

***“The Big Words of the Bible:  
Resurrection”***

***1Corinthians 15.20-28***

Easter Sunrise, 2006

The Word of God for our Easter Sunrise Sermon is recorded in St. Paul's First Epistle, the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter, verses 20-28 as read earlier.

It was a devastating scene. Three days earlier they had seen their Lord crucified on a cross. He had been brutalized, beaten beyond recognition, and mistreated as no man ever has. For nearly six hours He had hanged on the cross in agony, suffering the wrath of God and the pangs of Hell, the sentence of death for every sinner. They saw Him utter His last breath and witnessed His body shudder as He died. The Roman soldier stuck a spear in His side to confirm the truth they already knew. Jesus of Nazareth was dead. The Lord of life was lifeless. The Author of creation hanged there killed by His creatures.

Jesus was hastily wrapped for burial and placed in the tomb since the Sabbath was quickly approaching. Knowing that it had not been a proper burial, the women had planned to return after the Sabbath. But as they walk in the early morning light they wonder who will roll the stone away. It was of such a size that they could never manage it and they knew that the soldiers and the disciples would render them no aid.

But looking ahead they see the stone is already rolled away! Fear grips their hearts as they see an angel to the right of where Jesus had laid. Their hearts are about to burst with terror and grief until the angel announces, “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. But go, tell His disciples – and Peter – that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.”

Somewhat incredulous they leave and soon their joy will be made full as they see that Jesus, the Crucified One, the Dead One, is the Risen One, the Resurrection of His people. He, though He died, was restored to life. He had broken the grip of the grave and demolished the dominion of Death. He is the One raised from the dead, the resurrected Lord whose rising to life reveals the resurrection of all believers to the life that has no end. So we learn this Easter Sunrise as we ponder with joy and elation our final Big Word of the Bible: Resurrection.

The Scriptures use two words to speak about the resurrection. One, which we will delve into in our 10am service, speaks to the historicity of the event, the concrete fact of Easter morning. The other word, the focus of our attentions now, simply of being raised from the dead, of being restored to life having once died. This is what we celebrate today. We rejoice with heart and lips that Jesus is risen. He was restored to life by the Father having accomplished the redemption we needed from sins and death.

We rejoice as believers on this Day of days for we know what it means that Jesus is our Resurrection, the Life of His people. It means, as St. Paul states in our sermon reading for today, that we will also be raised to life. We will be taken from among the dead ones and restored to life never to taste of death again. Though we will die, our Lord Jesus announces, through faith in Him, we will live because our Savior, our Redeemer has overcome death by His own death and torn open the mouth of the grave by His resurrection from the tomb.

We rejoice and celebrate that Jesus is raised from the dead because we know we will have to face death one day. St. Paul states that “since by man came death” and “as in Adam all die” we know, as much as it bothers us to talk about it and think about it, death will come knocking on our doors. It is inevitable the Scriptures teach because we have all sinned and the wages of sin is death. It is coming to us though we do not know when or how or where. Death is, at the same time, the great known and unknown.

But does this truth, this cold and bitter fact, need to alarm us and make us sorrow and mourn without hope? It is true that death stings us terribly when our loved ones, our friends, and others we know die. Whether one is a man or woman, child or adult, we are hurt by Death’s sting. Tears flow in our eyes and flood in our hearts. An emptiness and a loss is created as another is laid into the earth and is physically removed from our lives. We know this for each of us has felt this personally and the feelings are renewed whenever we visit the place of burial and think on them.

But the resurrection, this Day of days makes all the difference. Since Christ is risen from the dead, since He was restored to life

the first Easter morning, we as believers can face death not just with defiance, but with confidence for ourselves and all our loved ones and friends in Christ. We can look Death and the Grave squarely in the eye and say “I am not alarmed nor am I afraid for Christ is my Resurrection and Life. He is the First-fruits and because He lives I know that I will also be raised from the dead to live never to die again.” Or, to quote St. Paul at the end of this 15<sup>th</sup> chapter in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians we can say on the basis of the resurrection of Christ our Lord “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?”

That is the very truth the women and the disciples learned the first Easter morning as the empty tomb preached the good news of salvation and life to them. It is the very same truth that St. Paul declares to us as well. Even though Death has come to us by Adam, on account of our sin life comes to us by the God-man Jesus Christ who atoned for our sins, paid for them with His blood as the price and has removed our transgressions from us forever by His sacrifice on the cross.

Just as Christ, who was made sin for us, was raised from the dead, so also we, who are declared righteous for His name’s sake, will be raised from the dead on the Last Day, a part of the great harvest of God’s people throughout the ages. To drive home this truth, Paul uses an agricultural picture, one that any gardener and farmer, or not, can understand. Each of us knows that as the first buds form and flower, more will follow. We know that as the first fruit forms on the tree, more will follow. We know that as the first vegetables form on the vine, more will follow.

It is a basic truth of the creation. So also with the resurrection of the dead, with the rising to life of all of us and all of God’s people. Since Christ is the First-fruits, since He left the tomb empty for the women and the disciples to see and the angels to proclaim, since He is raised from the dead, we are promised by faith we will also be raised from the dead, restored to life and we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.

For Christ our Lord swallowed up Death forever having risen from the dead. He has taken away its sting and destroyed its power and hold over us and all who died in His name. Jesus has set in motion and will bring it to its culmination on the Last Day when He

delivers us, the Kingdom, to God the Father for eternity. For He, as He states in Revelation chapter 1, has the power of Death and Hades, over Death and the Grave. “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I hold the keys of Hades and Death.”

Hence, we need not be alarmed when Death comes nor do we need to be afraid for we have the Redeemer who lives, who was raised from the dead, whose restoration to life guarantees to us and all who believe that we too will conquer death being raised to life never to die again. On that Day, we will be harvested, reunited with all those who are the Lord's, who called on His name in faith in this life and for the life to come.

This St. Paul teaches in his First Epistle to Thessalonians when he writes these words. “But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

Then, on the Day of Resurrection, we, with all of God's people, will rejoice on His holy mountain forever and ever as Isaiah foretells in the Old Testament reading. We will sit at the great Feast of feasts, gathered before the Lamb and the Spirit and He who sits on the throne and we will be filled with the joy that never ends. Every tear will be wiped from our eyes and our joy will be full since we have waited on Him who has saved us from Death and the Grave.

On account of the resurrection of Jesus we can stand at the graves of our loved ones, family, and friends who died in the Lord without alarm and without fear for we know that though they have died, they will live. They will be raised to life, be restored to life

with glorious, resurrection bodies. We will see them at the resurrection of all flesh and we will dwell with them with our risen Lord and Redeemer forever. For this is what the big word “Resurrection” teaches us for “now Christ is risen from the dead and has become the First-fruits of those” who fall asleep. Rejoice and be glad. Jesus is risen! He is risen indeed! Amen.

**+Soli Deo Gloria+**