

4/12/20

OUR LORD'S EASTER PROMISE-I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE!

READ John 11:20-27

Promises! Mountains are often used to symbolize greatness and stability. An unchanging link between the past and the future. Unchanging! Yet, how inadequate they are to portray the unchanging Love and the certain Promises of our God. Secure as they may seem, mountains are in a continual process of disintegration and change caused by the forces of the wind, the snow, the rain and the avalanche.

It is the eternal and unchanging God who assures us, **"Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing Love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of Peace be removed..."**

Isaiah 54:10 Promises! **"Surely, I will be with you always, to the very end of the age."** Matthew 28:20 Promises! **"Who shall separate us from the Love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship? ...No in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who Loved us.!"** Romans 8:35,37 Promises for the Good Times and yes, for the Bad Times – like those we face now – celebrating Easter as we never have before! Promises that cannot be shaken!

Easter is centered in Promises! From our Gracious God! Promises fulfilled! –Promises of things yet to come! Christ's bodily resurrection –the empty tomb is a promise fulfilled – A REALITY! And His resurrection is the basis for the promises of things yet to come!

THEME: OUR LORD'S EASTER PROMISE – I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE!

I. HIS PROMISE DISPELS OUR DOUBTS!

II. HIS PROMISE OFFERS ETERNAL LIFE!

Even the most confident and self-assured must deal with doubts when faced with death. Mary and Martha were struggling with gloom and doubt—as Jesus arrived in our text. But, HIS PROMISE DISPELS OUR DOUBTS!

What a test these dear friends of the Savior faced! Their dear brother Lazarus was seriously ill—they send for Jesus—but Jesus doesn't seem in any hurry to come. When Jesus does come—Lazarus has been in the tomb for 4 days! Now Martha rushes out to meet him.

"If only you had been here, my brother would not have died." Do we sense a word of ACCUSATION? Of COMPLAINT? Or only TRUST? You could have intervened—BUT YOU DIDN'T!! But this was all part of God's plan—Lazarus died SO THAT THE DISCIPLES MIGHT BELIEVE and SEE GOD'S GLORY – IN JESUS!!

But Martha had more to say, **"I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."** I KNOW!! Even NOW – with Lazarus dead—you ask God and he will bring him back! I KNOW!! SUCH FAITH!

When Jesus promises that the dead Lazarus will rise again on the final judgment day—that's not good enough for Martha—impatiently, she responds, **"I KNOW he will rise again in the resurrection at the Last Day!"** But that's not good enough—IF ONLY!!

The resurrection of the body on the final Judgment Day was not some new invention by those of Jesus' day. God was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—the God of the living not the dead. Job promises, **"I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVES...AND AFTER MY SKIN HAS BEEN DESTROYED, YET IN MY FLESH I WILL SEE GOD..."** Job 19 The Psalm (16) writer speaking of Christ declares **"...You will not abandon Me to the Grave..."** Daniel (12:2) promised, **"MULTITUDES WE SLEEP IN THE DUST OF THE EARTH WILL AWAKE..."** Martha says, 'SO WHAT!' 'HOW DOES THAT HELP NOW?' 'IF ONLY!' 'DO SOMETHING NOW!'

Jesus wants her to take what she know from the head to the heart, so He boldly explains, **"I AM THE RESURRECTION...!"** I am it's very source and power. I have the power over death. You shall see it now when I call Lazarus forth! You shall see it again in a few days---I will be crucified—die//but BY MY OWN POWER I WILL ARISE FROM THE DEAD. **"I AM THE RESURRECTION!"**

Aren't we often so much like Martha—struggling with daily doubts and fears? Can God really provide for my bodily needs? Will he protect me from this present danger that seems to surround us? Will he supply friends and loved ones? But the toughest is when we come face-to-face with death.

It is that last great enemy that is still most difficult to conquer!! When we hold the hand of that dying loved one—when we face death ourselves—OFTEN EVEN THE BRAVEST OF SOULS SUDDENLY STAGGERS!

Our bodies are subject to death because of sin. Our heart cries out the message—SIN LEADS TO DEATH. Our fears and doubts are but a few from the great catalog of sins in our lives. Yes, TO DEATH!

Modern so-called Bible scholars have many different theories about what happened on that first Easter...SOME – *THE DISCIPLES STOLE THE BODY...* OTHERS – *JESUS ONLY SWOONED ON THE CROSS AND THE COOL OF THE TOMB REVIVED HIM...* OTHERS – *THERE WAS NO BODILY RESURRECTION—JESUS WAS 'RAISED IN THE HEARTS OF THE BELIEVERS (a nice way of saying they imagined it!)* Yet, none of these offer any real comfort. ONLY

THE REAL MESSAGE OF EASTER – *Jesus BY HIS OWN POWER was raised in victory* from the dead!! Victorious over sin and death and hell! Do more than ‘know about it’! Believe it!

