

4/12/09

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY O God, you gave your only Son to suffer death on a cross to pay for our sins, and by His glorious resurrection you delivered us from the power of death. Make us die every day to sin, so that we may live with Him forever in the joy of the resurrection; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

THE OLD TESTAMENT LESSON Isaiah 25:6-9 (*Death itself shall die.*)

6 On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine-- the best of meats and the finest of wines. 7 On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; 8 he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The LORD has spoken. 9 In that day they will say, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation."

THE EPISTLE LESSON 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

(God tells us through Paul that the resurrection of Jesus is of first importance.)

1 Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. 2 By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. 3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. 6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, 8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. 9 For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them-- yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. 11 Whether, then, it was I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

THE GOSPEL LESSON Mark 16:1-8 (*The resurrection of Jesus from the dead.*)

1 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. 2 Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb 3 and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" 4 But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. 5 As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

6 "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was

crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. 7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'" 8 Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

THE SERMON

“He has Risen!”

Mark 16

INTRO - Pastor James DeLoach wrote in a 1989 book, “Some time ago I saw a picture of an old burned-out mountain shack. All that remained was the chimney...the charred debris of what had been that family's sole possession. In front of this destroyed home stood an old grandfather-looking man dressed only in his underclothes with a small boy clutching a pair of patched overalls. It was evident that the child was crying.”

From the description of this picture it is obvious this family had already been poor. It may have seemed things couldn't get worse. But now the few possessions they had were burnt and gone. When they thought things couldn't get any worse, it did.

- I. The ladies in our lesson for today thought things couldn't get worse, but Easter morning it seemed they did
 - A. They had hoped in Jesus. He had brought hope and joy and a relationship with God into their lives.
 1. In fact the disciples on the way to Emmaus described this hope **we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.**
 2. The ladies had hoped that God was working through Jesus in their lives, and in their world.
 - B. But on the Friday before the events of our Gospel lesson, Jesus had been falsely accused, arrested, put through a false trial, and then killed as a common criminal.
 1. Surely things couldn't get any worse. The one they hoped was doing God's work was dead.
 2. But now they went to the grave to continue caring for the body of their dead loved one according to Jewish custom, and they couldn't even find the body.
 3. Just when they thought things couldn't get worse, they did! At least it seemed so to them.
 4. Hope was not just gone, it was dashed and then trampled on again.
 - C. Because the ladies' hope was dashed, they acted that way.
 1. The angel told them good news of what had happened to Jesus. **"You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.** All they heard was **He is not here.**
 2. In verse 7 the angel told them what to do. **But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee.**
 3. But with their hope dashed, the next verse says, **8 Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone,**

because they were afraid.

4. They were told to share good news, but having lost hope they fled and hid.

II. During one of the previous recessions I was reading hints on how to find a job. Do you know what the first suggestion was? "Don't watch the evening news." In other words, if you focus on how bad things are, like the job market, this affects how you act.

A. What are the bad things going on in your life?

1. Is it the troubles in the world? The world economy is down everywhere. North Korea just launched a rocket. Iran says it can manufacture nuclear fuel.

2. Is it something going on in your life? Maybe you face illness. Maybe your job is not going well.

3. Maybe there are troubles you have brought on yourself by foolish behavior, or even sinful behavior?

B. Does the trouble in your world, or the trouble in your life, cause you to miss the joy, the hope the blessings that might be right there around you? Do you act out trouble because you expect it?

III. The ladies heard what the angels said, they saw the empty tomb, but they missed three words. The angel said, **"You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. HE HAS RISEN! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.** But, even if their hope had been dashed by Jesus' death, even if they went to care for Jesus' body and could not find it, even if they missed the words, **HE HAS RISEN!** It was still true.

A. Jesus did die on the cross for the sins of the whole world, for your sin, and my sin, but 3 days later he rose.

1. In rising Jesus has overcome death. So when we face illness, or the death of a loved one, or we face our own death, death is not stronger than God. For all who believe in Jesus have eternal life in heaven. No matter how hope is dashed, God and his love and salvation are the ultimate reality. **HE HAS RISEN!**

2. No matter how bad our life may be, perhaps because our own sin caused it, Jesus has risen and He has overcome sin. My sin is not stronger than Jesus, Jesus is strong than my sin. **HE HAS RISEN!** So I can start life new again as a child of God, today, every day.

3. No matter how bad the situation in our world is, **HE HAS RISEN!** I can face the trials of life knowing that God is stronger than any evil or problem that can come along.

B. In fact, when I know, and remember that Jesus has risen, it does the same thing for us that it did for the ladies, only in reverse.

1. They had lost hope, and it affected their actions. Understandably they expected the worst and missed the good.

2. But we know that, in the middle of life's worst troubles, Jesus has risen, so we can live in faith and hope and joy.

3. We can forgive the unforgivable, we can love the unloveable, we can face the worst life can bring. **HE HAS RISEN!**

C. From *Parade* magazine comes the story of *self-made millionaire Eugene Lang, who greatly changed the lives of a sixth-grade class in East Harlem. Mr. Lang had been asked to speak to a class of 59 sixth-graders. What could he say to inspire these students, most of whom would drop out of school? He wondered how he could get these predominantly black and Puerto Rican children even to look at him. Scrapping his notes, he decided to speak to them from his heart. "Stay in school," he admonished, "and I'll help pay the college tuition for every one of you." At that moment the lives of these students changed. For the first time they had hope. Said one student, "I had something to look forward to, something waiting for me. It was a golden feeling." Nearly 90 percent of that class went on to graduate from high school.*

If knowing they had college waiting for them caused these young people from Harlem to stay in school and graduate, what can the rising of Jesus from the dead do for our lives?

CONCLUSION - By the way, do you know the end of that story about the picture, the one with the cabin and the grand father and the boy looking at their burnt belongings with the boy crying? Beneath the picture were the words which the artist felt the old man was speaking to the boy. They were simple words, yet they presented an Easter outlook on life. Those words were, "*Hush child, God ain't dead!*"

No, evil, sin, and death have tried their best, and put Jesus to death on the cross, but the words of the angel are true. **HE HAS RISEN! He is not here.** Knowing that truth does not just give us forgiveness and life in heaven, it changes the way we live in this world.