Death Turned Backwards

I. Slide#1 Intro:
   A. Prayer: Lord, we lay out the welcome mat for You, in front of our hearts, for 2014. You are giving us a new set of 12 months, should you tarry.
   B. Slide#2 I like new years. To me it’s like that feeling you get when you get to clean off your work desk...or clean your garage.
      1. We get to seal up 2013 with a bow.
      2. Maybe it was a great year for you. Or, maybe it was a year to forget or put behind. Maybe it was a year of failures. Regrets. Even poor choices relationally, or bad investments financially, or you felt it was unsatisfactory spiritually.
      4. As we look into 2014 in sports...we don’t know whether it is going to be too cold for The Superbowl this year in Jersey. Or, too warm for the winter Olympics in Sochi. The Boston Marathon will be the 2nd largest in history w/36,000. Brazil promises to be ready for the World Cup, but they’re asking can its infrastructure handle all the tourists?
      5. But what about our spiritual life in 2014...will it be status quo Christianity? Or, off the charts cool things partnering with God?
   C. Well, we just celebrated Jesus’ birth, which we get to do each year.
      1. But our topic this morning is one to be celebrated every day, cuz it is always Easter.
         a) Slide#3 “Easter morning was the Father’s audible Amen to all the claims of Jesus Christ.” George Matheson
         b) Christ has died, Christ has risen, & Christ is coming again...maybe in 2014? :)
   D. Let’s start by watching a clip from, The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe. King Aslan the Lion(rep/Jesus) has been brutally killed by the White Witch, leaving his body on the stone table. Lucy & Susan are dejectedly mourning the loss of the great king. Turning to walk away, the ground shakes & they hear the sound of stone cracking. The girls turn & see Aslan's body is gone.
      1. Slide#4 Susan said, "But we saw the knife..."? But her question was cut short by Aslan's response. He explains the Evil Witch did not understand the true meaning of sacrifice. Aslan proclaims, "When a willing victim who has committed no treachery is killed in a traitor's stead, the stone table will crack and even death itself will turn backwards."
      2. Slide#5 Our Title this morning - Death Turned Backwards

F. God has a Word for each character in the Res story… & a Word for each of us this morning.


II. Slide#7 A WORD OF VICTORY FOR THE LADIES

A. (4) When they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away - for it was very large.

B. 1st, a couple words about the resurrection.
   1. The religious leaders jeered, Let the Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe.
      a) Well, Jesus had one better for them...How about instead of down from the cross...I come up from the grave?!!!
   2. All 4 gospel accounts end with the resurrection story. Yet some get worried about the different accounts.
      a) Well, they are 4 different individuals, giving 4 different perspectives.
      b) If the police call in 4 eyewitnesses, & they all give the exact-same-story, it is usually not trustworthy because most likely they have collaborated.

C. (1) The same Love that brought these ladies to the cross brought them to the tomb.
   1. They must not have expected His Resurrection. For they brought spices to complete the anointing Joseph & Nicodemus had begun.

D. Brought spices – αρωμα(aroma) perfumed oils.
   1. Since embalming wasn’t a Jewish custom, these aromatic perfumes were poured over the body to counteract the stench of decay.
   2. But this was also done as an expression of loving devotion (as we bring flowers to the grave today)

E. (3,4) What surprises these ladies faced:
   1. Slide#8 The stone was already rolled away.
      a) The heart pound. Did someone steal it? Is someone defiling it? Would they be denied this last act of devotion?
      b) Once the large stone was slotted in the prepared groove, it was far harder to remove.
      c) Of course this not to let Jesus out, but to let them in.
      d) Great Lesson: It is interesting that when we are worried about how something is going to work out, i.e. vs.3 who will roll away the stone?…we just need to Look up (4)
      (1) On reaching the place of the resurrection…they found their difficulty gone!
(2) The stoned rolled away by an unseen hand.
(3) Are you facing any terrible difficulties?
    (a) We imagine difficulties which God has already solved for us.
F. The stone was rolled away from their hearts.
1. Slide#9 Joy rested. Salvation completed. Holiness was assured.
2. The Christian church is built on an empty grave.

III. Slide#10 A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT FOR PETER
A. (7) Tell the disciples and Peter.
B. Slide#11 There is restoration. There is forgiveness. There is amnesty/pardon.
   1. In spite of Peter denying our Lord, Jesus never denied him.
      a) See, He had plans for Peter. And when you have returned to Me Peter strengthen your brethren.
      b) And backslidden brethren, He has plans for you. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace & not of evil, to give you a future & a hope.
   2. Peter loved Jesus, & even if his loved failed, it rose again.

