

4/24/11

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY Almighty God the Father, through Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, You have overcome death and opened the gate of everlasting life to us. We praise and thank you for your power and mercy. Grant that we, who celebrate with joy the day of our Lord's resurrection, may be raised from the death of sin to live for you, now and eternally; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

THE CALL TO WORSHIP AND INVOCATION Colossians 3:1-4

The Epistle lesson (*Paul reminds Christians how our lives have changed because Jesus rose.*)

Lay Minister: 1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above,

People: where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

Lay Minister: 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

People: 4 When Christ, who is [our] life, appears, then [we] also will appear with him in glory.

Lay Minister: We begin our worship in the name of the All powerful and merciful Lord.

People: In the name of God the Father, in the name of God the Son, and in the name of God the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE FIRST LESSON Acts 10:34-43

(*Having been called to the home of the Roman centurion, Cornelius, Peter understands even more the meaning of Jesus' life and death and resurrection.*)

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 GOSPEL LESSON Matthew 28:1-10

(*The first witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus were the guards at the tomb,*

followed by many others.)

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."

THE SERMON “Jesus’ Easter Victory Makes a Difference!” Colossians 3

INTRO - I was talking with a man the other day, and he told me he had served in WWII under General Patton. He said, “Yup, my daughter was born while I was fighting, but I didn’t find out till a couple of months later until the mail caught up with us.” A blessing had happened for this man that he didn’t even know about. But, the blessing had happened.

I. It is easy to criticize the disciples, and to criticize the women who were there that first Easter day because they didn’t know or realize the Easter Blessings.

- A. As they were going to the tomb in grief and sorrow, yet Jesus had already risen.
 - 1. The tomb was empty. Jesus had overcome the powers of Satan, and sin, and death.
 - 2. History’s most life-changing event had occurred, but, they did not realize it and were still living in their sorrow.

B. It is easy to criticize the disciples, and to criticize the women who were there that first Easter day. But, do you know we do the same? Even Christians who know that Jesus died for our sins and rose again, miss the blessings God has.

- 1. We know that Jesus died because of our selfishness, and hatred, and sharp tongues, the fact we are prone to wander, and not just us but the whole world.
 - A. We know that in love God sent His Son, and His son, Jesus, took our punishment on the cross.
 - B. We know that Jesus is the resurrection and the life, and that all who believe in Him shall have eternal life.
 - c. Colossians 3:4 says, **When Christ, who is [our] life, appears, then [we] also will appear with him in glory.**
- 2.. But, often we live like this new life will happen in heaven, but doesn’t happen now. The disciples missed that Jesus was risen, we often miss that Jesus resurrection and victory over sin is working in us right now. But, did you see our epistle lesson?
 - A. In verse 1 God tells us through Paul, **1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ**, This new life isn’t just something that will happen in heaven. We **ALREADY HAVE BEEN RAISED WITH CHRIST**. It is Jesus’ resurrection victory working in us now, if we don’t miss it.
 - B. In Colossians 3:3, God says, **your life is now hidden with Christ in**

God. It isn't just that God will save us and bring us to heaven. Right now we are hidden, safe in our Savior's hand, forgiven, and given new life which proclaims the resurrection of Jesus.

3. Jesus' victory over the grave is not just for heaven. He is victorious over Satan, right now. He is victorious over our sin right now. He is victorious over death, right now.

II. I was walking in my back yard the other day. Most of the snow is gone now. Over where my rhubarb was is sort of a dark, slimy, area. The dark area is where the leaves died from last year's plant. But, as I stooped down and looked, in the middle of the dark slime, there was also a red and green pointed pine cone looking form sticking out of the ground. The rhubarb may have looked dead during the winter, but it was alive, and the new life is coming forth.

A. While its easy to criticize the women, its also easy to understand them. They saw the brutality of the soldiers. They saw the agony of Jesus' suffering. They saw the spear in the side, and his lifeless body taken from the cross. The results of our sin which they experienced in Jesus' death was so real, how could they think otherwise . . . except He told them He was the Son of God . . . except He told them He would die and rise again. Even though he seemed dead, he was alive.

B. Our struggle with sin can be so real in this world, that we can forget Jesus' victory right now, and only think it will happen in heaven.

1. Our temptations might be gossip, or our temptation might be greed, it might be laziness or lust. The temptation to pride might be strong, but Christ is risen.
2. Some fights can seem stronger than others, procrastination, pornography is a trap. Alcohol, drugs, and anger enslave. But Christ is risen and victorious, for my life too.

C. But, remember We are told, **Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, AND God says, your life is now hidden with Christ in God.**

2. Please speak the Easter refrain it with me. "He is risen (He is risen indeed. Alleluia!)"
3. Now also please say, "In MY life!"

III.. That is why God can tell us, **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.**

A. We can set our hearts and minds on things above, we can live in the power of Jesus resurrection trusting God, obeying God, seeking to live lives of righteousness and love right now, because Jesus is risen, victorious over our sin.

B. Jesus' rising means that God knows our sin, and has sent Jesus to die, and even rise victorious over it.

1. His victory and his forgiveness are REAL
2. This rising means, God hides me in his love and is with me in the fight to live a life of righteousness FOR HIM.
3. So when God call us to live new lives, **to set our hearts and minds on things above,** living that way with his forgiveness and strength is part of His Easter Victory!
4. He is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia! IN MY LIFE!

CONCLUSION - This past Monday we had a funeral here for long time member, Charlie Fox. Death can bring grief and sorrow. But Christians also know victory at the time of death as - Colossians 3:4 says, **When Christ, who is [our] life, appears, then [we] also will appear with him in glory.**

But I recently attended another funeral and learned how Jesus' resurrection gives strength and

victory in this world too. While in Florida as my mom died, my dad gave me an obituary. This is for your mom's sister. Let me tell you about my mom. In 1989 I was in her hospital room when the doctor was interviewing her for heart surgery and he asked about the medical history of her family and she said, "I don't know. I'm adopted." I was 36, and had never heard that. I recently learned she didn't know of her adoption till the week of her marriage to my dad. But, it gets better. In 2003 at my uncle's 80th birthday celebration my sister and Mom went to town. I asked where they went. They went to see my mom's sister. I knew she had a twin brother. I didn't know she had a sister. And this obituary my dad gave me was for another sister. It turns out my mom's mom had many children while not married. Sometimes, there are certain lifestyles that are not God's way of doing things that can suck you in and become a kind of slavery. I never knew that was my mom's background. Her mom's lifestyle could have sucked her in.

Yet at the funeral the pastors talked about my mom's faith. They read letters from people who said Mom's faith and love touched them. One pastor said she never said no to working in the church. Another said, ours was the only family in our denomination in FL and GA with 3 children in professional ministry. Now, to come out of a background that could enslave you to a life that runs from God, how is it that she seems to have done what Colossians 3:2 says, **2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.** It wasn't her strength. But, what Colossians says is true. **you have been raised with Christ,** Jesus' Easter victory makes a difference so we can live for God right now. **He is risen. He is risen indeed, in our lives. Alleluia.**