

Easter Sermon

THE FIRST READING

Acts 10:34-43

page

(Peter tells of Jesus resurrection, and the forgiveness it brings those who believe.)

34 Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism 35 but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. 36 You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. 37 You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached-- 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

39 "We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, 40 but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. 41 He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen-- by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42 He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. 43 All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

THE EPISTLE LESSON

Colossians 3:1-4

page

(Christ has been raised, so we can now live a new life, hidden with Christ in God)

1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

THE GOSPEL LESSON

Matthew 28:1-10

page

(The angel announces Christ's resurrection and calls the women to spread the good news.)

1 After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. **2 There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it.** 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. 4 The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

5 The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. 6 He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

8 So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9 Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

INTRO - I told a joke in Lighthouse Bible Class the other day I thought everyone had heard before. I didn't expect a laugh, but it fit so I told it anyway, and then everyone laughed. It fits today's lesson too.

An angel appeared to a guy and said, 'I've got good news and bad news for you.'

What is it? the man asked.

The angel replied, 'Well, the good news is there's golf in heaven.' Great,' the man replied. 'I'll look forward to going. What's the bad news?'

The angel slowly answered, 'You tee off in 5 minutes.'

Talk about numb and shocked!

- I. That is the way the ladies in today's lesson felt. Numb and shocked by good news turned bad.
 - A. They had known good news, Great News.
 1. They had come to know Jesus.
 2. They not only knew him as a friend, and a teacher, and a prophet.
 3. They had come to believe that Jesus was the Son of God, the long-promised Messiah, the one who was to deliver Israel from their enemies.
 4. This was the best news they had ever known.
 - B. But, now even the best news ever turns bad.
 1. Jesus was betrayed by one of his own disciples, arrested by the religious leaders, of all things.
 2. He was put on trial for false charges and executed as a horrible criminal.
 3. Jesus their friend and teacher was dead.
 4. What's worse, their hopes that God was working to save them, that was dead too.
 5. Now they are at his grave, even the first words of the angels seem to say the same thing, **'you are looking for Jesus, who was . . . crucified.** What was good had turned bad.
 - C. Do you ever feel like whenever you have good news, there's bad news around the corner?
 1. Well, we know the reason for all the bad news in life.
 2. All our suffering, pain and death is because of sin. People don't like to think about sin, or they sometimes don't think sin is that bad, especially theirs.
 3. But, Jesus died not because of his sin, but because of ours.
 4. We see just how bad the news is, that sin is rebellion against God and leads to death, and we all have sinned. **NO WONDER THERE'S SO MUCH BAD NEWS!**

II. Without trying to seem insensitive to this difficult topic, I have another joke. This one I got from Diana Christenson. Now remember, these are jokes, it doesn't work this way. But this too helps to tell the story.

A man dies and goes to heaven. Of course, St. Peter meets him at the Pearly Gates. St. Peter says, "Here's how it works. You need 100 points to make it into heaven. You tell me all the good things you've done, and I give you a certain number of points for each item, depending on how good it was. When you reach 100 points, you get in.

"Okay," the man says, "I was married to the same woman for 50 years and never cheated on her, even in my heart." "That's wonderful," says St. Peter, "that's worth three points!"

"Three points?" he says. "Well, I attended church all my life and supported its ministry with my tithe and service." "Terrific!" says St. Peter. "That's certainly worth a point." "One point!!!"

"I started a soup kitchen in my city and worked in a shelter for homeless veterans." "Fantastic, that's good for two more points," he says. "Two points!!!" Exasperated, the man cries. "At this rate the only way I'll get into heaven is by the grace of God." "Bingo, 100 points! Come on in!"

- A. The bad news is we are all sinners, and whether we know it or not, we deserve punishment and death.
 1. The bad news is that this life is full of troubles, because of sin, and we can't earn our way to heaven, no matter how hard we try.
 2. But the good news is that the love and grace of God is stronger than sin and stronger than death.
- B. The Easter angel did not deny the bad news, but, no matter how bad the news was he had better news.
 1. the women approach the grave, expecting the dead body of Jesus, they hear the news that sin caused. **you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified.**
 2. But, no matter that the Son of God died because of our sins, God has better news.

3. **5 The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. . . . 6 He is not here; HE HAS RISEN, JUST AS HE SAID. Come and see the place where he lay.**

C. The bad news of life is real, because sin is real, and death is real.

1. It is not what God originally intended for His children, but this is the hard truth.
2. But stronger than sin, stronger than suffering, stronger than death is God.
3. Jesus is not in the tomb, **he has risen.**
4. The good news is that in a world of sin and pain and death, God is always stronger than the pain we face.
5. Instead of life being like a bad joke, God has a better reality. No matter how bad things are, His love and grace are stronger!

III. I've got another story. A lady was rushing to work when the man in front of her stopped as the light was turning yellow. Boy did she throw a tantrum, and didn't even see the policeman behind her. As she was still in mid-rant, she heard a tap on her window and looked up into the face of a very serious police officer. The officer ordered her to exit her car with her hands up. He took her to the police station where she was searched, finger printed, photographed, and placed in a holding cell. After a couple of hours, a policeman approached the cell and opened the door. She was escorted back to the booking desk where the arresting officer was waiting with her personal effects. He said, "I'm very sorry for this mistake. You see, I pulled up behind your car while you were blowing your horn, flipping off the guy in front of you, and cussing a blue streak at him. "I noticed the 'Choose Life license plate holder, the 'What Would Jesus Do' bumper sticker, the 'Follow Me to Sunday-School' bumper sticker, and the chrome-plated Christian fish emblem on the trunk. "Naturally, I assumed you had stolen the car."

This lady's faith displayed on bumper stickers, did not show in her actions.

A. The lives of these ladies at the tomb were never the same again. They were changed by the love of God, and even though we struggle with our sin and it's horrible pain still in this world, God has changed us too, by His Easter Victory.

B. Our epistle lesson for today says that Jesus rising not only has won eternal life for God's people after this life, Jesus' rising can and should make a difference in our lives today. **1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.**

1. **Since you have been raised with Christ.** Did you know that? Did you know that Jesus' victory over death is yours right now?

2. **For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.**

3. When you came to faith in Jesus, when you were baptized, you died to sin and its eternal punishment through the forgiveness of Jesus, and you rose to a life that will last forever.

A. The worst life can do, pain and death, is not as strong as the wonder of heaven that God has waiting for His people.

B. **your life is now hidden with Christ in God.** Jesus is with you at with his love and victory and strength at all times in this world.

1. Because God is with us, we can face the worst life can bring,

2. We have the one who defeated sin and death by our side, to strengthen us in temptation, to comfort us in sorrow, and to give us victory over sin, and over death.

3. Knowing we have eternal life, we can live for God in the face of death.

CONCLUSION - We started today with what seems good in life turning bad. Sometimes life can seem like a constant terrorist attack by sin, and death, and the devil. It can seem like constant bad news. We have had a lot of funerals lately. This week I heard of two more deaths, Pastor Leisa, next door, lost her father on Tuesday, and yesterday Dennis Knuth's dad died from liver cancer while talking to Dennis on the phone.

But, today we have heard, the battle may go on, but the victory is won. **He is not here, he has risen.** Today we saw God act in love and power. He reached down to bring his victory in the baptism of Hallie

Peterson. In baptism she is dying with Jesus and rising again. Her life is changed. Not only has Jesus risen, but God tells us, **For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.** Jesus victory is hers, and ours, forever, and it is ours as we face life today. Amen.