

THE SECOND VERSE OF CHARLES WESLEY'S HYMN-"CHRIST THE LORD IS RISEN TODAY", VOICES THIS TRUTH:

"LOVE'S REDEEMING WORK IS DONE. FOUGHT THE FIGHT THE BATTLE WON. DEATH IN VAIN FORBID HIM RISE; CHRIST HAS OPENED PARADISE. ALLELUIA."

IT IS THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE SON OF GOD, THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING.

IT IS THE RESURRECTION THAT ENABLED PAUL TO WRITE TO THE CHRISTIANS OF ROME:

"WE KNOW THAT ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD FOR THOSE WHO LOVE GOD, WHO ARE CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE."

AND ALSO PROCLAIM IN HIS LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS: "REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS, AGAIN I SAY REJOICE."

YES, THE RISEN CHRIST GOES BEFORE US OUT INTO THE WORLD AND ALSO ACROSS THE FINISH LINE TO OPEN THE WAY TO PARADISE. ALLELUIA!

BUT NOT EVERYONE IS FILLED WITH PRAISE WHEN IT COMES TO GOD'S REVELATION ABOUT JESUS AND HOW HE LIVED AND DIED AND ROSE TO PROCLAIM THE TRUTH OF GOD'S LOVE FOR THE WORLD.

FOR EXAMPLE-IT IS RECORDED IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN THAT ON GOOD FRIDAY JESUS TOLD PILATE HE CAME TO TESTIFY TO THE TRUTH.

JOHN 19:38 RECORDS THE ROMAN GOVERNOR'S RESPONSE WAS TO ASK JESUS- "WHAT IS TRUTH?"

LATER WHEN PILATE FELT FORCED TO CONDEMN JESUS TO DEATH HE ATTEMPTED TO CHANGE THE TRUTH OF HIS OWN GUILT FOR GIVING THE ORDER, BY WASHING HIS HANDS IN PUBLIC.

DOING SO DEMONSTRATES THE WAY SOME LEADERS ANSWER THAT QUESTION CONCERNING WHAT TRUTH IS.

FOR THEM THE TRUTH IS WHATEVER YOU CAN CONVINCING THE PUBLIC IS THE TRUTH.

OF COURSE, HISTORY SHOWS THAT THIS DID NOT WORK OUT SO WELL FOR PILATE, HE WAS LATER BLAMED BY THE EMPEROR FOR NOT HANDLING THINGS IN WELL.

AND IT IS PERPETUALLY CLAIMED BY THE CHURCH, IN THE APOSTLE'S CREED, THAT JESUS SUFFERED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE.

CONCERNING THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS AND THE TRUTH ABOUT IT, A CLEVER CARTOONIST NAMED JOE MCKEEN DREW A PICTURE OF THE EMPTY TOMB.

ACTUALLY IT SHOWED A GROUP OF TOURISTS OUTSIDE WHAT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE THE TOMB WHICH ONCE HELD JESUS'S BODY.

THE CAPTION UNDERNEATH SHOWS THE WORDS OF THE TOUR GUIDE TO THE GROUP:

"THE ANGEL MOVED THE STONE TO REVEAL AN EMPTY TOMB, AND THE RISEN CHRIST; AND, EVER SINCE, HUMAN BEINGS HAVE BEEN TRYING TO ROLL THE STONE BACK."

THEOLOGICALLY, IT WOULD BE MORE ACCURATE TO SAY THAT THE ANGEL REVEALED THE EMPTY TOMB AND THE FACT JESUS WAS NOT THERE, BECAUSE HE HAD BEEN RAISED.

AFTER ALL, WHILE THE GOSPELS MAY DIFFER CONCERNING THE VARIOUS FACTS ABOUT THE RESURRECTION, LIKE HOW MANY WOMEN AND ANGELS WERE PRESENT;

THEY ALL AGREE JESUS WAS NOT INSIDE THE TOMB WHEN THE STONE WAS ROLLED AWAY.

BUT THE HEART OF THE MESSAGE FOUND IN THE CARTOON IS WHAT WE NEED TO PAY ATTENTION TO TODAY.

MCKEEN'S WORK REMINDS US THAT MANY PEOPLE DO NOT LIKE GOD'S TRUTH THAT AFTER JESUS DIED FOR THE SIN OF THE WORLD, HE WAS RAISED TO LIFE AGAIN.

