

First Presbyterian Church- Rouses Point NY

Virtual Worship – April 26, 2020

Greeting

PRAYER OF PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

Loving God, come and speak to our hearts today. May we, like your first disciple find your words burning with hope in our lives. Strengthen us and give us courage for the journey ahead. For we pray in Christ's Name. Amen

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Praise be to you, O God, who has raised us our Savior Jesus Christ. Let us worship the Lord and open our hearts to the Savior's healing love.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION:

We confess we are afraid to take a truthful look at ourselves, yet you see us as we really are. Open our eyes, Lord. Help us repent of the wrong we have said and done, and our failure to speak and act when you give us opportunities to live out the love we say we have for you. Forgive us, we pray, open our hearts, to you once more, and renew us the love of Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Readings and Proclaiming God's Word

Old Testament: Psalm 116:5-14

New Testament: John 21:1-17

Children's Sermon

Sermon "Do You Love Me?"

*Affirmation of faith: Apostle's Creed

Prayers of the People

Lord's Prayer

*Benediction

REFORMER, MARTIN LUTHER ONCE HAD A DREAM ABOUT SIN. HE DREAMT THE DEVIL STOOD AT THE FOOT OF HIS BED HOLDING A SCROLL.

AS HE UNROLLED THE SCROLL HE READ LUTHER'S SINS AND THEN ASKED HIM: "WHAT HOPE OF HEAVEN DO YOU HAVE?"

LUTHER THEN HEARD JESUS SAY TO HIM: "TELL THE DEVIL TO UNROLL THE REST OF THE SCROLL."

IN THE DREAM, THE DEVIL RESISTED AT FIRST, BUT THEN LUTHER COMMANDED HIM TO DO SO IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

WHEN HE HAD DONE SO, LUTHER SAW THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION ABOUT THE HOPE HE HAD.

THE WORDS AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SCROLL WERE: "THIS ENTIRE ACCOUNT OF MARTIN LUTHER PAID IN FULL BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST."

THIS IS INDEED THE HOPE OF EVERYONE, WHO BY FAITH PUTS THEIR TRUST IN JESUS, SEEKING FORGIVENESS THROUGH HIM.

THE DECLARATION OF THE PSALMIST: "YOU HAVE DELIVERED MY SOUL FROM DEATH" TAKES ON NEW MEANING SINCE JESUS DIED FOR OUR SINS AND WAS RAISED TO LIFE AGAIN.

PSALM 116 IS A BEAUTIFUL PSALM, WHICH OPENS WITH A DECLARATION OF LOVE FOR THE LORD.

IT REMEMBERS WITH GRATITUDE THE SAVING ACTIONS OF GOD. THE PSALMIST IS MOVED TO RESPOND IN PRAYER, WORSHIP, AND WITH A PROMISE TO SERVE THE LORD.

BUT THERE IS A VERSE OFTEN OVERLOOKED THAT ALSO HAS AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE.

VERSE SEVEN SAYS: "RETURN, O MY SOUL TO YOUR REST, FOR THE LORD HAS DEALT BOUNTIFULLY WITH YOU."

ONE INTERPRETATION OF THIS FOR CHRISTIANS IS- THAT IT REFERS TO THE GIFT OF SALVATION. SO TO REST IN CHRIST IS TO RECEIVE BY FAITH THE SALVATION HE OFFERS.

WE REST IN THE SENSE WE DO NOT NEED TO TRY TO EARN SALVATION, WE DO NOT NEED TO SHOW GOD WE ARE GOOD ENOUGH, OR LOYAL ENOUGH.

THIS DRAWS OUR ATTENTION TO THE MEANING OF EASTER. IT IS OF VITAL IMPORTANCE FOR US, BECAUSE ITS IMPACT IS STILL BEING FELT IN THE WORLD.

NOT BY EVERYONE, UNFORTUNATELY. BUT THE FACT JESUS DIED FOR OUR SINS AND WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD HAS TRANSFORMING POWER THAT IS ON GOING.

THUS EASTER IS NOT A PAST EVENT, IT IS A PRESENT REALITY FOR THOSE WHO LOVE JESUS AS LORD AND SAVIOR.

LOVE IS A KEY COMPONENT OF THE REALITY OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

JESUS WAS BORN, LIVED, WILLINGLY DIED, AND ROSE FROM THE DEAD BECAUSE- GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD.

IT SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISING THEREFORE THAT THE QUESTION JESUS ASKS OF THOSE WHO CLAIM THE TITLE "CHRISTIAN", OR WISH TO IS: "DO YOU LOVE ME?"

IT IS BOTH A SIMPLE, AND AT THE SAME TIME, A PROFOUND QUESTION.

FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST, AS WELL AS THE THINGS WE DO FOR GOD IN THE CHURCH AND IN THE WORLD, ARE ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN OUR LOVE FOR THE LORD. AND IF THEY ARE NOT, THEY SHOULD BE.

THIS LOVE IS MORE THAN A FEELING, IT INCLUDES A DESIRE TO KNOW CHRIST BETTER, TO BUILD ON OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM, AND TO FOLLOW HIM IN WORD AND DEED.

REALLY SERVING CHRIST, HOWEVER, IT NOT ACTUALLY ABOUT DOING MANY THINGS. BUSYNESS IS NOT NECESSARILY FAITHFULNESS.

SERVICE OR ACTIVITIES THAT EITHER PRIVATELY ARE MEANT TO SHOW GOD OUR DEVOTION; OR PUBLICALLY DISPLAY IT TO OTHER PEOPLE- IS LESS ABOUT LOVING JESUS AND MORE ABOUT OURSELVES.

WE DO NOT NEED TO PROVE TO ANYONE, AND ESPECIALLY NOT TO GOD THAT WE LOVE HIM, GOD ALREADY KNOWS WHETHER OR NOT WE DO.

THIS BRINGS US TO THE GOSPEL STORY, WHICH IS NOT ABOUT JESUS WANTING PETER TO PROVE HIS LOVE.

INSTEAD THE STORY IS ABOUT HOW JESUS RETURNS PETER (WHO OFTEN IN THE GOSPELS REPRESENTS ALL DISCIPLES), AS A FRIEND AND FOLLOWER, IN A BEAUTIFUL WAY.

THE LORD WAS DOING FOR SIMON PETER WHAT HE KNEW THE DISCIPLE NEEDED IN ORDER TO BE HEALED OF THE GUILT PETER FELT BECAUSE OF HIS SIN.

YES, JESUS WAS RISEN AND THAT WAS WONDERFUL, JOYOUS, AND POWERFUL NEWS.

WE MIGHT EXPECT, HOWEVER, THAT ONCE THE INITIAL JOY AND EXCITEMENT FADED EVEN A LITTLE, REMEMBRANCE OF THE DISCIPLES' ACTIONS, AND THE GUILT THEY MUST HAVE FELT, RESURFACED.

AND PETER HAD PERHAPS A GREATER BURDEN ON HIS HEART AND IN HIS MIND THAN THE OTHER TEN.

AFTER ALL, IT WAS HE WHO AFTER MAKING AN OATH HE WOULD DIE WITH JESUS, DENIED EVEN KNOWING HIM.

PETER'S WORDS REVEALED HE LOVED HIS OWN LIFE MORE THAN HE LOVED JESUS, AND SO THE SAVIOR DIED BETWEEN TWO STRANGERS.

BUT THEN JESUS WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD, AND EVERYTHING WAS ALL RIGHT AGAIN.

EXCEPT-FOR LINGERING GUILT, WHICH IF IT HAD BEEN ALLOWED TO FESTER, WOULD HAVE INHIBITED PETER AND OTHERS, FROM MOVING FORWARD WITH JESUS.

IMAGINE HOW THE DISCIPLE MUST HAVE FELT. PETER-THE ROCK, HAD CRUMBLLED UNDER PRESSURE.

IT IS VERY LIKELY THAT PETER WAS WAITING FOR JESUS TO SAY SOMETHING ABOUT HIS FAILURE.

SURELY THE SAVIOR WOULD NOT LET IT PASS AS IF IT DID NOT EVEN HAPPEN, AND YET JESUS REMAINED SILENT.

HE DID NOT, AS FAR AS THE GOSPELS INDICATE, SAY ANYTHING TO THE ELEVEN ABOUT THEIR FAITHLESSNESS.

WE MIGHT IMAGINE PETER WANTED AND NEEDED TO CLEAR THE AIR ABOUT THE PAST, YET WAS AFRAID TO BRING IT UP.

I EXPECT, THERE HAVE BEEN TIMES WHEN WE ALL HAVE FELT GUILT OVER WORDS, ACTIONS, OR LACK THEREOF; AND HAVE WANTED TO APOLOGIZE BUT WERE NOT SURE HOW.

OR PERHAPS WE WERE AFRAID OF REJECTION IF WE ASKED FOR FORGIVENESS, AND SO HESITATED TO APOLOGIZE.

UNDOUBTEDLY, JESUS KNEW PETER AND THE OTHERS WERE AT LEAST PARTIALLY TRAPPED BY HOW THEY HAD FAILED JESUS.

THE SAVIOR HOWEVER WAS LOOKING FORWARD, AND HE WANTED HIS DISCIPLES TO DO THE SAME.

THIS MEANT, PETER, IN PARTICULAR NEEDED TO HAVE HIS GUILT DEALT WITH.

