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Sermon 412 - 1 Corinthians 15:12-26

## A New Story to Tell

Happy Easter everybody! It's a great day to be a pastor, it's a great day to be in church. All because Jesus is risen from the dead. He not only wrote the check for our sins on the cross, but the empty tomb proves that the check has cleared, the funds were sufficient, and we are saved. I don't know your experience with church, and welcome if you're new or don't call yourself a Christian, but this is the highlight of our whole year! It's like Game 7 of the World series right after the rain delay. Because we win. Easter changed everything, it gives hope to the hopeless, it gives peace to the distressed, it gives life to dead things spiritually. Because Jesus was dead and rose again. I saw a video of what it was like for the women to go to the tomb and see the stone rolled away that first Easter morning. What's no way. No way! That's crazy. That's amazing. No that's Easter. Could you turn to the person next to you and say, Yes way, the stone is rolled away.

Sometimes you have the need to tell a new story. For example in the news was this story about customer service and care gone wrong on a United Airlines Flight. Did anyone hear about this? I think this was my favorite meme about the story. David Dao who was on a flight from Chicago to Louisville, and it was overbooked and he refused to give up his seat. So he was dragged off the flight by the City's aviation department security. The CEO of United Oscar Munoz is taking some serious heat for what happened, even after statements accepting the blame, and some are even calling for him to be fired. United Airlines is desperate for a new and a better story to tell. (How about free airfare for everyone living in Chicago - just a thought)

On the first Easter, in the morning there were people desperate for a new story to tell. And that was the disciples and followers of Jesus. For on Friday they had witnessed the some more unthinkable and unsettling than a passenger being pulled from his seat. They witnessed the torture and crucifixion of the one they thought was the Messiah. And as they witnessed his death, in that moment they didn't know what it meant. For them the only story they could tell was all is lost, we had hope and it is gone, we had great expectations for this Jesus but they didn't come to fruition. We thought he came to bring life, but now in the wake of his death we're not so sure. But when they got to the tomb that first Easter Sunday, and they saw the stone rolled away... the empty tomb gave them a new story to tell. A story of hope restored, a story of victory, a story of dreams that had finally come true, of a Messiah who lived up to the name. Jesus lives! And this new story changed everything.

Have you ever been in need of a new story to tell? I remember needing a new story to tell. I was sophomore in high school who was moved up to Varsity for wrestling. And that whole year every match, every brutal weekend tournament filled with matches, I never won. That was a sad story to tell. It was such bad story that the only thing good to say is that I was good at fighting on my back. But when wrestling was over I was in the musical called Oklahoma. And I had a new story to tell. I wasn't that losing wrestler, no, no I was Ali Hakim the Persian salesman. (Some of you are like, how's that better?) But no it was.

On a serious note, sometimes in life we need a new story to tell. I'm not sure the story of your life so far. But I do know this. That an empty tomb has implications for your story right now. Even if you're new to Christianity or new to church today, what I believe is that regardless if you are on top of the world or not, known or not, feel loved or not, the empty tomb and the resurrection of Jesus Christ can change your story. The resurrection of Jesus can give you and us a new and better story to tell. Oh goodness there is hope in this place today.

Let me explain your new story as we get into our lesson. What we have here is the longest chapter of the Bible that deals with the resurrection of Jesus Christ - it's all about the realities and ramifications. Paul is writing to Christians in the city of Corinth. And what this is, is a reaction to something people were saying, though they didn't know exactly what that meant or what they were talking about.

You ever encounter that? Someone says something without knowing completely what it means? Reminds me of parents trying to be cool, and lingo they try to use. BTW the day you became a parent you lost your cool card. I will never say on fleek, I don't know what that means or implies. It reminds me of text messaging, and my limited knowledge of the abbreviations that are in use. I know lol, but you lost me after that. And I see stuff out there all the time. Like I can just imagine when my kids have phones, and they are like Dad your outfit looked ridiculous ROTF. And I'd be like, thanks, do your chores ROTF. Or my wife could text me ILY, and I'd be like yes I would like some delicious Italian coffee but you're missing an L.

Well worse than using not knowing the cool lingo, or text abbreviations is where they were in Corinth. Because this is the idea there were tossing around. "There is no resurrection." And Paul their teacher, and church planter was like who told you, and how did you get there. And you have no idea what you are saying. So he writes this chapter as a reaction to this statement. And first he needs to get them to understand the implications. So let's get into it. There it is. And Paul is saying if there is no resurrection there is a different story to tell about Jesus resurrection, about preaching and the faith, about our sins, and those who have died. But he's flipping the script. Because there is a resurrection, and Jesus is proof. There is a new story to tell about all these things. And that new story in view of the resurrection is what we get to explore. Can you turn to the person next to you and say, "It's good story."

