



St. Michael's Church
CHARLESTON, SC

SUNDAY APRIL 4

ISAIAH
PSALM 22
MARK 16:1-10

PREACHER: THE REV. AL ZADIG, JR.

HELP US LORD TO BE SO CONNECTED TO YOU THAT WE MIGHT BECOME YOUR DISCIPLES AND THE SERVANTS OF OTHERS.

TAKE OUR LIPS AND SPEAK THROUGH THEM,
OUR MINDS AND THINK THROUGH THEM,
AND TAKE OUR HEARTS, AND SET THEM ON FIRE

Alleluia, Christ is Risen! The Lord is Risen Indeed, Alleluia!

Welcome to a St. Michael's Easter! There is such power, beauty and majesty on this day!

Those of you present here, those in our overflow spaces, and those online... Welcome to the most beautiful day of the year! For today, in addition to the explosion of music, color, and aroma, today is the day we celebrate the most amazing MIRACLE the world has ever known. In fact, today begins a threePart Easter Mini-Series on Miracles that will continue this Wednesday and next Sunday!

It reminds me of the American Tourist years ago going through Customs here in the US after returning from Scotland. In those days before liquids were banned, the Customs official finds a full pint sized bottle in his brief case and asks the man what it contains. The man says, "It's holy water." Suspicious, the inspector takes a sniff and shouts, "It's not Holy Water, it's Scotch Whiskey!" The tourist lifts his eyes to the sky and cries out, "Alleluia! Another Miracle!" But...Easter Sunday is an even better miracle! In fact, the Easter Resurrection is the most important miracle of the Christian faith.

But hold everything, just what IS a miracle? Webster's dictionary defines a miracle as an "extra-ordinary event manifesting divine intervention in human affairs." Many Gamecock football fans are still looking for one of those. But it was C.S. Lewis who gives the very best definition of a miracle. Lewis writes, "A miracle is something that breaks a pattern so expected and established we don't believe it could ever be broken.

Miracles: Divine interventions breaking patterns we never thought could be broken!

As a Boston Red Sox fan, that is a perfect definition of a miracle!

So my friends, on this glorious Easter Sunday, What patterns in your life have you given up on, thinking they could never be broken? Addiction? Sadness? Health? Marriage? In Fact, let me go deeper and ask, WHO have you given up on, thinking they could never change? Have you given

up on MIRACLES? If you have, today will flip you upside down. FOR EASTER IS PROOF THAT MIRACLES HAPPEN. Easter is the day of “divine intervention breaking all patterns!” To understand this, I need to take you to Genesis 3...as I did two weeks ago. If you don’t get this, you won’t get Easter. Easter will only be a day of Lilly flowers, Lilly outfits, And nice hymns, BUT not a day of miraculously changing your life.

In Genesis 3:24, God is giving Adam and Eve the consequence of bringing sin into the world. One of the consequences is that Adam and Eve would be driven out of the garden of paradise. After they are driven out, evil and patterns of evil are unleashed in the world. Ever since, men and women have lived patterns of hatred, pain, sickness, tragedies, unforgiveness, violence, holocaust, eternal death...in short, sin. If you’re here today as a skeptic of faith, you have to admit it’s true. Patterns of unchecked sin are rampant and on repeat. But one more thing happened: God places an angel at the entrance to that garden paradise with a flaming sword flashing back and forth-to prevent anyone from re-entering paradise!

And that takes us to Easter Morning-Mark 16. The ladies who go to the Easter tomb that early morning had given up on miracles. They had literally seen Jesus die on that Cross with their own eyes. They were only there out of duty to put flowers on the tombstone. So painful for Mary the mother of Jesus...So painful in a different way for Mary Magdalene. You see, years ago, Jesus had literally broken the pattern of pain and sin in Mary Magdalene’s life. We don’t know a lot about Mary Magdalene, but we do know she lived a life of suffering- and had given up on ever feeling whole.

M.L. Del Mastro in his work on Mary Magdalene says: “Mary experienced great physical pain in her life,

- Jarring pain in every muscle that put her to bed,
 - even her skin hurt
- The sudden breathlessness when her heart would pound too fast
- Just as painful was her:
 - Hopelessness
 - Helplessness
 - and utter-alone-ness.

That is, until she met Jesus. Jesus breaks the pattern of her pain and sickness. Even demons are torn out of her by the roots! From that moment on, Mary Magdalene would be a leader in this new “Miraculous” movement to bring divine intervention and pattern breaking into the world.

But It all comes crashing down on Good Friday...The Day Jesus was beaten and crucified. Mary Magdalene weeps through the crucifixion. She can’t bear it, not just because she feels the pain of Jesus, but because she can’t control the voices in her head saying:

- “Jesus was a con-man
- He was a fraud
- He’s dead
- There are no miracles, you are deceived.”

Disillusionment is too weak a word to describe Mary’s crushing pain of feeling sucker punched. Yes that Easter Sunday...Mary had given up on miracles. Have you?

If so, you're in good company. The male disciples don't even bother showing up at the tomb...

