

3/30/08

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY Almighty God, You have raised us to new life with our Lord Jesus Christ in His resurrection. Renew in us a living hope in the promised inheritance of eternal life, that our lives may reflect the joy of our salvation and a commitment to love others the way we have been loved; On this Confirmation Day, we especially pray that you would bless our Confirmation students with these blessings. We pray through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and rules with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

THE FIRST LESSON

Acts 5:29-42

page

(The disciples rejoice at the privilege of suffering for Jesus.)

29 Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men! 30 The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead-- whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. 31 God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. 32 We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

33 When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death. 34 But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while. 35 Then he addressed them: "Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. 36 Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. 37 After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered. 38 Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. 39 But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God."

40 His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41 The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. 42 Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.

THE GOSPEL LESSON

John 20:19-31

(Thomas' doubts are set aside when Jesus appears to him.)

19 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

21 Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." 22 And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

24 Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said

to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."

26 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." 28 Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

30 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

THE EPISTLE LESSON 1 Peter 1:3-9

page

(He has given us new birth through the resurrection of His Son.)

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade-- kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that your faith-- of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire-- may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, 9 for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

INTRO - Monday I went fishing by the Ahrens' house, hoping to catch fish where I caught some last summer. Now, the lake near them is down a big hill, and hard to get to. But I made it down the hill, sliding on my bottom, carrying my power auger and my bucket of gear. Then the lake was all slick, and my fishing spot was on the other side. So I shuffled across the lake. I think I hurt my back. Then I looked for where I fished last summer, and dug a hole. The auger would only go so far, and I looked. The bottom of the hole was black, and muddy. I hit bottom. So I went to drill another hole, and the gravel bottom had knocked the tip off my auger. I hadn't hit water, and my auger was broken. My hope was to catch fish . . . but that hope was dying fast. How can you fish through the ice when you can't drill a hole?

I. Imagine life without hope.

A. Life would be horrible

1. Imagine a loved one died, and that was the end.
2. Imagine someone got sick, and the doctors didn't know what to do, and there was no one to pray to.
3. Imagine You sinned against a loved one, and God, but, you needed perfection to live and there was no forgiveness.
4. Imagine your problems overwhelm you, and there is no help anywhere.
5. Sounds bad doesn't it?

B. Ephesians 2:1 says, '**You were dead in your trespasses and sins..**'

1. Imagine wanting to live, but being dead.
2. The reality of life is that because of our rebellion against God, our selfishness, our sin, on our own we are dead.
3. Unfortunately, because of sin, on our own our reality is worse than our imagination.

II. I tried my auger, and it bounced all over the ice. But, I found if I leaned on it, I could actually start a hole, and finish it. Hope for fish again.

A. For people, who literally, on our own have no hope, today's lesson has good news. **3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade-- kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.**

1. Jesus died to pay for the sin that makes life hopeless, and rose in victory.
2. By Jesus' resurrection God has given the dead new life, has changed our hopeless situation.
3. For all who know their sin, and turn in faith to God, Jesus' rising totally changes our reality.
 - A. We have victory over the sin that causes death, we have forgiveness.
 - B. We have victory over death, and we have eternal life in heaven.
 - C. We have God beside us in trials, God who has been crucified, and tried, and made it through.

- B. So, for those who believe in Jesus, life changes.
 - 1. We have a hope for eternity, a sure hope, a living hope, because Jesus rose.
 - 2. We have hope for this life, because the loving, merciful, powerful Jesus is with us.
- C. God gives us this new life in a number of ways.
 - 1. About 20 verses later God says through Peter, **23 For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.** God's word creates faith, and through trust in God, He gives new life - hope!
 - 2. In John 3 we are told, **no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.** God works faith and new life, eternal life through His Spirit and forgiveness given in baptism
 - 3. Life's reality on our own is worse than we imagine. But, because Jesus rose from the dead and God calls us to new life, we have hope in heaven, and hope on earth, and our reality is better than we can imagine - even when we are down in the dumps.

III. Well, I drilled a hole into water, and I caught a 14" rainbow. But, as I looked at the auger I noticed how the tip was put on the blade. I went and bought a new one. I celebrated a catch, and future catches as well.

- A. Today we celebrate the future of hope.
 - 1. We celebrate the future of hope for new life because Jesus rose and that resurrection is now effective for Jacob and Jared through baptism.
 - 2. We celebrate future hope for our confirmation class who have studied for 3 years and today will share their faith in Jesus and His victory for them.
 - 3. We continue to bask in Jesus' resurrection.
- B. But, don't think because Jesus rose, and we have hope life is easy. Look what happened to Thomas, and look at verse 6. **6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.**
 - 1. Sometimes as Pastor I can look around, not at the non-Christian world, but at those are Christian, and those who claim to be Christian, and just shake my head.
 - 2. Trials and illnesses can fall on the most faithful people.
 - 3. Many Christians fall in times of temptation, and make bad choices.
- C. But, Jesus who rose from the dead is stronger than our trials, our suffering, our defeats, our sins.

CONCLUSION - I caught that fish, but, that's a natural lake, not stocked. His life was on the line, but I threw him back. I look at our baptized today, at our confirmation students making a profession of faith. I know trials will come, but Jesus already came, and suffered, and died and rose, and He is with them. If by faith, they turn to Him, as they are doing, in the midst of the worst of life they have a forgiveness, help, life . . . and hope. We celebrate, because like Thomas, Jesus has called us from our doubt and sin to **a living**

hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, My prayer is they live in Jesus and live in that hope, and that each of you do too.