

Service notes and sermon for Easter 2, April 19, 2020

Overview: The sure testimony of the resurrection is placed before us today. Jesus' resurrection is attested to by the Scriptures and by eyewitnesses. Faith hears this testimony and rejoices in sure and certain hope in Jesus. Those who have such faith are declared blessed by the risen Christ. Believers gather on Easter to hear the joyous news of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. His resurrection assures us of our own resurrection and calls us to fix our eyes on him who is our life.

Service is Service of the Word (CW p. 38).

Suggested Hymns: 143 "He's Risen, He's Risen"

165 "O Sons and Daughters of the King"

150 "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today; Alleluia"

153 "Alleluia! Jesus Lives"

\* Please feel free to sing additional hymns from the Easter section: CW 141-168.

Prayer of the Day: O risen Lord, you came to your disciples and took away their fears with your word of peace. Come to us also by Word and sacrament, and banish our fears with the comforting assurance of your abiding presence; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

First Lesson: Acts 2:14a, 22-32 Filled with the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, Peter boldly addresses the people of Jerusalem and proclaims the resurrection of Jesus. The passion, death, and resurrection are not chance history but occurred "by God's set purpose and foreknowledge" in perfect fulfillment of the Scriptures. To this testimony Peter adds his own. "God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact."

Psalm is Psalm 16 (CW p. 68) The Church sings a psalm of resurrection joy. Psalm 16 was quoted by Peter to the crowd in Jerusalem in testimony of the Lord's resurrection.

Second Lesson: I Peter 1:3-9 The resurrection of Christ gives us new birth into a living hope. Although Jesus is not visible to our physical eyesight, faith fills us with joy and confidence in him nonetheless. Our faith is precious, for by it God continues to lead us through this life, even through trials and suffering, to our heavenly goal.

Verse of the Day: Alleluia. Alleluia. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. Alleluia. (John 20:29)

Gospel: John 20:19-31 John chronicles Easter evening appearance of the risen Lord to the disciples in Jerusalem. He bids them peace and confers on them the power of the keys. But Thomas is absent from the scene. When told of the Lord's appearance, Thomas expresses only skepticism and refusal to believe without "proof." Graciously, Jesus again appears a week later, and Thomas is present. The Lord recalls his disciple to faith but says, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Sermon Text: Acts 2:14a, 22-32

Sermon Theme: THE EASTER RESURRECTION

Prayer: CW p. 126. Lord's Prayer: CW p. 43.

## THE EASTER RESURRECTION

## EASTER 2

MY DEAR CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,

World War II was a great event in American history and in the lives of people who lived through that experience. People of that era still talk about those days as being the greatest days of American history. At no other time have we seen the bravery and the unity of the American people as we did in the days of WW II. At no other time did our nation feel such a sense of urgency to overcome and to prevail. History was in the making; and the makeup and the character of our nation as well as the rest of the earth was taking shape for the future. Former NBC news anchor, Tom Brokaw, has written a book chronicling and highlighting what he has called America's greatest generation.

Today, most people couldn't tell you what the war was about. Today many people couldn't tell you who the enemy was or where we dropped the atomic bombs. For the record, it was Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Today, most of the people alive in America, a great percentage of us did not live through the depression and did not experience WW II. Many do not realize what has taken place in history so that you and I can still call this the land of the free and the home of the brave and that we can still enjoy the prosperity and the blessings beyond almost every nation on the earth. History has a way of being forgotten and put into the past.

Can the same be said for Easter? Easter for this year, 2020, is over. It was last Sunday. But the thrill of Easter and the joy of Easter remain with us. It would be hard to match the excitement and the anticipation of Easter; yet the effects of Easter and the blessings of Easter are still ours. The Savior who rose from the grave that first Easter morning is still risen, and has in fact ascended to heaven, where he continues to rule all things for our spiritual and eternal benefit.

Is it possible that people could live their lives not knowing what took place on that first Easter? And how the events of that day affect their temporal and eternal lives? Is it possible that the truth and the miracle of Easter could be lost by a skeptical generation? Could its importance fade as our lives get busier and busier?

Easter was certainly a big event, but unlike a big event that is recorded in the papers and then forgotten over the years, Easter lives on in the hearts and lives of those who through faith in Jesus will one day also rise to live forever. In fact, we worship on Sunday not because we are prescribed to, but because every Sunday is really a celebration of Easter; a celebration of the blessings we have through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And now that Easter is over we have an opportunity to reflect on

Easter, to review the events that led up to Easter and to examine how it has changed our lives forever.

That opportunity is afforded us in the words of our text for this morning as Peter addresses the crowd in Jerusalem. THE EASTER RESURRECTION I. The prophets foretold it II. Christ fulfilled it III. We proclaim it.

