

The Napkin
The Last Enemy Destroyed

Introduction:

John's Record of the first Resurrection Morning goes like this:

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."

Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed. For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again to their own homes. (John 20:1-10, NKJV)

700 years before Isaiah the Prophet penned these words:

On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove his people's disgrace from all the earth. The LORD has spoken. Isaiah 25:7, 8, NRSV)

These two texts inform our message this morning:

A. The Gospel account

1. Jesus was crucified on Friday (Sabbath began at Sundown on Friday and went until Sundown on Saturday).
2. Jews did not want bodies on the cross over Sabbath so they asked that bones in legs be broken (Jesus did not need it and it fulfilled Psalm 34:20, not a bone broken).
3. Joseph of Arimathea asked for His body, placed it in the garden tomb and would embalm later.
4. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary followed and watched Him be buried.
5. The next day Saturday, Pilate secured the tomb (with guards) at the request of the chief priests.

6. John says early Sunday morning (still dark) Mary Magdalene went to the tomb (stone rolled away and empty), ran to tell Peter and John—they have taken the Lord and we don't know where they have laid him.
7. Peter and John ran to the tomb (John outran Peter but stopped at the entry to the tomb).
8. Peter ran into the tomb and saw the linen cloths and the handkerchief (napkin) folded neatly in a place by itself (almost like it was a message).

B. The prophecy of Isaiah (730 BC)

1. He is writing to a people who are soon to be judged.
2. They are going to be ripped from their homeland and carried away captive to Babylon.
3. Judah, though it will be rebuilt, will never be the same.
4. One of the themes of Isaiah is the judgment/hope motif
5. Despite judgment, even in this life, there is a universal and eternal hope that is promised.

*On this mountain he will destroy the **shroud that enfolds** all peoples, the **sheet that covers** all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove his people's disgrace from all the earth. The LORD has spoken*

6. Two words that are used to metaphorically describe death
 - a. **Shroud** that enfolds (KJV-face of the covering cast over all people).
 - b. **Sheet** that covers (KJV-veil that is spread over all nations).

C. Connection to the resurrection narrative of John

*“He saw the **‘linen cloths lying there and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded together in a place by itself? (John 20:7).**”*

1. Neat and orderly exit (not a grave robber)
2. Deliberate folding of the handkerchief.
3. Latin word (**sudarium**=sweat cloth (sweat=**sudor**)
4. For burial it wrapped around the head and around the face, holding the jaw in place.
5. This shroud, face of the covering, veil, sheet, handkerchief, representative of death was folded neatly in a place by itself, by Jesus.

D. The message the folded napkin implied?

1. Death has been defeated.
2. The prophecy fulfilled.
3. That which once left everyone gripped by fear, the veil that hung over all nations has been defeated..
4. No more shame...resurrection that is promised is now validated!

5. Yet, many people still see death as an enemy to be avoided and live in fear (even Christians)

Contemporary philosopher Simon Critchley surprised that Christians, who have many reasons not to fear death, are still so afraid to die. (The Book of Dead Philosophers)

A detailed national survey ... from 2003 claimed that fully 92 percent of Americans believe in God, 85 percent believe in heaven and 82 percent believe in miracles. But the deeper truth is that such religious belief, complete with a heavenly afterlife, brings believers little solace in the face of death. The only priesthood in which people really believe is the medical profession and the purpose of their sacramental drugs and technology is to support longevity, the sole unquestioned good of contemporary Western life.

If proof were needed that many religious believers actually do not practice what they preach, then it can be found in the ignorance of religious teaching on death, particularly Christian teaching Christianity, in the hands of a Paul, an Augustine or a Luther, is a way of becoming reconciled to the brevity of human life and giving up the desire for wealth, worldly goods, and temporal power [But many Christians today] are actually leading desperate atheist lives bounded by a desire for longevity and a terror of [death].

E. The biblical witness is that death as an enemy has been destroyed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ that is rid of its power.

But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. (1 Corinthians 15:20-26)

1. Death has no sting and is swallowed up in victory (1 Corinthians 15:55).
2. Our grieving is no longer hopeless (1 Thessalonians 4:13)
3. The Shadow of death is all that touches us now (Psalm 23 and Barnhouse, 20th century, died in 1960-10th Presbyterian in Philadelphia).
4. The folding of the napkin signaled the destruction of the last enemy

So, if the last enemy has been destroyed, have not the rest as well? (Fold the death napkin)

The resurrection of Jesus on that first Easter Sunday is an announcement that death and every other enemy has been rendered powerless!

What enemies do we need defeated today?

I. Many today are plagued by the enemy of FEAR.

We Fear So much and usually the wrong things: (Louthia Law Firm-avoiding injury in 2014 published this set of statistics).

