

"ROPE"
John 2:13-16

February 20,2013

Lent Service 2

Tonight, in our Lent worship, we want to consider rope. Rope is very useful (good). We have had rope for a long time. We make rope from hemp (plants), synthetic materials, and steel. We use rope to connect two things. Strong ropes will connect a boat to the dock. Thin rope - line - will connect a fishing pole with fish. If the rope breaks, then the two objects are disconnected.

Love is like a rope. Love connects people together. Tonight, we want to use this rope to help us remember the love that connects Jesus to God the Father, love that connects Jesus to us, and the love that connects us with one another.

Jesus was connected to His Heavenly Father from the time He was born. Maybe you remember the story when Mary and Joseph and Jesus went to the temple when Jesus was 12 years old. They went to the temple for PASSOVER. When the Passover was finished, they were traveling home in a group, Mary and Joseph could not find Jesus. They went back to Jerusalem, looking for Jesus. Finally, they found Jesus in the temple. Mary asked him, "Son, why have you done this? Your father and I have been worried and searching for you."

Jesus understood their feelings, but He had to teach them about Himself and God. So, Jesus said, "I must be here in my Father's house. Didn't you know that?" The temple was God's House. Jesus is God's Son. Jesus lived with Joseph, but Jesus was bound to another Father -- His Heavenly Father. Love was the rope that connected them..

Later on, when Jesus had grown up, He came back to the temple. He saw people selling cattle, sheep, and doves for sacrifice. People were changing money. Jesus was angry. The temple was supposed to be a house for prayer and worship. These people were using it as a house of merchandise. God's house had become defiled because of this.

Jesus decided it was time to "clean house." So, Jesus took some rope, not to bind something together, but for punishment. Jesus made a WHIP from the ropes. Jesus used that to

drive out the men, and the sheep, and the cattle. He went to the people changing money, turned over their tables, and scattered the money. He shouted, "Don't make my Father's house a place for buying and selling." Thus, Jesus cleansed the temple.

This also shows the reason for Jesus coming into our world here. We are like the temple -- we are His dwelling. God made us to be bound to Him. But sin defiles us, just like those merchants defiled the temple. When we lie, cheat, and steal, that is bad and that is sin. When we are not loving and caring towards other people but, instead, pick at each other, argue, and fight, that is not good and is sin. When we ignore God, refuse to worship, are apathetic to His Word, and selfishly give so little to support His mission, that is wrong and a sin. There are many more examples. All of these sins disconnect us from God. Sin becomes like an evil rope -- it connects us to Satan. That rope of sin connecting us to Satan will drag us down to hell.

Jesus cleansed the temple with a piece of rope. In the same way, Jesus came to cleanse us and He uses a rope, but in a different way. How? Did you notice the rope in our Bible reading for tonight? Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane with His disciples. Soldiers came. Judas betrayed Jesus. The soldiers arrested Jesus, bound Him with rope, and led Him off to trial and punishment.

Isn't that funny? How could soldiers bind Jesus? He is the Son of God. He had all power. A rope could not hold Him. But Jesus allowed that to happen. Why? He did that so He could go off to punishment, but not because He broke the Law, but because you and I sinned and broke God's Law. God is a holy God. He must punish sin -- all sin. He must punish your sin and my sin. He must punish us for when we do wrong. He must punish us for when we fail to do good. But God loved us that He sent Jesus who willingly accepted that punishment in our place. That punishment began when the soldiers bound Jesus with rope.

Being bound with rope was only the beginning of the punishment. You know the story: soldiers beat and whipped Jesus and, finally, crucified Jesus. But there was even more. While on that cross, Jesus cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" What does that mean? Jesus was disconnected from God Himself. When God viewed all of our sin placed on Jesus, He

turned away. Jesus was separated from His Father in heaven and that is hell. You and I deserve that hell for all our sins, yet Jesus literally suffered that pain of hell in our place.

But the story does not end there. Jesus re-connected to God. Satan and the grave tried to hold Jesus -- keep Him dead -- but failed. Three days later, Jesus broke the bonds of death and Satan and became alive again. He was re-united with His Father again.

Jesus does the same for you and me. Before, you and I were like prisoners bound in our sin. Yet Jesus Himself became bound as a prisoner to free us. In the past, we were disconnected from God because of our sin. Now, we are bound again to God because of Jesus' suffering and death. And we will continue bound to God for life and eternity because Jesus Himself rose from the dead and made (cause) that happen.

What a truly wonderful love Jesus has shown to us through His death and rising again! That love has bound us to God. That love also binds us to one another. God's love is like a rope that ties us all together as Christians. We are not separated because of our age or hearing ability. We are joined together in our faith in Jesus Christ. We are free to love each other and support each other. That means children are free to love parents and parents to love children. Young people are free to love older people and older people are free to love younger people. Hearing people are free to love deaf people and deaf people are free to love hearing people. We are free to accept each other, be patient with each other, forgiving each other when we do wrong. We are free to live together in peace and harmony with God's love binding us together.

When you see this picture of the rope, you may think of punishment because Jesus used a rope as a whip to cleanse the temple and because the soldiers bound Jesus' hands to lead Him off to punishment. But this rope can also help us remember love. God's love is like a rope which joins us to Him through our Lord Jesus Christ. We are also joined to each other because of that wonderful love. May we live in that love during this Lent season as we worship and thank our Lord Jesus Christ and as we support and encourage one another! Amen.