

Good Friday, the day that all creation looks. Everything drawn into a single point: the cross. Every moment coalesces on this one day. All of history focuses on this one death. Apocalyptic. Heaven and earth are all suspended in silent waiting to see the spectacle of God dying. It dwarfs anything ever conceived, comprehended by man. This is story gives meaning to today, and every day. It was for you. So that Heaven and earth joined here for you to give Good Friday and Resurrection -as in no other way on earth.

Life is filled with paradoxes. He who is life, dies; the only love and truth this world has ever known dies an imposter, hated. Creatures kill the Creator. The Good shepherd dies in the fangs of wolves; the Water of life dies thirsting; Light of the world dies in darkness. Strangest of all paradoxes, Jesus calls it His glory when He's lifted on the cross. Life is filled with paradoxes, we can cry out, **O grave where is your victory, O death, where is your sting?** He is risen, that now though you will die, you will never die.

Life is filled with paradox. Your life. You're declared a saint while you daily struggle with sin. Unworthy of anything good and you're given the treasures of heaven. What may seem like a set-back and tragedy, a loss, is truly God working good in your life. Even what you may think is right, even good things that happen can actually turn out to be harmful and God works in that to teach you more of His love, to draw you closer to Him through all of life's moments. When we face death, when we face life, **remember what He told you.**

He gives you a life of worth, with meaning, purpose, but not without tears. Jesus weeps at Lazarus tomb before He resurrects Him. Like Jesus we weep. Can we be sure? Yes. Too many people saw Jesus dead, too many people saw Him alive. Everyone in power that had the resources and motivation to produce a dead body can't. Today is based upon historical facts, many eyewitness testimonies; that filled them with joy – a deep, lasting joy that persisted even through persecution, martyrdom. You can be sure, the historical reality of His death and resurrection.

The reality of Jesus in your life, who is life changes everything for you, each day. Every day. O grave where is your sting? And nothing, no one, no thing, can rob you of the joy that's yours, take His resurrected life away from you.

Which of us do not face death each day? Which of you can guarantee you'll be here tomorrow? We have all seen death to some degree. Dealt with it in many ways. How will each of you respond in life-threatening situation or your own death; will it matter if it's sudden or you're given weeks to live from the doctor? I am privileged as a pastor to sit at the bedside of the dying. It happens, the person says, "can I make a request", "sure what is it," "preach at my funeral". People don't need fishing stories or jokes or sentiments poems and music, advice or eulogies, that will never give lasting comfort. What they, what you need, is Jesus, who He is, what He has done for them, for you, how you receive the goods.

Like the angel spoke to those mourning women at the tomb that changed their entire reality, what did the angel say, **He has risen...remember how He told you.** What He is doing now; what He will do.

He gives you a life of worth, with meaning, purpose that has no end, but not a life without tears. How will you respond in the face of death? In the face of life?

A Lutheran pastor with his wife, 5 yr old daughter went to visit their homeland in Europe. On the trip, the child became ill, they did what they could but she died. They buried her in their ancestral homeland. Their original booking back to the US was missed due to the funeral. So they booked the next available trip; they became passengers on the Titanic. 105 yrs. ago. There were 8 pastors on board, who rightly all stayed on the ship. Including Lutheran pastor Lahtinen. His wife could get into the lifeboat but gave up her place when she learned her husband would be staying, stayed at his side. Another pastor famously yelled, all women, children and unsaved get in the lifeboats! When he gave up his life jacket to another he stated, I'm not going down with the ship, I'm going up. No one, no one here knows exactly how they would act, react in a life-threatening crisis. We all have ideas, our bravado, but we don't know.

But this we know, **remember how He told you, I am the resurrection and life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.** That is how you respond in the face of death, in the face of life. How you live. **O grave where is your victory?**

The angel comes with proclaiming His Words. Look there. Live there. **Remember how He told you... Remember how He told you Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, abides in me, I in him; and will live forever.**

Remember how He told you, **I forgive you your sins.**

Remember how He told you, **Let not Your heart be trouble.**

Remember how He told you **My sheep hear my voice, I know them, they follow me. I give them eternal life, they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.**

Remember how He told you **Behold I make all things new.**

Remember how He told you, **I am with you always.** This is how you face life, now and always.

500 years ago, the Reformation just underway, unfolding, with no desire for innovation or a divided church. Luther's 95 thesis began, "out of love for truth" Out of love for truth, where we place our eternal peril, in nail scared hands, His word alone, His works alone that you be forgiven. You are holy. You will never die. Truth. **O grave, where is your victory?** Death will not have the last word, not then, not here, not ever. **Remember how He told you...The Lord is risen!**