

"SEED"  
John 20:1-18

March 31,2013

Easter Sunday

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who was crucified and dead, but who has risen and now lives! During our Lenten journey we have considered many things: sword, rope, cloth, thorns, wood, silver, bread, and DICE. Today is our last object: SEEDS. That is a very appropriate one for Easter. While we celebrate Jesus resurrection from the dead today, many people are celebrating the beginning of spring. During winter, everything was dead and the earth was bare. Now, it is a time for things to become alive and grow and the earth to become green. Seeds are very important for that.

In our text, this day begins badly. His disciples were sad and grieved. Jesus was dead. They were confused. They believed that Jesus came to save the world, but now this Savior was dead. Jesus promised a future Kingdom, but now this King was gone. They were afraid. Would the Jewish leaders now try to kill them too because they followed Jesus? What would they do in the future?

Imagine Mary Magdalene's deep grief and anger. She felt grief because Jesus was a good friend. Before, she had had seven demons in her and Jesus had cast them out. She felt anger for (because of) Jesus' enemies. They had killed her friend. Now, she had come to the tomb while it was still dark. She wanted to finish preparing Jesus' body for burial. But Jesus' body was not there. It was gone. She ran to Peter and John and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we don't know where they put the body." So she sat at the tomb and wept.

Many people today feel the same way -- sad, angry, and confused. Sin has ruined everything. People who do not believe in Jesus feel sad, angry, and confused. Life has many problems. There is pain, poverty, sickness and suffering. Unbelievers see that and feel sadness. When friends suffer and friends die, unbelievers feel angry and confused. If there is a God, why did He let this happen?

Believers feel the same -- sad, angry, and confused. We know that Jesus died to forgive our sins. We know that we are God's people. Yet we suffer and have problems same as unbelievers. We experience financial problems, sicknesses, and other things. We have friends suffer and die. One time, a man was going to church for an evening worship service and a bus hit him. He went into I.C.U. His wife called the pastor and asked, "Pastor, tell me why this happened. He is a good man. He is honest at his job. He loves his children. Why did God let this happen to him? He was on his way to church. Why?" Maybe you suffered some terrible thing and asked God, "Why did you let that happen to me?" Have you felt sad, angry, and confused like that and wanted to cry?

Let's remember the seed. Perhaps you have a garden or you want some plants for your home. You take a seed, drop it in the ground and cover it -- did you feel sad? The poor little seed was dead and gone. Did you cry? Of course not. The seed must go into the ground, die and be buried. You are not sad or mournful because you know what will happen. The seed will grow into a new plant. And that plant is much more glorious than the seed itself. And when that seed becomes alive again and grows then it produces many more seeds as well. And those seeds will spring to new life, too. We do not feel sad to plant a seed, but we wait in eager anticipation.

Jesus once said, "If a wheat seed does not go into the ground and die, then it remains a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." Jesus was talking about Himself. Jesus, the Holy One of God, had to die. If He did not die, then He alone would have remained holy. We would remain sinners. He alone would live forever. We would die eternally. But Jesus did die to forgive us and make us holy in God's sight. But His death was not the end, just like planting a seed is not the end. The seed becomes alive again and produces more seeds. Jesus is the same. Jesus became alive on Easter and He will make more people become alive again just like Himself -- you, me and all people who trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

Jesus' resurrection on Easter changes our sadness, bitter feelings, and confusion into joy, celebration, and peace. In our lesson, Mary was very sad and crying near Jesus tomb. She thought

Jesus was dead and gone. But Jesus was alive and He came to her. At first, she did not recognize him through her tears. She thought he was the man who took care of the garden. Jesus said, "Woman, why are you crying? Who are you looking for? She said, "Sir, if you have moved Jesus' body, tell me so I can go to Him." Then Jesus answered and said her name, "Mary!" At once Mary knew it was Jesus. Her sadness, bitterness, and confusion melted away. She was filled with joy. She ran back to the disciples and said, "I have seen the Lord!"

Mary's life situation probably did not change. She probably still had problems like us, but her attitude was changed and her future had changed because of Jesus' resurrection. Jesus lived and she would live forever, too. That was the most important thing for her. In the same way, you and I are happy today, but we will leave here and we will still have problems - financial problems, sicknesses, sufferings, friends dying, and so on. God never promises us an easy life, without pain, because we belong to His family. However, God does promise that we will live forever. We are like seeds. We will have to have problems and difficulties here on this earth. We will have to die and be buried before (then) we will burst into new life forever with Him.

This wonderful knowledge changes our attitude and changes our future. Even though we have pain and suffering, sickness and death, we can have a true joy and a true peace. People in the world cannot understand our joy in the midst of sorrow and our peace in the midst of strife and pain. Sometimes we ourselves forget it. We allow problems to defeat us. We allow ourselves to have a negative attitude - to complain, be frustrated, disgusted and disappointed about life.

Let's help each other to remember the wonderful news of Jesus' resurrection every day of our lives. Jesus' resurrection changed the disciples' attitudes, future, and their habits. Before, they worshipped on Saturdays like the other Jews. However, after Jesus' resurrection, they began to worship on Sunday to remember and celebrate His glorious resurrection every week.

Easter is a time when many people come to church because it is a special time. That's great. But let's become like the disciples long ago and meet every Sunday to celebrate Jesus'

resurrection and what it means. A famous Easter hymn is entitled "Jesus Lives! The Victory's Won". Jesus has won. He has defeated sin. He has defeated Satan. He has defeated death. And we share His victory. He forgives our sin. He helps us defeat Satan and resist temptation. We will defeat death and live forever. Nothing here on earth can change that - financial problems, sicknesses like CANCER, government problems, family problems, moral problems or anything else. Let's help each other remember that so that we can face those problems and still have joy and peace. I will promise to preach that message every Sunday of Jesus' death and resurrection. You come and hear it. Celebrate Jesus' victory! Celebrate our victory! Share that message with one another as you help and support each other..

We are grateful to have Easter lilies in our chancel today. Do you know why we use the lily on Easter? The lily is a symbol of Easter. When you want to grow a lily, you get a dead bulb. When you plant it and cover it, it becomes alive and grows into a new beautiful plant. That is the message of Easter. Jesus was killed and dead -- that had to happen. But He became alive again with a new and glorious body. When you see these beautiful flowers, think of Jesus. But also think of yourself. You are all seeds. All of you who put your trust in Jesus Christ conquer this world and all the problems in it. You, too, will live again with a new and glorious body. May this message fill you with enduring joy, celebration, and peace on this Easter day and every day of your lives. Amen.