We have spent the last several weeks looking at Jesus, his betrayal and finally his death. Today, I want us to focus on his resurrection. Yet even as I say that I know that most of the world doesn’t believe in the resurrection. It’s just an empty promise given to dupe people into believing a man was really God. Empty Promises.

When it comes to empty promises, I can’t help but think of politicians running for office. They promise so much and we know most of those promises are hollow, empty. Very few really believe their promises, including the politician! When it comes to Easter, God DID gave us some empty promises. Only these empty promises are a little different than those of politicians. As we think of Easter we see the promise of an empty cross, an empty tomb, and some empty burial clothes. Those are good empty promises. This morning let’s look at what those empty promises mean to us.

PRAYER
I. The Empty Cross

A. The Bible setting

1. It’s been a tumultuous weekend. Thursday night Jesus was taken away by the Temple guard, a trial ensued, lies told, threats made and finally on Friday Jesus was crucified on a cross. This is Sunday. The women are walking towards the tomb where Jesus was buried hoping to convince the Roman guards to let them in to put new spices over his body. It gives them one final chance to say goodbye. Maybe that road to the tomb led them past Golgotha, the hill where Jesus and two thieves were crucified. Maybe they simply thought about that hill on the way to the tomb. The hill that still held 3 empty crosses.

2. That middle cross is the one they are concerned with though. The one that had held a man they loved dearly, but now he is dead and they are heading to his tomb.

3. Oh he is dead alright. They sadly watched him die. They looked on as a soldier thrust a spear into his side to make sure.

4. At least Joseph and Nicodemus had gotten his body and were able to bury Jesus.

B. The promise of the empty cross

1. Sin – It’s a word we don’t like to use. It sounds so… bad.

2. Maybe it’s because it is!

3. We don’t like to think of ourselves as bad. Misguided, fallen, maybe even mistaken, but sinful? Bad? Surely not me Lord.

4. As we have said so much over the last several weeks, the cross is about our sin and our inability to do anything about it.

5. The promise of the cross is that God has forgiven us.

6. Rom 5:8 tells us, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

7. I always have mixed emotions whenever I see a crucifix. I understand it’s to remind us of the sacrifice of Jesus. But the more powerful symbol should be the empty cross because Jesus didn’t stay there!

8. We talked a lot about that cross last week, with Jesus hanging there, but now the cross is empty. The sacrifice once and for all for our sins was paid.
9. Now we finally have hope of salvation.

II. The Empty Tomb

A. Bible setting

1. Let’s look again at the story of that first Easter.

2. Vs 1 says it was very early in the morning that they headed out for the tomb.

3. The Jewish day was from Sunrise to Sunset, so they wouldn’t be allowed to “work” until sunrise of the day after the Sabbath.

4. This was the first chance they would have had to go to the tomb after the Sabbath.

5. The very first thing these devout women wanted to do was tend to the body of their Lord. They were in for a surprise.

6. They weren’t expecting an empty tomb. The resurrection story in Mark indicates they were discussing how they were going to get the stone moved so they could tend to Jesus.

7. They get to the tomb and something is strange. The Roman guards that were supposed to be there weren’t. On top of that the stone was already rolled away.

8. You know when they entered the tomb they had to be thinking something was up.

9. They were right, on one side stand 2 men in white clothes that gleamed like lightening.

10. I would say it was a safe bet to say they were angels.

11. I love the irony in verses 5 and 6. “why are you seeking the living among the dead?”

   a) What are you supposed to find in a tomb in the middle of a cemetery? Dead people, right?

   b) Why would you look for a living person where there are only dead people?

   c) Because they had missed the point!

   d) Jesus wasn’t dead. They were supposed to know that.
e) The Jewish leaders knew it. That’s why they wanted the guards posted there for 3 days.

f) Jesus told his disciple this was going to happen several times. They should have been expecting the empty tomb.

B. The Promises of an empty tomb

1. A tomb is for dead people.

2. A tomb that is empty after someone dead has been put in it can only be empty for 2 reasons. Someone removed the body or that person came back to life.

3. Scripture tells us the body wasn’t removed, they tried an elaborate lie to say it was, but it didn’t work.

4. So the only other conclusion is that Jesus came to life again.

5. Going back to the Bible, 1 Cor 15:6 tells us he showed himself to 500 or more people at one time!

6. Now if it had just been his Apostles, you might have said that they were just wishing too hard.

7. But 500 witnesses all seeing the same person cannot be a mass delusion!

8. An empty tomb means a risen savior.


10. If God beat death, that means his promise of salvation is true!

11. A story is told of a father and son driving down the road when a bee came in through the window. The boy was very allergic to bees and began to panic as the bee flew all around him. The father reached out and grabbed the bee in his hand and after a couple of seconds released the bee again. Of course the boy started to panic all over again. The father looked at his son and said, “relax” he showed the boy his and there was the stinger. “I took the sting so the bee can’t hurt you.”

12. The empty tomb is the reminder that our heavenly father took the sting of death so it can’t hurt us anymore.

III. The Empty Burial Clothes

A. Bible story
1. When the women saw the empty tomb and heard the words of the angels, they ran back to tell the 11.

2. Peter and John race each other to the tomb. John is faster but hesitates at the entrance. Of course Peter doesn’t even think to stop and ponder. True to his nature he rushes in and there on one side are the burial clothes all folded nice and neat at the head of the burial slab.


4. He obviously didn’t listen to the women too well. They told him what it meant.

5. The Savior is risen!

B. The Promise of the empty burial clothes

1. Jesus is alive and well.
   a) He isn’t some nebulous force of nature.
   b) He isn’t just a concept to make us feel good.
   c) He is alive! He is real! He is here!

2. The cross couldn’t hold him.

3. The tomb couldn’t hold him.

4. The burial clothes couldn’t hold him.

C. Those empty promises are now filled promises.

1. John Maxwell tells about a time he bought a suitcoat from Nordstroms department store. Their return policy is that you can return any item for any reason. No questions asked. That’s quite a promise, but is it real? Well he wore the jacket for about six months, but just didn’t like the color of it so he quit wearing it and let it hang in the closet for a year! One day, he decided to see if that return policy was all they claimed and took the jacket back to the store and told his tale. The man looked at him and said, “for heaven’s sake, what took you so long?” Mr. Maxwell walked out with a new suitcoat that he loved and they gave it to him for the original price of the other jacket.

2. All those promises that were “empty”, are fulfilled in Jesus.

3. God promised you salvation no matter how long it takes for you to realize you need it.
4. He’s telling you right now, “for heaven’s sake, what took you so long!”

5. Just before we started the lesson we sang standing on the promises.

6. Let’s sing this song with the understanding of the promises we are standing on.