

He is Risen, AS HE SAID

Matthew 28:1-10

Easter Sunday, April 5, 2015

Beloved of the Lord.....Let us begin this morning by discussing what is called the “fear of death”. Every man, even strong Christians, have certain fears regarding death, and this is because of our sinful nature. We know our sins, and we know nothing escapes the all-seeing eye of God. Our life is an open book to God above, and though we have done well in hiding our sins from other people, nothing can be hidden from God. Psalm 94 says, “He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?” God gave you your eyes and ears, don’t you think He sees and hears all your sins? What have been your greater sins? Did you lie carnally with someone you were not married to and then left them? Did you covet another person’s money so badly you lied to them and cheated them? Did you faithfully report your income on your taxes? Did you try to escape your problems by drugs or alcohol? Were you the proud sort who always thought yourself a good Christian, but inwardly you knew you were a fake? Are you angry at someone now, refusing to forgive? Did you faithfully go to church because you liked how people thought you good to do so? Have you always put God first in your life, His will before your wants? What does the sacrifice of Christ on the cross really mean to you? Is it everything or nothing at all? Whatever our sins may be, especially the greater sins, understand when death approaches and you know you must stand before God’s judgment, your world of self-righteousness is going to fall apart. All you think you are, all you think you have done, crumbles like a house of cards when death draws near. You cannot escape death, and the Bible says “It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment.” This means God is waiting for you on the other side, and God is surely going to judge what you have done. Every deed done in the darkness, He has seen in the light.

The purpose of our sermon then today is this: it is to point and direct the soul of every sinner who is sorry to the True God in heaven above, Jesus Christ, “for neither is there salvation in any other”. Jesus is the God who one day will judge you, but He is not only a just God, but also a gracious God. This gracious God, because He had mercy upon you, once came down to this earth in flesh and blood, and He lived as a True Man on earth, even while He was also True God. He lived a sad and sorry life, because He came to be your Substitute, carrying your sins upon Himself. He hung upon a cross because He was willing to pay the price of your sins. They pierced His hands and feet. He was bleeding and suffering and dying, as God punished Him for your sins from above. Yet in this way and manner, Jesus secured for ALL SINNERS in the world.... what is called “forgiveness of sins.” He earned it by His own right without any of your works. It was His freewill offering of body and soul, an offering of love, which moved God to forgive all. We live today in a world of wicked sinners because of the devil and our own flesh, but it is still true for Jesus’ sake, God has forgiven them all. The resurrection then of Jesus Christ from the dead, is genuine proof, that God the Father has accepted the

sacrifice of God the Son. If there was even one sin which Jesus did not pay, the Father would not have raised Jesus from the dead, but the Father did raise the Son, as proof of our justification. Now all that is left is for this Gospel to be preached to all the world. Second Timothy 1:10 therefore says OUR SALVATION, "is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." Rejoice then today dear Christian, because Christ really has abolished death, and death has lost its sting. Sinners who now confess their sins and believe in Jesus, are the dead brought back to life by the power of Jesus' blood, the power of the Gospel. Therefore.....

I. Come see the place where the Lord lay! Sunday morning, at the beginning of dawn, three Marys, and other women began their journey to the tomb. Though Christ the Living Word had told them many times He would rise again the third day, they were faithless on the way to the tomb. They went there only to complete their final act of love, embalming the body. On the way they realized, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" This stone was like a big round wheel of great weight set. Not wanting anyone to steal the body, the chief priests and Pharisees had this stone sealed with either clay or wax. Moreover Pilate permitted a watch of soldiers, usually about 16 men who would watch around the clock in shifts of four. God of course had other plans. "Behold there was a great earthquake, for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning and his raiment white as snow." The terrified guards fainted in fear. When they came to they quickly ran to the city telling the chief priests about the angel and open tomb. The priests quickly called an emergency meeting of the elders, and they decided to bribe the soldiers with hush money. They were to lie and say the disciples stole the body by night. "So they took the money and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day."

Needless to say, when the women arrived the stone was no obstacle. Also remember the angel did not roll away the stone so Christ could get out, but so the faithless could look in and believe. Surprised and bewildered, they enter the empty tomb, and "behold two men stood by them in shining garments....Fear ye not: for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as He said. Come see the place where the Lord lay." Note how the angel understood they did not believe as they should. He is saying "Since you do not believe, look here, and examine the evidence yourself. Why do you seek the living among the dead?" Further evidence of the resurrection is also explained to us in the Gospel of John. He writes "The napkin, that was about His head, not lying with the linen clothes, [was] wrapped together in a place by itself." This means the linen which had been around the head of Christ was taken off separately and folded neatly apart from that linen which once wrapped His body.

