

“Among the Dead... We Live” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Easter Sunday April 20, 2025

- I. **Luke 24:5-6** – “⁵And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead?
⁶He is not here, but has risen.”
- II. **Easter Day is here! He is risen!** (*He has risen indeed, alleluia!*)
 - a. For me, the season of Lent that leads up to Easter Sunday is a lot like the season of Advent leading up to Christmas Day.
 - i. A countdown begins, and the anticipation grows each day until it's time to celebrate.
 - ii. Some of you attended our Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services, which are very somber as our Lord was betrayed, falsely arrested and convicted, tortured without mercy... and then sentenced to death on a cross.
 1. Our sin and brokenness could not be repaired through any ordinary human way... it had to be God Himself, dying on the cross... being punished in our place... It was me that should have gone through all that.
 - iii. Leaving the sanctuary on Good Friday is a heavy feeling... and I always look forward to this day of Jesus' resurrection with eager expectation... and as I woke up this morning, it almost feels like a veil has been lifted as the Savior rose.
 - b. If I feel this way, I cannot imagine how the disciples felt as it dawned on them that their Lord who was dead on Friday afternoon... wrapped in grave cloths and laid in a burial tomb... was now alive... the stone had been moved away, and the tomb was empty.
 - i. Their minds would be racing... was this a grave robber? People playing a cruel trick? The religious leaders taking away His body so that no one could come and visit His grave?
 - ii. The angels then appear, telling the women that the Lord is not among these dead people in a graveyard... He is risen! (*He is risen indeed, alleluia!*)
- III. **Why do we seek the living among the dead?**
 - a. These words resonate with us even today.
 - b. Too often we seek life, prosperity, peace, pleasure, and health among the brokenness and death of the world.
 - c. The angels ask the women, “Why are you looking for someone who is alive amongst all these dead bodies?”
 - i. We should also ask ourselves, “Why am I looking for life in a world that cannot offer it?”
 - d. Why do we look for life in the approval and validation of others?

- i. In today's world of social media... a massive number of people put their lives out there so they can receive a little bit of positive affirmation...
 - ii. Our self-worth is often tied to what others think of us, rather than what God thinks of us!
 - iii. Some of us are tied to the world's subjective views of what we should look like or how we should act, and we don't feel good about ourselves until others like us.
 - iv. Sadly, the brokenness of the world cannot validate us, as we look for life among the dead opinions of others.
- e. Why do we look for life in prosperity and wealth?
 - i. What promises to give us good becomes our master... as we focus on the next paycheck, or winning lottery ticket, or an inheritance, or career that gives us a better life.
 - 1. The bigger house, the nicer vehicle, the better toys are all part of what we think will make us happy... and we end up in debt up to our eyeballs.
 - 2. All of the time and energy we put into money and making more of it becomes a vicious cycle that won't give us any peace at all.
 - ii. It reminds me of Jeremiah as God says, "For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water." (Jeremiah 2:13)
 - 1. God wants to give us life in the form of living water, and we create our own broken containers that hold nothing!
- f. Why do we look for life in our country and politics?
 - i. There is nothing wrong with being active in politics, voting your conscience, patriotism, or working to make our country better.
 - ii. The trouble comes when we are so fixated on political philosophies or individuals that we think removing them or keeping them will bring us life, peace, and hope.
 - iii. I hate to break it to you, but powers come and go, great countries come and go, and all along the way, supporters and detractors come and go as well.
 - iv. The government will not bring us life... it is simply a tool to keep order... and if we think it will solve our problems or give us what we truly need... it's like wandering around in a graveyard to find new friends.
- g. Why do we look for life in pleasure?
 - i. Whenever we want to avoid our discontent, our pain, or troubles, we seek out pleasure to get us through.

- ii. When we feel down or unhappy, what's our go to solution?
Chocolate! Or alcohol... or food... or drugs... or buying things... or entertainment... or physical pleasures.
- iii. All these things were part of God's good creation that get twisted around and broken... and then they become a trap for us to feel better for a few minutes but slowly stop working altogether and make things much worse.
- iv. We use these things to bring life, but they are like looking for Jesus in a tomb...
- h. Unfortunately, the world does not have the power to bring us true life – it is only found in the power and promise of Jesus Christ our Savior.

IV. **Life begins and ends in Jesus.**

- a. What brought you here today?
 - i. Some of you will say a family member brought me... or a friend invited me... or I always come to Easter service because it's a tradition.
 - ii. But the reason you are here today is Jesus... the one who died on the cross and rose again from the tomb to give life to all who believe... and without Jesus, this day would not even exist!
- b. A little more than thirty years ago, I remember coming to church on Easter and just feeling broken... You see, I had tried my hardest to find life in the graveyard.
 - i. All the failures of broken relationships, drugs and alcohol, debt, and selfishness were still fresh in my mind as I looked for a new life.
 - ii. By the power of God, He rescued me from the grave and called me to follow Him once again... somehow the Holy Spirit came to me in way that called me to worship and life in Christ.
 - iii. That Easter, I remember thinking that Jesus won the victory over sin and death for me... and no matter how bad things had gotten, the love and victory in Jesus' resurrection was for me.
 - iv. Even more than the gratitude I felt for Jesus' death on the cross to pay the price for my sins and the trail of brokenness I had left in my path... the resurrection was a celebration of new life that I could really grasp... I could truly live a new life in Christ.
 - v. From that point on, I have always loved Easter as the greatest day in my faith life, because victory is mine in Christ – He is risen! (*He is risen indeed, alleluia!*)
- c. To be clear... it not just my victory, but it's a victory for all of us who believe that Jesus is our Savior.
 - i. Whenever we go out looking for life in the tombs of approval from others... or prosperity and wealth... or politics and government... or pleasure to overcome discontent or troubles... we lose sight of the life that comes in our Risen Savior Jesus.

- ii. He wants us to live... now by the power of the Holy Spirit and in faith... and for eternity as His grace covers us and we live even when this body stops functioning.
- d. The promise is yours... the promise is mine... the promise for all who believe... sin no longer wins... death no longer wins... the tomb is empty, the Savior lives... Where the world offers death, Jesus offers life.
- e. He is not among the dead—He is risen indeed, Alleluia!