

EASTER 2008
THE CELEBRATION OF THREE EMPTY THINGS

Opening ill.--Jeremy was not a normal child. He had a terminal illness which affected both his body and his mind. Still, his parents had tried to give him as normal a life as possible and had sent him to a religious elementary school. At the age of 12, Jeremy was only in second grade, seemingly unable to learn. **He was a frustration to his teacher and to all the children in the class.**

Springtime came, and the children talked excitedly about the coming of Easter. Their teacher told them the story of Jesus, and then to emphasize the idea of new life springing forth, she gave each of the children a large plastic egg with this assignment: "I want you to take this home and bring it back tomorrow with something inside that shows new life. Do you understand?"

All the children responded enthusiastically, "Yes, Miss Miller!" All of them, that is, except for Jeremy. He just listened carefully, his eyes never leaving the teacher's face. Had he understood what she had said about Jesus' death and resurrection? Did he understand the assignment? The teacher thought perhaps she should call his parents and explain the project to them, but she got busy and forgot. The next morning, 19 children came to school, laughing and talking as they placed their eggs in a large wicker basket on Miss Miller's desk. After they completed their math lesson, it was **time to open the eggs**. In **the first egg**, Miss Miller found a **flower**. She said, "Oh yes, a flower is certainly a sign of new life. When plants peek through the ground, we know that spring is here." A small girl in the first row waved her arms. "That's my egg, Miss Miller," she called out. The **next egg contained a plastic butterfly**, which looked real. The teacher held it up. She said, "We all know that a caterpillar changes and grows into a beautiful butterfly. Yes,

that is new life, too." Little Judy smiled proudly and said, "Miss Miller, that one is mine!"

Next, the teacher found **a rock with moss on it**. She explained that moss, too, showed life. Billy spoke up from the back of the classroom. "My daddy helped me!"

Then the teacher opened the **fourth egg. But the egg was empty!** Surely it must be Jeremy's, she thought, and, obviously, he didn't understand her instructions. If only she hadn't forgotten to phone his parents. Because she did not want to embarrass him, she quietly set the egg aside and reached for another. Suddenly **Jeremy** spoke up. "**Miss Miller, aren't you going to talk about my egg?**" A bit flustered, the teacher said, "**But Jeremy -- your egg is empty!**" He looked into her eyes and said softly, "**Yes, but Jesus' tomb was empty, too!**"

Truly, the greatest symbol of new life is found in an empty tomb!

Matt. 28:5-7 "But the angel answered and said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

⁸ So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, NIV

There are 3 Empty things we can celebrate this Easter.

I. An Empty Life v-5 .. I know that you seek Jesus

They came seeking Jesus' body. There was no more he could give them....he was dead.

It was Jesus who was always giving of himself.

Gal. 1 ⁴ Jesus gave his life for our sins, just as God our Father planned, in order to rescue us from this evil world in which we live. NLT

Matt. 20 ²⁸ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

A. He gave of himself to **his disciples**
Teaching, demonstrating kingdom power, revealing, empowering, and equipping them from ministry.

B. He gave of himself **to the world**
He healed the sick, forgave sin, raised the dead, loved the unlovable, fed the hungry, was a friend of sinners, and presented the father's love.

C. He gave **till there was nothing left for Him to give**

II. An empty cross- Our debt was paid in full

“I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified.”

ill. Many crosses have Jesus on them. The Christian cross Jesus is not on the cross.

1. His death on the cross satisfied God's judgment for the sins of man.

He became the sinless sacrifice and the burnt offering to take our sins from us.

2. The cross would not be needed again.

a. Jesus last words on the cross were “it is finished”.

That means “paid in full”. No more suffering would be required or would satisfy the Lord.

b. It will never happen again.

Romans 6: 9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more. KJV

Hosea prophesied that Israel would cease offering sacrifices and would lose the priesthood.

Hosea 3 ⁴ For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or idol. ⁵ Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the Lord and to his blessings in the last days.

This indeed occurred after the crucifixion of Jesus. He was God’s perfect lamb that would “take away the sins of the world”.

Heb. 10 10 we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ **once for all**.

¹¹ Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² **But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.** NIV

III. An Empty Tomb

V 6.... He is not here; for He is risen

A. The empty tomb is the greatest display of power.-
His resurrection

Eph. 1 ¹⁹ And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, ²⁰ Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*, ²¹ Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: ²² And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, ²³ Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all. KJV

1Joh 3: 8 For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, the he might destroy the works of the devil. (sin and death)

B. Judgment in the future is certain because of the empty tomb.

Acts 17 ³¹ Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead. KJV

C. Those who believe in his resurrection will obtain there own.

John 11 ²⁵ Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: ²⁶ And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? KJV

D. His resurrection still creates the same emotion.

⁸ So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy

Afraid and joy are the emotions that this witnesses experience. How can you have fear and joy at the same time?

ILL. One of the major TV networks featured a video story of night fighting in Iraq. Our soldiers were two and a half miles away watching with night vision. Three Iraqi soldiers were planting a road side bomb. With precision they hit each soldier and destroyed a truck one was hiding behind.

We have fear when we experience the overwhelming displays of power. However, if we are on the giving end of the power we have great joy.

The devil was in horror while Jesus was in the grave. Jesus was about to demonstrate his power.

- Jesus displayed his power over the enemy by delivering those who were in paradise and taking them to heaven. Eph. 4.
- Matt. 28 states that when Jesus died many were resurrected and appeared in the streets of Jerusalem.
- He says to the soldiers of heaven, "Watch this!" He raises himself from the dead.
- He claims all power and authority over the devils and his cohorts.

Rev. 1¹⁸ I *am* he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. KJV

When he took the keys he established that he had not only authority, but the position and power to bind or loose. Let's praise him for the empty life, the empty cross and the empty tomb!