I saw a compelling video of a dog rescue the other day. Do any of you have at home a rescue dog or cat? Well in this story we have a puppy who was stuck in a canal. Let me show you. So what they found was not only was he stuck, but his leg had been cut off. But the dog was rescued, the dog was set free and now the dog, they named Jordan is on his way to recovery.

What we recognize this day is that at one point or another we too were like that dog. We were stuck. Not because of a homeless man's brutality, but because of a man named Adam. Our lessons says, "Death came through a man...in Adam we all die." What Adam did is he didn't cut off our legs, he cut off our line to God because of sin. And sin is something passed down from Adam, that we all have. It is every loveless activity we have. Every evil thought about someone else. Every evil action. If you've ever said or heard, "Nobody's perfect," that is evidence of sin. And by the way we believe that at Amazing Love. This group you're in today is not filled with perfect people, but with broken people. This place, this church, is a hospital and not a social club. And sin makes us stuck without hope, without answers. Stuck in canal with only shame, guilt, and no future. And maybe this is how some of you were feeling as you came in today.

And that is exactly where we would be and have to stay if Christ has not been raised. Paul said v.17, "If Christ has not been raised...you are still in your sins." Sorry, sitting on a bag in the canal. Sorry, you stuck. Oh but Easter, and Christ has been raised! The author life took life back. And it means I have a new story to tell. That I am stuck no longer, and that you are stuck no longer but we have been set free.

Because God put his ladder down from heaven, and he came to this sewage canal called earth. And it stunk when he was here, born in a barn. And this Jesus lived, died, and rose again. And the same arms that were stretched out wide on the cross, the arms that said I love you this much, they are the same arms that have scooped us up. They are the same arms that carried us not to the hospital, but to his Father. Said here. Isn't he, isn't she beautiful. And the Father said yes Son you have made it so. And he set us free. And he did more than just rescue us from sin, his work in our lives continues to heal us of past hurts and abuses. His work in our lives leads to recovery from a lot of areas where you might feel stuck. And his works means we are now able to leap, bound, and do the work he has set before us with the freedom he has given us. *Your new story is that you are set free.* If you're new to Christianity I know you may have questions even reservations, but I do believe this is the new story you can tell because Christ has risen for you!

But there is more. And it seems that many are looking for fulfillment and satisfaction, but are not finding it. I consider one of the most accomplished people of our times Tom Brady. He is rich, famous, has love, family, and 5 Super Bowl rings. And yet after winning 3 Super Bowl rings he still said, "Why do I have those Super Bowl rings and still think there's something out there greater. There's got to be more than this." I'm not sure rings 4 and 5 hit the mark. I don't know where you are in life, success or not, praised or not, appreciated or not. But we all know the feelings of emptiness. We all know what it is to crave something more than what we found. We've chased the rainbow of success, romance, money, and family and found at the end there still is no satisfying pot of gold that can completely fill us.

In fact what we do, kind of reminds me of this vase. As you can see it's painted on the outside, and what that means is that you cannot see on the inside. You don't know if it's full or not, you don't know what's inside. I think people are like this. They try to paint the outside of their lives. Look at my beautiful car, my beautiful house, my beautiful lawn. Painting away. And I'm not against any of those things - especially a beautiful car. But isn't it true we at times put on a front. Because if you could see the arguments in that car, the loneliness in that house, and regardless of that beauty or how accomplished I am, I feel empty

And guess what if Christ has not been raised we do have emptiness. Paul said, v.14, "If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless (empty) and so is your faith." But Christ has been raised. According to the will of the Father. Christ has been raised according to his own predictions, destroy this temple in three days I will raise it up again. Christ has been raised and what it means is that we can be full!

In fact Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the **full**." (John 10:10) So you have a new story to tell. *Your new story is that you are full.* And walking with him can be so good. You can have peace in unpeaceful circumstances, you can have strength when you feel weak, you can have joy when it's gray outside, you can feel loved even though no one likes you today - how crazy is that! Because of the fullness we experience with God.

