

Living on the Resurrection side of Life

Power of Resurrection

Philippians 3:1-11

Sing with all the Saints of Glory; Sing the resurrection song. Death and sorrow, earth's dark story, To the former days belong.

For over forty years now, I have been trying to preach that sermon and sing that song. Today I would like to try once more. I take for a text the words of Paul who said, "I want to know Christ, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection of the dead." What a worthy goal for any life.

Jesus got up from the grave. Do you ever wonder how it happened? Was it like a sudden bolt of lightning that brought him back to life or was it like a slow arousal from a long summer nap?

Have you ever questioned how Jesus felt about coming back? Somewhere in the bowels of that tomb did He hesitate returning to disciples arguing over who is the greatest, to governments posturing for political gain, to people suffering from diseases of multiple names? On Good Friday, Jesus announced from the Cross, "It is finished." If it was finished, then why go back?

Nearly everyone Jesus met, in one way or another, he asked to get up and go back. He said that to the invalid who laid on that pallet for thirty-eight years, "Get up, pick up your mat and walk!" He said to the demonic who lived in the tombs, "Get up, go home to your family and tell them what the Lord has done for you."

Could the resurrected Lord be saying something like that to you? Get up from your poorly made beds and walk. Get up from your premature deaths and live. Get up from your self-pity and serve. I want to know Christ and the power of Christ resurrection!

Do you ever think about it, really think about it, the power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead? We love to talk about power: horsepower, manpower, fire power, solar power, nuclear power, but what about the power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead?

There is nothing distinctively Christian about immortality. Every religion of the world has some notion of life after death. But We Christians believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. We believe we will find new life beyond the grave and speak with clarity in the kingdom of heaven. We are individual and responsible souls with resurrected bodies that return to their creator where they enjoy everlasting life. So, we shout, "Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!" I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection!

Abundant life is yours. Jesus said, "I have come that you may have life," - life to the fullest, life to the max, abundant life, abiding life, adventuresome life."

If you feel trapped, topped out, up against it, fenced in, burned out, terminally ill, you might do well to ponder the lyrics of Natalie Sleeth who said:

There's a song in every silence, seeking word and melody; There's a dawn in every darkness, bringing hope for you and me. From the past will come the future; what it holds, a mystery, Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

A twenty-six-year-old wrote this note to her pastor. Today I am thanking God that I am free to keep my home, rear my children, and welcome my handsome husband home each night. We are not wealthy, but we are young, and we are sure God is at work in all things for good. Personally, our family is living as close to God as we

know how. Will you tell other families who may be lax or visionless to reach out and renew their experience of God?

Thornton Wilder in his play *Our Town* has one of his characters say, “I don’t care what they say with their mouths – everybody knows that something is eternal. And it ain’t houses, and it ain’t names, and it ain’t earth, and it ain’t even stars...everybody knows in their bones that something is eternal and that something has to do with human beings. All the greatest people who ever lived have been telling us that for five thousand years and yet you’d be surprised how people are losing hold of it. There’s something way down deep that’s eternal about every human being.”

Mission teams of youth and adults go to poverty-stricken areas of this country and literally around the world to Africa, to Honduras, to Mexico. Without exception these short-term missionaries come home with the same story. In places where, humanly speaking, one could only see death and despair, the people are so incredibly happy. They love life. They rejoice together. They worship with enthusiasm. How is that possible? They believe in the risen Christ and the power of the Resurrection to bring new life.

While some of our wild fantasies have crashed against hard reality, I suspect most of us will agree that life on earth has given us better than we deserve. If not here, then over there, things will be better than we imagine. For as the Apostle Paul says: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived, what God has prepared for those who love God.”

“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

In our end is our beginning, in our time infinity;

In our doubt there is believing; in our life eternity.

In our death, a resurrection; at the last, a victory,

Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see. Amen.