

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas  
April 1, 2018

Contradicted Holiday

Mark 16:1-8

16:1 When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him.

16:2 And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb.

16:3 And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?"

16:4 And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back--it was very large.

16:5 And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed.

16:6 And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him.

16:7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you."

16:8 And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

16:9 [[Now when he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons.

16:10 She went and told those who had been with him, as they mourned and wept.

16:11 But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it.

Christians greet each other shouting “Alleluia!” on Easter since the first century church. I’m going to declare, “He is risen.” three times. Please reply me shouting, “Alleluia!” This is our practice on Easter.

He is risen. — Alleluia!

Jesus Christ is risen. — Alleluia!

He is risen, indeed. — Alleluia!

We have been keeping the “Lenten Devotional” during 40 days before Easter. Now the devotional book is written by a few authors, but I have started it by translating from Lenten devotionals written in English. One of them was written by Rev. Joseph Creedon in 1999. He wrote this:

“Easter is the contradicted holiday. Because the empty grave leads us to the life of fullness. Death leads us to life, and a denial brings vigorous confession of faith, and the cross of the disgrace becomes the cross of the glory.”

## **1. Contradiction Seeking the Living Among the Dead**

I think it is true that Easter is the contradicted holiday. The Bible lists some of the contradictions. The first one is “seeking the living among the dead” (Luke 23:5) Women went to the tomb and to anoint the body of Jesus. They did from their love to Jesus, but their action was aimless. Jesus was not kept in the tomb, therefore the oil was needless for Jesus.

We may do the same error as the women did. We keep Jesus in the category of “historical persons” or “parsons of the past.” Jesus was a person who left his footsteps and fingerprints in history, but he was

not just a “historical” and “of the past.” He was resurrected and is alive, and he continues to do his powerful work now and here.

## **2. Contradiction Fearing of the Joyful News**

The second contradiction is that the women disciples were fear of the news which says, “Jesus is risen.” The announcement of the resurrection was the joyful news. They should rejoice it, but they were frightened by the news. The tomb of Jesus had been capped by a huge rock. It was sealed. And, moreover, it had been guarded by soldiers. But rock, seal, and guard were nothing to the power of the resurrection. The Bible says, the guard soldiers “trembled and became like dead men.” The resurrection, which should give life, made the living like the dead. It was a contradicted fact. But this contradiction tells us that the power of the resurrection is so strong.

“Resurrection” is different from “resuming breathing” or “coming around.” We have some people who went back to life in the Bible, such as a daughter of Jairus, a young man in the town of Nain, and Lazarus of Bethany. They came back to life by Jesus, but they eventually died at the end of their lives. However, Jesus conquered death and had immortal body and become the One lives forever. Moreover, he shared his resurrected life with the believers. This is beyond our comprehension and imagination.

So, we can understand that they were astonished and frightened by seeing the resurrection. As a matter of fact, not only the resurrection, but also the birth of Jesus and the cross were astonishing and awesome matters. The Son of God became a man, and the most holy and righteous person was executed as the most sinful criminal, and the

Lord of life died. These were the things that should not happen. They are great contradiction in the Bible. And the forgiveness by the cross of Jesus also was the “amazing grace.” Do we bow down before the infant Jesus in the manger with astonishing heart? Do we kneel under the cross with trembling body? Do we see the resurrection with surprising eyes? We often sing “Amazing Grace,” but do we sing the song with being amazed?”

### **3. Contradiction that Death Brought Life**

The third contradiction is the fact that the death of Jesus brought us life. And the fact was announced at his tomb. Tombs are the place for the dead. But, disciples heard the news of the resurrection of Jesus and the life giving message there.

All of the four Gospels describe Jesus’ death very precisely using the one forth of the pages. Why? Because our life ends by death. It’s a big challenge for you to find how to live life, because you have only one life. What are the meaning and purpose of your life if your life ends by death and once? If you have no answer about your death at the end of your life, you cannot find the meaning and purpose of your life.

The Bible tells us, “You can live, because Jesus died for you.” by describing his death. And the Bible also speaks us, “You can live, because he lives.” by announcing the resurrection. The Bible looks your life not only in the direction from birth to death, but from death to now. It teaches us that you can live your life with abundant life because Jesus overcame death.

It was really true that Rev. Creedon said, “Easter is the contradicted

holiday. Because the empty grave leads us to the life of fullness. Death leads us to life, and a denial brings vigorous confession of faith, and the cross of the disgrace becomes the cross of the glory.” This contradiction is the joyful contradiction. I pray you may have the joy of Easter within you.

**(Prayer)**

Dear Father, we are those who seeks Jesus in the dead and are confused by the announcement of the resurrection. But we listened to the message that the death and resurrection of Jesus was for our salvation. Your love and power are shown in this message though it looks contradicted for human eyes. Help us to believe the message and live with Jesus. We pray in the name of Jesus, the resurrected Lord. Amen.