The resurrection of Christ is indeed a historical fact, perfectly recorded by the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Both Matthew and John and Peter were eye witnesses of the resurrected Christ as well as all the disciples, and First Corinthians 15 tells us 500 "brethren at once" saw Jesus, probably at the time of His ascension. In fact, His resurrection is so well recorded in the Bible, there is plenty of evidence in the

Scriptures to refute those lies floating around in our world today. For example, the Jews today still claim the body was stolen. But there were the very ones who had Pilate set a watch of soldiers so it wouldn't happen. Then when Jesus did rise from the dead as He promised, it was the Jews who bribed the guards to lie, and the Bible says in Matthew 28:15, "So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day." Also consider if the body was stolen in the middle of the night and there were guards who somehow missed it all, would the thieves in the middle of the night take the time to unwrap the body and fold the linens neatly in two places? Another ridiculous theory is that Christ didn't die on the cross but only passed out. He was merely sleeping in the tomb and then woke up! Yet this makes no sense at all. After Jesus died at 3PM the soldiers pierced Jesus with a spear to make sure he was dead! They didn't need to break his legs as they did with the thieves. Still further, are we to imagine Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea buried Christ not realizing He was asleep? Every adult knows a dead body is cold and not warm.

Time does not permit all the other ridiculous theories of men, but we should understand the devil continually repeats such lies in the world today and we shouldn't fall for his old tricks. All we need is God's Word to convince us, for Jesus said, "Thy Word is truth." Our Bible is the only book in all the world written by God Himself. Let it be said, everyone who denies this resurrection of Christ will have no excuse on Judgment Day, when they will see a very living and alive Jesus who will judge them for their denial of His sacrifice. Those who are damned will only have themselves to blame, for they called Jesus a liar. Yet Jesus told the truth when He said, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" likewise "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" likewise "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness." Those who deny the resurrection live in darkness, but those who believe the resurrection live in the light and are come to the light and they have the Light of Christ and the life of Christ in themselves. To those Jesus said, "Because I live, ye shall live also." But there is another witness still.....

II. The witness of the Spirit. Our faith today is not really based upon the evidence of the resurrection, but rather the solid Word of God, the foundation of Christ and the apostles. Only the Word of God Himself can really convince you that Jesus is your Savior, and He really did out of love die for you and rise again. Thus the greatest witness we have of the resurrection, is the witness of God Himself, for the Holy Ghost never lies. Second Peter 1:19 says "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." This is the internal witness of the Holy Ghost. I John 5:10 says, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." It is the Holy Ghost Himself within you which causes you to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, for "no man can say Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost." If then you know and believe Jesus is your Lord and Savior who conquered sin, death, and the devil for you, you have been schooled, or taught the same by the Holy Ghost within you. You have what the Bible calls the "earnest of the Spirit". Second Corinthians 1:22 says, "God hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."

This witness, this earnest of the Spirit, is much more valuable to you than miracles which are seen with the eyes, for faith itself is stronger than what the eyes see. Faith sees what cannot be seen, and God preserves our faith so we never let go. Indeed we now see angels we have never seen, for the Spirit has revealed the truth of their words to our hearts. The witness of the Spirit and angels is "He is not here: for He is risen, AS HE SAID." For those women who first heard those words, there is a bit of scolding here by the angels, for they are telling the women that if they had heard Jesus and believed AS THEY SHOULD, they would have expected this resurrection. If they had believed God's Word AS THEY SHOULD, they would have been searching for a living Jesus, not a dead one. In like manner we rob ourselves of much spiritual happiness and joy, because inwardly we fail to believe and trust in God's Word as we should. But just as Jesus didn't scold the women, but He charitably forgave them and showed Himself alive, so His grace covers all our sinful doubts, and He gives us new life by the same. Do not then find your greater happiness in this world with material things or the love of family or good health. These are all blessings of course, but Jesus said, "rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." Isn't your name written in heaven by the blood-ink of God's only begotten Son? Thanks be to God through Jesus then.... Death is no longer death. Life is no longer life, but to live....to really live.... is to live in Christ, and for Christ. "Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. Amen.