



FAITH AFTER RESURRECTION

Scripture: Psalm 4 and Luke 24:36-48

What do you think of the description that we are Resurrection people, living and witnessing as a resurrection church?

In Luke's reading we hear about another episode of the Risen Christ appearing to His disciples. Jesus appeared to them and said. "Peace be with you."

They thought they were seeing a ghost and were shaking in their sandals. But He reassured them, "Don't be upset and don't let all these doubting questions take over. Look at my hands, look at my feet – it is really me. Touch me. Take my hand. Look me over from head to toe.

A ghost doesn't have muscle and bone like this. And so He showed them His hands and feet. Jesus was still Jesus. He even asked for something to eat and they gave him leftover fish which He ate.

Ghosts don't eat. Jesus was really Jesus. New, fresh and alive. It was Him. Resurrected. Still Him, but different. The old has gone, the new has come. Christ is Risen.

Have you ever tried to tell a non-Christian about the resurrection. It's not easy because it is the most unbelievable event. Often people begin to roll their eyes – resurrection? Resurrection from the dead? You poor Christians, do you still believe these stories.

Aren't you living in the 21st century? How could you still take seriously these fairy tales? Come on – grow up!

Many non-Christians perceive Christianity as basically a set of principles teaching how to be a good, moral person, but unfortunately, it contains those ancient myths about the resurrection and the miracles.

These people are partly right – the Bible reveals God’s wisdom, His design for our lives and when people try to live according to these guidelines – they flourish. That is living guided by the Creator’s wisdom.

They say you only have to follow God’s guidelines and commandments but not become a Christian. They think it is all about principles and laws.

But this is not what Christianity is about. The very essence of Christianity, the very heart of Christianity is the message of Jesus’ resurrection.

We are resurrection people – people of the risen Lord. Take it away and we are left with a set of nice principles which we can only partly follow, because we all sin.

So what is resurrection? It is not resuscitation – we read that Jesus was killed on a cross under Pontius Pilate. This did actually happen in history. There were witnesses. He was thoroughly dead and buried in a new tomb. He descended to the dark place of the dead: the Lord of Life takes on the Lord of Death and is victorious. The Gospel is preached to those in hell. Jesus has destroyed death and its dominion. And miracles of all miracles Jesus rose from the dead.

Now you may think that this idea of the resurrection of Jesus is somehow the end of the story. Maybe because it comes at the end of the gospels. But it is just the beginning – this is something new which has reshaped our world forever.

We may understand resurrection as Jesus having secured somewhere else for us to go when we die – heaven. But we read in Revelation of a new heaven and a new earth. The same

ones but better. Enhanced, renewed, restored and resurrected. When Jesus rose His body was not like that of Lazarus who Jesus called from the grave. Jesus was able to appear and disappear – His body was immortal.

This is the kind of body we will be given at the resurrection of the dead, as told in:

1 Corinthians 15:42-44 “In the same way with the resurrection of the dead. Our earthly bodies are planted in the ground when we die but they will be raised in glory to live forever with Christ. Our bodies are buried in brokenness – but they will be raised in glory.

They are buried in weakness - but they will be raised in strength.

They are buried as natural human bodies – but they will be raised as Spiritual bodies.

For just as there are natural bodies there are also spiritual bodies.”

I want to encourage you to consider resurrection is now, not when we reach the pearly gates. It has already begun – here and now. Christ is risen.

In all the messiness of life, we can see glimpses of glory. In pain we can find hope. In desolation we can find consolation because He is risen – He is alive.

I looked at our emerging garden in the back yard during the week and I remembered that creation began in a garden with beauty and order – fellowship between God and humans. But we know what happened when sin drew a wedge in between.

The tomb where Jesus was buried was a new tomb – in a garden.

To me this is loaded with meaning – recreation – resurrection – began in a garden.

Resurrection is now, despite the darkness and cruelty in today's world, where evil seems to be particularly rampant. Despite the lack of vision of many of our leaders and corporate greed and the poverty and pain around us.

The fact of the resurrection should radically reshape our hearts, mind and world views. The new creation is here right under our noses. And we should live in the light of this knowledge.

We have absolute hope in an uncertain and dangerous world.

We started this year with exploring where our church is and what we want it to be in the future.

In renaming the Annexe as Hope Cottage we are reflecting the direction that Jesus is calling us to. Today our board is continuing with its planning meeting.

We have sought your input so my question to all of us is – what are you bringing?

Are you just bringing your thoughts and your preferences?

Are you happy with the way things are or are you daring to think like a child of the resurrection?

There is new life and we can claim it today. Hope is now.

The reality of Jesus Christ among us is now. Jesus said – don't be upset and don't let all these doubting questions take over. Look at my hands and feet – it is really me. Touch me and take my hand.

As a church, let us take Him at His word. Let's put our hands into His and fearlessly be the resurrection church in Chelsea – a beacon of hope; a people of hope; a people whose song is Christ is Risen.

My challenge is for all of us to be witnesses for God – to tell others about Jesus and His sacrifice for us.

For this week, I want you to think of just one person, someone you know well enough and who does not know the truth about Jesus and His resurrection, about forgiveness and eternal life in Jesus' name.

Choose the person and pray so that the Holy Spirit would open up an opportunity for you to witness to them about Jesus Christ and ask God for wisdom to do this.

How do you witness – you share that all that happened was as it is written in God's word. That Christ suffered, rose from the dead and now – repentance and forgiveness of sins is proclaimed in His name to all nations.