The phrase "Be afraid, be very afraid" was a tagline from the 1986 horror flick The Fly. Google the phrase and you'll get about 183 million results for that phrase. But the trick is to be appropriately afraid of the right thing. What people commonly fear is not always what should be causing that spike of adrenaline. Here are some examples:

Are you afraid to fly? You have a 0.00001 percent chance of dying in an airplane crash. On the other hand, the car insurance industry estimates that the average driver will be involved in three or four [car crashes](#) in their lifetime and the odds of dying in a car crash are one to two percent.

Are you afraid of heights? It's the second most reported fear. Your chance of being injured by falling, jumping, or being pushed from a high place is 1 in 65,092. The chance of having your identity stolen is 1 in 200. Do you fear being killed by a bolt of lightning? The odds of that happening are 1 in 2.3 million. You're much more likely to be struck by a meteorite—those lifetime odds are about 1 in 700,000.

How about dogs? They're bark really is worse than their bite: Your chance of suffering a dog bite is 1 in 137,694. On the other hand, your chance of being injured while mowing the lawn is 1 in 3,623. How about sharks? You're much more likely to be killed by your spouse (1 in 135,000) than a shark (1 in 300 million). Won't ride a roller coaster? If you have the patience to stand in the line, the chance of a roller coaster injury is 1 in 300 million. But if you play with fireworks on the Fourth of July, you're really playing with fire: the chance of injury is 1 in 20,000.

A. So many live in fear today (so many phobias)

1. Death
2. Sickness or disease
3. Pain or loss of a child
4. Financial ruin
5. Relationship breakup

B. Scripture says we need not live in fear

Deuteronomy 31:8 "He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."

Romans 8:28 "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

Isaiah 43:1 "Don't fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine."

This material is copyrighted. Its use in the local church or in any other setting as a teaching tool or ministry presentation requires written permission from the author.

2 Timothy 1:7 “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”

- C. The folded napkin which defeated the last enemy has made possible your freedom from FEAR! **(Fold the napkin of FEAR)**

II. Many today are plagued by the enemy of HURT

- A. Hurt/pain/disappointment comes in so many forms
1. Someone mistreated you
 2. Abused, sexually, physically, emotionally, as a child and an adult
 3. Alcoholic parents
 4. Mistreated or lied to
 5. Prayed for something for so long and it never happened
 6. Loss in your life
 7. Our own poor choices (cannot forgive ourselves)
- B. So many outcomes of our pain and hurt
1. Unforgiveness that creates relational issues forever
 2. Bitterness that can even harm you physically
 3. Loss of joy, everything in gray and depressing
 4. Live with regrets, self-loathing, always guarded
- C. Scripture gives us hope to be free from our hurt once and for all

Psalm 34:18 -The Lord is near to those who are discouraged; he saves those who have lost all hope.

Psalm 147:3 -He heals the broken-hearted and bandages their wounds.

Romans 8:39-(Neither the world above nor the world below—there is nothing in all creation that will ever be able to separate us from the love of God which is ours through Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 John 4:10-This is what love is: it is not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the means by which our sins are forgiven.

Matthew 11:28-30 Come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke and put it on you, and learn from me, because I am gentle and

humble in spirit; and you will find rest. For the yoke I will give you is easy, and the load I will put on you is light.

- D. The folded napkin which defeated the last enemy has made possible your freedom from HURT! **(Fold the napkin of HURT)**

III. Many today are plagued by SATAN who is our enemy

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8)

- A. Satan is our enemy on so many fronts
1. Temptation (always makes things look good and does not present the consequences)
 2. Accuses us (reminds us of our failures)
 3. Source of fear and doubt, anxiety and dread
 4. When we give him a foothold he takes it and exploits us
 5. Torments so many...he is the accuser of God's children (a liar who comes to steal kill and destroy)
 6. The thoughts on your mind are his effort to destroy you
- B. Scripture promises us that Satan has been defeated and gives us the power to walk in that victory

Hebrews 2:14-15 - Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,

John 12:31 - "Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. (as Jesus predicts the cross)

Colossians 2:15 - When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him. (It is Finished)

- C. The folded napkin which defeated the last enemy has made possible your freedom from SATAN! **(Fold the napkin of SATAN)**

IV. Many today are plagued by the enemy of ADDICTION

A. So many addictions today. Alcohol, drugs, pornography.

(ILL)

On August 11, 2014, the actor Robin Williams took his own life. The 63-year-old actor, who was loved by many fans and fellow actors, was an admitted abuser of cocaine—which he also referred to as "Peruvian marching powder" and "the devil's dandruff." In 2006, he checked himself into a rehab center to be treated for an addiction to alcohol, having fallen off the wagon after some 20 years of sobriety.

