

Sunday, April 26, 2020

11:00 am Worship

PRE SERVICE MUSIC

WELCOME

Larry Courson, Pastor

CALL TO WORSHIP

This is the Good News we proclaim to you.

Jesus Christ is raised from the dead!

Walk in the light of His love.

Live in the light of His teachings and love.

Worship the One who overcame death.

Celebrate the triumph of our Lord.

OPENING PRAISE

PRAYER OF THE DAY - Pastor

Gracious God, we celebrate Your love. You have defeated sin and conquered death through the resurrection of Your Son, Jesus Christ. We recognize that without the cross, we would have no reason to live; we would have no hope. Thank You, Father, for giving us hope! We do not know what it was like to watch Your Son die, but we know You endured it because of Your great love for us. We are full of gratitude and worship Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord and Savior. Amen.

READING OF PSALM 117 NLT

Praise the LORD, all you nations.

Praise Him, all you people of the earth.

For His unfailing love for us is powerful;
the LORD's faithfulness endures forever.

Praise the LORD!

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE (can't erase sins)

FIRST READING Acts 2:36-41 (NLT)

Peter's Pentecost Message

Then Peter stepped forward with the eleven other apostles and shouted to the crowd, "Listen carefully, all of you, fellow Jews and residents of Jerusalem! Make no mistake about this. "So let everyone in Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, to be both Lord and Messiah!" Peter's words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" Peter replied, "Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is to you, to your children, and to those far away—all who have been called by the Lord our God." Then Peter continued preaching for a long time, strongly urging all his listeners, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation!" Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all.

SECOND READING 1 Peter 1:17-25 (NLT)

Encouragement to live the new life of faith

And remember that the heavenly Father to whom you pray has no favorites. He will judge or reward you according to what you do. So you must live in reverent fear of him during your time here as “temporary residents.” For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And it was not paid with mere gold or silver, which lose their value. It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. God chose him as your ransom long before the world began, but now in these last days he has been revealed for your sake. Through Christ you have come to trust in God. And you have placed your faith and hope in God because he raised Christ from the dead and gave him great glory. You were cleansed from your sins when you obeyed the truth, so now you must show sincere love to each other as brothers and sisters. Love each other deeply with all your heart. For you have been born again, but not to a life that will quickly end. Your new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal, living word of God. As the Scriptures say, “People are like grass; their beauty is like a flower in the field. The grass withers and the flower fades. But the word of the Lord remains forever.” And that word is the Good News that was preached to you.

GOSPEL READING Luke 24:13-35 (NLT)

Jesus appears to the Emmaus Disciples

That same day two of Jesus’ followers were walking to the village of Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem. As they walked along they were talking about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things, Jesus himself suddenly came and began walking with them. But God kept them from recognizing him. He asked them, “What are you discussing so intently as you walk along?” They stopped short, sadness written across their faces. Then one of them, Cleopas, replied, “You must be the only person in Jerusalem who hasn’t heard about all the things that have happened there the last few days.” “What things?” Jesus asked. “The things that happened to Jesus, the man from Nazareth,” they said. “He was a prophet who did powerful miracles, and he was a mighty teacher in the eyes of God and all the people. But our leading priests and other religious leaders handed him over to be condemned to death, and they crucified him. We had hoped he was the Messiah who had come to rescue Israel. This all happened three days ago. “Then some women from our group of his followers were at his tomb early this morning, and they came back with an amazing report. They said his body was missing, and they had seen angels who told them Jesus is alive! Some of our men ran out to see, and sure enough, his body was gone, just as the women had said.” Then Jesus said to them, “You foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures. Wasn’t it clearly predicted that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his glory?” Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. By this time they were nearing Emmaus and the end of their journey. Jesus acted as if he were going on, but they begged him, “Stay the night with us, since it is getting late.” So he went home with them. As they sat down to eat, he took the bread and blessed it. Then he broke it and gave it to them. Suddenly, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And at that moment he disappeared! They said to each other, “Didn’t our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?” And within the hour they were on their way back to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven disciples and the others who had gathered with them, who said, “The Lord has really risen! He appeared to Peter.” Then the two from Emmaus told their story of how Jesus had appeared to them as they were walking along the road, and how they had recognized him as he was breaking the bread.

THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried.
He descended into hell.

The third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended into Heaven
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.
From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

OFFERING PRAYER

God the Father, giver of life, may the works of our hands bring You honor. May the life we live reflect the risen Jesus, the Word of life. May the service we offer be inspired by Jesus Christ, the Breath of life. Amen.

MESSAGE SONG

MESSAGE

“Easter Crisis, 2020”

Easter 2020, the year of the Corona Virus, was without a doubt the strangest in all of my years of ministry. I have never before had an Easter morning service with only two other people. This may have been the first Easter Crisis in our lifetimes, but certainly not the first Easter Crisis.

- Easter 1916 saw thousands of Irish men and women seizing control of locations in Dublin and proclaiming an Irish Republic. The British responded with force; but their response was not popular. Public opinion began to shift and moved Ireland toward independence.
- Easter 1920 saw a conflict between the king and cabinet in Denmark that created a constitutional crisis that led to the creation of a constitutional monarchy.

The First Easter Crisis took place 2,000 years ago when Jesus rose from the dead. The powerful people in Jerusalem thought they had crushed the Jesus rebellion when Jesus was killed on a cross and his body placed in a tomb. But God raised Jesus from the dead. Public opinion began to shift as people began to see that Jesus had conquered death; that He was their Lord and Savior.

