

5/2/2010

**THE PRAYER OF THE DAY** Work in our hearts, Lord God, by your Holy Spirit. Grant us to know and believe that Jesus is our Savior so that we may rejoice in your presence when there is no more pain, or crying, or death. Give us joy today in your love and forgiveness. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

**THE FIRST READING** (The Spirit falls on the Gentiles, which leads to praise.)

1 The apostles and the brothers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. 2 So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him 3 and said, "You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them."

4 Peter began and explained everything to them precisely as it had happened: 5 "I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. I saw something like a large sheet being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to where I was. 6 I looked into it and saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, reptiles, and birds of the air. 7 Then I heard a voice telling me, 'Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.' 8 "I replied, 'Surely not, Lord! Nothing impure or unclean has ever entered my mouth.'

9 "The voice spoke from heaven a second time, 'Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.' 10 This happened three times, and then it was all pulled up to heaven again. 11 "Right then three men who had been sent to me from Caesarea stopped at the house where I was staying. 12 The Spirit told me to have no hesitation about going with them. These six brothers also went with me, and we entered the man's house. 13 He told us how he had seen an angel appear in his house and say, 'Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. 14 He will bring you a message through which you and all your household will be saved.' 15 "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. 16 Then I remembered what the Lord had said: 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'

17 So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God?" 18 When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life."

**THE EPISTLE LESSON** (The Lord is our God and we are His people.)

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

5 He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." 6 He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. 7 He who overcomes

will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.

**THE GOSPEL LESSON** (The Spirit brings glory to Jesus.)

12 "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. 13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. 14 He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. 15 All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you. 16 "In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me."

17 Some of his disciples said to one another, "What does he mean by saying, 'In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me,' and 'Because I am going to the Father'?" 18 They kept asking, "What does he mean by 'a little while'? We don't understand what he is saying." 19 Jesus saw that they wanted to ask him about this, so he said to them, "Are you asking one another what I meant when I said, 'In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me'? **20 I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. 21 A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. 22 So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.**

INTRO - A lady named Susan Fahnke wrote in 2003 about her 5 year old son, Noah. He was deaf and had trouble finding friends. He even went to the extent of writing what notes a 5 year old could write, taping his toys to the notes, and leaving them on the porches of people he wanted to be friends. One day when his mom was on the phone with one of her friends, Noah went out into the neighborhood. Susan became worried when she couldn't find her son. But, finally, her older son, Noah's brother, came running, "Mom, I've found Noah. Come look." Noah had gone to the house of a lady in the neighborhood who ran a day care. Noah and 3 others were in the front yard jumping and playing. Mom stood and watched for a while and walked into the yard saying, "I'm Noah's mom. His ears don't work very well." Little Jessica introduced herself and said, "No, but he sure can climb." As Noah left Susan says, the children all gave him hugs, and told him to come back again. He looked at his mom and gave the sign for friends. These children didn't take away Noah's ailment. But their friendship helped him to face life with it.

- I. We all need friends, and we need family, because we live in a world of pain and grief.
  - A. Recently both my wife and I have reconnected with friends from our childhood. One of my very best friends was a man, a boy then, named Jim, now James. I met him in 1965 when we moved to Florida. Not only did we live in the same neighborhood, but he was a friend to a new kid in town, and a wise Christian friend to me while I made it through public school. I left town to go to college, and become a pastor, and because I left, I only heard from him from time to time. Life was not always easy. He suffered some losses. His first wife left him. He suffered a bout with cancer. But, recently he got my e-mail address from my parents after his dad died. He contacted me and reminded me of a Bible I had given him. I had forgotten. We have since discussed some of life's challenges. I sense that just renewing contact was helpful for him. It was a blessing for me. Friends can help us face life's troubles.
  - B. Today I want to introduce you to another friend, Jesus.
    1. In our Gospel lesson from John he is telling his disciples he is leaving.
    2. Jesus is honest about life's trials. **Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.**
    3. He knew the struggles of living in a world full of pain and death, because of sin. Jesus knew this because, in His love, He had come to this world to share it with us.
    4. He knew the struggles of grief His disciples would soon face at His death.
  - C. Yet, in spite of the troubles and grief of this world Jesus tells his disciple they will rejoice. **Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.**
    1. Jesus called His disciples to joy, in the midst of the grief of losing Him.
    2. Jesus calls us to joy, in the midst of the time of grief we face in this life.
- II. The story is told about Jackie Robinson who broke baseball's color barrier. Especially that first year he faced jeering crowds in every stadium. But one day in his home stadium in Brooklyn, he committed an error. The fans began to ridicule him. He stood at second base, humiliated, while the fans jeered. Then, shortstop Pee Wee Reese, a southern white man, came over and stood next to him. He put his arm around Jackie Robinson and faced the crowd. The fans grew quiet. Robinson later said that arm around his shoulder saved his career.
  - A. Today we not only have a reading about joy in times of grief, but a reading about life in heaven. Revelation 21 tells us, "**Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.**" What a beautiful picture of what God has waiting for His children through Jesus.

B. But, sometimes Christians look at the joys of heaven, and forget that even in life's trials, there is joy.

1. Jesus tells his disciples **Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.** Jesus did die and leave them for a while. But then He rose. When His disciples saw Him again they rejoiced.
2. Because Jesus was with them, even in their time of grief, with His arm of love around them, they could have joy.
3. Jesus was there for His disciples with His love, with His understanding, with His forgiveness, with His Spirit.
4. They could face the grief of life, and even death, because no one could take away the joy they knew because Jesus had risen.

III. Because, Jesus came to this world of sin and grief in the first place, and died to forgive us, because Jesus rose from the dead overcoming the cause of and grief and pain, we can have joy.

A. As a congregation we have recently had plenty of grief.

1. Last Fall and this Spring, we have buried many long time members that we loved. These people were loved by their families, by the community, by our congregation.
2. We've had a number of people ill as well.
3. We have faced some other struggles, including finance. We could be discouraged.

B. But Jesus says to us, **Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.**

C. In the middle of life's trials, Jesus is with us today.

1. He is with us because He rose again. After He rose he said, "I am with you to the very end of the age."
2. He is with you by His Spirit, to teach you and give you faith and hope in a world of pain and grief.
3. He is with you in His word, to remind you that He rose from the dead, and has defeated life's trials.
4. Jesus is with us today in the Lord's Supper, a wonderful mystery where Jesus gives us his presence, and His forgiveness.
5. Jesus is with you through Other Christians, His church, who are led by the Spirit to encourage and comfort.

CONCLUSION I confess that I was personally drained from the recent busy-ness of Lent and Easter, and the loss and grief of losing so many people in our church family. But, I was talking to a friend many of you know. Pastor Tony Schultz knew one of the folks we recently lost. He also heard the weariness in my voice. This week I got a one line e-mail from him. "Just thinking of you and prayerful that after so many funerals you are refueling." That arm around my shoulder made a difference. His prayers for me brought me to our Savior. Today, I want you to know your best friend, Jesus. He is with us, so that we can have joy of His forgiveness, His love, His presence even in life's grief. **Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.**