

Easter Sunday – April 12, 2020

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR PASTOR

Perhaps the Lord has some very important lessons for all of us as we continue through this life-changing trial called a pandemic. We must remember to pray for those directly smitten with this deadly virus. In particular, let us grieve together with the many who have had the death angel cross their threshold. Then, too, may we hold up in prayer all those in the medical field and the first responders amidst this global crisis.

We must not lose faith nor, give up without hope, for our Lord Jesus Christ is risen from the dead, and He will not leave us nor forsake us!

Celebrate with me, if you will, the great truth of the resurrection. In the Gospel of John, chapter 11, we find the story of Lazarus, the friend of Jesus and the brother of Mary and Martha. Lazarus falls very ill. The sisters call for Jesus to come and heal their brother. However; Jesus delays His coming and Lazarus dies and is buried for four days.

Martha reminds the Lord that, if He would have come right away, Lazarus would still be alive. Jesus comforts her and says: "...thy brother shall rise again." (John 11:23) She knows this. "...I know that he shall rise again at the resurrection at the last day." (John 11:24-26) Then Jesus tells her: "...I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believeth thou this?" She responds with a "...Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." (v.27) She certainly went a lot further in her response. As we come to the close of the Gospel of John, in chapter 19 we find the account recorded of the trial, the brutal treatment, the crucifixion and the burial of the Lord.

Now comes the "good news". In John 20, we have John's account of the resurrection. Here, this Easter Sunday, are some encouraging thoughts to ponder.

FIRST – We should be EXCITED. There was a lot of running going on down in the cemetery. It is still dark early in the morning of the third day. Mary rises very early. When she arrives at the tomb, she sees that the sealing stone is rolled away. She immediately runs to find Peter and the other disciple. When they hear the news, they both run to the sepulcher. The other disciple looks into the tomb while Peter goes all the way in! Note: It seems that these two fellows did not understand the words of Jesus from the very beginning. (Luke 18:31-34) – “Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them. Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again. And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.”

SECOND - We should express EMOTION Mary did not give up. Both disciples saw first-hand, the vacant tomb, yet, somehow they were unaffected by it. (John 20:10) – “Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.” What? There was no emotion - no tears – no questioning on their part. Poor, poor disciples! Mary took another look amidst her streaming tears. That look brought to her a surprised blessing. She saw two angels sitting in the tomb. They asked her why she was weeping? Her emotions were very sad because she thought that someone had taken away the body of her Lord. (John 20:13b) – “...Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.”

Her sadness and despair quickly turned to elation as the risen Lord appeared to her face to face.

THIRD – Let us express some ENTHUSIASM. After all, the tomb is empty and Jesus is alive! Peter and the other disciple didn't hang around long enough to get the blessing. Mary now sees the Lord in his resurrected body. She did not realize it was Him at first. But once she knew it really was Him, she addressed Him as "Rabboni" which means Master! Can you imagine just how she felt? What a life-changing experience!

Just how enthusiastic are you about our risen Saviour? What is it that excites you? Do your emotions get stirred when you remember that the borrowed tomb is empty? The Lord went back to His home in heaven with a promise that He will come back some day for His bride. His coming is near and He will take us to a place where there are no pandemics.

Fourth – What EFFECT will this Easter have on you? This Easter will be far different than any of us have ever experienced. Under a "stay-at-home" mandate this Easter, for the most part, will be void of church services, visits to our loved ones and following family traditions.

None the less, Easter to the believer means the same as always, and our present circumstances do not change that meaning.

Consider how different the first Easter was. The city of Jerusalem was in an uproar over the teachings of a man from Galilee named Jesus. He was tried, found guilty and sentenced to death by crucifixion.

A most unusual and miraculous event occurred three days later, He arose!!! We all know that dead men don't rise. But, ah this is our hope, for Jesus said: "...because I live ye shall live also". He conquered death, the grave and hell once for all. That dear one is the meaning of Easter.

God bless you and Happy Resurrection Day!