**Blain Bargo’s Message Notes from 1-21-2024
The Essential of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ**

Ezekiel 37:1-14 NKJV

Luke 24:13-35 NKJV

If my memory serves me right, I believe it was in September of 1989 my wife and I were making a trip to East Canton to visit friends for the weekend. Hurricane Hugo had hit the Carolina’s and was making its tract inland to the north and west and we were experiencing some of the wind and rain that was left over from this major storm. We were heading north on 15 coming up on a small town with one traffic light along route 15 when a couple of guys in a jeep were driving erratically, speeding up and getting in front of us and then slowing way down, almost like they were trying to get us to stop or hit the backend of their jeep. I had decided that I was going to get away from them and found an area to pass them and sped up to get far enough away from them. It was when approaching the one traffic light in this small town that I saw the red lights flashing in my rearview mirror.

I pulled off the road with the officer pulling in behind me. I got my license and registration out and handed them to the officer as he told me that I was doing more than double the speed limit. I tried to explain to the officer what was happening, and he went back to his car to write me a ticket. As he came back up to speak to me, the jeep drove by, and I mentioned the vehicle to the officer. It didn’t make a difference; I still got a ticket and points that I had to work off.

I was trying to justify to the officer my reason for my actions, even though my actions were not right. My justification was trying to sway the decision of the officer to right the wrong that I committed.

There are times in our lives when we all try to justify our actions or our words for both right and wrong reasons. It may be to try to prove a point or maybe to clarify something that has been said. Justification is a way of putting things into perspective for others to see your purpose in your decision. Today we look at the essential of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection is the basis of Christianity. If there is no resurrection, then what do we base our faith in Jesus Christ on. The resurrection is Christ justification that everything He had been teaching over the course of His ministry while on earth was in fact truth. The resurrection is noted more than 100 times throughout the New Testament, and in Acts you will find Paul referring to and preaching about the resurrection in every church that he ministered to.

But before we go too far let us look at one of the first instances that Jesus revealed Himself after the resurrection. Our passage today begins shortly after a few women had gone to the tomb where Christ was laid, bringing spices to prepare His body.

While on their way they must have wondered if the guard would even move the stone so they could enter, but as they arrived, they found the stone already moved, and Christ’s body no longer there. Two angels were there and reminded the women of what Jesus had proclaimed, that on the third day He would rise again.

Turn with me to Luke 24:13-35.

The Road to Emmaus

13 Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was [a]seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened. 15 So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. 16 But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him.

17 And He said to them, “What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you [b]walk and are sad?”

18 Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, “Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?”

19 And He said to them, “What things?”

So they said to Him, “The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20 and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. 21 But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. 22 Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. 23 When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. 24 And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but Him they did not see.”

25 Then He said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” 27 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He [c]expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

The Disciples’ Eyes Opened

28 Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He [d]indicated that He would have gone farther. 29 But they constrained Him, saying, “Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.” And He went in to stay with them.

30 Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight.

32 And they said to one another, “Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?” 33 So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, 34 saying, “The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!” 35 And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was [e]known to them in the breaking of bread.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

The first thing I want to note is that Christ did not need to have the stone rolled away. If He can conquer death, don’t think that the stone was moved for Him to get out of the tomb. That stone was removed for the benefit of the women so that they could witness what had been spoken to them over the past few years.

We enter our text with “two of them”, these two men were followers and disciples of Jesus, but not part of the twelve that had traveled and ministered with Jesus over the last three years.

Picture what may have happened in this exchange. Two men, having witnessed the death of the one that they thought was going to reign and bring relief from Roman opposition, probably talking with each other about their disbelief and feeling rejected because of their own failure to hear what Jesus had been telling them. Now Jesus approaches and joins with them in an exchange, an exchange that Jesus knew every answer to, but continued so that these two might have a stirring in their hearts that at the moment they didn’t understand.

This is the first exchange that Jesus has after His resurrection. It is an exchange that He used to justify what He had been teaching throughout His ministry. Even those closest to Him struggled to understand the events that had happened. Jesus had to physically appear to His disciples and still “they were troubled”using Jesus’ words.

We find in scripture of Jesus revealing Himself and speaking to many over the next 40 days. His resurrection is the fulfillment of His gospel message. Without the resurrection, His death would have been just like the death of any other king. The blood He shed for you and me would have been for no purpose because we would still be in our sins. His resurrection provided a means for new life in us.

