

Easter Thoughts

Prayer

This morning as I reflect on what Jesus did for us on the cross, I am amazed at the wondrous work he has done for us. If you are sitting there this morning and you can unemotionally think of the cross on which Jesus bled and died for you - then you seriously need to reconnect.

As Christians we hear about Jesus, the cross, the blood that was shed and so on, so many times we begin to become numb to what he actually did. Some of us actually mentally put ourselves in the place where we acknowledge what he did for us, but we think of it as: He died for us all and so we are better able to deal with what he did for us personally.

My friends, it was our sin... each one of us individually that put him there. He died for you and for me, but not just the collective whole of the church. He died for us each individually,

So this morning instead of the “we” or “us”, I normally use, I will intentionally use the word “You” this is not to say that it doesn’t apply to all of us collectively and me personally, because it does, but this morning, I have been lead to share that Easter is for each of you individually and God would have this personalized this morning. As we hear the word of the Lord this morning, we are to reflect on what he did for us personally. As I was preparing this week, God spoke to me about this on a personal level and told me to share it with you in a similar manner.

What Jesus did on the Cross.

Jesus gave his life, a perfect sinless life for each one of us. Today, we gather to reflect on the fact that he:

- Redeemed you – Purchased you personally with his lives blood. He has repossessed you at a cost. He has purchased forgiveness for you. We were his but we became lost.
- Propitiated you – He took the blame for you as a substitution for your sin, he appeased the wrath of God the Father so that you as individuals would not have to pay the price. In the Greek we see that the meaning of this is to conciliate two parties and make them one. We were propitiated to appease God’s demands.
- Reconciliation – Romans 5 tells us that before you were saved, you sinned against God. Further, it says that you are at enmity with God in your mind, You were also sons or daughters of disobedience, children of wrath, and enemies of God.

- Enmity is the greatest problem between man and God.
- Miriam Webster defines enmity as: positive, active, and typically mutual hatred or ill will
- Justification – You are pardoned of your transgressions because of the atoning work that Jesus Christ did for you. You are absolved of guilt. In fact, you are justified before God the Father to His standard of righteousness, not our own. We could not be justified on our own, this is why our justification is on the basis of Christ's redemption of us

As a fallen sinner, you and I need reconciliation with God by making a complete turn around back towards God. We need Christ's redemption to pay the price to allow us to come back to God the Father. We need the forgiveness of sins to approach the throne. In point of fact, we need Redemption, propitiation, justification and reconciliation to have peace towards God (Rom 5:1) and to stand firm in the Grace of God.

Romans 5:1 NKJV

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Can you therefore see that Justification produces reconciliation?

When does this justification occur? It is at the moment of a person's faith in Jesus Christ.

If we will commit ourselves to look deeply we will see the great plan of God for our lives. Jesus didn't just come and die... There was a plan!

At this point WE can see the magnificence and glory of the plan of the Lord and the Glory of his sacrifice for you, because he loved you so much. God doesn't give his Son over to be crucified for persons of no significance. You are a chosen people.

This morning, have you really look at your walk with Jesus? Have you truly embraced what he has done for you?

YOU ARE FREE!

This morning we acknowledge what he has done for us in his great work and through the shedding of his life's blood on the cross. But the message gets better...

At Easter just over 2000 years ago, Jesus rose from the dead to give you the hope of

eternal life

So what has Jesus required of us in return for this great gift?

He has required that we believe in him and that we live a life that is pleasing and acceptable to the Lord God. He has said that we are to love God with all our heart, soul and mind and love our neighbor as ourselves. He has required of us a life of obedience to his will.

Some great authors of our time have seen this simple truth of obedience to his will...

A.W. Tozer said:

- "Faith, as Paul saw it, was a living, flaming thing leading to surrender and obedience to the commandments of Christ."
- Have you noticed how much praying for revival has been going on of late - and how little revival has resulted? I believe the problem is that we have been trying to substitute praying for obeying, and it simply will not work.

Andrew Murray said:

- Just as a servant knows that he must first obey his master in all things, so the surrender to an implicit and unquestionable obedience must become the essential characteristic of our lives.

Augustine said:

- Wicked men obey from fear; good men, from love.

Jim Eliot Said:

- Rest in this - it is His business to lead, command, impel, send, call or whatever you want to call it. It is your business to obey, follow, move, respond, or what have you.

