

Jesus' Grave is Opened

Matthew 27:62-66;28:2-4,11-15

Introduction

Ask how Jesus' enemies felt about him. *[They hated him and didn't believe he was God's Son.]*
Ask how these enemies would have felt to know Jesus rose from the dead. *[They would have felt upset, angry, and worried.]* Explain that by rising from the dead, Jesus showed that his enemies had been wrong about him.

AIM

Today's lesson tells about Saturday and Sunday, the two days that followed Jesus' death on a cross. Listen carefully to find out **what Jesus' enemies said when Jesus rose from the dead.**

Lesson

Even though **Jesus was dead** and Joseph and Nicodemus had put his body in a grave, Jesus' enemies, **the Jewish leaders, were still worried.** They remembered that **Jesus had said he would rise from the dead on the third day.** So the day after Jesus was crucified, these Jewish leaders went back to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, and said, "That liar **Jesus told the people that three days after he died he would rise from the dead.** Now we're afraid that his disciples will come at night and steal his body. Then they will tell everyone that Jesus is not dead but that he has come back to life. Please send some soldiers to guard the grave so that this doesn't happen."

Pilate answered, "Do whatever you need to do. **Take some soldiers with you to guard the grave.**"

So the Jewish leaders and the soldiers went to Jesus' grave and checked it. **Then they put a seal on the stone that blocked the doorway so that if anyone moved the stone, they would know.** *Explain that a wax seal was put into the gap between the stone and the grave. Demonstrate by doing the following:* • Melt candle or sealing wax to make a small puddle on paper. • Imprint a "seal" by pressing a ring into the cooling wax (play dough). Allow the seal to harden. • Tear the paper along the seal to show that the seal would crack if someone moved the stone.

When they had finished, the leaders went home and left the soldiers to guard the grave.

Very early on Sunday morning, while the soldiers were still guarding the grave of Jesus, something amazing happened! Suddenly, the **earth shook** and an **angel came down from heaven!** His face was as bright as a flash of lightning, and his clothes were as white as snow.

The angel **rolled back the stone from the door of the grave to show that the grave was already empty. Jesus was no longer there! He had risen! He was alive!**

When the soldiers saw the angel, they were so afraid that they fell to the ground. Then they got back up and ran all the way back to Jerusalem. **The soldiers went to the Jewish leaders and told them what they had just seen.** This was shocking news!

The **enemies of Jesus said**, “We can’t let other people hear this report! **We don’t want the people to believe that Jesus is alive!**” So they thought of a plan. They **gave the soldiers a lot of money to keep quiet about what had really happened** and **made up a story** for them to tell. “If anyone asks you what happened,” they said, “**say** that Jesus’ disciples came during the night and stole his body while you were sleeping. And if the governor hears about this, we will keep you from getting into trouble.”

The soldiers took the money and **began spreading the lie** that the Jewish leaders had told them.

Review

Have ready a pad of paper or a white board to illustrate some of the questions

After Jesus had died and was buried, the Jewish leaders were worried. Why? *[Jesus said he would rise on the third day.] Draw a numeral 3.*

The enemies went to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, for help. What did Pilate do to make the enemies happy again? *[He ordered soldiers to guard the grave and had a seal put on it.]*

Draw two stick men holding spears. Soldiers and the seal could not stop what happened next.

Draw shaky lines. What happened to the earth? *[It shook.]*

Draw what the soldiers saw next. *The children draw an angel as you explain that Jesus had already risen by the time the angel rolled away the stone.* The angel showed that the grave was already empty.

Have the students stand. What happened to the soldiers when they saw the angel and the empty grave. *[All fall down in fear.]*

Lead the students to run in place, pretending you are soldiers running to tell the Jewish leaders the news. Then have the students sit down.

Jesus' enemies didn't want people to believe that Jesus was alive.

Aim question What did Jesus' enemies say when Jesus rose from the dead? *[They told the soldiers to say that Jesus' disciples had come during the night and had stolen his body while they were sleeping.]*

Print "Jesus rose" and "Disciples hid Jesus' body" on the whiteboard or a piece of paper.

What does it mean to lie? *[To not tell the truth.]*

Read each of the phrases, and have the children tell which one is a lie and which is the truth. Then write "**Lie**" across "Disciples hid Jesus' body" and "**Truth**" above "Jesus rose".

Why did Jesus' enemies spread the lie that Jesus' disciples stole his body? *[To make people believe Jesus had not risen.]*

Stand if you know that Jesus rose from the dead. *[All stand.]* **Lies cannot hide the fact that Jesus rose. The Bible tells us that he rose, and many people saw him.**

How does this news make us feel? *[Happy!]*

Pray: We thank you, God, for your dear Son, Who has for all the victory won. Please help us share the joy it gives To know that our dear Savior lives. Amen

Additional activities

Remind the children that we know the truth about Jesus. **We know that Jesus is our Savior who rose from the dead so we can live forever in heaven.** We want everyone to know this wonderful news.

Explain that there are people in our lives who don't know about Jesus. They may be people in our families, in our neighborhoods, or from places we often visit. We can share Jesus with them. We can pray for them.

Then show a Bible book, one of the children's Bible art pictures, and a link to the church online service. What are some ways you can use these things to tell others about Jesus? *[Student lesson: share a Bible story with a friend; share an art picture of a comforting Bible passage you*

love; copy the link to the church youtube service: invite someone to online church and Sunday school.]

To encourage your children to pray for others: – Trace your child’s hands to make praying hands. Think of one person they know who might not know about Jesus and write that person’s name on one praying hand. – Draw a picture of that person on the other praying hand. – Have your child cut out a set of praying hands and fold them so the picture and name are hidden inside. Encourage the children to place the praying hands under their pillows or beds and privately pray for the person listed.

Art

Purpose: To make live reminders of the open grave.

Procedure: Give each child a plastic tray or other suitable low, flat container.

Either provide strips of paper with “He Is Risen” to attach to one side or have the children paint the words on the fronts of their containers. Place soil in the containers. Next, each child should shape an open “grave” out of clay or play dough, place it on the soil, and put a stone near the doorway. The children should plant grass seeds in all the uncovered soil and add small artificial flowers and homemade angels. Tell the children to place their models in a sunny location and water them lightly every other day so that the grass grows and makes the scene come “alive.”

Interview

Pretend you are a newspaper reporter interviewing the soldiers who guarded Jesus’ grave that Easter morning **with the truth** about what happened that morning. Use your iphone to record the interview and watch it with your child.