CONSIDER THE REACTION OF THE AUTHORITIES WHEN THE SOLDIERS REPORTED WHAT HAPPENED THAT MORNING.

THEY TESTIFIED TO WHAT THEY WITNESSED, WHICH WAS AN EARTHQUAKE, AND THE APPEARANCE OF AN ANGEL.

THE ANGEL ROLLED THE STONE AWAY FROM THE ENTRANCE TO THE TOMB TO REVEAL JESUS WAS NOT INSIDE.

THEN THE ANGEL SPOKE TO THE WOMEN, TELLING THEM THE REASON JESUS WAS NOT THERE WAS BECAUSE HE HAS BEEN RAISED FROM THE DEAD, AND HAS GONE BACK OUT INTO THE WORLD.

THAT, MY FRIENDS WAS NOT THE TRUTH THOSE WHO HAD JESUS CRUCIFIED WANTED TO HEAR OR PROMOTE, SO THEY TWISTED THE FACTS AROUND TO PRESENT A TRUTH MORE TO THEIR LIKING.

THE NEW TRUTH AGREED JESUS WAS NOT IN THE TOMB-BUT EXPLAINED IT WAS BECAUSE HIS BODY WAS STOLEN.

THIS TRUTH WAS MUCH MORE PALATABLE TO THEM, TO ROME, AND TO MANY OTHER PEOPLE THROUGH THE AGES.

OF COURSE THEY WERE NO MORE SUCCESSFUL IN THEIR ATTEMPTS TO REWRITE THE TRUTH OF JESUS' RESURRECTION THAN PILATE WAS, WHEN HE WASHED HIS HANDS AFTER CONDEMNING JESUS TO DEATH.

BUT THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS WERE NOT THE ONLY ONES IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE RESURRECTION THAT ATTEMPTED TO OFFER AN ALTERNATIVE TRUTH.

REMEMBER WHAT THE APOSTLE PAUL WROTE TO THE CHURCH IN CORINTH, IN RESPONSE TO SOME WHO HAD TOLD THE CORINTHIANS THAT THE BODILY RESURRECTION OF JESUS DIDN'T REALLY HAPPEN.

HE PROCLAIMED TO THEM IN 1 CORINTHIANS 15: "IF THERE IS NO RESURRECTION, THEN CHRIST HAS NOT BEEN RAISED.

AND IF CHRIST HAS NOT BEEN RAISED, THEN OUR PROCLAMATION HAS BEEN IN VAIN AND YOUR FAITH IS FUTILE...AND YOU ARE STILL IN YOUR SINS."

TODAY IS EASTER SUNDAY, THE DAY WE SET ASIDE TO HIGHLIGHT EVEN MORE THAN USUALLY THE TRUTH OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST IS THE PLACE OUR FAITH STORY REALLY BEGINS.

APART FROM GOD'S TRUTH ABOUT THE RESURRECTION OF HIS SON, THE GOSPEL STORIES ARE NOTHING MORE THAN TALES ABOUT YET ANOTHER PROPHET SENT FROM GOD.

TRULY, OUR FAITH DOES NOT BEGIN WITH CHRIST'S BIRTH, BAPTISM, TEACHINGS, MIRACLES, OR EVEN WITH HIS DEATH-BUT ONLY WITH HIS BODILY RESURRECTION.

EVEN THE CHOICE OF THE MAJORITY OF CHRISTIANS TO CELEBRATE THE SABBATH ON SUNDAY INSTEAD OF SATURDAY, SPEAKS TO THE BELIEF JESUS WHO DIED WAS RAISED BY GOD TO LIFE AGAIN.

THUS EASTER, OR RESURRECTION SUNDAY, AS SOME CHRISTIANS PREFER TO CALL IT IS NOT REALLY A SINGLE DAY ON THE CALENDAR.

THE DAY OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION IS AN ONGOING EVENT, THE NEW REALITY IN WHICH THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN HIM LIVE.

THIS TRUTH IS HELPFUL TO REMEMBER ESPECIALLY WHEN A PARTICULAR EASTER SUNDAY OCCURS IN DIFFICULT OR TRAGIC TIME IN OUR LIVES.

