

Every now and then something is found which turns out to be life-changing, at least for the one who does the finding. A rare coin among someone's spare change. A rare painting. An Ohio man recently found a Picasso in his parent's attic.

There have been some great finds throughout history. But none of them greater than what the women find on Easter morning. And actually, we should word this a bit differently. The greatest find of all time is what these women did not find. "*They found the stone rolled away from the tomb,*" we read, "*but when they went in, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.*" What they did not find is the greatest life-changing find of all time. Nothing that has been found can compare to what these women did not find.

And yet they go to the tomb at early dawn fully expecting to find Jesus' body. They do not bring their hymnals preparing to sing Easter hymns. They bring spices preparing to anoint His body. When they do not find Him lying there, they do not rejoice and sing: "Alleluia!" They are perplexed, not knowing what to think.

But then two angels proclaim to them the good news of Jesus' resurrection. And these women go to find the apostles with that same good news.

I'm always a little amused when I hear so called "born again Christians" say: "I found Jesus!" That's more than these women could say. They would reply: "We did not find Jesus!" And because they didn't, they could report to the apostles with joy: "Good news! We didn't find Jesus!" Never has not finding Jesus meant so much.

Now we should not think that these women did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. They did. Even in Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Like all of God's people, they would have believed in the resurrection at the end. As Martha said to Jesus after her brother Lazarus died: "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the Last Day!" These women, therefore, go to the tomb with hope. Yet, hope in the future, and not in the present. They expect Jesus to rise, just not now.

But if Jesus does not rise now, there can be no resurrection at the end. And let's put all of this in the present tense. Because Jesus does rise now on Easter, there is resurrection for us, and not just on the Last Day, but right now.

And here's why. The greatest, life-changing find in your case, my friend, is this: that Jesus found you and made you His own. A dead Jesus will find no one. But a living Lord Jesus seeks and finds sinners like you and me. And you know where He finds us? Exactly where the women expected to find Him. Jesus finds us in our tombs where our sins have buried us.

Now in your baptism, He found you, a lost and condemned sinner. And He raised you up from the death of sin. “*God made you alive together with Christ,*” writes St. Paul in Ephesians. Yet if you paid attention to our Easter collect this morning, we prayed: “Grant that we, who celebrate with joy the day of our Lord’s resurrection, may be raised from the death of sin by Your life-giving Spirit.”

If we were raised with Christ in baptism, why do we pray that God will still continue to raise us from the death of sin? Because we keep crawling back into our tombs. Our fleshly lusts desire the darkness rather than the light.

But friend, you have, not a dead Lord and Savior, but a Lord and Savior who is fully living. And His life-giving Spirit, the same Spirit which will raise you to life on the Last Day, is at work now in the present – at work in your baptism – and He seeks you, and He finds you. And yes, He knows exactly where to find you.

He sees you covered up by sin. And He is not ashamed of you. He is not ashamed to be called your God. Jesus was your God on the cross where He covered Himself with all your sins. And He is your God in His resurrection.

And friend, He knows how to rise from death. He did it. And so, He is able to raise you up right here and now, from wherever your sins have buried you, and give you life, life with Him, right now in the present.

You know why this life is yours right now? Because He forgives your sins. Sin brings death. But the forgiveness of sins brings life. You are forgiven. Absolutely, positively, without any doubt whatsoever, you are forgiven of all sin. And this is life for you. Life with Jesus.

Even before the Last Day, you enjoy life because Jesus, day by day in your baptism, raises you up from the death of sin to live with Him now and forever.

And so, stop crawling back into the tomb! Turn away from sin. It only brings death. Jesus found you for a reason. Not to die, but to live, to live with Him. And it’s because, my friends: “He is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!” Amen.