

Jonah 2, Acts 2:22-28  
“The comeback kid”

Sorry to disappoint you with a normal entry this week. You need to know that I am so far from cool that it isn't even funny. I don't own a leather jacket or a pair of sunglasses. The jacket I borrowed from Leo and the glasses from Laura. We had fun learning about Jesus who descended into Hell because he is so bent after pursuing us every moment of our lives. This Sunday is the Sunday that we give thanks to God here in the United States. I remember our first Thanksgiving in Italy as a married couple as missionaries. We ordered an 18 pound turkey because we had invited at the orphanage the director and a number of other families from the church. A week before I stopped in to see the butcher and wanted to make sure that the order was still in and he said that it was, he said that he could only get one that was about 13 pounds, I figured that should be fine, we would have enough extras to fill people up. Wednesday I went to pick up the turkey, he took me into the back room where the cold closet was, and there hanging on a hook was what looked like a small person. It was a 12 kilo turkey, or 36 pound turkey. We made it work, but it was probably our most memorable Thanksgiving as we scrambled to use 4 ovens to cook that Turkey.

We have made our way through the Creed week after week: I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ his only son, our Savior, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. He descended into hell and “on the third day he rose again from the dead”. This is where we find ourselves today.

We are going to be looking at a couple of Scriptures where we will find that the resurrection should have an immediate and substantial impact on the way we actually live our life. Because Christ was raised from the dead we ought to be living with the attitude of victory, and hope, and joy and that ought to be reflected in our daily lives. If Jesus was raised from the dead, then what can our God not do? This is a radical thought for all of us.

**READ**

We have entitled this sermon the comeback kid as we talk about on the third day he rose again from the dead. The concept of Jesus coming back from the dead, as the ultimate comeback kid, is revolutionary. I can't shake a video that I once saw that

reminds me of the comeback kid. I need to warn you though, it is a bit graphic and shocking...so if you are squeamish, hang in there, it gets better. The comeback kid.

If you think about the time and the effort that we put into Lent during the church year you should know that it is not an indifferent amount of time. We have the 6 entire weeks of lent, then holy week, we adorn the church in a very different manner, we focus strongly on the suffering of Christ. If you look at the Apostles' Creed and think of the words devoted to Christ's suffering it is also fairly substantial. Suffered under Pontius Pilate, crucified, dead, and buried. If you look at Scripture we find that the Gospels give three chapters to one to Christ's passion and suffering as opposed to Christ's resurrection which is just a few verses in most Gospels.

Why do we stress the suffering of Christ so much as opposed to his glory and his resurrection? Is it because we can relate more to the suffering, or is it because we have the train wreck syndrome where we like to see people suffer, we are fascinated by car wrecks and investigations. What is it that sells papers if not other people's bad news, and certainly not the good news?

Today I am here to tell you that our emphasis has been put in the wrong place. This past week the President came out with a statement on immigration and provided amnesty for all immigrants, legal or not. You need to know that I feel very, very strongly about this issue. Here's why. The work we did in Russia was primarily with illegals. They came from African countries, or Iraq, or other countries where at the time they were being persecuted and sought out, or they simply wanted a better life. We created a center where they could use computers and communicate with their families, medical centers where they could get care, food banks where they could get food, shelter where they could live. I don't think I need to tell you what I think about immigration. But as your pastor, it is my responsibility to have opinions that are not based on emotions, or even my experiences, but rather on Scripture. It is my responsibility to let you know that Jesus spent his childhood as an illegal refugee in Egypt. The fact that today we are looking at the Apostles' Creed that tells us that Jesus rose from the dead on the third day reminds us that what is happening in the world around us today, always has a point of reference to Jesus and his life and his teachings. Let's look at those Scriptures.

Our Scriptures today command us to live lives that reflect the victory, the conquest that Christ has accomplished. Our first Scripture today gives us an example of how not to live your life once you have experienced and known God. Jonah is one of those biblical stories that we really never finish. We get to the whale part and we think that is all there is to the story. It is also an example of a character in the Bible who does not live his life according to the victory of redemption found in God. And he is someone who actually was raised from the, almost dead.

Jonah was from the very beginning rebellious to God's call in his life. This is not unusual for most of us. God tells us to go one way and we turn around and go the opposite way. God pursues him, captures him like we said last week God always does, and Jonah finally encounters God. This is reflected in his prayer as he states: "I went down to the land whose bars excluded me forever, yet you brought up my life from the the pit." He experienced his own resurrection. And then his final word is: "Deliverance is from the Lord." Jonah here in these verses has experienced God's presence so powerfully that he feels as if he himself has been resurrected and delivered from the hands of death.

But...even in this light of this experience Jonah did not obey. He was told to walk around the city which took 3 days, but instead he half-heartedly went one day and stopped. When the people repented he becomes grumpy and displeased and stalks off from the city dejected and pouting. God encounters him, he recognized God, but his life did not become one of celebration, but rather one of depression.

I have heard Christians make statements such as what do I have to celebrate in my life? I am sure that you know people who are anything but a reflection of the joy that they profess to have because Christ is their Savior. The resurrection ought to instill within us a no whining allowed attitude that propels us to live as if Christ were present by our side.

Our Scripture in Acts gives us a sermon by Peter which is a good example of what I mean when I say that we need to live our lives in the light of the resurrection of Christ. The setting for the sermon is Pentecost when the disciples are surrounded by people who have just experienced the power of the Holy Spirit. Peter speaks to the crowd which was composed of Jews from all over the land and his point centers to the resurrection of

Christ. He tells them the Jesus you killed was really supposed to die according to God's plan. But another part of this master plan was that God then raised him up: because it was impossible for him to be held in the power of death.

This is where we are today. Are we living a life which reflects the power of Jesus Christ in the resurrection or are we living a life that shows to those around us that we are really living under the power of death? Peter explains what it means not to live under the power of death: It means that when you experience God your heart is glad, your tongue rejoices, your flesh lives in hope even as broken down and corrupted it is. When you turn yourself over to a life of resurrection you know as we mentioned last week that you will never be abandoned in Hades. Through the resurrection you have been made known to the ways of life. With God's presence you will be full of gladness.

Does that accurately describe your state of mind? Is that your approach to life just as Peter described, because he was talking about the church, he was talking about us and if Peter's speech does not describe us then we are still under the power of death. The resurrection of Christ has not had the impact upon us that it should, because when we are forgiven, we are set free. When Christ rose from the grave, he made known to us the ways of life.

Today, allow the Easter message to change your approach to life because it has changed your status before God. No longer are you in sin, but rather you have been freed of that sin. Give thanks to God for that. Live a life of gladness which reflects the joy you have in Jesus. Amen.