

Sunday, April 16, 2023 – Second Sunday of Easter

The resurrection of Jesus . . .

Gives us great boldness - First Reading: Acts 2:14a, 22-32

Contrast the courage of Peter on the day of Pentecost with the way in which he crumbled and denied his Lord just fifty-two days before on the night of the betrayal.

One of the greatest evidences of the reliability of the Biblical account of the resurrection of Jesus is the changed lives of the disciples.

People are not willing to die for something that they know is a lie.

How does the reality of the resurrection of Jesus give you boldness and courage?

Does your changed life give evidence for the reliability of the Biblical account of resurrection?

14a, 22- Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed [the crowd], "You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know

Peter was speaking to people who had seen and experienced at least some of the miracles of Jesus.

23 – "This man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God

1 Peter 1: 20 – He was destined before the foundation of the world.

Long before creation – long before such Old Testament prophecies as Genesis 3:15, Psalm 22, and Isaiah 53 - God knew what He would do to save us.

23-24 - "You crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power."

Two of the best words in the Bible are "but God."

When are some times in your life when you experienced a "but God" moment?

Gives us new life - Second Reading: 1 Peter 1:3-9

1-2 – Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ: To the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who have been chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ and to be sprinkled with his blood. May grace and peace be yours in abundance.

Note the Trinitarian form of the writing.

In what ways are we today like exiles of the Dispersion?

5: 13 – Your sister church in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings; and so does my son Mark.

Cf. Exiles in Babylon Conferences from The Center for Faith, Sexuality, and Gender

Have you ever experienced not just grace and peace, but grace and peace in abundance?

If so, when, and what was it like?

3-5 - Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

*How does the resurrection of Jesus give you a new birth into a living hope?
What does it mean for you today to know that your inheritance in Christ is imperishable, undefiled, unfading, kept in heaven, and that you are being protected by the power of God?*

6-7 - In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

*How are you and your faith being tested by fire right now?
Is your faith genuine? If so, how is the genuineness of your faith being revealed?
Are you able to rejoice even while you are having to suffer various trials?
If yes, what makes you able to do that?*

Meets our greatest needs and addresses our deepest concerns - Gospel: John 20:19-31

*What today are your greatest needs and deepest concerns?
How does the resurrection of Jesus help meet them and address them?*

19 - When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews

Like us during the days of COVID, the disciples were self-quarantined

Verse 19 – The presence of Jesus – He came and stood among them.

Verses 19 and 21 – He said, “Peace be with you.”

Verse 20 – Evidence of the resurrection - He showed them his hands and his side.

Verse 21 – Purpose and calling – “As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

Verse 22 - He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

Verse 23 – Authority - “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

24-25 - But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

26 - A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them.

*The doors were shut, but this time it does not say that they were locked.
A week later are the disciples starting to become a bit more courageous?*

I believe that we have given Thomas (so-called Doubting Thomas) a bum wrap.

John 11: 16 – “Let us go also, that we may die with him.”

Verse 28 – “My Lord and my God” – Thomas is the first disciple recorded as calling Jesus God