

Easter Sunday - Luke 24:1-12

A class of fourth-graders decided that they wanted to put on an Easter pageant for their parents. They wanted to enact what happened to Jesus on Easter morning. So, their teacher helped them by coming up with a list of all the characters that they would have to play. She then spoke to each student asking which role he or she would prefer. Of course, many of them wanted to play soldiers or angels or one of the women who came bearing spices.

But when she came to a young boy named Kevin and asked him, "Kevin who would you like to be?" Kevin responded quickly, "I would like to be the stone." "The stone?" said the teacher, taken back by his response, "We have no lines for the stone, there's nothing you would be able to say." "That's okay," said Kevin, "I'll be happy just to roll away at the appropriate time."

So, since she had more children than roles, she allowed Kevin to be the stone. The play was a great success. Afterwards, the teacher went to all the children to affirm them and to thank them. When she came to Kevin, she first of all thanked him for the excellent job he did rolling away. But then she asked him, "Kevin, tell me why was it so important to you to be the stone. It wasn't after all the biggest role."

"I know," said Kevin, "but I really wanted to be the one who let Jesus out of the tomb."

Kevin's words are important to us this Easter morning. We have heard the proclamation that Jesus is risen. In faith, we believe that he now sits at the right hand of God in power. But the power of Jesus will not benefit us unless we are willing to let him out of the tomb.

We let him out of the tomb when we move our faith from our head to our heart. There are many things that we believe and do that are based in our head.

If people were to ask us we would answer, “Yes, I believe in God. I am a Catholic. I come to church with my family.” All good things. But the power of the resurrection is when we move our faith to our heart, when we let the power of the risen Christ pervade our very center, our very being.

What does it mean to let Christ into our heart? It means that we live each day trying to be aware that the power of Christ is with us. Aware that Christ is with us to protect us, to guide us, to help us.

Living that way is very different than simply living on our own. It is different than making our own decisions and plans, thinking of our own future. It is different from only thinking of God when someone else brings God up or when we come to church on Sunday or on Easter.

If we were to invite Christ truly into our hearts, into the center of who we are, we would live differently. Christ would give us more clarity, more commitment, and more confidence.

We need clarity because every day we are bombarded by issues and demands that come on us from all sides and we keep going doing one thing after the next.

If we are not careful, we can end up living our lives surrounded by matters of little consequence. But if we invite Christ into our hearts, he will help us clarify what is important and what is not.

If Christ is with us, he will show us which things are distractions and which things are essential. Then we will never ignore the people who love us and we will never forget which decisions are the ones that can really make a difference.

So, we need clarity. We also need commitment. Now, we are committed people. We try to live good lives, to love our neighbor, to serve those in need.

All of this is good. But if we place the power of Christ at our center we will find a new way to be committed.

We will realize we do the good things in our lives not simply because they are right but because they are God's work. That insight should give us the ability to keep going even when it is difficult and disappointing.

It should give us new energy because the good things we do are not simply our good things, but they are part of God's plan for recreating the world.

Inviting Christ into our life will give us a new kind of commitment. It will also increase our confidence. We worry about a lot of things. We worry about the bad decisions our children might be making. We worry about our aging parents as they cope with sickness and grief. We have problems at work or at school. We have disagreements we cannot resolve.

But if we let the power of Christ come into us, it will give us greater confidence because we will realize that Christ wants to resolve these issues as much as we do.

We will realize that God is active, bringing our problems to a good conclusion. When we invite Christ into us, we have the confidence that once we have done everything we can, we can leave the rest in God's hands.

The risen Christ can give us power. The risen Christ can give us clarification, commitment, and confidence. But first, we must invite him in. Christ is risen. But he does us no good if we keep him in the tomb.

So, should today not be the day that we decide to roll the stone away? AMEN.