

**A Day To Imagine**

By: Rev. Mark Breese

*Pastor Mark is the Agency Minister and the Director of Ministry & Community partnerships at Community Missions.*

After Jesus of Nazareth was killed, the Gospel writers tell us that he was placed in a tomb that was nearby. It's hard to imagine what his devoted followers may have been thinking and feeling.

There was certainly fear. Jesus was executed as a criminal. The movement he was starting, and being successful at, was just over.

And they were his followers, and leaders in the making. They might be the next ones to be arrested, tried, and executed.

There was certainly sadness. This man that they had spent every day with for probably the past three years was dead, never to be seen again.

Mostly there was shocked confusion. This was not at all what they expected a few days before. Back then, they expected something...big. It seemed that their hopes of seeing some kind of mass awakening among the Jewish people under Roman oppression seemed to be coming to pass. Jesus had entered Jerusalem hailed as a king. Now, that was over. They were in hiding, trying to figure out what came next.

What is interesting is that they were not even thinking about what might happen on the third day. Resurrection was not on their mind. It was, however, on the minds of the powerful people who had succeeded in having Jesus killed. Interestingly it was the opponents of Jesus that remembered his teachings about resurrection. And it was not uncommon in that day and age for the followers of spiritual leaders to claim that their leader who had died had risen from the dead, transcended death in some way, and so kept their movement going. So, the opponents of Jesus, and particularly Pilate, took steps to make sure this would not

Matthew 27:64

So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first."

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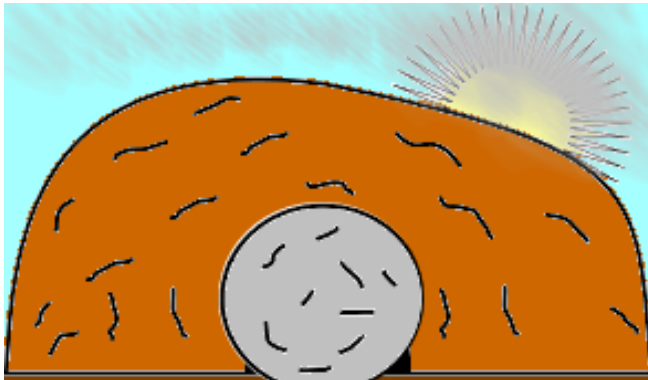
happen with Jesus of Nazareth. A seal was placed on his tomb and a Roman guard was posted.

You might think that it should have been the disciples who would be waiting for the resurrection. But throughout their time with Jesus they just never got exactly who he was. They never understood what he was telling them when he tried to explain that he would need to die in order to accomplish the plan of salvation he was preaching.

The day after Jesus died and was buried is a unique moment. After the first Easter, the Day of Resurrection, Christians have never been without Jesus. He is eternally living and present with us. But there was the first Holy Saturday where Jesus was most definitely *not* with us. Holy Saturday is a day where Christians imagine a day without Jesus, the Christ, being with us.

It is important for us to imagine what that would be like. It is exactly what the disciples thought was happening. Their light in the world was gone and all that was left was fear, sadness and confusion. They didn't realize Easter

Morning was coming as we do. For us, it is often just holding our breath for a bit before the dawn. But today really should be a day to consider what our lives would be if Good Friday was the end of the story. For



me, the world would be a dark place, indeed. And that is part of what makes the actually ending to the story such a joyful moment. There never will be a time, ever again, where Christ is not present.

So today we would do well to both count the blessing of having a living savior, and reflect on what it would mean to not have Jesus with us every day. It makes the blessings of the empty tomb all that more apparent.

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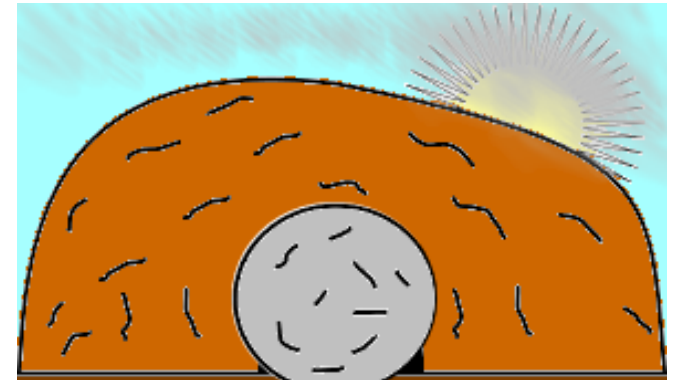
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