

Read Isaiah 25:6-9 and Mark 16:1-8

Hopping in Hope (story of Luke's excitement for his birthday)

A significant difference can be found between these two texts. Did you pick up on it?

In Isaiah, the prophet declares the good news about a coming Messiah who will save and deliver God's people. To be more specific, Isaiah declares that the God of creation and order, the Lord, will swallow up death forever. And because a Messiah is coming, and when the Messiah hoped for is revealed, what is to be the response? Isaiah declares, **"Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."** **"Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."** Hold that thought...

In Mark, we encounter a story about a people who would have been familiar with Isaiah's prophecy; a people living during the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. One question we might ask is whether they believed Jesus was the true Messiah or maybe they were experiencing a little shock and stage fright that what Jesus had told them was true? Let us go back for a minute...

They had spent lots of time with Jesus while he lived and taught and performed miracles. Everything they had witnessed and come to know of Jesus would certainly have given them belief that he was indeed very special. Jesus gave them hope.

But was he capable of coming back to life? Sure, they witnessed Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead but was he capable of bringing himself back?

What they knew for certain was that they witnessed Jesus die just hours before.

They witnessed his journey leading to Jerusalem; his entry into Jerusalem; the servitude exemplified in the upper room, the betrayal and arrest; the mockery and lies and false accusations; his beating and hanging. They witnessed and were pierced by his cries. They witnessed his last breath.

They knew he was taken down off the cross; his dead body had been prepared and placed in a tomb; a stone had been rolled in front of that tomb; which tomb exactly as there were guards outside it.

Even after everything they had been through with Jesus himself, coupled with their knowledge of Isaiah's prophecy and God's relationship with their ancestors, how did those at Jesus' tomb that morning respond to the angel's proclamation? The angel said, "Do not be alarmed, you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. (All confirmed). He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place where he laid." Were they glad and filled with joy? Not quite. They were consumed by fear.

The angel told them to go share the good news. Start with the disciples and let them know Jesus will meet them. But instead of going to share the good news of the prophecy that had been fulfilled, the good news that death has been defeated and salvation is here, they fled in terror and shock and said nothing.

What is the difference? What is our takeaway?

Being silent and terrified, hiding, and holding on to the news themselves are not expressions of being glad and rejoicing.

Do we believe in the good news that Christ is Risen? That He is risen indeed? Yes? Yes!

Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Let us take a deep breath in being filled with God's liberation, love, grace, hope, and peace. (Take breath)

Brothers and sisters in Christ, because of Christ's resurrection, the good news we receive is that the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting. As Paul declared boldly, "The old life has gone, and a new life has begun."

Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Let us share the good news with all those we know, through our words and through our actions.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, because of Christ's resurrection, the good news we receive is that we do not need to live crippled by worry and fear. As the psalmist declared boldly, "God's steadfast love endures forever." In Deuteronomy, "God will never leave you or forsake you."

Breaking News! The tomb is empty! Christ is risen! **Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.** Let us hop on in hope! Hallelujah. Amen.