C. S. Lewis Said:

- When humans should have become as perfect in voluntary obedience as the inanimate creation is in its lifeless obedience, then they will put on its glory, or rather that greater glory of which Nature is only the first sketch.
- [To have Faith in Christ] means, of course, trying to do all that He says. There would be no sense in saying you trusted a person if you would not take his advice. Thus if you have really handed yourself over to Him, it must follow that you are trying to obey Him. But trying in a new way, a less worried way. Not doing these things in order to be saved, but because He has begun to save

you already. Not hoping to get to Heaven as a reward for your actions, but inevitably wanting to act in a certain way because a first faint gleam of Heaven is already inside you.”

They have captured the knowledge that obedience to God is part of the plan.

That my friends, is your Good Friday message... But we find ourselves here on Easter Sunday, surrounded by those we love and care about, looking at Good Friday... Why would the pastor do that?

I have it on good authority; it is because he wants to drive home the point that the Death of Christ is inseparable from his resurrection... even though they deal with different aspects of our Christianity.

Jesus died on the cross and paid the price for us his blood did four miraculous things for us. Yet let us consider what that wonderful work means if Jesus did not rise from the dead?

- We are back in right relationship with God
- Our sin has been paid for
- We are forgiven
- We have been paid for as his servants

These are awesome and amazing things, yet if Christ did not rise from the dead at Easter what does that mean?

Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 15 12-19 NKJV

Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up — if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

CEV Version:

If we preach that Christ was raised from death, how can some of you say that the dead will not be raised to life? If they won't be raised to life, Christ himself wasn't raised to life. And if Christ wasn't raised to life, our message is worthless, and so is your faith. If the dead won't be raised to life, we have told lies about God by saying that he raised Christ to life, when he really did not. So if the dead won't be raised to life, Christ wasn't raised to life. Unless Christ was raised to life, your faith is useless, and you are still

living in your sins. And those people who died after putting their faith in him are completely lost. If our hope in Christ is good only for this life, we are worse off than anyone else.

Paul was pretty emphatic that the resurrection was necessary to the message of Jesus and without which all his work was useless...

But friends today we know that Jesus did rise from the dead... If we don't embrace this fact then we ourselves are lost.

If he died he would have only been a religious teacher or prophet. But... There was a plan. You and I are to serve a risen savior.

Many of you have heard the account of Jesus resurrection year after year. I pray we never tire of hearing the words, because Jesus is alive today. He walks with me and he talks with me. Does he walk and talk with you?

Jesus said in John 10:27-30 CEV: *"My sheep know my voice, and I know them. They follow me, and I give them eternal life, so that they will never be lost. No one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father gave them to me, and he is greater than all others. No one can snatch them from his hands, and I am one with the Father"*

At Christmas we celebrate a miraculous event. We bear witness to Jesus becoming incarnate in the flesh, fully God and fully man. Yet it is a single point in history...

On Good Friday we recognize that Jesus died and his work goes forward and backward from the cross. Easter Sunday is where the culmination of the work at the cross attains an amazing truth for all of us. It is a point in time at which his death and resurrection become a daily reality. When we declare he is risen; we don't declare he rose at a single point in time to be captured by death at some future point. NO! He is risen! He is alive today, and He is alive forever more. He is alive in this moment right now and his spirit is with us right here and right now!

What amazing benefits does the resurrection provide? Here is a couple...

- Love – 1 John 4:9 NKJV:
 - *"In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him."*

- Life – 1 John 3:14 NKJV:
 - *"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him"*

Note:

We participate in the resurrection to a new life in Jesus. His resurrection floods into us and over all our relationships. We know that Jesus said that the world would know his disciples by their love.

We need to examine our wondrous Easter in the light of what we are doing with our hope in his resurrection. Do we die daily to ourselves? Does his love characterize our conversations with each other?

Are we speaking with resurrection life?

There are the happy easy conversations, but what about those who feel it necessary to correct everyone by claiming to do it in love?

If your conversation with each other doesn't pass the following criteria then you are in error and not speaking in love... The criteria is 1 Corinthians 13:4:

Love is kind and patient, never jealous, boastful, proud, or rude. Love isn't selfish or quick tempered. It doesn't keep a record of wrongs that others do. Love rejoices in the truth, but not in evil. Love is always supportive, loyal, hopeful, and trusting

How often I have seen a culture of honor destroyed by those who are prideful and rude in their approach to their brothers and sisters.

Do you have the depth of love that Jesus requires of you towards each other? Are you embracing the cross? Here is a simple rule that I have used many times when talking to others to quickly check if I am speaking in love...

Does the person walk away encouraged and wanting to change in a positive way or does the person walk away discouraged or upset?

