against sin, death, and the devil. Sin, the kind that's inside you and me like a bacterial infection. It's deadly if left untreated and does plenty of damage in the meantime. Sin like that will grow and grow and our bodies can't fight it off alone. You've tried. You've made the promises to yourself silently in the car. You've read the books and watched the videos for improving your life. You've talked it out. But over and over you find yourself right back in the same spot, failing again, sinning again, wanting to be better but not. Only through pain do we realize we can't wish this sin infection away, we can't hope sin will go away, sin doesn't come out of us like that.

God knew that and sent his Son to do something about it. Everything Jesus did was part of that plan to save you and me from our sinful infection. From his baptism, to his walking around and living his life, Jesus was like you and me in every way. Except one major difference. Jesus never sinned. The silent promises, the self-help books, the talking himself up, none of that was necessary for Jesus. He lived perfectly. That's what made his going to the cross so important. He went there accused and found guilty of sins he never committed. No, they were sins you and I committed. Our sins sent Jesus to the cross. All our guilt, failures, and best attempts at self-healing sent him to the cross. Jesus' death paid for all of it. One perfect person paying for a world full of guilty people.

For as much as God's love sent him to the cross, God's love brought him out of the tomb. Jesus is God's greatest gift...for you. When God looks at you now he can't see your sins anymore. Why? Because Jesus paid for them and they're gone. You aren't guilty anymore. You aren't facing punishment anymore. You are free from sin, death, and the devil. "One sometimes finds what one is not looking for." We may have started by looking for sin, death, and temptations in our lives. But what we find is a living Savior who is God's greatest gift.

Alexander Fleming went looking for the wrong thing in the wrong place and found penicillin. It changed his life. He received accolades, awards, and is generally considered the finder of one of the greatest discoveries of modern medicine. With God's greatest gift for you, a total change in your life is what you and I receive. We get a clean slate. We get a fresh start. Forgiveness for our past and certain promises for our future. Jesus is God's greatest gift...for you.

You might be surprised to note that Alexander Fleming never patented his discovery. He said he wanted it to be a gift for all people free of charge. I've got an even greater gift to share with you this morning. It's right there in the gospel. You can take it, share it, talk about it, and enjoy it. It has saved the lives of billions of people. **"The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again."** One sometimes finds what one is not looking for. Fleming was looking for something and found a gift. The women went looking for a dead Jesus and found angels declaring good news. You may have been looking for relief, hope, and comfort in many places but what you have is Christ Jesus, God's greatest gift...for you.