

“Renegade Gospel: Resurrection”

1 Corinthians 15:12-19

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Rev. Dave Baldrige

Palm Harbor United Methodist Church, Palm Harbor, Florida

“If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.” (1 Corinthians 15:14). You see the very essence of the Christian faith rests on the bodily resurrection of Jesus.

This Sunday, Palm Sunday begins Holy Week. **(Palm Sunday image)** So much happens during this week let’s briefly look at what took place. As the bells played “Hosanna Loud Hosanna” our children came in waving their palms and then His Kidz sang Hosanna. Hosanna means a phrase expressing praise or joy...adoration. It is like a cheer. Hooray! Or as I would say, “Woo-hoo!” However the literal meaning of Hosanna from the Hebrew is “Save now! Please save!”

So the scene is the crowd went before Jesus and followed Jesus shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” “Please save us Son of David. Blessed are you who comes in the name of the Lord! Woo-hoo!!! Save us now!”

We find this verse from the passage Isabel read, **Matthew 21:10: And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying “Who is this?”**

The whole city took notice. I like the phrase...stirred up. The whole city was stirred up. I guess you could call it March Madness. ☺

During World War II when sugar was scarce a man went into a diner and asked for a cup of coffee. “Sugar or cream, the waitress asked?” “Sugar,” he replied. Since the sugar was so scarce, she kept it under the counter. The man put in 2 heaping teaspoons full of sugar, tasted it and said, “I need more sugar.” The waitress set the sugar back up on the counter. He put in another heaping teaspoon. Tasted it and said, “Still not sweet enough. I need a little more.” Disgusted, the waitress glared at him and said, “Stir up what you’ve already got”

Beloved Jesus has entered the city....rather Jesus is in this place...has He stirred you up?! xxxx Stir up what you already have!!!!!! Do you have Jesus?

They were asking, “Who is this?” Reminds us of how we started the Lenten series Renegade Gospel. The most important question you will have to answer. Who do you say Jesus is? Oh not what the crowd says...but who do you say that He is?

Are you stirred up enough to say that He is the one I’m going to follow daily? But oh, what does that mean?

After Jesus entered Jerusalem he went to an upper room and had a meal with his disciples known as The Last Supper. **(Image of Davinci’s ‘Last Supper’)** This happened on Thursday. Known as Holy Thursday or Maundy Thursday.

He takes the bread and the cup and asks His disciples to do this in remembrance of Him. This is His body broken for them and His blood poured out for many. What we know and celebrate is the Sacrament of Holy Communion based on this event on Maundy Thursday.

However, **The word “maundy” comes from the Latin *Mandātum novum dō vōbīs*.** Maundy comes Mandatum which means “command.” A new commandment I give to you. For it is at the Last Supper that Jesus gives them something new to think about. **John 13:34: A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you.**

The commandment to love one another is not necessarily a new commandment. Why in the Old Testament it tells us to love our neighbor as ourselves (Leviticus 19:18) What is new is that part of that verse that says...love...just as I have loved you. That is a whole new way of loving. It talks about we talked about last week...to deny self.

We often talk about the Last Supper on Maundy Thursday but this new way of loving others was also part of what Jesus did in that Upper Room at the Last Supper. He washed the disciples feet. **(Image)**. He served others. So on Maundy Thursday we will have a worship service that begins at 7 p.m. with the opportunity for you to come receive communion and remember...as well as the opportunity for a foot washing ceremony.

Jesus left that Upper Room and went to pray. He went to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was in the Garden that He prayed to His heavenly Father, “Not my will, but yours be done.” (Luke 22:42).

Arrested in the Garden, unfairly tried by Pontius Pilate and sentenced the terrible humiliating death of crucifixion. The way of the cross. In Holy Week we call this Good Friday. It is an oxymoron as what it is so Good about this day. Jesus was beaten and crucified...how could we call it Good. The only way we can call it Good is because of the Good result. It is because of that cross and that Jesus died on the cross that we can have our sins forgiven. So on Friday at 7 p.m. we will have a worship service focusing on the 7 Last words (or statements) **(Image)** that Jesus said from the cross. These words are statements recorded in scripture are words of forgiveness, assurance, relationship and even words of abandonment and agony. But also there is the word of triumph and commendation. We will have 7 candles representing these words and along with scripture and powerful music from our Worship and Arts team we will extinguish each candle after each of the 7 Last Words. We will also dim a section of the sanctuary as a candle is extinguished. This is a Tenebrae or Service of Darkness where we end the service in just about total darkness symbolizing the death of our Lord and the darkness of that day.

All of this leads us to Resurrection. Which today we are reminded of even before next Sunday when we totally dedicate that day to the celebration of Resurrection Sunday. You see this day, this Palm Sunday, this entry into Jerusalem lead not just to an Upper Room and Last Supper and washing of feet. Not just to a cross were 7 statements were said but this day, this very day leads us to Resurrection Day. This is a Radical Jesus who is doing Radical things. Washing of feet---radical. Dying on the cross---Radical. This Rebel Jesus has this Renegade Gospel that is Revolutionary and yet Redeeming.