1. Peter gave up
2. The James's gave up
3. John gave up
4. Andrew gave up
5. Bartholomew gave up
6. Jude
7. Matthew
8. Philip
9. Simon
10. Thomas all gave up

Meaning...If you've given up on God---on miracles- You are not alone! There is No guilt-or judgement in feeling as if that pattern of pain and sin will never break. WHICH IS WHY I SAY: THANK GOD FOR THE MIRACLE THAT IS EASTER!

- Divine Intervention
- Breaking all Patterns
- Never thought break-able!

As the Disillusioned Marys and Salome walk to the tomb, literally, all HEAVEN breaks loose! The Miracle begins..

- First.....the massive stone is gone from the entrance to the burial tomb!

And with eyes as wide as 50 cent pieces, the ladies WALK into the tomb. When a white robed angel APPEARS OUT OF NOWHERE AND SAYS five things that would break the GLOBAL pattern of sin and pain forever!

- Fear not
- I know you're looking for Jesus
- I know you saw Him killed
- He is not here

HE HAS RISEN!

The Miracle of Miracles! DIVINE INTERVENTION THAT WOULD BREAK THE PATTERN OF SIN! The miracle of a human being that had become a CORPSE, TOTALLY DEAD, coming back to life to become a living breathing, walking, talking person. Death could not hold Jesus. This miracle was as improbable then as now. Don't think it was any easier for Mary Magdalene to believe THAN it would be for say..Mary Ables...or Eunice Logan! IT WOULD BE LIKE: Bishop Nathaniel Bowen coming out of the casket under OUR altar...SAYING: Good Morning!

It reminds me of Joseph of Arimathea. He was the guy who gave the tomb to the disciples for Jesus to be buried in, and was fictionally asked, Joseph, Why did you give the tomb away after Jesus? Joseph replies with a smile: "Jesus only needed it for the weekend!"

But Go deeper with me. The EASTER MIRACLE of Jesus coming back to life is that JESUS REVERSES WHAT HAPPENED IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN. Genesis three-The angel with the flashing sword guarding Paradise. A price had to be paid to gain entrance back to paradise.

Jesus went under that flaming sword for us on Good Friday, where He absorbed all the Patterns of:

- Sin
 - Hate
 - and all the evil the world had to give.
 - He took the sword AND DIED once and for all
 - for all of us!
-
- The Garden of Eden is where Paradise is Lost
 - The Easter Tomb is where Paradise is regained!

19th century French Poet Victor Hugo said, "The Easter tomb is not a blind alley, but a thoroughfare!" A highway to heaven! And it didn't end there. Jesus went to hell and Ancient Homilies reveal Jesus searched for Adam and Eve---woke them up and said: "Get up, you were not made to be held a prisoner to death!" The pattern of death is over! That all who believe in JESUS can enter Paradise! And it didn't end there!

- After going to hell,
- Jesus Goes to heaven in the Resurrection
- Then during the 50 days of Easter, JESUS comes back to earth to tell people we are forgiven and free!
- The price has been paid!
- And who is the first person Jesus tells?
- Mary Magdalene
- If I were Jesus I would have come back and spoken first to Pilate and said...
- PILATE, PILATE, I'M BACK!!
- But Jesus goes to Mary first.
- Wow...Divine intervention, patterns broken.

Dear Friends, do not give up. Miracles are what Jesus does!

So, two Easter questions for you:

1. Where do you need a miracle in your life-like right now?
2. More importantly, are you ready to invite the man behind the miracles into your life?
To intervene, to Break patterns, to Bring eternal life?

Give Him your heart, by holding up the patterns so he can break them.

For instance:

- I give you Lord my broken Marriage...
 - All the bad patterns I will not give up,
 - I hold it up to you to—intervene!
 - Break the patterns of sin, Transform it!

For others:

- I give you my terminal health condition
 - I will not give up, I hold it up to you,
 - Intervene Lord! Heal me

Lord break the patterns of:

- Sickness
- Cancers
- Unforgivenesses

- Estrangement,
- Unbelief
- Regret...
- And death itself

Which means:

- If you have lost a mom or dad...
- If you have lost a best friend...
- If you have lost a child..

The Resurrection Miracle says you can see them again!

+My dear friends..at the end of the day: The Miracle of the Resurrection is the proof of God's love for you. You may have given up on God, But as Mary discovered, God will never give up on you. Jesus is saying, I will never, never, never, ever give up on you. And because of what I have done for you, I have given you the power never to give up on anyone or anything in your life! Hold up your patterns and say Jesus, take them, break them, free me.

Finally my friends, this is real. It's personal. When my wife was 11 years old, her father Edward took his own life. Following that tragedy, patterns of pain emerged, patterns of fear, abandonment, and despair. Yet, it was clear, Jesus had not given up on Elizabeth. During a healing prayer meeting, Elizabeth held up those patterns. Jesus intervened, broke the patterns and healed her.

Allow the Miracle of Jesus in your life. Do not give up, Hold it up for a miracle!
Let us pray.