

Resurrection

In our message last week, we gave our thoughts to the words of Isaiah 53 that described for us the awful suffering that Jesus endured as He was beaten by the Roman soldiers just before He was crucified.

And from that beating, the scriptures describe for us how the Lord Jesus was then taken to the hill called Golgotha where He was crucified and He died, the sacrificed Lamb of God paying, in full, the debt for all our sins, redeeming us eternally from our bondage to sin and to death and giving us eternal life in heaven with Him.

So much was taking place in those final hours and moments of Jesus' life, we can't begin to imagine their importance. All that He did that day was both a declaration and a promise. A declaration that our sins were forgiven, and a promise to us that by His stripes, He would never cease to heal every wound that our sins would inflict upon our souls.

And praise be to God, all of the sufferings He endured and then His death on that cross were not the end of the story of His provision for us. His blessed "Resurrection" from the death He suffered was the crowning provision. His blessed resurrection was God's declaration to the world that He had accepted the "propitiation" Jesus had made for us. Praise be to God!

Let's turn and read about His resurrection in our scripture passage for today. It comes from the Book of Mark chapter 16, beginning in verse 1. Listen to these precious words!

¹ Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him.

² Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen.

³ And they said among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?"

⁴ But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away-
-for it was very large.

⁵ And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.

⁶ But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. (Mark 16:1-6)

In 1st Corinthians chapter 15, we are told that the “gospel”, in its purest sense, is made up of three parts, the death of Jesus, His burial, and then His resurrection. In our teaching about the gospel, we usually spend the most of our time on the first part, His awful suffering and His death on the cross.

We spend very little time on His burial because that is far too mysterious for us to comprehend. Those intervening hours and days between the time that Jesus died there on the cross and the time that the stone was rolled away hold secrets that only God knows about, things that were being worked out between heaven and hell so that eternity could once again be made Holy.

And again, such things are too mysterious for our minds to comprehend, but through the eyes of faith, we can believe that it all really did take place, that in those intervening hours, in some mysterious way, Jesus paid the recompense for every sin that you and I will have ever committed during our entire lifetime here on this earth.

And that then brings us to this third part of the Gospel, the resurrection, the thing that Mary and the others discovered as they came near to the tomb, the thing the angel spoke about when he said, “You seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here. He is risen!

This resurrection, this third part of the gospel is the part that I would like for us to consider very carefully this morning, because it also holds mysteries that only God’s Holy Spirit can explain to us. But before we do that, let me say again, and with certainty, that it is only as all three parts of this gospel work together that it is complete.

It takes all three, the death, the burial and the resurrection to free our soul from its bondage to sin. One part does not work without the others.

And here in these words about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, God is declaring to us that life does not end at death and at burial. There will be, there must be, a resurrection. Resurrection is that sure and “certain proof” to us who believe that all that God has promised about eternal life is true.

“Faith” is described for us in these scriptures as our believing in that which is unseen. But knowing our frame, God knows that we also need some confirmations along the way to shore up our faith and to strengthen it. And the resurrection of Christ gives that kind of certainty to our faith.

But even though we know all of this, the resurrection of Christ is still a very curious thing to us, something that we, with our commonsense conceptions about life and death are not able to easily comprehend. It's probably simply because, in all our days on this earth, we have never, and probably, will never witness anything past the final breath of a person.

While yes, we do hear reports about people having "near death experiences" and about them seeing bright lights and other such things that convince them that they have had a glimpse into the next life, but those reports are nearly always suspect to us.

We simply know that a person, our loved one, has died. We mourn, but then, seeing that our loved one has no life remaining in them, we know that it is best to put them into the ground. And then, for us, except for our memories, that person is no more.

But thankfully, God does not leave us without hope regarding such things. Thankfully, He has put a deep yearning within our hearts, a yearning for there to be something more, more than just these few days that we have had with our dear loved one, more time to say all the things that we failed to say to them while they were with us, more opportunities to love them, more opportunities to embrace them and to enjoy their touch.

And as our minds ponder those things, we know also that we ourselves will someday pass into that unknown realm of death, that for us also there must be something beyond just these few days of living and breathing and having our being here on this earth.

And thanks be to God, there really is more. And throughout these blessed scriptures, over and over again, God gives us very special assurances that there will, with a certainty, be more, much more, an eternity of more.

Jesus spoke those very words of assurance to us just before He went forward to suffer His own death on the cross. In John 14, He said to His disciples,

¹ "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.

