

Sermon Text for April 17, 2022 Easter Sunday

By Rev. Robert K. Bronkema

Micah 6:8, Luke 24:1-12 ***“I believe in the resurrection”***

Happy Easter everyone. We are a unique people because we believe in a God who loves us so much that even while we were yet sinners, even while we disobeyed him, he still died for us, he still rose again in the resurrection so that our sins would be forgiven. Our God is not waiting for us to make a mistake so that He can point it out and punish us. If you are here for the first time this Sunday, I need to tell you that you have come to a place that believes with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength that God loves us and rose again from the dead for us, for each one of us individually so that our sins would be forgiven.

In our young adult Sunday School class we are studying other religions and what we have come to realize is that we are the only religion that believes in the resurrection as a means to salvation. We are unique because of our belief in the resurrection which extends not just to Jesus, but to each one of us. Easter is about that ancient call which we took part in earlier, He is Risen, he is risen indeed. Or to translate, Jesus has been resurrected, he is resurrected indeed.

Both of our Scriptures today remind us of what has been told to us from of old. What are the lessons that we were taught. Now whether we remember those lessons or not, that is a whole different story, but we have heard the teachings from of old about the resurrection of Jesus. I'm guessing that no one here is attending an Easter service for the first time in their life. I'm not going to ask, but if you are, don't worry, you'll hear it again for the first time. So we know, we know the Gospel story of the resurrection. When I read it shortly in Luke no one is going to say: Oh, that's what happened, he actually rose from the dead. I don't have to give a spoiler alert to anyone here today, I'm guessing. The purpose of the Luke story is to present Jesus as the victor over death.

Both of these Scriptures tell us that we know what is God has done, we know what God wants, we know what is good, we know what to believe, but it is one thing to say you believe and it is a completely different thing to remember what you believe and why you believe it and what difference it ought to make in your life. What do we mean when we say: I believe in the resurrection? Let's read.

READ

So I want to do a little fun exercise that we do periodically around here. It has probably been about 6 years since we last did this. Okay, if you are able, I want each one of you to stand

up. Now, all of you have attended FPC while I have been pastor here. Now, if you attended FPC while Jack Craft was pastor here, stay standing, everyone else sit down. If Jack Craft was never your pastor, sit down. What about Steve and Jenny Clark? If Steve and Jenny were your pastor stay standing, if not sit down. Okay, what about Rev. Powl, if Rev. Powl was your pastor then stay standing. What about _____.

For centuries now we have been told about the resurrection of Jesus Christ in this church. Some pastor has stood in this place, or maybe 20 feet in front of me and there has been faithful proclamation of the Gospel that has taken place since the 19th century. We have been told, as Micah states, He has told you, O mortal, what is good and what does the Lord require. We have been told. Or as the Apostle Paul states in Romans 1:20b-21 – “So they (or we can say we), so we are without excuse for though we knew about God, we did not honor him as God or give thanks to him.”

In order to know the Lord and to understand what is required of the Lord, one thing that Micah does not state is committees: you must have committees to operate. Another thing Micah doesn't state is programs: you must have church programs in order to survive. Again, we have both committees and programs, but they can't be the end all or the purpose for why we are the church. Micah says simply: you know what the Lord requires – do justice which means treat everyone fairly and the same and if we haven't treated everyone fairly and when you discover that some have been taken advantage of historically, you make it up to them in some way. Do justice. Love kindness – this sounds so simple. Lucy and Charlie Brown and Charlie is the psychologist and he hears Lucy tell him I don't understand it Charlie, I love humanity, it is just people I can't stand. There is no room for meanness if you are a follower of Jesus Christ. If a person is not compassionate, kind, how can they be a follower of Jesus and how can we follow them?