He later explained in an interview with ABC's Diane Sawyer that this addiction had not been "caused by anything, it's just there." Williams continued, "It waits. It lays in wait for the time when you think, 'It's fine now, I'm O.K.' Then, the next thing you know, it's not O.K. Then you realize, 'Where am I? I didn't realize I was in Cleveland.'"

Adapted from Matt Walsh, "We're A Nation Of Porn Addicts. Why Are We Surprised By The Perverts In Our Midst?"

In just one year (2016) we dedicated well over four and a half billion hours to watching porn on one porn site. On that single website humanity spent twice as much time viewing porn in a year as it has spent existing on planet Earth. The site had over 90 billion video views and 44,000 visitors every minute of every day. It all adds up to over 500 thousand years worth of porn consumed in the span of 12 months. Since 2015, human beings have spent one million years watching porn.

Porn seems to be America's favorite pastime. The porn industry is worth \$97 billion, which is about 100 times higher than the \$750 million it was worth 20 years ago. Today, porn grosses more in a year than Hollywood. It also brings in more money than the NFL, NBA, and MLB combined. And this is just "the porn industry," the legal, W-2 filing porn stuff. If we were to quantify amateur porn and figure out what it's all "worth" in dollars, who knows what the number would be.

B. Addictions so gripping and difficult to be freed from

(ILL)

*In their Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *Half the Sky*, Nicholas Kristof and his wife Sheryl WuDunn report on [the] worldwide slavery [in sex trafficking], telling stories of girls who had been kidnapped or taken from their families on a ruse and then sold as sex slaves. These girls, many under ten years of age, are drugged, beaten, raped, and forced to sell their bodies night after night. It is a slavery even more horrifying than the slavery colonial America practiced, and the numbers are beyond imagination.*

Kristof reports that it is far more effective to crack down on the perpetrators than to try to rescue the victims. That is because rescuing the girls from external slavery is the "easy part," but rescuing them from the beast within, such as the drug addictions that cause them to return or the shame they feel, is enormously challenging. They keep returning to their abusers.

Kristof tells of rescuing Momm, a Cambodian teen who had been enslaved for five years. Momm was on the edge of a breakdown—sobbing one moment, laughing hysterically the next. She seized the chance to escape, promising she'd

never return. When Kristof drove Momm back to her village, Momm saw her aunt, screamed, and leapt out of the moving car.

A moment later, it seemed as if everybody in the village was shrieking and running up to Momm. Momm's mother was at her stall in the market a mile away when a child ran up to tell her that Momm had returned. Her mother started sprinting back to the village, tears streaming down her cheeks It was ninety minutes before the shouting died away and the eyes dried, and then there was an impromptu feast.

Truly it was a great rescue—and there was singing and dancing and celebrating, reminiscent of the singing and dancing of Miriam and the Israelite women when they were rescued out of their slavery in Egypt.

But as with the Israelites, the celebration didn't last long. Early one morning Momm left her father and her mother without a word and returned to her pimp in Poipet. Like many girls in sex slavery, she had been given methamphetamine to keep her compliant. The craving had overwhelmed her. No doubt she thought, I just have to have this or I can't go on. Perhaps she imagined she'd be able to escape after she got it, but even if she didn't, she thought, I have to have this.

C. The fight to be free goes on and on but freedom is elusive

(ILL) The Prodigal left home, caught in his addictions and afraid to return home...thinking there was no hope

(ILL) *Our addictions make us cling to what the world proclaims as the keys to self-fulfillment: accumulation of wealth and power; attainment of status and admiration; lavish consumption of food and drink; and sexual gratification without distinguishing between lust and love. The addicted life can aptly be designated a life lived in "a distant country." Beneath it all is the great rebellion, the unspoken curse: "I wish you were dead." Henri J. M. Nouwen in The Return of the Prodigal. Christianity Today, Vol. 36, no. 10.*

1. How that pictures so many
2. Longing to be free, wishing they were dead
3. Continuing to be bound

D. Scripture says you can be free

1 Corinthians 10:13—"No temptation^[a] has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted^[b] beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted,^[c] he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it."

1 Peter 5:10—"And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast"

Hebrews 4:14-16—"So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. ¹⁵ This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. ¹⁶ So let us

This material is copyrighted. Its use in the local church or in any other setting as a teaching tool or ministry presentation requires written permission from the author.

come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

1. You can come to Him
2. He will set you free
3. You can stay free in His power
4. Because of the resurrection
5. **The last enemy is destroyed**

The folded napkin which defeated the last enemy has made possible your freedom from ADDICTION! **(Fold the napkin of ADDICTION)**

Conclusion: So Mary ran to tell them...the tomb is empty

1. The grave clothes
2. The prophecy of Isaiah
3. The folded napkin **(unfold death napkin)**
4. The last enemy is death
5. So every other enemy **(put fear, hurt, Satan, and addiction napkins inside death napkin then fold them up!)**
6. Jesus is Victor