With these few words Jesus challenges Martha to look ahead to the EASTER EVENT, **“I am the Resurrection”**. I am the SOURCE and the POWER!! See the startling proof!! Lazarus raised from death! Yes, you will see me die. By my death I will destroy the power of sin. My blood will flow for all your sins! Forgiveness is yours freely given through faith!

But look at the rest of the MESSAGE – a PROMISE to comfort and to dispel our doubts. With eyes of faith see the light of that early morning fall on the empty tomb! Witness the tomb torn open with the violent earthquake—to reveal the empty tomb. Hurry with the women to the tomb – to find it empty! Thrill to the words of the angels, **“He is not here, He is risen!”** See and touch the Risen Savior in the Garden with Mary and experience her joy with the cry, **“My Teacher”!** Walk with the two down caste disciples on the way to Emmaus—taste their joy as he revealed himself in the breaking of bread. See him in the Upper Room with the 12 disciples!

He was dead—now he is alive – sin is paid for – death is conquered! Know and Believe! I AM THE RESURRECTION! May this promise dispel all our doubts!

In the early Christian church, many taught their children to point at themselves and confess, ‘I believe that THIS BODY will be raised up on judgment day!’ May his promise, **“I AM THE RESURRECTION” BE OUR COMFORT AND DISPEL ALL OUR DOUBTS!**

II. Some say life begins at 40. As Christians, we recognize that the most important life begins when first we believed in Jesus. It may have been when as a child God came to us in the water and the Word in our Baptism...It may have been later through the Word. But Life with Jesus is real living.

Jesus speaks of Life that comes as a gift by faith, **“I am the resurrection and the LIFE.”** I am the SOURCE OF LIFE! He tells us who will have such life, **“He who believes in me will LIVE.”** Knowing of and believing in Jesus --- that’s living! Again, the Gospel Writer John (3:36) concurs, **“Whoever believes on the Son has Eternal Life.”**

It is a sad fact that the Easter sun that rises this morning to bring us as Christians Joy—will also rise for millions in our land and around the World who are living and dying without Jesus. Physically alive but Spiritually dead. Some knowing poverty others wealth/weakness or great power. At times, ‘living it up’.—But Dead none the less. That will join the Rich Man in Jesus parable in saying, ‘IF ONLY’, ON THE FINAL JUDGMENT DAY. Only Regrets!

Can you imagine what life would be like without regrets? Have you ever finished the sentence, ‘IF I HAD MY LIFE TO LIVE OVER AGAIN...’ Any regrets? Things you would have like to have changed? Some proudly say on their death bed, ‘I WOULDN’T HAVE CHANGED A THING!’ Isn’t there some sin in our lives that we should have tried harder to cut out of our lives...that hurt ourselves and other? I have plenty!

Yet, life with Jesus is one without regrets, for **“Godly sorrow leads to repentance that leaves no regrets...”** II Cor While sin brings sorrow to the heart of the believer (How can we say-OH WELL I SINNED AGAIN) – WHERE THERE IS REPENTANCE AND FAITH—WE NEED NOT CARRY THE BURDEN—NO REGRETS!! Christ died and made full payment for all our sins! His resurrection assures us of the fact, **“He was raised again for our JUSTIFICATION.”** Romans 4:25 NO REGRETS! THIS IS LIVING!

Such life in Jesus will go beyond our physical death! Jesus assures Martha in our text and also us, **“He who believes in me will LIVE, even though he dies...”** Physical death need not alarm us...Jesus stepped through that door in VICTORY. **Life with Jesus that begins NOW by faith in Jesus cannot be interrupted by physical death.** Jesus who rose from the dead that first Easter Morning—freely gives life that will not end at death. When we die we have his promise that our soul will be IMMEDIATELY WITH HIM IN THE JOY OF HEAVEN. Our bodies will rest for a short time in the earth. But even that body will be raised from the dead on judgment day and reunited with our soul to live eternally with Jesus in heaven. Jesus promised Martha and us, **“WHOEVER LIVES AND BELIEVES IN ME WILL NEVER DIE.”** THAT PROMISE WAS SEALED BY HIS RESURRECTION!

It is said that a once well-known non-Christian lecturer claims he was silenced only once. He claimed that the story of Lazarus’s resurrection was all part of the plan to bolster the waning fortunes of Jesus. Their plan was for Lazarus to pretend to die –be placed in a tomb – only to come out when Jesus said, ‘Lazarus Come Forth’. To make his point, he asked the class, ‘Give me one good reason that Jesus should have said, “Lazarus come forth?”’ After an extended silence, a pale-faced young student replied in a shrill voice, ‘I can tell you, If he had not said, Lazarus, the whole grave yard would have been emptied!’ **The Empty tomb of Easter gives US such a WONDERFUL Easter Promise—may it drive away our doubts and bring us to eternal life! HE IS RISEN INDEED! AMEN**