BUT INSTEAD OF SAYING SOMETHING LIKE: "WELL PETER IT IS TIME TO TALK ABOUT YOUR DENIAL OF ME", JESUS DREW EVERYONE'S ATTENTION AWAY FROM THE PAST TO THE PRESENT AND FUTURE.

HE DID SO BY ASKING PETER, TO RENEW HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM, THROUGH THE QUESTION: "DO YOU LOVE ME?"

THE SCENE MUST HAVE BEEN HAUNTINGLY FAMILIAR-PEOPLE GATHERED ROUND A CHARCOAL FIRE, MUCH LIKE THE NIGHT JESUS WAS ARRESTED.

PETER CHALLENGED TO RESPOND TO QUESTIONS ABOUT HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS. THREE TIMES ON THAT NIGHT THE DISCIPLE'S WORDS DEMONSTRATED LITTLE IF ANY REAL LOVE.

NOW, AFTER THE RESURRECTION, BESIDE ANOTHER CHARCOAL FIRE, WITH OTHERS PRESENT AS WITNESSES, PETER IS ASKED THREE TIMES IF HE LOVES JESUS.

PART OF THE LYRICS OF A SONG BY BRENDEN GRAHAM TOUCHES UPON WHAT HAPPENED BETWEEN JESUS AND PETER THAT DAY.

"WHEN I AM DOWN, AND OH MY SOUL SO WEARY, WHEN TROUBLES COME, AND MY HEART BURDENED BE, THEN I AM STILL WAITING IN THE SILENCE. UNTIL YOU COME AN SIT AWHILE WITH ME.

YOU RAISE ME UP, SO I CAN STAND ON MOUNTAINS, YOU RAISE ME UP, TO WALK ON STORMY SEAS. I AM STRONG WHEN I AM ON YOUR SHOULDERS. YOU RAISE ME UP TO MORE THAN I CAN BE."

JESUS HEALED AND RESTORED PETER BY ASKING HIM TO PROCLAIM HIS LOVE FOR HIM, THREE TIMES.

IT WAS BY REPEATING HIS QUESTION TO PETER THREE TIMES, JESUS GAVE HIM THE CHANCE TO CONFESS LOVE ONCE FOR EACH TIME HE HAD DENIED JESUS.

AND, EACH TIME PETER RESPONDED "YOU KNOW THAT I LOVE YOU", JESUS CALLED HIM TO SERVICE.

SO WHY DID THE SAVIOR ASK PETER TO RESPOND WITH ACTIONS TO FOLLOW HIS CONFESSION OF LOVE?

PETER RIGHTLY STATED ABOUT JESUS- "LORD YOU KNOW EVERYTHING, YOU KNOW THAT I LOVE YOU."

THIS MEANS THE REASON WAS NOT BECAUSE JESUS DOUBTED PETER'S LOVE, OR WANTED THE APOSTLE TO PROVE HIS LOVE TO HIM.

INSTEAD IT WAS BECAUSE PETER NEEDED TO BE ABLE TO SHOW HIMSELF HE LOVED THE LORD; WHICH IS WHY JESUS GAVE HIM DIRECTION.

THROUGH THE QUESTIONS, ANSWERS, AND COMMISSIONING, PETER'S BROKEN RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS WAS RESTORED IN A WAY THE DISCIPLE, HIMSELF, COULD EXPERIENCE AND BELIEVE.

HERE, WE ARE REMINDED THAT OUR FAILURE, EVEN FAILURE TO LOVE JESUS AND SERVE HIM OUT OF LOVE, IS NOT THE FINAL WORD FOR OUR LIVES.

JESUS SHOWS US, THROUGH WHAT HE DID FOR PETER, HIS DESIRE FOR EACH ONE OF US TO BE RESTORED WHEN WE REPENT OF OUR SIN.

THE BIBLE AFFIRMS THE TRUTH TIME AND TIME AGAIN THAT THE LOVE OF THE RISEN CHRIST, AND THE GRACE HE PROVIDES TO SINNERS- IS MORE POWERFUL THAN OUR SIN.

THEREFORE WE CAN BE ASSURED THAT LIKE HE DID WITH PETER. JESUS WILL RAISE US UP AND GIVE US THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS OUR LOVE FOR HIM ONCE MORE.

AND AFTER WE DO SO THE SAVIOR INVITES US TO CONTINUE ON WITH THE WORK TO WHICH WE HAVE BEEN CALLED.

THE IMPORTANT THING TO REMEMBER IS THAT WHILE WE OFTEN HAVE A GENERAL IDEA OF WHAT WE ARE SUPPOSED TO DO, SOMETIMES WE NEED TO WAIT UNTIL GOD MAKES THE DETAILS CLEARER.

