

**April 16, 2017 (Easter Sunday)**

**Matthew 28**

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There's something special and important about having a vision for doing something grand.

Maybe it's to take a cross-country road trip, or to lead an organization to fight against homelessness, or to write the next "Harry Potter."

However, there's a problem...having a vision...that's the easy part. Getting down into the weeds of planning, making sure everything is arranged, taking time to flesh out all the details, and, you know, actually *doing* the thing you've envisioned...that's where it gets hard. That's when even the grandest of visions, the most audacious of projects, the boldest of designs, can crumble into dust.

As we say, "The devil is in the details."

Family gatherings for holidays are great examples of this.

You have this grand vision for a wonderful, good, old-fashioned, family Easter...*but*, the devil is in the details.

The cooking needs to be planned so that the feast can be consumed in a timely manner.

And activities need to be lined out for the kids, and timed properly, so that they don't interfere with naps.

And sleeping arrangements need to be well-ordered, cordoning off the loudest snorers as much as possible.

And a wake-up schedule needs to be worked out so that everyone has enough time to get ready and you aren't walking into worship 5 minutes late.

And...we could go on and on with everything that needs to be done in order for you to pull off your vision.

But with so many things that need to happen correctly, there's the distinct possibility that everything will just fall apart.

Like how the ham, which was supposed to be thawing in the fridge for the past two days, lay forgotten in the freezer until 7:06 this morning.

And faced with the choice of taking naps or playing with cousins, the kids chose poorly.

And Uncle Albert, who is usually a peaceful sleeper, decided to snore so loudly he woke up the baby, who wouldn't stop crying, which made the dog start

barking uncontrollably, and which, miracle-of-miracles, *somehow* managed to set the car alarm off!

And because they were up half the night, 3 people slept through their alarms, throwing the whole schedule into chaos!

So instead of a good, old-fashioned family Easter, you've got an old-fashioned, family mess.

But the alternative isn't any more desirable.

Instead of trying to do something grand and special for the holiday, you could just plod along, going through the motions like nothing is different.

Except today *isn't* just *any* old Sunday...it's *Easter* Sunday!

It *is* a special time, things *are* different! After all, Jesus, who was *dead*, is *alive*!

It can be hard for us to remember how earth-shaking this really is, but *Christ is risen*! And that makes a difference!

So it seems like we have two options: do we get bogged down by the details which, inevitably, won't go as planned, or do we act as if it's no big deal?

Well, what if those aren't our *only* options?

What if that expression we've been using is wrong?

What if it isn't the *devil* that's in the details...what if it's the gospel? What if it's the good news?

In our familiar story this morning, St. Matthew offers up some interesting details that we might normally just pass-over.

Like this one: "And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone...*and sat on it.*"

What's the good news here?

It's that the stone, that imposing rock, that impressive block, walling off the tomb, has been shoved aside...and *sat* upon!

I can't think of a more compelling illustration of God's victory over the grave, than for this angel to *sit* on this once immovable symbol of the power and finality of death!

Or how about this one: "Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell...*my brothers*...to go to Galilee."

What's the good news here?

It's that Jesus called his disciples "brothers."

The angel who sat on the stone called them "disciples," but Jesus called them "brothers."

What's the big deal with this one word choice?

Well, it reveals to us who Jesus is:...

Jesus had just shown that he was right all along; he kept telling people that he was going to die and then rise from the dead, and *no* one, not even his disciples, believed him. But there he was, on the third day, alive!

Surely if there was *any* occasion for Jesus to remind his disciples of how much *lower* than him they actually were, it would have been this instance!

Surely he *should* have called them disciples, reminding them of how much they still had to learn.

But Jesus didn't do this. In the light of his resurrection he called them "brothers."

He didn't lord his power over them; he united himself to them as a member of their family.

The devil isn't in the details of this story...the gospel is!

The angel sits on the tomb-stone, *showing* us that the power of death has been broken forever, freeing *us* to live into the newness of the resurrection!

Jesus calls his disciples, calls *us*, sisters and brothers, not lording his power over us, but uniting himself to us forever as someone who will walk *with* us through the mountains and valleys of our lives.

The gospel, the good news, is in the details.

Even when everything seems to go wrong in the story, even when the grand vision seems to have failed at the foot of the cross, even when the details wind up taking us to the grave on Friday afternoon, God can work something special!

Christ is risen! **Christ is risen indeed!**