



29 March 2024

The tomb is empty!

The story has been around for a long time. It was originally told by Paul Harvey on one of his broadcasts. He said he received the account from a minister.



The story was about a nine year-old boy named Philip. He had Down Syndrome. He went to Sunday school where, as in other places, he was not always accepted very well.

One Sunday after Easter the Sunday school teacher brought in some plastic eggs, the kind which pull apart in the middle. She gave one to each child. They were to go outdoors and find some symbol of “new life” and place it inside their egg.

Later the children gathered and the teacher opened the eggs one by one. Some had flowers, and one even had a butterfly. When she opened the last egg, there was nothing inside, it was empty. The egg was Philip’s. He explained. “It’s empty. I have new life because the *tomb* is empty.”

That summer Philip died after contracting a serious infection. The boys and girls from his Sunday school class attended his funeral. They went up to his casket and placed their gift of love on it—an empty egg.

On this Easter weekend we celebrate because the tomb is empty, Jesus has risen!

We get the importance of Jesus’ being raised from the dead: it signaled His victory over sin and death, guarantees the believer’s resurrection, victory over death and, without it, as the Paul apostle declared, our “faith is useless.” In that same section Paul wrote,

“I handed down to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve” (1 Corinthians 15:3-5, 12-19).

But what is so important about the tomb being empty? Why do each of the four gospels give us an account of Jesus’ followers finding the tomb empty? Let’s briefly note just three points.

First, the empty tomb shows us that not only did Jesus conquer death, but also that death could not hold Jesus. As the apostle Peter preached,

“God raised Him [Jesus] from the dead, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power” (Acts 2:24).

As the hymn sings,

“Thine is the glory, risen, conquering Son. Endless is the victory Thou o’er death hath won.” (*Thine is the Glory*)

Then, the empty tomb reminds us that Jesus is who He said He is, that what He said is true, and He keeps His word. Mark records Jesus telling His disciples

“The Son of Man is to be handed over to men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later” (9:31).

Mark tells us the disciples did not understand this at the time, and even were afraid to ask Jesus what he meant. But they remembered it. They understood it later. It showed them that Jesus is the truth who speaks the truth.

As well, the tomb is a reminder of Jesus’ resurrection just as the cross is a reminder or symbol of His dying for us, taking our sin on Himself and paying its debt. The empty tomb reminds us that Jesus did not stay on the cross. He did not stay in the tomb. God raised Him from the dead. He *is* risen! He *is* alive!

The tomb is empty! *Hallelujah!*

Pastor Lyle