Walk humbly with God, Micah states as the third thing which God requires of us, and we haven't even started talking about the resurrection. How do we walk humbly with God? Well first of all, we have to walk with God, we have to spend time with God, we have to read the Bible and who knows, maybe make our way through it in 9 months or read it on our own schedule. How do we walk humbly with God? Don't consider yourself better than you are or as Paul states in Romans 12:3 “For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly that you ought to think.”

I believe in the resurrection. We know the story as the women made their way to the tomb. Luke tells it in his own unique way. The stone is already rolled away when they get there,

they go in and Jesus is not around and they are confused. And then in that small cramped space you have the three women and then two men in dazzling clothes appear and in most of the other Gospels you have the words spoken to them: Do not fear, they are encouraged and Jesus even appears to them in the other Gospels. But not Luke.

Here we hear the disciples almost chastising the women and asking them why they are looking for the living among the dead. Meaning, why are they looking for Jesus in a cemetery when he is alive. Look at vs.6 where they state: don't you remember how he told you that he had to suffer and then, vs. 7 on the third day rise from the dead? You heard that before, he told you that already right? Don't you remember.

And wouldn't you know, look at vs.8, they remembered. Luke presents to us in these verses the command to believe in the resurrection even before you have seen the risen Christ. He was nowhere to be seen, even Peter makes his way to the tomb and sees nothing and leaves amazed. That is hard to do. When you don't see the tangible signs of something taking place, it is hard to believe it. Just ask Thomas.

I have a resurrection story for you. One of our members, Todd Hambleton was involved in one of the most moving videos I have ever seen in my life. There we were in the middle of the pandemic, I believe it was Easter two years ago or sometime around then, and Todd and all of his friend who live with him in the group home were huddle around the TV worshipping at home and taking communion at home.

This week I saw his parents and the were looking for a children's Bible for him because now that he has cochlear implants he is able to start to learn how to read, and he wanted to read the Bible. So we go him a children's Bible. It is hard sometimes to imagine how much God is able to do in a person's life until we start to see miracle after miracle taking place. Todd is being resurrection almost every day in ways that we never would have imagined.

I believe in the resurrection, that Jesus rose from the dead, but that he also gave us the ability to remember what he taught us which included his teaching that with him all things are possible. Now, an empty tomb does not present a persuasive argument for the resurrection. It simply means that the body is not there. That's what the women faced. Faith does not usually move from promise to fulfillment but from fulfilment to promise. The times will come when the congregation will remember and it will make all the difference. But we cannot remember what one has not heard.

When the women went back they told the disciples, and that was all they could do. They thought they were telling the disciples something new, but instead it was something that Jesus

had already told them and prepared them for. But they were not ready to hear and understand and remember. As a result this new thing was not believable in the present. When you read vs.11 it reminds all of us who celebrate Easter so easily what a burden the resurrection of the dead places on faith. We are kind of left with waiting for confirmation of the resurrection by the appearance of Jesus, which has not happened yet, in person.

And so as a result we forget. Even though we get these glimpses of the resurrection that intersect with our lives with the miracles of being able to read Scripture for the first time. I challenged you last week to bring someone here among us so that they could be exposed to the Gospel message of Jesus Christ who loves us unconditionally. I hope you hear that message today. But our testimony and our witness will not always engender faith. Sometimes we invite and it takes time for people to remember, if they remember at all.

But don't we also forget what the Lord requires? Don't we also forget the power of the resurrection which is for salvation and for a new way of life? We witness in this story how difficult it was for even dedicated followers, those who had walked with Jesus for three years to comprehend his victory over death, and somehow we expect to understand it, we who are 2,000 years removed and have not walked with him in person?

But we are called to believe in the resurrection. That same resurrection that has been told from this pulpit for generations. That same old story that I love to tell and that I have encouraged you to tell and that I hope one day we will remember as resurrection stories intersect with our lives. For you know, that Jesus, as the victor over death, he has already come into his kingdom. A share in it awaits the faithful disciple who recognizes him now as the risen Lord. He is risen, He is risen indeed. Amen.