

## “He Is Here!” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Easter Sunday – April 17, 2022

- I. **Luke 24:5-6** – “<sup>5</sup> And 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?  
<sup>6</sup> He is not here, but has risen.”
- II. **Sometimes an important message can get lost by the words we use...**
  - a. Michele and I went to an Easter service before I became a pastor, and the opening portion of the service had a short skit.
    - i. The pastor was reciting the words from Luke today, but he got them mixed up... he said, “He is not risen...but is here...” to the gasps of the congregation.
    - ii. We all understood his flub, but we couldn’t forget how he messed up his one liner on such an important day as Easter and the risen Lord!
  - b. On another occasion, a sermon was titled by the very words we read today, “He is not here.”
    - i. Now, I don’t know about you, but I think that might send the wrong message, even if it is right from the Bible!
    - ii. Certainly we need to add the context to these words – as Jesus rose from the dead, He was no longer in the tomb... of course.
  - c. Today is, of all days, important to bring clarity and confidence to the truth of Scripture... Jesus is risen... and He is here!
- III. **Amazingly, the same simple message is still shared.**
  - a. Just think about it... for 2000 years, beginning with a ragtag group of Christ followers... the death and resurrection of Jesus has been passed on to billions of people.
  - b. I smiled the other day when I read a quote from Chuck Colson (who was involved in the Watergate scandal of the Nixon administration and sent to prison)...
    - i. He said that the story of Jesus has to be real because all those involved in Watergate rolled over under questioning in two weeks...
    - ii. Jesus’ followers never denied Him or said it was all a hoax – even after years and years of persecution, torture and suffering.
    - iii. Those who followed Christ and witnessed the life, death and resurrection of Jesus could never deny the truth... no matter how bad life got.
  - c. And life can get pretty bad, right?
- IV. **Some people might even ask, where is Jesus in all this trouble?**
  - a. It’s hard to watch the news... it’s just overwhelming.
  - b. For some of you, this is the first time you have been to a church service since March of 2020.
    - i. Two years ago, we began a journey into fear, anxiety, and the unknown... as Covid became a pandemic.

- ii. In-person church services – even Holy Week and Easter services – were canceled all over the world.
  - 1. Isolation, depression, and fear became a part of everyday life
- iii. Where was Jesus in all that?
- c. Two months later, in May of 2020, a police officer kneeled on the neck of a black man for almost ten minutes... until he died.
  - i. Riots, division, anger, and death came to cities across the U.S.
  - ii. People from all walks of life took sides... dug their heels in... lobbed accusations and labels at each other – even families at the dinner table.
  - iii. Meanwhile, our sense of security was shattered, as not only were we dealing with a pandemic, but riots and protests – especially here in Portland!
  - iv. Where was Jesus in that?
- d. Just recently, our world seems less stable with the Russian invasion of Ukraine.
  - i. For the first time in decades, we are seeing Eastern Europe involved in a conflict that could explode into a world war at any time.
  - ii. Threats of nuclear bombs and other countries getting involved... news stories of families and little children displaced or killed... the horrific scenes of war...
  - iii. Where is Jesus in all this?
- e. Perhaps you have experienced a loss or traumatic experience...
  - i. It seems all too common to hear about a cancer diagnosis or some other serious health issue in our friends and loved ones
  - ii. Many of us have experienced the loss of a loved one – and the pain of not having them with us can really hurt
  - iii. Economic insecurity, inflation, high cost of living... all the pressures we feel right now can easily weigh us down.
  - iv. Where is Jesus in all this?

V. **The answer is, Jesus is here!**

- a. From the very beginning of time, Adam and Eve made a choice to turn away from God... and that choice opened the door for sin and brokenness to enter our world.
  - i. Disease, war, unrest, brutality, hate, racism, murder, and division of every type was the new reality – as even the first children in Cain and Abel ended up in murder...
- b. And yet, from the very beginning, God promised a Savior would come (Genesis 3:15)... a Messiah who would overcome sin... and death... and satan!

- i. In the most humble and obscure way, when the time was just right, a baby was born to a virgin who became pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit
  - ii. A baby who would grow up to become a man... a baby who was God in the flesh – Immanuel, God with us.
  - iii. From that humble beginning, Jesus, the one human being who was perfect and without sin... made His way to the cross.
- c. In a sacrifice that covered all the sins of the world – including you and me... Jesus paid... He took the full burden and weight of our sin as it was nailed to the cross.
- d. However... the greatest part of the story answers our question today... where is Jesus in all this?
  - i. Jesus lives, the victory's won!
  - ii. Jesus did not remain in the tomb... He's risen! (**He's risen indeed, alleluia!**)
- e. The power of the resurrection is the victory over sin, and death, and the devil...
  - i. Sin can no longer destroy us... sure it might try to harm us, but the words of St. Paul in 2 Corinthians 4 remind us that:
    - 1. "We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. We are [persecuted], but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed. Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies," (2 Corinthians 4:8-10).
    - 2. Sin may come after us in this earthly life, but it cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord! (Rom. 8:39)
  - ii. Death has no real power over us either...as our reading in 1 Corinthians says that God destroys death... and as Jesus Himself said in John 11 – "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die," (John 11:25-26).
  - iii. Finally, the old evil foe, Satan has no more power to destroy us either... as 1 John 4:4 tells us, "Little children, you are from God and have overcome [satan and his demons], for He [Jesus] who is in you is greater than [the devil]"
- f. Yes, we might see sin all around us and a world that is lost... but not only did Jesus win the battle over sin, death and devil... He gave that victory to us... and now lives in us.
  - i. You, and me, and all believers in Jesus are the very presence of Christ in a world of chaos and suffering.

- ii. Without the power of the resurrection living in us... we could not be present in a world that needs Jesus so badly.
- iii. Maybe all the terrible things going on in the world around us could have a different question than “where is Jesus?”
- iv. Maybe we, as Christ lives in us, can be the reason people say, “Jesus is here!”
- g. Jesus really is here, living through us by the power of the resurrection – so never despair... Jesus lives... the victory’s won... He is risen! (**He is risen indeed, alleluia!**) Amen.