

On July 4th, 1803 President Thomas Jefferson announced that the land from the Mississippi River west to the Rocky Mountains had just been purchased from Napoleon for \$15 million. 825,000 square miles of wide open land that would double the size of the country and it was all purchased for the low price of 3 cents an acre.

Also that day Jefferson made a promise to a young man in his military. In a letter Jefferson promised that this man could utilize any US agency, could take things from any citizen and the US government would pay it all back. At the bottom of that letter Jefferson wrote ***"I, Thomas Jefferson, President of the United States of America, have written this letter of general credit for you with my own hand, and signed it with my name."*** That's a letter of almost unlimited credit. That man walked out with the power to get weapons, money, supplies, anything from anyone, anywhere and the government and the president guaranteed it. He walked out with a huge promise.

Big promises require careful instructions. My dad always told me the same as your dad probably told you, "If it sounds too good to be true..." If you were holding a letter like that wouldn't you wonder if it was going to work? Would you wonder if you really could go down to Tinker and tell them you've got authorization to take one of their airplanes? Nothing is worse than a huge promise you were counting on that didn't come through.

Those women on the way to the tomb were holding huge promises from Jesus. He had promised them he was the son of God. He had promised he was the world's Savior. He promised that he was the way, truth, and life. He promised nothing could separate them from him. And they believed him. But huge promises mean equally huge broken hearts. These women were walking out to a dead man's tomb. He had died three days before on a cross. He had died and all his promises died with him. He had predicted it all, Jerusalem, the suffering, the cross, the death. He promised it would happen but now it didn't matter. He was dead and they were heartbroken.

A dead Jesus is worthless. A dead Jesus is really just a broken promise good for nothing. It's no better than if I gave you a letter to go down to Tinker stating that you were authorized to use one of their planes. I could sign the letter, make a bunch of promises and guarantees, and it still wouldn't help. I could promise all I want but it wouldn't make it happen. These women were just concerned about one thing, ***"Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"*** They saw Jesus die. They knew it was real. Now the only thing they had to do was attend to the body. Pack it with spices and close it up again.

Panic set in. Where the body should've been was nothing. A young man was there but it wasn't Jesus. ***"Don't be alarmed."*** Things were not as they appeared. The women might have thought now it was worse with the body missing. But it was actually better. Jesus kept all his promises. ***"You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here."*** The dead Jesus was here, but the living one isn't. He's right where he promised to be, alive. He kept this promise. And he'll keep every other promise.

Jesus knew exactly why he had come to this world, exactly why he went to the cross, and why he was in the tomb. He went to the cross for me. God told me but I didn't want to hear it. I want the Easter without the Good Friday. I don't want the suffering Savior. I don't like it because every time I see the cross I'm reminded that God knows exactly what I've done to deserve that cross. He knows all my sins. Seeing Jesus die reminds me that I should die and will die for my sins. It's just what God told me.

Don't look away from the cross. It's part of God's plan. It's a plan that included sending Jesus through suffering. He ended up hanging on a cross being mocked by the crowd and ultimately dying a shameful criminal's death. But he wasn't the criminal, you and I were. My sinful thoughts, words, and actions put Jesus there. His death on Friday was my death. But he didn't stay dead. That too was in God's plan, it was promised ahead of time. Jesus rose from the dead to show you can live on his promises.

Did you hear the angel, ***"Go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"*** Just as he told you. Jesus had promised this. And he kept it. He kept this promise so you can know that he will keep every other promise made to you too. Jesus wants you to live in those promises. He lives so you know that he'll forgive your sins. Know you are forgiven, be certain of God's favor, and look forward to the life that will never end. But living in God's promises doesn't mean life will be easy.

Remember the man who walked out of the President's office with a signed letter of huge promises. It was Meriwether Lewis. With his friend William Clark he was preparing to explore the Louisiana Purchase of Jefferson. They were promised everything they needed. But 4000 miles is still 4000 miles. Big promises didn't make Lewis and Clark's journey shorter; it just ensured they'd have everything for the trip. And when the Rocky Mountains were in view Lewis and Clark felt the ocean was close too. Probably just over the next ridge. It wasn't, only more mountains. Sometimes that's your feeling too. Whatever your problem, marriage, job, social life, just when you think you've climbed over the mountain you find the problem is bigger than you thought.

You've got big promises from God. It won't make the journey shorter but it ensures you have everything for the trip. When life gets long it's time to live on the big promises. Jesus gave one of those big promises the night before he died. ***"In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart, for I have overcome the world."*** That's a huge promise that there isn't a mountain too tall or a valley too low in your life that Jesus can't overcome it. He stands behind you with all the promises and all the power to use the hardest of your days to bring you closer to him. His guarantee is his own resurrection and the fact that he kept that huge promise.

What makes life worth living? It'll never be a life completely free of problems. It will be a life free from the worry of problems. God wants you living in peace regardless of your past. Living in hope free from circumstances that held you back before. To have that life is found in Christ Jesus alone. He died but he rose again as Savior. Whoever believes in him will live even though he dies. Life is long but the promises are huge from God. Live on the promises.

Two years and four months after they left President Jefferson's office with the letter of promises Lewis and Clark finally saw the ocean. Clark wrote, 'Ocean in view. Oh the joy!' It's good you're here today celebrating Easter and hearing of God's huge promises. The promise fulfilled of Jesus' resurrection guarantees you a life worth living, even when it's filled with disappointment and failure, worry or guilt. God gives you unlimited promises of forgiveness, hope, peace, and a life that will never end. Jesus lives! That's the heart of those promises. It's what gives you the proof they're all true. You live in his promises every step of your life until you reach the place you've been waiting for. 'Heaven in view. Oh the joy!'