

Sunday, April 19, 2020

Acts 2:14, 22-32 | Peter 1:3-9 | John 20:19-31

“Salvation in Jesus Christ”

Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! We rejoice on this second Sunday of Easter because we need to! We are Christians and if we don't celebrate the joy of the Risen Christ who will? So I ask this question on this Holy Humour Sunday—What did Jesus say when he rose from death? I'm back! And because Jesus rose from death and into life= we need to be glad and we need to give thanks for life and love and laughter.

Jesus appeared to the disciples who were hiding behind locked doors. Jesus told them, “Peace be with you.” They were afraid because they were not sure who it was amongst them. This is ironic- who else could appear amongst them through locked doors? Who else could calm their fears by speaking of peace? And who else had to prove himself as being, the one who had died on the cross? Just who did the disciples really think had come to them that first evening? Jesus had to show them his hands, and his side. And then they rejoiced? Didn't they know who he was before this? Jesus had to prove who he was to those who were the closest to him. If you had been present, would you have wanted proof too? But here we are 2000 years later talking about Jesus, and trusting in him as we have put our faith and life in his not because he died, but because he lives again! Did the disciples want proof because he died or because he was alive?

Sometimes we wonder about these kinds of things. Just as we wonder why” we recite at a play, yet play at a recital? Park on driveways and drive on parkways or when a house burns up we say it burned down and when you fill in a form we say you filled it out. Or even why Braille is used on the numbers in a drive thru ATM? And we might also wonder why Jesus had to show his hands and side to his disciples. We know that later on, after Jesus left, Thomas shows up and these same people tell him about Jesus' appearance. Thomas fully expressed his thoughts by saying, “I doubt it. Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and the mark of the sword in his side, I don't believe it nor do I believe you!

This has been the attitude for some people in recent weeks—unless there is real proof that COVID19 is a real threat I don't believe it. Yet every evening and morning newscasters across the country report the latest statistics of those who have been affected by this virus- number of cases; number of positive tests, number of deaths and now number of people recovering. But there are still those who don't believe it is true! How do we tell this news so that others can believe it? This has been the dilemma and challenge of telling the good news of

Jesus Christ for two thousand years, yet our world still does not fully grasp onto the belief that the one who died and rose to new life, can save us and give to us the gift of eternal life. How do we know this? Because there are many people who do not know the story of Jesus' passion, death and resurrection.

There is a story about a woman who was in a jewelry store who was looking to purchase a necklace. She said to the clerk, "I'd like a gold cross." The clerk looked over the stock in the display case and said, "Do you want a plain one or one with a little man on it?" What this good Christian woman said, would have put every preacher talking—as she shared the whole story of Jesus to this clerk. A few weeks later another woman went to the same jewelry store and asked the clerk, "I'd like a gold cross." Well the clerk stepped up and stared at the woman and asked, "Do you know Jesus, the one who died on the cross for our sins?" Are you a believer and this is why you want to purchase this necklace which is empty indicating the tomb is empty? Do you know that Jesus is alive? This woman surprised at the knowledge of the clerk, Smiled and said, "Sonny, you have a real calling to preach the word, Let's talk about you entering the ministry!"

There are many ways and reasons to tell others of the good news of Christ's resurrection but we must do so with a joyful heart. Why would anyone want to follow Jesus if we only talked about his death? Why would anyone want to believe that Jesus is alive when often we walk around as if in mourning or deep grief. We need to laugh and rejoice. I think Jesus was an amazing storyteller. But I also think Jesus loved to laugh! Whether it was a good fish story or whether it was about what he had done as a child- which we don't know- Jesus probably told some wonderful stories and maybe even jokes or as in his parables, he was able to get you to think about such things of his times that made you wonder about today. Just what does it mean to be a Christian.

Two guys are walking through a game park and they come across a lion that has not eaten for days. The lion starts chasing the two men. They run as fast as they can and the one guy starts getting tired and decides to say a prayer, "Please turn this lion into a Christian, Lord." He looks to see if the lion is still chasing and he sees the lion has stopped running. The lion is now on its knees with its front paws together praying. The man is now happy to see his prayer answered and so he turns around and heads towards the lion. As he comes closer to the lion, he hears the lion saying a prayer: "Thank you Lord for the food I am about to receive."

Christians walk in different paths around the world. But one thing that is common is what Jesus has done for people as individuals and for communities. When Peter addressed the

crowd a couple of months after Jesus ascended to heaven, he spoke of Jesus, the One God raised up and that he was a witness to this. He had seen the Risen Lord and had spoken with him the day of his resurrection and through the times Jesus shared with his disciples prior to his ascension.

But what about you? In I Peter we read that we have received new life because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And that it is through God's mercy that we are protected by the power of God through faith. In this we can rejoice-because our faith is genuine and can result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus makes himself known. And when Peter writes," Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith which is the salvation of your souls." What this means is that you have been saved through Christ even though you haven't seen Jesus but what you have experienced gives you peace that only he can give. And you have salvation- that is the certainty of where you are headed when you die, that is you know your place is ready with him in God's heaven.

Unlike Thomas who had to see for himself, you believe because there is something about knowing Jesus that can make and continues to make a difference in your life. There is joy, love and peace that comes from him. He enables you to have hope and this is a living hope that will carry you beyond this life. This is because you have believed and you received Christ within your life and he will guide you always- you have been forever changed.

As we rejoice in this Easter season we need to be filled with joy knowing that through Jesus there is eternal life. We need to be joy filled because Jesus is joy for he conquered death! So we must exude not a life of tragedy and sadness- but joy—for there is new life in Christ! There is hope beyond all hope. So when we are with others social distancing in line ups to get into stores, line ups to check out, or line ups even as we walk on sidewalks, let us remember you have the joy of life in you because you are Christians- believers in the Risen Christ. And you have the ability to laugh at death- because you know that death did not overtake Christ—he is alive and so are you unto and through eternity! Praise be to God. Let us rejoice in the gift hope and promise of eternal life.

Let us pray: God we praise you and thank you that we can experience true joy in knowing Jesus. Help us to lift up our hearts and praise with thanksgiving because you have raised Christ from death just as you promised so that our Saviour lives and is with us now. Enable us to live and laugh and love others even though it is difficult to do this under current

circumstances- when it is difficult to connect and reach out to everyone. Help us to share the good news of Christ's resurrection with others. And enable us to share the joy we have in knowing him as our Saviour and Lord. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.