IV. Slide#12 A WORD OF DIRECTION FOR THE DISCIPLES
A. (7) Go, tell His disciples...that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him.
   1. Or, as Mt.28:6,7 writes it Come and See. Go and Tell.
B. He’s going before you -
   1. Where do you need Him to go before you? Where would you like to be assured that He’ll be there waiting. Where do you need to know He’s been there first?
C. Slide#13 According to The Proceedings of the U.S. Naval Institute:
The USS Astoria (CA-34) was the first U.S. cruiser to engage the Japanese during the Battle of Savo Island, a night action fought 8-9 August 1942. Although she scored two hits on the Imperial flagship Chokai, the Astoria was badly damaged and sank shortly after noon, 9 August. About 0200 hours a young midwesterner, Signalman 3rd Class Elgin Staples, was swept overboard by the blast when the Astoria’s number one eight-inch gun turret exploded. Wounded in both legs by shrapnel and in semi-shock, he was kept afloat by a narrow lifebelt that he managed to activate with a simple trigger mechanism. At around 0600 hours, Staples was rescued by a passing destroyer and returned to the Astoria, whose captain was attempting to save the cruiser by beaching her. The effort failed, and Staples, still wearing the same lifebelt, found himself back in the water. It was lunchtime. Picked up again, this time by the USS President Jackson (AP-37), he was one of 500 survivors of the battle who were evacuated to Noumea. On board the transport Staples, for the first time, closely examined the lifebelt that had served
him so well. It had been manufactured by Firestone Tire and Rubber Company of Akron, Ohio, and bore a registration number. 

**Given home leave,** Staples told his story and asked his mother, who worked for Firestone, about the purpose of the number on the belt. She replied that the company insisted on personal responsibility for the war effort, and that the number was unique and assigned to only one inspector. Staples remembered everything about the lifebelt, and quoted the number. *It was his mother’s personal code and affixed to every item she was responsible for approving.*

1. 71 ago, a mother’s unheralded diligence in an anonymous wartime job made sure her soon-to-be shipwrecked son’s hope of survival.

2. But how much greater are the stakes in eternal matters, and how much greater is the challenge to diligence in eternal matters. “We desire/long for each one of you,” says the writer in verse 11, “to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure.”

D. Heb.6:19,20 Forerunner – This spoke of the men or troops which were sent to explore before the advance of an army.

1. Jesus was our forerunner, our trail blazer, our pioneer, our guide, our scout, our leader who opened up The Way.

E. Slide#14 I see the image of Jesus as the lead climber (forerunner) w/a mountain climbing team.

1. He “goes ahead” & anchors the pitons/pee-tons (the metal spike w/eye for rope) into the rock [or nuts or camming device]
   a) At salvation we clipped our carabiner, onto His rope of salvation. And we follow behind progressing onward & upward w/faith & patience(12).
   b) Faith = This is when He anchors to a place out of our sight. [Picture up over the rock where you can’t see]
      (1) Jesus has gone 1st through the veil, into His Fathers presence, & though we don’t see it yet, we’re climbing close behind.
   c) Patience – you can’t be in a hurry when you’re climbing. Every step & grip better be calculated.

2. We are anchored, w/His pitons, so we can make progress.

V. Slide#15 A WORD OF _______ FOR YOU

A. Which do you need? Victory, Encouragement, or Direction?

B. We are part of this story. It is unfolding right before us.

1. **We do not tell a completed story.** At the beginning of the book of Acts, Luke says that in his first volume he recorded **all the Jesus began to do.** The history of the Church is what Jesus **continues to do.**

2. We look back at the first disciples, Mary or Cleopas or Peter. **Our role is to live as consistent characters** in line with the unfolding story.

C. **Slide#16** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

   1. **What is old in your life?** sin, sickness, pain, suffering, grief, heartache… **but** Christ has opened to us the path to what is **New.**

   2. **What is new in Christ?** Forgiveness, salvation, eternal life, a new creation. **New birth by faith. New nature, new heart, new life, new hope, and a new task.** **Finally,** a new body in a new home called Heaven.

      a) **Slide#17** Now God is giving us a New Year. This means **a new start** for some as they have not done well in the old one. **Not lived for God as they should.** Chance for a new start. **New hope.**

      b) **Maybe you dreamed certain things would happen in the old year,** but dreams can become **reality** in the New Year of 2014.

3. **Let’s make Jesus our everything in 2014.**

D. **Slide#18** Jesus is our everything:

   1. To the **Artist** He is the One **Altogether Lovely.**
   2. To the **Architect** He is the **Chief Cornerstone.**
   3. To the **Astronomer** He is the **Sun of Righteousness.**
   4. To the **Baker** He is the **Living Bread.**
   5. To the **Banker** He is the **Hidden Treasure.**
   6. To the **Biologist** He is the **Life.**
   7. To the **Carpenter** He is the **Sure Foundation.**
   8. To the **Doctor** He is the **Great Physician.**
   9. To the **Educator** He is the **Great Teacher.**
   10. To the **Farmer** He is the **Sower and Lord of the Harvest.**
   11. To the **Florist** He is the **Lily of the Valley and the Rose of Sharon.**
   12. To the **Geologist** He is the **Rock of Ages.**
   13. To the **Horticulturist** He is the **True Vine.**
   14. To the **Judge** He is the **Righteous Judge.**
   15. To the **Juror** He is the **True Witness.**
   16. To the **Jeweler** He is the **Pearl of Great Price.**
17. To the Editor He is the **Good Tidings of Great Joy**.
18. To the Oculist He is the **Light of the Eyes**.
19. To the Philosopher He is the **Wisdom of God**.
20. To the Printer He is the **True Type**.
21. To the Servant He is the **Good Master**.
22. To the Student He is the **Incarnate Truth**.
23. To the Toiler He is the **Giver of Rest**.
24. To the Sinner He is the **Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world**.
25. To the Christian, He is the **Risen Son God, the Savior, the Redeemer, and Lord of Lord’s and King of Kings!!!**