St. Augustine said it best when he said, “Our hearts are restless Lord, until they find their rest in you.” Solomon said every under the sun, or without you is meaningless, but everything above the sun, where you are - has meaning, and life and fullness.

And I think there is a link between the fullness God brings and the transparency of our lives. *If God has filled you, you're free to be transparent.* I brought another vase. You can see it's clear. And you know what it's filled with? The very best jelly beans, Starburst Jelly beans. And this is a good picture of a Jesus follower. Me on the outside, not much to see. I like cars, donuts, and my family. I got flaws and imperfections. Not that impressive. But if you see something in me that's good. You have to know it is the God who has so filled me. The Spirit of God who lives in me, same Spirit that raised Jesus lives now in me - convincing me I am loved, convincing me I'm all I need to be in him, convincing me he's worth it. Every time you taste or see something good in me, it's God. 'Cause he is filling me. And I don't need to wow you with any other externals, fancy cars and the like, because if you see he's in me that will be enough. Reminds me of Paul who said we carry the good news of Jesus like a Jew in a clay jar. Jelly beans in a vase will do though.

But I have to caution you real quick about fullness. God can be in you. He can make you feel loved, and acceptable, and useful. But the culmination of our fullness will be when we see him face to face. As long as we walk on this earth there will still feel something, a piece is missing, because we are not home yet. We cannot mistake this place for heaven. But there is more.

This passed year I've been reading the book through the eyes of a lion. It's about a pastor who's daughter was named Lenya, but after a severe asthma attack at the age of 5. In the book he references counting the days since he last saw his daughter. Pastor Levi Lusko shares what he has learned about God through this incredibly tough ordeal. But imagine if there was no Easter for him. Ok let's be more honest, imagine if there was no Easter for us? We all carry with us those people whether grandparents, parents, spouses, children who we miss. Who are no longer on the earth. I'm not sure who's on your heart.

But yeah without Jesus' resurrection they would be lost. Paul said in v.18, “Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.” But Jesus has risen from the dead. As the angels proclaimed about the tomb. He was here, but he's not here. He was dead, but he's alive. Go and tell people this news.

And it means we have a new story to tell about those who have died. *The new story about death in Christ is that you are found.* In fact I found the gravestone for Lenya Lusko, and on it read, “JESUS HAS ABOLISHED DEATH AND BROUGHT LIFE AND IMMORTALITY TO LIGHT THROUGH THE GOSPEL.” How good it is to know death has been destroyed, defeated, annihilated, and done away with in the wake of the empty tomb! I love the word abolished, we should say it in like a Christian Bale Batman voice. It's what I was talking about earlier about the fullness being in heaven. And it's not that we should ever take our life, but as Paul said to live is Christ, but to die is gain. So about whoever is in your heart. Sometimes as a pastor I have a chance to be at those critical points in your life at a funeral home, or memorial service. As they are with the Lord, they are found in a way that we have yet to realize - with a fullness and a satisfaction that this world just hints at. They are with the Lord, where we through faith will be as well.

But maybe these are all lies, 'cause we live in an age where we really don't know who is telling the truth? There is so much fake news out there, and reasons to fact check. You know if Jesus hasn't risen. That too was an implication. Paul said v. 15, "We are then found to be false witnesses about God." But Christ has been raised. He didn't fake his death, going into a coma, he died as a spear proved when the blood and water had separated. His body wasn't stolen and a story told. If they were going to tell a story they wouldn't have had women as witnesses, in that age their testimony was not valid. More than that he appeared to more than 500 others after the resurrection. He ate food. And his grave cannot be found, mainly because he didn't stay there.

And this means. You haven't been lied to, but you have been evangelized. By this I don't mean I'm trying to convert you, only the Holy Spirit can do that. Evangelism is just this idea that you've been told the good news. *Your new story is about good news.* And this idea that out of all the people in the world we could hear the message of Easter. The message that Jesus lived, died, and rose for us it is a privilege. Why should we be so blessed to know all these glorious implications. That the stuck are set free, that the empty can be full, that the lost are found, and that the lied to can have good news. I don't know but I like it. And what should our attitude about this message be?

I saw a video recently about a tribe in Indonesia, and their joy upon receiving Bibles. The message of God written in their own language. That's pretty convicting. It's that joy, that conviction, that appreciation, that we too can carry. For we not only have Bibles but the message of a Risen Savior. Let us join together in this church to celebrate what we have heard and have, and get to work to tell the world there is a new story to tell. All because Jesus is Risen, he is risen indeed. Amen.