THUS, PETER AND THE OTHERS ENTERED A DIFFERENT TIME OF WAITING AFTER THE RESURRECTION AND BEFORE PENTECOST.

THEY KNEW FROM JESUS HE HAD PLANS FOR THEM TO SPREAD THE GOSPEL AND TAKE CARE OF PEOPLE.

BUT THEY DID NOT EVEN BEGIN TO LEARN EXACTLY WHAT THOSE PLANS WERE UNTIL THE SPIRIT CAME ON PENTECOST.

THIS REMINDS US THAT THERE IS VALUE IN WAITING AND PRAYING AND LISTENING, WHEN WE DO NOT HAVE A CLEAR DIRECTION.

WAITING, OF COURSE CAN BE HARD, ESPECIALLY WHEN WE WANT TO BE OUT AND ABOUT AND DOING.

PERHAPS AT NO TIME IN THE LIVES OF MANY OF US HAS THIS BEEN MADE CLEARER THAN NOW, WHEN MUCH OF NORMAL LIFE IS SHUT DOWN.

YES, THERE ARE STILL WAYS WE CAN LIVE OUT OUR LOVE FOR JESUS, WITHIN THESE LIMITATIONS.

HOWEVER, FOR THOSE NOT IN THE MEDICAL AND FIRST RESPONDER JOBS, OR OTHER ESSENTIAL POSITIONS, THE SHUT DOWN HAS CHANGED HOW WE DO THINGS.

WE ARE MOSTLY CONFINED AT HOME, AND PHYSICALLY SEPARATED FROM FRIENDS, NEIGHBORS, SOME FAMILY MEMBERS,, CO-WORKERS, AND THE CHURCH BUILDING.

MANY OF US HAVE MORE TIME TO THINK, AND TO REEVALUATE OUR CONNECTION WITH FAMILY AND OTHER PEOPLE, AND ALSO WITH GOD.

AND-TEACHERS, PATENTS, AND STUDENTS, AS WELL AS COUCHES AND ATHLETES, AND ESPECIALLY THOSE SOON TO GRADUATE- HAVE HAD IMPORTANT PLANS CHANGED.

THERE ARE ALSO TOO MANY PEOPLE WHO HAVE LOST LOVED ONE TO THIS VIRUS.

SO LET'S LISTEN TO A COMMENT ON CHANGE WRITTEN YEARS AGO, IT SAID:

“AT SOMETIME OR ANOTHER MOST OF US HAVE BEEN IN A SITUATION WHERE WE HAVE SAFELY SET A COURSE OF OUR LIVES.

BUT SOMETHING UNEXPECTED HAS HAPPENED TO CUT RIGHT ACROSS OUR PLANS. WE HAVE BEEN FORCED TO RETHINK OUR LIFE AND WHERE WE ARE GOING.”

IT MAY BE HELPFUL TO REMEMBER THAT INTERRUPTING OUR LIVES CAN HAPPEN ANY TIME, NOT JUST DURING A WORLD CRISIS.

WHENEVER THIS HAPPENS, IT IS IMPORTANT TO LOOK TO GOD, TO KEEP OUR EYES ON JESUS, REAFFIRM OUR LOVE FOR HIM, AND SEEK THE HOLY SPIRIT'S DIRECTION.

SOMETIMES THAT DIRECTION WILL BE TO REST BECAUSE THAT IS WHAT GOD NEEDS US TO DO, SO WE CAN BE READY FOR WHAT IS TO COME.

OTHER TIMES WE NEED TO STEP OUT IN FAITH, EVEN WHEN THE ROAD IS NOT AS CLEAR AS WE WANT IT TO BE.

EITHER WAY, WHETHER WORKING FOR, OR RESTING IN, THE LORD, LOVE IS WHAT BINDS US TO GOD AND OTHERS.

THIS IS THE GOOD NEWS FOR ALL WHO KNOW AND LOVE CHRIST OUR SAVIOR.

AND THERE IS GOOD NEWS FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NOT YET COME TO FAITH IN HIM AND DO NOT YET LOVE HIM .THE GOOD NEWS IS JESUS LOVES YOU AND DIED FOR YOUR SINS ALSO.

THERE IS NOTHING YOU OR ANY OF US HAVE DONE OR HAVE FAILED TO DO THAT IS NOT COVERED BY THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST OR REDEEMED BY HIS RESURRECTION.

AND SO TO ALL OF YOU THE SAVIOR LOVES YOU, AND JESUS INVITES ALL OF US TO CONFESS OR REAFFIRM OUR LOVE FOR HIM.

IN THIS WE CAN REJOICE – GOD IS GRACIOUS, RIGHTEOUS AND MERCIFUL. THEREFORE, LET US CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD, WHO LOVES US AND HEARS OUR VOICES. AMEN

SERMON SUMMARY- JOHN 21:1-17

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