Paul speaks to the Corinthians in chapter 15 of 1st Corinthians of the elements of the ministry of the gospel. In versus 3-7 he speaks of Christ death, His burial, and that on the third day He rose from the dead. The fourth element of the gospel that Paul expresses are the witnesses to the events and those that Jesus appeared to. We read starting at verse 12 that without the resurrection the message that he is preaching is in vain. He tells us that our faith is empty without the resurrection and that he himself is a false witness of God without the resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:12-19:

12 Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. 14 And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. 15 Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. 16 For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. 17 And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! 18 Then also those who have [a]fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

The resurrection is the culmination of the ministry of Jesus Christ. It is the validity of His message. It is the source by which God has given you and I new life. Without the resurrection, without the conquering of death, we would still be under the Old Testament law. The lamb of God was sacrificed for our sins, and raised on the third day so that you and I will have new life in Him. Why is it that we only celebrate His resurrection one day a year when this is the very foundation of the life of a Christian?

Our first scripture today from Ezekial spoke to us about the prophesy over the dry bones coming back to life and the winds giving breath to them. There is a song put out by Elevation Worship called Rattle. Listen to the words of the 1st verse and chorus.

*Saturday was silent, surely it was through.*

*But since when has impossible ever stopped You?*

*Friday's disappointment is Sunday's empty tomb.*

*Since when has impossible ever stopped You? Yeah.*

*This is the sound of dry bones rattling.*

*This is the praise, make a dead man walk again.*

*Open the grave, I'm coming out.*

*I'm gonna live, gonna live again.*

*This is the sound of dry bones rattling.*

In the gospel of Matthew we can find another reference to dry bones as Jesus addresses the scribes and pharisees.

Matthew 23:27-28:

27 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. 28 Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

We have mastered how to clean-up our outward appearance while in our hearts, we carry our dried-up dead bones, our sinful nature. We mask the person we really are. Christ calls us to die to ourselves, to the things that are hidden behind this flesh that we can manicure so perfectly, our tombs.

Our dried-up bones, He desires to bring new life to them. This is the purpose of His resurrection. When we lay our sinful natures down at the cross, He wants us to move beyond that place. He desires for you and I to rise with Him in newness of life.

When you have laid your sins at the cross, stop harboring over them. Release them and move into His resurrection life. As we mature in our journeys with Christ, He will bring convictions over us in areas of our lives that He wants to release us from. We continue this process all through our journeys with Jesus Christ, conviction, laying it at the cross, release and new life.

Our relationship with Christ will cause us to look inward. Jesus gives us another warning in Matthew 7:3-5 that we as humans struggle with. I cannot look at the speck in your eye with a log in my own eye. I must first look inward at my own heart. What is it that God has been convicting me of?

I’m going to be a little vulnerable with you this morning. Sometime in the early 2000’s I became interested in a recreational activity that caught me off guard I think because the company I now own was building office and lab space for the PA Gaming Control Board to do testing on machines involved in the industry. My introduction was in watching some of these machines running through their test.

Over the years I found myself enjoying for the most part, taking part in this activity. I visited a casino here and there to try my luck, and could see how being involved in this activity could become dangerous without controls. I was also feeling that God was convicting me to release this to Him. It was always on my mind that God was asking me to be a better steward of the resources He gave me. I tried to commit to not spending any money on gaming by my own will power and would always fail because I enjoyed it. I enjoyed the possibility of making money on chance. You see, I was trying to keep one foot in with God, while still wanting to enjoy the things He was calling me away from. This is the journey that I share with you this morning. We cannot keep one foot in and one foot out. When we lay it at the foot of the cross, we need to let it there and enter the new life of His resurrection. On October 13th of this past year, I committed to giving over to Him at the foot of His cross that which He had been convicting me of over several years. Today I can tell you that He has freed me and given me new life.

I share this because it doesn’t matter where you or I am in our journeys with Christ, He desires growth into His nature and maturity in Him. This will be an ongoing process until the day He takes us home. Some of us if not all of us here have been convicted by God for something in our lives, and while on the outside we managed to manicure ourselves to look the look, whatever that is, we have dried-up bones with-in us that God wants to bring new life to.

We are a people that need to know what lies ahead, but God is asking us to trust Him. To let it go and give it over to Him. To allow His resurrection to work within our lives.

This morning we are going to give the opportunity to come forward and give those convictions over to God, to lay them at the foot of His cross, and to rise from here knowing that new life has entered the dry bones within us.

Amen.

Let’s Pray