Further, are we taking up others offenses? We have the scriptural right in love to talk to a brother or sister in love who has offended us and make it right, but how often have we seen those who take on authority which has not been granted to them to correct what they PERCIEVE as a doctrinal error in the church?

How many times have we seen an attempt to correct a leader publicly on a point in which he is only sharing a portion of the concept to illustrate a point? Many times a leader will only give a partial revelation of a concept because to cover every possible meaning in which a scripture is used would detract from God's message.

When you approach your brother and sisters in love you will find your answers and love will rule the day, you learn and can often get a new perspective, which you may have never considered previously. Yet, when approached through pride or arrogance, you will find yourself estranged from leaders and each other.

This behavior is indicative of the enemy of pride or perhaps even a Jezebelic Spirit causing division and gossip in the church or in your relationships. What this ALWAYS leads to is hurt and division between the body and ultimately a church split. This is NOT what the resurrection intended to communicate to us...

Are you murdering people with your words in the name of the one who resurrects his people unto life? Friends, you would be amazed at how many "Christians" fail to see the contradiction here...

Resurrection love needs to characterize all of our conversations with each other.

What I am saying is that a culture of honor springs forth as an effect of embracing Christ's resurrection of love in each of us and by extension in the body of Christ.

God's kingdom is NOT seen when unloving, critical, prideful and harsh communication is present. When we see this in ourselves or in others we need to replace that which is in us with the incredible love of God that raised Jesus from the dead.

We can talk about evangelism at Easter, yet what is actually irresistible to those who are not of the faith is the evidence of God's love in his people.

My beloved friends, I assert this morning that inside of each of us is the desire to be loved, to belong and to be valued. When I look at what Jesus did at Easter I find the example of exactly that!

This morning if you are striving to be loved, if you are dying inside, I will not embarrass you this morning by forcing you to raise your hands but I will leave you with this thought to ponder:

In fact, If any of this has resonated with you this morning, you need to:

Embrace the love of the cross and really make the love and forgiveness your own. But... Don't stay there... You need to determine inside yourself to come and meet the resurrected Jesus, your savior who is alive and is here in his precious spirit today. If you do this and seek him with your whole heart you will find him and in the process discover an amazing love like none other.

So we need to leave behind the old self behind and embrace the resurrection in us...

Why does my old self need to die?

Because there is:

- Love and life in the resurrection
- Hope in the resurrection
- There is power in the resurrection

As we embrace the love of Jesus and what he did for us at the cross, it inescapably leads us to the resurrection. Paul told us in 1 Corinthians 15:31 that we need to deny ourselves daily. His words from the NKJV are: "I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily."

We are not to continue in our sin. We are to strive for righteousness because he has given us the freedom from the consequences of sin and death and so has made us anew. In fact, if we look at 2 Corinthians 5:17 we can see Paul telling us: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." He has given us hope, love and life.

When we embrace Christ... Then God releases his resurrection power in us. Jesus has said John 14:12: "" Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it." Are we embracing what Jesus has offered us? Are we seizing ahold of the abundant life he has promised us.

I want to embrace everything that God has for me... To do that I have to embrace his work at the cross, I must abide in his resurrection and then live as he would have me to live. And that is according to his will not my own. So... I must press forward toward the mark of my high calling in Christ Jesus if I want to walk in resurrection power.

Today let us examine ourselves and commit to embrace what Jesus has done for us personally at the cross and by his resurrection. Easter is powerful! It is a celebration of our hope of eternal life in Christ Jesus.

Let me conclude with this thought...

In Philippians 3:10 NKJV the Apostle Paul said: "*that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.*"

The NIV says:

I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death

Like Paul, I want to know the amazing power of his resurrection. In fact, as I wrote this sermon, God revealed a simple truth to me personally that I will share with you...

The Apostle Paul did not want to simply know about Jesus intellectually. Paul wants to KNOW Jesus and the resurrection in a deeply personal way. He wants intimate experience to go with his knowledge of Jesus.

The resurrection is personal... embrace it, take up your cross and follow him.

When we really consider all that his death and resurrection have done for us. We are suddenly face to face with the reality that we are called to die to self, yet to live in him.

Easter is a celebration because like our savior, the first from the dead, we are raised to an eternal relationship with Jesus and an existence full of life, love, hope and power. We celebrate because he came not to condemn us but to give us life. We celebrate because he came to give us life and life more abundantly. We celebrate because Jesus did rise from the dead and gives us the hope of eternal life. We celebrate because he sent his Holy Spirit to guide us into his truth.