The First Easter Rising

- Was a liberation movement in which God freed Jesus from death.
- Was a revolution in which a crucified criminal became the Promised Savior.
- Was a promise of freedom for everyone who follows Jesus—Freedom from sin, shame and death.
- Was the first step toward the transformation of the entire world in which suffering is replaced by joy, fear is replaced by hope, chaos is replaced by peace, hate is replaced by love and death is replaced by eternal life.

The Second Easter Crisis took place 50 days later when the Disciples received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Peter gave the crowd that had come to the temple to celebrate Pentecost the first public proclamation of the resurrection when he said, **“With the help of lawless Gentiles, you nailed him to a cross and killed him. But God released him from the horrors of death and raised him back to life, for death could not keep him in its grip.”** (23-24)

This was a shocking message to the people in the crowd. The report of this event in the Acts of the Apostles tells us what happened. **“Peter’s words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?” Peter replied, “Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”** (37-38)

Peter’s words created a crisis for the people and brought an immediate response. Peter challenged them to repent, which means to make a complete reversal of course and move in a new direction. Peter put the people on the spot to try to force them to decide whether they were going to oppose Jesus or support Him. Where they going to serve earthly authorities or the Promised Messiah? Peter encouraged them to respond when he said, **“This promise is to you, to your children.” Then Peter continued, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation!”**(39-40)

This Easter Crisis was a turning point that had enormous consequences for the people of Jerusalem. This turning point is bigger than the Declaration of Independence, the Civil War or the Civil Rights movement. All of these were crisis and turning points in the history of our nation. But they are not nearly as big or as important as Jesus’ resurrection.

The people in Jerusalem welcomed Peter's message and 3,000 were baptized. Their lives were changed. "All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals, and to prayer." (42) The Easter Crisis led to the rapid spread of Christianity.

How are we going to respond to the COVID induced Easter Crisis of 2020? We could hold onto the things that we put our hope in from the very recent past. Or we could let go of the things that have failed to deliver and put our trust in God. The Letter of James tells us, "Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father." (James 1:17). Sometimes I think we are guilty of making a false god out of the gift instead of the giver. We can put our trust in the good things of life rather than the giver of life. We have the wonderful promise in Romans 8:28 that God can work all things out for the good of those who love in and have been called by Him.

Is God using this crisis to expose the failed "gods" of our time?

- I saw an ad on TV this week telling us that we can count on Science to rescue us from this crisis. Science is a gift from God. It can't replace God. I hope and pray that our medical sciences will find both a cure and vaccination for the Corona Virus. But science can't save us.
- The experts are telling us that they know what is best and that we should trust them. Americans have become very dependent on experts. But the experts' opinions are changing constantly. They can't save us.
- The Government is telling us what we can and cannot do. Some of their advice is good. But the government is made of sinful people like you and me. The Government can't save us.
- Many Americans have made health and wealth their little gods, the driving force in their lives. Obviously those have failed in the midst of this crisis.
- Recreation, entertainment and sports have become dominant forces in our society. But they are all shut down. They can't give us what we want or what we need.

I think you get the idea. Only God is with us. Only God can save us. Like Peter with the people of Jerusalem, God is calling us today to repent, to return to Him and to put our trust in the Risen Lord Jesus Christ.

- If you have turned away from Jesus or just neglected your relationship with Him, turn back to Him.
- If you have been living in a way that says everything is all about you, it is not all about you. Find a new life in Christ.
- If you have been serving your earthly desires, the false gods of our time, serve the Lord and others in His name.
- If you have been putting faith in yourself and your own abilities, put your faith in Jesus and His power to save.

We don't know how long it will take for the current crisis to pass and for a new normal to settle in. But we do know that regardless of how long it takes or how many changes it will bring, nothing can separate us from God's love in Jesus Christ. He has defeated sin and death and invites us to bring all of our cares and concerns to Him. We can count on Him to be with us, to help us, to give us a new life. We can live in fear of the unknown, or we can live in faith in the one who knows us and loves us. Isn't faith the better option?

PRAYER

Holy God, we marvel at the mystery of Christ's suffering, death and resurrection. We are awed by His obedience, astonished by the depth of His love for us and amazed by the display of Your power over the forces of sin and death. You are a God of wonders. You restore that which has been lost, bring new life from that which is old and offer healing and hope where there appears to be only sickness and death. Your miraculous power continues to work in our lives and in our world. Set your hearts on fire with Your love and open our eyes that we may recognize Your presence in every person, in every situation, in every place.

INTERCESSORY PRAYERS

We Remember in Our Prayers: Elly, Evan, Cindy, Meggan, Sheryl, Stephanie, Lonnie, Jonah, Amy; Towers family upon the passing of Jessica's mother; Aufdemberge & Bergolts families in Nebraska

Peace's Call Committee; our Nation in the midst of COVID-19 concerns; medical personnel, including: Stephen, Rebecca, Becky, Karen, Erik, Lindsey, Stephanie, Chris, Ericka, Todd & Heidi

Prayers for our Men and Women in the Military: Matt, John, Joe, Connor, Eustace, Eric

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

THE BLESSING—Pastor

The tomb is empty and Jesus Christ is alive.

What will be our response to that Good News?

Will we flee in fear, keeping the news to ourselves, or are we ready to give an account of the resurrection hope that is within us?

In the power of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, may you be emboldened to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

May the Peace of the Lord be with you today and always. Amen.

CLOSING PRAISE