

April 1, 2018

## **Resurrection Has Taken Place**

### PRAYER

May the words of my mouth be meditations of our hearts and be always acceptable unto Thee. O Lord our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

### SERMON

I feel like all you can see are my eyes over this thing (Easter cross). I always wanted to be taller, but you know (laughter). The time from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday is the time that we call Lent. Lent is a journey. It begins with a very profound service of remembering that we are mortal. That we live, that we die. That we have a relationship with God based on law that isn't sufficient, for we are not sufficient. We remember that we fall short of all that God calls us to do and to be in relationship with God and with one another. We begin the journey with that recognition and with the idea of self-examination. With looking deeply at ourselves to see where we stand with God. To see where we stand with one another. And to deepen that relationship with God and hopefully to deepen our relationship with one another.

During that season of journeying through that looking at ourselves, we are also hearing and participating again in the events of Jesus' life. That bring him closer and closer to his passion and ultimately to his death on the cross.

Every year for me it is a profound journey. Every year for me, I recognize in myself again how I fall short of all that God wants for me. What God wants from me both as a follower as one who is trying to live out the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ and certainly fall short of the call to be priest to others. As we come closer and closer and enter into

Holy Week, when we began to focus most closely on that last days and hours and moments of Jesus' life. It is with a profound sense of the great gift that God has given. It is recognizing again the overwhelming love that God has for creation. That God has for humanity. That God has for you and for me. He would join with humanity. That he would create a relationship between humanity and God that has lived out from birth through death. To be reminded of the great obedience required by humanity to live out the law that God has provided. So that we might find the means of living with God and living with one another in peace and in hopefulness. The reminder that we still fall short of that.

Yet Jesus, as he is living out that relationship that God desires with all of us. Does so without sin. Does so obediently. Not without temptation, surely. But to continue to move forward. To share with the people, God's love. To share with the people God's invitation to be part of God's kingdom. Which ultimately brings him to this triumphal entry into Jerusalem as he makes his way step by step to the cross.

It is humbling to remember that the journey that Jesus is taking is for me. The journey that Jesus is taking as he walks those steps, as he is put on trial, as he is beaten and marched to Golgotha. He does so because of his obedience to God and his love for God's creation, humanity.

In these last few days, we have come together, we have remembered. We have told the story and we have participated in that story. It brings us face to face with the great love of God. It brings us face to face with the punishment that we richly deserve for our sinfulness. It also brings us face to face with the grace of God. With a love that is so overwhelming that God would not allow our sins to be the final word. And that punishment for our sins would be the final word for each soul that God created.

That is why Jesus makes his way to Golgotha. That is why Jesus makes his way to the cross. That is why Jesus suffers death. Not for his sake but for ours. So that we might know the great love of God. So that we might experience on a level that goes so far beyond God telling us that he loves us. Or showing us that he loves us by providing the things that we need. Going that extra step of saying I will take your place. I will take on the punishment. I want you to be with me. I want you to be my sons and daughters. I want you to be my children. I want you to know my love.

Now imagine what it must have felt like for Mary; Jesus' mother, the disciples, when Jesus makes that sacrifice on the cross as he gives up his spirit. He breathes his last. He is taken down from the cross and laid in his mother's arms for a moment. Imagine the great love of humanity that it took for him to endure that. The obedience to God that it took to endure that. The quick preparations to wrap his body in a shroud and lay it in a tomb. A stone rolling shut across the opening. And going away not sure what has just happened. Being afraid that this is an ending not knowing the great power of God that will make this okay.

Now imagine the women coming to the tomb. To do what they would have done if they had more time. To properly prepare the body to be laid in its tomb. The expectation that the body would still be there. That Jesus for all they thought of him, for all they cared for him, and all they loved him could not see fully who he was or what he was accomplishing. Fully expecting to see the body lay there. To provide for it the last rituals of life and death.

Only to find that the tomb had been opened. Only to find that the body was not there. To look inside and see something that they couldn't even fully explain. It was a young man and he was all dressed in white. It wasn't me. (Laughter) It was an angel, messenger from God. To give

the message that they were too afraid to even hope for. You're looking for Jesus of Nazareth, he's not here. He's been raised. Resurrection has taken place and the message for you is to go back and tell the disciples and Peter that he has been raised. And if they go to Galilee like he had told him that they would see him. Not as they saw him before but as the resurrected Lord. As the one who has conquered death, as the one who has gone to those who have died before and offer them eternal life.

That's the Lord you're going to see. That's the resurrected Lord that will speak to you of salvation. That will speak to you of eternal life. Not as one who has not experienced it but as the one who has opened the door. That's what we celebrate today.

After walking in the unsure footsteps of the disciples. Of not clearly knowing and understanding what all is going on and witnessing the great love of God and the salvation of God being worked out through Jesus. Then we come to this empty tomb and a messenger that says, "This is God's answer. This is the gift of salvation. This is the beginning of eternal life."

Now this year we read the gospel according to Mark. His depiction of the empty tomb. Mark's gospel is by the far the shortest. It begins with the baptism and it ends right here. Ends with the empty tomb. There are no resurrection appearances that are shared. The women go back. At first they don't tell anybody anything for they are afraid.

There are a couple of verses that seem to have been added on to the gospel according to Mark. That said they indeed shared it with the disciples and went to Galilee and they did in fact have an opportunity to come into face to face with the resurrected Lord. That was probably a later edition. Mark leaves the question open. The tomb is empty. God

has called his disciples to go to Galilee, to follow. And Jesus would fulfill the promise that he made.

We are those disciples. We have come to the empty tomb. We have been told that Jesus has been raised from the dead. We have experienced witnesses who have said they have experienced the risen Lord in their lives. Probably not face to face, not in the same kind of confrontation that the risen Lord had with Paul. Probably not like the resurrection appearances that we hear in the other gospels that Jesus had with the disciples. We have an empty tomb and we have a promise.

Come to the empty tomb. See and know and understand what has taken place. That Jesus came not just to teach, not just to show, not just to be an example. But to open for us, each of us, all of us the gates of salvation. The gates to eternal life. And like the gospel according to Mark's ending we are left to make a decision. You've heard that Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. The decision do I believe. Do I follow? Do I accept the gift of God that allows me to be a citizen of God's kingdom? That allows me to be a son or daughter of Christ, of God? Do I believe, and will I follow?