BUT EVEN WHEN IT DOES, THE FACT OF THE RESURRECTION IS WHAT GIVES US HOPE. WITH THIS IN MIND LET US LOOK A MOMENT AT PSALM 118.

IT IS ONE OF THE PASSAGES CHRISTIANS FIND IN THE OLD TESTAMENT THAT WE THINK TESTIFIES TO THE TRUTH ABOUT JESUS.

INDEED, WITHIN THE ORIGINAL MESSAGE OF THE PSALM IS THE HIDDEN TRUTH ABOUT JESUS AND HIS RESURRECTION BEING PART OF GOD'S PLAN.

THE PSALM PRAISES GOD FOR SECURING SALVATION, AND SPEAKS ABOUT THE REJECTED STONE BECOMING THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE.

THIS IS THE DAY THE LORD HAS MADE, LET US REJOICE AND BE GLAD IN IT.

YES INDEED, ON THAT FIRST EASTER MORNING, GOD NOT ONLY BROUGHT JESUS BACK TO LIFE, BUT VINDICATED HIM AND ALL HE SAID AND DID BEFORE HIS DEATH.

JESUS, WAS ONCE HUMILIATED, AND ALTHOUGH INNOCENT WAS CRUCIFIED BETWEEN TWO GUILTY MEN, AND A FEW DAYS LATER WAS BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE AGAIN.

HIS HEAD, ONCE CROWNED WITH THORNS, NOW IS CROWNED WITH GLORY.

HIS HANDS, WHICH WERE NAILED TO THE CROSS, REACHED OUT TO GREET HIS FOLLOWERS, HIS VOICE SILENCED BY DEATH SPOKE WORDS OF PEACE AND HOPE, FIRST TO THE WOMEN AND THEN TO HIS DISCIPLES.

MATTHEW DESCRIBES HOW THE ANGEL OF THE LORD APPEARED LIKE LIGHTENING, IN THE MIDST OF AN EARTHQUAKE.

HIS WORDS SEEK TO CONVEY CREATION ITSELF SHIFTED WHEN GOD'S TRUTH ABOUT JESUS WAS REVEALED.

THE DAY CHRIST WAS RAISED IS A GLORIOUS DAY THAT ACTUALLY MAKES ALL DAYS GRACE FILLED FOR THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN HIM.

HIS RESURRECTION REVEALS THE MEANING OF HIS MORTAL LIFE AND THE PURPOSE OF HIS DEATH, WHICH WAS BECAUSE:

“GOD SO LOVE THE WORLD HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON THAT WHOSOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT PERISH BUT WILL HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.”

“LOVE'S REDEEMING WORK IS DONE. FOUGHT THE FIGHT THE BATTLE WON. DEATH IN VAIN FORBID HIM RISE; CHRIST HAS OPENED PARADISE. ALLELUIA.”

A MINISTER AND AUTHOR WHO LIVED IN THE EARLY PART OF THE 17TH CENTURY, NAMED MATTHEW HENRY, EXPLAINED HIS UNDERSTANDING OF JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION.

HE WROTE:” ON THE SIXTH DAY HE FINISHED HIS WORK BY DYING ON THE CROSS. ON THE SEVENTH DAY HE RESTED. AND ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE NEW WEEK HE BEGAN A NEW WORK.”

THIS NEW WORK IS OF COURSE THE NEW CREATION MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

GENESIS ONE RECORDS THAT ON THE FIRST DAY OF CREATION, GOD BROUGHT FORTH LIGHT, WITH THE COMMAND, “LET THERE BE LIGHT.”

SIMILARLY GOD BROUGHT FORTH THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD, HIS SON, WHEN GOD COMMANDED JESUS TO RISE TO LIFE AGAIN, NEVER TO BE EXTINGUISHED.

THIS DOES NOT MEAN PEOPLE HAVEN'T TRIED TO PUT OUT THE LIGHT OF CHRIST, JUST LIKE SOME TRY TO ROLL THE STONE BACK BY DENYING THE BODILY RESURRECTION.

HOWEVER THE TRUTH IS SUCH THINGS ARE BEYOND THE POWER OF ANYTHING OR ANYONE TO DO.

