

There is hardly a place on this earth that hasn't been explored. All seven continents have been mapped and studied. But in 1900 that was not the case. The number of uncharted places wasn't a lot but there was one place people knew of but never ventured. Antarctica was a place of extreme cold, biting wind, and brutal seas with loads of ice. It's so far from anything that still when scientists go there they're risking their lives. If something happens to them it's going to be a while before help arrives.

But danger only keeps certain people away. Explorers must explore. In 1914, one by the name of Sir Ernst Shackleton set out to be the first man ever to travel across Antarctica from coast to coast. He had been there before so he knew the risks. Any crew that he hired would have to know the risks too. So Shackleton was brutally honest in the ad he took out for crew. "*Men wanted for hazardous journey. Low wages. Bitter cold, long hours of complete darkness. Safe return doubtful. Honor and recognition in event of success.*" Not exactly enticing. The captain promised nothing but trouble, and for those who signed up it was a promise that would not be broken.

Every trip to Antarctica has new dangers. As Shackleton approached the frozen coast his ship, *Endurance*, became stuck in an ice floe. There was nothing the crew could do to free the ship. They would have to wait months for spring to hopefully change their situation. As spring arrived things changed, but not for the better. As the ice shifted it crushed the ship and it sank. Now the crew and its captain were stranded on the ice at the bottom of the world far from anything or anyone. In desperation they crossed the ice floe with supplies and lifeboats till they reached Elephant Island, deserted and 800 miles from anywhere.

The time had come for the captain to make a dangerous decision. Shackleton promised his men he would go, get help, and return. In one of the small open top lifeboats he would sail the 800 miles to where he knew help waited. He would cross the open South Seas, one of the most dangerous bodies of water on the planet. He would navigate by the stars till he found a tiny station in the middle of the ocean. And he would do it with no more than four weeks of supplies.

It was a foolish mission and the crew knew it. As Shackleton's crew watched their captain leave they probably thought they would never see him again. The darkness closed in around them and cold entered their bones. With their captain gone they must have wondered how he would ever keep his promise.

Centuries earlier it was another group tired and alone that wondered what would happen now. "**At dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.**" As they walked that Sunday morning they thought about what awaited them. They believed in Jesus as their Savior, but it wasn't yet resurrection faith. Instead it was faith mixed with emotions and fear. Sadness weighed on their hearts. Exhaustion crept in on them from a long weekend. The only thing that waited for them at the tomb was defeat, disappointment, and fear. Like the men on Elephant Island, their leader was gone, death had won again, and hopes were shattered. How could Jesus ever keep his promises now?

Arriving at the tomb immediately they knew something was wrong. The stone they worried would stop them cold was thrown down. The soldiers they expected to have to talk their way past were gone. The grave of Jesus was completely open. Now it wasn't just lack of hope but outright fear as to what they would find, or not find. Jesus' body was not there. But an angel was. "**Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.**" They hadn't expected much at the tomb, but now the angel's words lifted their hearts. Their leader had come back. He kept his promise and journeyed through death and hell and came back. These women came expecting disappointment but found Easter joy. They came thinking defeat but left with the first taste of victory. They came expecting to find a dead body but found him not there. He had risen!

Are we expecting too little of Jesus this morning? We left Friday in darkness and sadness. So we resign ourselves to looking to Jesus for inspiration. See how he handled it when people were attacking him, that's how we can act too. Or we like the idea of Jesus teaching us how to live. He always gave more than he got, that's how we should live. Don't expect so little. Jesus is so much more. Jesus came back. He died, but left his grave empty. He was a man but also the Son of God. The fact that he's alive changes everything for all of us here this morning. You can expect more. He paid for your sins. He grants you hope for eternal life. He's your Savior.

Why are you here? Better question why am I here? Why do I stand up and say what I say? Is it merely to give you warm fuzzy feelings? Is it because I get paid and that's what you expect of me? No. I'm here saying these things because I am convinced that Jesus died. But that wasn't the end. I am also convinced that he rose from the dead. He physically rose and that he lives today. It allows me to give a grieving wife comfort at the death of her husband. It allows me to stand at the bedside of an accident victim and give hope for the future. It allows me to live each day of my life completely changed. He lives who once was dead. That's right, he once was dead.

Just three days ago we spoke of death on a cross, a Savior who gave himself into death. Doesn't sound like good news. But it is. It is good news because that cross was meant for us. We each have sins that separate us from God. We don't deserve anything good from God. But God doesn't punish us like our sins deserve. He punished Jesus. He's the one who went on the rescue mission across treacherous conditions with our sins and guilt in tow to save us. He made us a promise that he would come back. Either he's lying and God is dead or sin is dead. When the grave was empty that was our answer. Sin is dead, God lives. Our Savior kept his promise and he came back to rescue us.

All the men still waiting on Elephant Island never expected to see their captain again. Weeks turned into months. But one day it happened. There was their captain coming across the water. He had braved unbelievable conditions to rescue them. But he kept his promise and he came back. Every last person was rescued. Shackleton didn't lose one man.

Before Easter joy, death claimed every last person who it caught up with. None survived. It seemed the best anyone could hope for was a good couple of years here on earth. That would be it because once death claimed you, you were just another victim. But Christ Jesus made the impossible journey to come back from death. He did it. He rose again. He lives! That changes everything.

We live in a new era, an era where death doesn't win. An era where life eternal isn't just some hope or dream, but the reality in Christ Jesus. **"Do not be afraid."** Those words were spoken by our Savior to these women at the tomb shortly after they discovered his body was missing. But it summarizes the entire gospel message. Your Savior made you a promise that he would come back. He made you a promise that you would have peace. He made you a promise that you would have life. Easter means no broken promises. He came back. Jesus lives and because he lives you will live forever.