The critical nature of our faith concerns this physical, bodily resurrection. British theologian N.T. Wright says this, “Take away the stories of Jesus’ birth and you lose only two chapters of Matthew and two of Luke. Take away the resurrection, and you lose the entire New Testament...” (page 121, *Renegade Gospel, Slaughter*)

You can find the dead bodies of Mohammed, Buddha and Confucius....but guess what...you cannot find the body of Jesus. He has been resurrected.

It is because of that resurrection that we have hope everlasting. It is because of that resurrection that we know that He is with us. It is because of that resurrection that we know that our loved ones who died as followers of Jesus Christ are now in heaven and we will meet them again.

Our 1 Corinthians passage says **vs. 16 “For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised.”**

What??? Are you telling me that you believe that Jesus physically rose from the dead? Yep.

You see the great thing about this passage that Paul is writing is that earlier in the chapter (verse 6) that Jesus was resurrected from the dead and appeared to more than 500 at one time. Say what? Oh I think you heard me....Jesus appeared to more than 500 at one time.

Okay you could say that those dear ladies at the tomb....maybe they were overcome with grief and were grieving so that they hallucinated and just thought they saw an empty tomb. But he also appeared to the disciples. And yes Thomas, for one had doubts. He was from the state of Missouri. I wish someone would ask me “Why?” Because he invoked the Missouri state motto: “Show me.” Oh yes, even the disciples had doubts. But they saw and believed.

But now Paul writes that Jesus appeared to 500 at one time. Now friends as we are gathered here if some well know person who had died comes walking up the aisle we would be stirred up. Actually some here would probably also die at that time due to heart attack. First you would punch your pew buddy and say... “Uh, isn’t that person supposed to be dead?” “I saw them die.” “I went to their funeral.” Hosanna....Save us!!!!

It is difficult for 500 to be hallucinating at the same time and the same place.

However the resurrection does something else to us as well. Rev. Slaughter says, “An encounter with the resurrected Jesus, however, doesn’t just transform the way we view ourselves; it causes us to see others in a new light.” (page 135, *Renegade Gospel*)

We begin to realize that everyone we meet have the potential of having that resurrection hope. Rev. Slaughter says this, “Jesus even redefines *enemy*, not as someone to hate but as someone worth praying for, an individual of sacred worth and God-potential. Our encounters with the resurrected Jesus gives us new eyes and a new resurrection worldview.”

You see here is what **1 Corinthians 15:19** says, **“If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.”**

Resurrection means this life and the next ongoing eternal life. The Message Bible puts it this way: **“the truth is that Christ *has* been raised up, the first in a long legacy of those who are going to leave the cemeteries.”**

Allow me to share with you a story that I think I might have shared with you before. I searched my sermon files and didn't see that I have, but if I have I hope the point is still valid.

A drunk man left a bar and decided to take a shortcut through a graveyard. It was raining heavily and rather dark, with only a half moon in the sky above, it cast eerie shadows across the tombstones, giving the drunk man the creeps. He didn't see an open grave in front of him and fell into it. He tried to climb out but the rain made the sides of the hole too slippery to climb. Finally he decided to give up and spend the night there and try again in daylight after he sobered up.

A while later, another drunk left the same bar and took the same shortcut through the graveyard. He too felt scared by the creepy shadows moving over the tombstones and the eerie atmosphere of the graveyard. He, too fell into the open grave. The first drunk was still there and watched him try to climb out only to fall back down into the slippery, muddy hole. Finally the second drunk got tired and sat down to rest. The first drunk said in his scariest voice, “yessss, just sit and ressst, you'll never get out.”

But he did!

Oh people didn't think Jesus was going to get out....but he did! I like this phrase from Slaughter, “God does God's best work in cemeteries!” (from DVD study)

Because Jesus was resurrected our soul will never sleep. Awake, awake my soul. God resurrected these bones. From death to life. Awake!!!! (adapted from Tomlin song...Awake, My Soul)

In the Old Testament God speaks to the prophet Ezekiel in the Valley of Dry bones and says. (Ezekiel 37:3 Contemporary English Version (CEV)) “Ezekiel, son of man, can these bones come back to life?” Ezekiel replied, “LORD God, only you can answer that.”

And we know that we come alive when God breathes on us. Now remember on that first Palm Sunday the whole city was stirred up. Today is the PHUMC congregation stirred up? xxxx

So God tells Ezekiel (Ezekiel 37:12-14 Contemporary English Version (CEV))

12 tell them, “I, the LORD God, promise to open your graves and set you free. 14 My Spirit will give you breath, and you will live again. I will bring you home, and you will know that I have kept my promise. I, the LORD, have spoken.”

Today right now...no spiritual drowsiness..... even spiritual death to spiritual life....Awake my soul.

Just as Ezekiel said. "Oh bones hear the word of the Lord!"

Oh know and hear the word of the Lord. The Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is real! Your resurrection to come is real! And today, right now your soul can be awake as we allow Jesus to breathe on us. Breathe on me, breath of God, breathe on me. Awake my soul!