² In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. (John 14:1-3)

Folks, Jesus created you and me. And He knows the uncertainty of our hearts. He knows how we fret and wonder and doubt.

And that is why He not only made this and other promises about life beyond our days here on the earth, He continued to assure us through the teachings of His disciples and through His Apostles, and even now through the ongoing preaching of His gospel.

One of my favorite such promises from Jesus is one that He made when He spoke to Martha about the death of her brother Lazarus. In His words to her, Jesus assured Martha that her brother would live again, not only in this life, but especially in the next.

And He wanted to give Martha, and also, you and me, real proof and real assurance that He really could carry forward with His promise. Listen to His words to Martha, given to us in John chapter 11.

²³ Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

²⁴ Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.

²⁶ And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:23-26)

In these words, Jesus declares that, in Him, is life. And in Him is resurrection. But please do not miss out on the one requirement that must be present for us to receive His life. It is that we must believe in Him. Listen again!

²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.

²⁶ And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:23-26)

Did you take note of Jesus' question to Martha? He asked her "Do you believe this?"

Folks, please know that this question is far, far deeper in its meaning than these simple words can express. And also, please know that this question is not just being addressed to Martha, it is also being addressed to you and to me.

His question asks, "do you believe that He, Jesus, is the very essence of resurrection and of life itself." His words again . . .

²⁵ . . . "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. ²⁶ And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26)

These and other truths like them are so mysterious to our finite minds, but they are very, very real and very, very true. And they will, without fail, take place in your and my life.

But again, Jesus does know our hearts and He understands our uncertainty and doubt about such mysterious truths. And that is one of the reasons why He made sure that we saw evidence of His own resurrection.

And yes, even with these words, many people still doubt and have continuing questions. But this, His resurrection, is a beginning point for us, a foundation from which we can begin to believe and to trust. Those words of Jesus again.

²⁵ . . . "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. (John 11:25)

These words assure us that there really is more for us, and for our loved ones. After our last breath leaves our body, there really is yet another whole lifetime, an eternity that is still yet to be lived. But to have it, we must believe in Him! We must have faith!

And again, that is why Jesus gave us these words of scripture, and especially these words about His own resurrection, because it was here at the tomb that eternity really began for us.

Why do I say that? It was not really until that very special moment in time that mankind could begin to have eternal life. It was not until Christ had gone to the cross and died there to pay our penalty for sin that new life could actually begin. And it was in His resurrection that death itself was finally and completely defeated. And it was in His resurrection that our own resurrection could be made sure.

And no, I don't fully understand the words I am preaching to you about this, but by faith, I really do believe them to be true.

I especially love the truths about the resurrection revealed to us in Romans chapter 6. Please turn there with me. And as we read these words, please

note, as these words speak about the resurrection of Christ, they also speak about our own resurrection. And they also reveal another very special mystery hidden within them, the mystery that our resurrected life actually begins now, in our living years. And that our resurrected life has the great blessing of our being freed from the power and the control of sin even during our living years.

In these words, you and I are assured that if we are united with Christ in salvation, that is, if we truly believe and truly receive Him into our souls, then we shall also be united with Him in His resurrection, even now, in our living years. Listen to these words of Romans 6:3-7 as I read them!

³ . . . do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

⁴ Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

⁵ For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,

⁶ knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, (and listen) that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

⁷ For he who has died has been freed from sin. (Romans 6:3-7)

I recognize that these words are deep and they are difficult to comprehend. But please know that within them is one of the most precious promises that we could ever hope for. The promise that in the resurrection of Christ, we also were resurrected with Him, and with a whole new beginning for our life while we still live here on the earth.

Let me say that again. Our eternal life, and our resurrected life does not wait until our physical death and our resurrection at the end of time. It all begins now! Our resurrected life begins now.

And as we are told here, the crowning blessing is that we are no longer slaves to sin. By His death and His resurrection, Jesus defeated sin. And with His life living within us, sin and death has also been completely defeated within us.

What that means to you and me in our daily life is that we now truly do have the ability to say no to every temptation and to every sin that reaches out to control us, because "When the Son shall set you free, you shall be free indeed."

But folks, the really good part is that these living years are only a small part of eternity. These days are few and they are fleeting. The really best part is yet to come, as we live forever in those mansions of glory in heaven.

May we close with these precious words of the Lord Jesus! First, Jesus said to His disciples, and to you and me . . .

¹ "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.

² In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. (John 14:1-3)

And Jesus said to Martha,

²⁵ . . . "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.

²⁶ And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:23-26)

May we pray.