

FREE AT LAST – Pastor Jerome Evavold

What the women at the tomb came to realize that first Easter morning is that it was not over yet. Good Friday was not the end. That is not what Jesus meant when he said, “It is finished”.

He was breathing his last, so that part was finished. How he came to give his life for us all was about finished, but it was not the end of the story.

The women obviously didn't think that on the way to the tomb. It seemed that it was over, that Jesus was gone for good.

With the good news of the resurrection of Jesus comes the good news to us that death is turned to life again and we are set free from sin and death.

What a feeling to know that we are set free from all that holds us down. Set free forever.

I experienced an illustration of this one day this past winter.

I heard a noise in one of our upstairs bedrooms. It sounded like a woodpecker pecking on a tree branch.

But it was in our house.

We still had a couple of old storm windows in that room and a sparrow had gotten in between the storm window and the inside window and was trapped there. It kept trying to get out.

I thought to myself, how can I set that bird free. The storm window was fastened shut from the outside.

I noticed the sparrow had gotten in there through the little small holes at the bottom of the storm window.

It was a pretty little bird. So what I did was to take a wash cloth and I opened the inside window just enough to grab the little bird and I took it to the door in another room that leads out to a top deck and I let the bird go.

It flew across onto the neighbor's tree. It was a great feeling to set it free and watch it fly away.

I am reminded of the old Gospel song, I'll Fly Away.

Some glad morning when this life is over,
I'll fly away.

To a home on God's celestial shore,
I'll fly away.

I'll fly away, O Glory,
I'll fly away. (In the morning)

When I die, Hallelujah, bye and bye,
I'll fly away.

When the shadows of this life are gone,
I'll fly away.

Like a bird from prison bars has flown
I'll fly away.

In Matthew chapter 6, we are reminded of these words of Jesus, "therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear.

Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"

EASTER MEANS WE ARE SET FREE NOW AND JUST LIKE THAT LITTLE SPARROW, WE ARE SET FREE ON OUR WAY HOME.

Some of you would remember Sigrid Stromgren. She was a member at Trinity for years. At age 8, she was one of the survivors of the Hinkley Fire which took the lives of several people.

When I would visit her, toward the end of her life, she would say she was waiting to go home. She did that. She died at age 107.

She was set free.

During the earthly life of Jesus, the Sadducees were questioning the resurrection. In the Gospel of Luke chapter 20, we read that Jesus said those who have died cannot die anymore because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection.

And the fact that the dead are raised, Moses himself showed in the story about the burning bush, where he speaks of the Lord as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

Now God is God not of the dead but of the living, for to God all of them are alive.

What a great promise to hang on to.

From a book called, Jesus Rediscovered by Malcolm Muggeridge, he wrote the following:

At the baptism of Jesus “At that moment a bird flew across the blue sky indicating God’s joy in what had happened. Only in the natural may we see the supernatural, and vice versa. A bird could not exist without God, and through its existence proclaims God. Not even a sparrow, we are told, can fall to the ground without causing God concern”

Easter means everything to us because now we really are set free at last. Free from all that holds us down.

Free from the imperfections we struggle with. Free from the guilt of sins we have committed.

Free from any sense of shame we may feel for whatever reason because we know we are not perfect.

Jesus left us with the promise, "Because I live, you will live also."

This Easter day, April 4th is the anniversary of the death of Martin Luther King Jr.

In the famous I Have A Dream sermon by Martin Luther King, he said it right: "FREE AT LAST. FREE AT LAST. THANK GOD ALMIGHTY WE ARE FREE AT LAST."

Even though he was referring to the end of racial injustice, we can also see how it applies to Easter Sunday for everyone.

Life and death will never be the same because of what happened on that first Easter morning.

As the prophet Jeremiah said, "God forgives our sin and remembers it no more.

Now, over 2,000 years later we are again giving God thanks for what happened on that first Easter morning. The women who first experienced the surprise at the tomb would pass on the good news reaching us today.

And all we can say is, FREE AT LAST. FREE AT LAST, THANK GOD ALMIGHTY WE ARE FREE AT LAST.

HAPPY EASTER!