We have in our text a portion of the Peter's sermon on Pentecost. Peter was thought by some to be drunk, because people of many different lands heard him speaking in their own language. Primarily, Peter was speaking to Jews, God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. Having been filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter reminds his listeners not only of the fact of Jesus resurrection, but that this had been God's plan throughout the ages as told by the prophets.

He addresses them as "men of Israel." In other words, Peter was reminding his audience that they were the ones who should know what God's plan of salvation is. They should know from their own prophets and from their own history that God had planned to send a Messiah. They should know how to recognize him and they should now acknowledge that Jesus Christ was in fact that Messiah who came and died on the cross and rose again on the third day.

Peter reminds them of the words of King David taken from Psalm 16: "I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body will also live in hope, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay." Peter was testifying to the people that the prophets of old, including King David had described to them none other than the Christ whom they had crucified.

Peter goes a step farther in showing that David was not talking only about himself, but was talking about one of his descendants, one who would come after him. King David was still in the grave, but he had not been abandoned. David was talking about One, who, when he died would not decay. In other words he would be raised back to life. And through that resurrection David also had the hope of the resurrection. David said that his body would live in hope because the Holy One would not see decay. David's hope of the resurrection was in the resurrection of the Messiah, who would be descended from David. That Messiah was Jesus Christ, who rose on that first Easter morning.

We may wonder how this has anything to do with you and me. When you think about it, our history and our faith really goes back to the Jews, back to God's people, the Israelites. Paul tells us in Galatians that we are all sons of Abraham through faith in Christ Jesus. How believable is the resurrection of Jesus that first Easter morning if the ancient prophets had not foretold it?

The less you and I know our history, the history of God's plan for our salvation, the less believable that Jesus Christ, true God and true man, died on the cross and rose on the third day. Without the knowledge and faith that Jesus rose from the dead, what hope do you and I have? If Jesus has not been raised, then we are still in our sins.

If we think that not knowing about or forgetting WW II history is a tragedy; and it is, what do we think of forgetting the history of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? If we are losing an appreciation for what those in our nation have done before us, may we also be losing our appreciation for what the Savior did on the cross? The Easter resurrection as foretold by the prophets did in fact happen and it did in fact change our lives and the world forever.

What the prophets foretold, Jesus fulfilled. Peter said that God himself gave the proof of Jesus in the signs and miracles and wonders he performed. He reminds them that they all saw what Jesus did. It was just as it was said it would be when the Messiah came. Peter also reminds them and us that this was God's plan. It was God's purpose and with God's foreknowledge that Jesus was handed over to them and that with the help of wicked men they crucified Jesus. Yes, Peter tells them, you put him to death by nailing him to the cross. It happened just as God said it would.

They couldn't deny that what Peter said was true; but what they did not want to acknowledge was that it was this same Jesus, whom they crucified, that God has now raised from the dead. Jesus rose from the dead on Easter morning, on the third day, just as the prophets and the Scriptures testified that he would.

Perhaps the most difficult part for Peter's audience, as is the most difficult part for you and me, was the fact that they had something to do with Jesus being nailed to the cross. Peter wanted them and us to see that it was God's will. It was God's will that Jesus suffer and die for the sins of all people. It was God's will that Jesus fulfill what had been spoken of by the prophets. It was God's will to raise Jesus from the dead on Easter so that all could see that through Jesus' death and resurrection they had the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. In the Easter resurrection, Jesus fulfilled God's plan for our salvation and fulfilled what the prophets foretold.

Now that you see what exactly has taken place, namely that as the Scriptures proclaimed, Jesus was crucified, died, was buried and then rose again on the third day, you are witnesses. As Peter, says, "We are all witnesses of the fact." We are witnesses of the fact that Jesus was not abandoned to the grave. He lives! We are witnesses to the fact that then we also have the hope of the resurrection to eternal life; just as David proclaimed it in Psalm 16.

Jesus had told his disciples, "You will be my witnesses." Jesus tells you and me the same. You and I are God's witnesses. We are witnesses to the truth of God that God has carried out his plan of salvation. That forgiveness of sin, life and salvation is not just for you and me, but for all people. Jesus lives! All who believe will also have life in his name.

Those who were there that day could not deny the veracity of Peter's words concerning the Easter resurrection. They knew what the prophets foretold. They knew what Jesus had done. They also knew that when they believed that Jesus was the one sent from heaven to be the Savior and that he was the one risen from the dead, it would change their life forever. They too would have the sure hope of a resurrection to eternal life.

So it is with all entrusted with the truth. So it is with you and me. The Easter resurrection has changed our lives forever. Having that truth, we now have the responsibility and the privilege of being Jesus' witnesses to the truth and proclaiming his saving gospel to all people and through all generations. We have a responsibility to the truth. May the Easter resurrection live on in our hearts and lives as we proclaim our Savior's name to all people and to all generations. In Jesus' name. Amen.