LIKE THE APOSTLE PAUL WROTE IN ROMANS 8: “FOR I AM CONVINCED THAT NEITHER DEATH, NOR LIFE, NOR ANGELS, NOR RULERS, NOR THINGS PRESENT, NOR THINGS TO COME, NOR HEIGHT, NOR DEPTH, NOR ANYTHING ELSE IN ALL CREATION WILL BE ABLE TO SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS, OUR LORD.”

THIS IS THE HOPE OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION, THE MEANING OF OUR CELEBRATION OF EASTER AND THUS OF OUR SALVATION THROUGH CHRIST.

THE FAMOUS BRITISH PRIME MINISTER, WINSTON CHURCHILL, OFFERED HIS OWN UNIQUE WITNESS TO THE TRUTH ABOUT CHRIST'S RESURRECTION AND OUR ETERNAL LIFE.

HE DID SO THROUGH THE ARRANGEMENT HE MADE FOR HIS OWN FUNERAL.

THE ANGLICAN FUNERAL SERVICE WAS HELD AT ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL IN LONDON, WHICH CONTAINED A HUGE DOME, WITH A BALCONY ENCIRCLING THE FLOOR BELOW.

AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE SERVICE, CHURCHILL INSTRUCTED A BUGLER TO PLAY "TAPS", THE FAMILIAR SONG OFTEN BY THE MILITARY, AT THE CONCLUSION OF EACH DAY.

BUT THEN, AFTER A BRIEF PAUSE, THERE WAS AN UNEXPECTED CLIMAX TO THE FUNERAL SERVICE-WHEN A SECOND BUGLER PLAYED THE MILITARY WAKE UP CALL, WHICH IS "REVEILLE.

THUS CHURCHILL TESTIFIED TO HIS FAITH THAT WHILE ON EARTH HIS DAY WAS DONE, HE HAD ALREADY AWOKEN TO A NEW AND ENDLESS DAY IN HIS HEAVENLY HOME.

AND SO LET US ALSO BELIEVE THAT BECAUSE CHRIST HAS BEEN RAISED, NOTHING CAN SEPARATE US FROM GOD'S LOVE.

AND SO, AT THE END OF OUR OWN LIFE'S STORY, AND AT THE END OF HUMAN HISTORY, THE LAST TUNE PLAYED WILL NOT BE ABOUT AN ENDING, BUT A NEW BEGINNING.

"CHRIST THE LORD IS RISEN TODAY- ALLELUIA...LOVE'S REDEEMING WORK IS DONE. FOUGHT THE FIGHT THE BATTLE WON. DEATH IN VAIN FORBID HIM RISE; CHRIST HAS OPENED PARADISE-ALLELUIA!"

THIS IS THE DAY THE LORD HAS MADE. LET US REJOICE AND BE GLAD IN IT. ALLELUIA, AMEN.

First Presbyterian Church Rouses Point- Virtual Worship

April 12, 2020 - Easter Sunday

Music-"Christ the Lord is Risen Today"

Greeting: The Lord is Risen, He is Risen indeed. Greetings in the name our the Risen Lord. Welcome to the Virtual Easter Worship of Rouses Point Presby. Church.

PRAYER OF PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

Living God, rejoicing in this day of resurrection, we celebrate the strength of your love—a love that triumphs even over death As we exult in the miracle of your incarnate love, we thank you for the opportunity to encounter the Risen Christ, especially as we worship this day. Amen

CALL TO WORSHIP : Christ is risen! Rejoice in this day of salvation. God's steadfast love endures forever. Alleluia!

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Holy God, on this Easter morning we remember and rejoice in our crucified and risen Savior. We respond to the wonder of your love through repentance. We confess that we have sinned against you. Forgive us when we go through our daily routine, forgetting to look for the Risen One. Forgive us for neglecting to follow your commandments, and for those sins we are not even aware of. Open our eyes and our hearts, O God to the full awareness of your presence with us, in each and every moment of our lives. In Christ's name we pray. Amen **ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

Readings and Proclaiming God's Word

Old Testament: Psalm 118:19-24

New Testament: Matthew 28:1-15

Sermon "Resurrection Truth"

Affirmation of faith: Apostle's Creed

Prayers of the People and Lord's Prayer

Invitation to Table-Great Prayer of Thanksgiving-Communion

*Benediction

EASTER SERMON SUMMARY: MATTHEW 28:1-15

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PARADISE-ALLELUIA!" AMEN