Being the Resurrection: Faith in Action

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*Scripture references: Genesis 3:8-15, Psalm 130, 2nd Corinthians 4: 13- 5:1, & Mark 3:20-35*

Greetings in the love and light of Christ my siblings. It is indeed a pleasure and a privilege to be with you today. I appreciate the invitation and opportunity to share with you today as we continue to celebrate the season of Pentecost.

You have heard and read today the series of texts that inform our reflection today. First let me ask you a question, and feel free to unmute yourselves and talk back to me, have you ever felt an unction so deep inside of you that it felt like it was trapped in the very fibers of your bones and muscles? It was such a strong compelling feeling that it was so inescapable that it consumed you. It often can feel like your entire body is on fire, you might recall Jeremiah saying, “it is like fire shut up in my bones”. But this compelling unction won’t leave you alone. I recall a gospel song I think it was Tremaine Hawkins singing “it won’t leave me alone”.

We begin in Genesis with the recounting of the willfulness of humanity versus the Divine will of God and the challenges we face when we neglect the gift and calling that God has placed on our lives by allowing ourselves to be deceived by the glamour of this world instead of holding fast to the Divine truth of what we know that comes only God. In these moments we feel naked and exposed when we come to understand the error of our ways having diverged from the will of God given to each of us separately for the work or calling on our individual lives. Note Adam and Eve both failing to take responsibility for their own actions, sound familiar? Maybe you have never done this but maybe you know someone who has.

Then we walk through the Psalms and visit Psalm 130 where we are reminded that in all things we are able to cry out to God who will hear and redeem us. Yet if we dig a tad deeper we discover that is not just a crying out but a profound crying out. A cry that wells up, not necessarily in streaks of tears but from the depth of our entire beingness or souls. It is a ***Soul-ular*** cry that comes from the place where our divine nature reconnects to the Divine Spirit compelling a response from the Divine.

Yet today I want to focus our attention on the scriptures in 2nd Corinthians chapters 4: 13-18 and 5:1. Then we will may give a nod to Mark in his gospel. Herein we find a message ripe for harvesting in our lives today. Let me invite you to think about this as we review these passages. We are currently in the season of Pentecost. In Pentecost we celebrate the visitation and residency of the Spirit after the resurrection and the ascension. It is here that we get the release through the spirit to act on the truth of the resurrection. Jesus tells his followers to wait or tarry and after that time the Spirit would come and empower them to move and act as God has given them vision to do. So here we find that Jesus has told us that we are to be the active agents of the resurrection in the world and would be infused with the power to act by the Holy Spirit.

**If, then, Jesus was resurrected and has called us to be joint heirs with Christ, and the Holy Spirit has come upon us, then why are we not being the truth of the resurrection in the world around us? What are we afraid of**? Why are we silent or reluctant to act on the social justice issues of the present day? Are we not called and chosen? Are we not joint heirs with Christ? Were we not told that “greater things” we would do? These are not nice catch phrases and cliches to be put on embroidered patch work placards, on bookmarks, or posters for vacation bible study or as nice phrases to be sung by choirs or praise teams in the confines of our community ministries! No, these are truths that are meant to be executed in our lived experiences daily, just as Jesus did during his lifetime and especially during his ministry years; indeed, in the truth of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus who became the Christ.

2 Corinthians 4: 13-18

*13 It is written: “I believed; therefore I have spoken.” Since we have that same spirit offaith, we also believe and therefore speak, 14 because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to himself. 15 All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.*

 You see here we are told specifically that the point of the resurrection is so that we could rise up and extend the grace to reach people such that they are also lifted up from their conditions (mental, physical, political, cultural, economic, and spiritual) and in such rising of the people would come high praise and thanksgiving because of the overflow of God’s grace, mercy, and love so that resurrection of our lives bring all to see the Glory of God, NOW!, not later in the great by-and-by. Now this does not mean by any means that this work of lifting people out of the poverty of their conditions will be easy. No, just like the painful death on the cross, the work we have before us will be gut-wrenching, painful, exhausting, draining; causing thirst, mental anguish, and constant reckoning with God about God’s presence during our trials of living out our calling.

*16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*

 Yes, the work is hard. There is opposition to social change and justice. Just as Jesus faced pushback. Listen,… anytime you get people complaining that you healed someone on the Sabbath because they want to liken that to “work”—and these are the same people who cared more for their traditions than the people in need in their own communities—then we have to expect that the same energies of the Pharisees and Sadducees live in the world around us today. The energies of greed and selfishness and self-aggrandizement live on boldly in the world around us. So, yes, we can become weary in well-doing, which is why Paul admonished to not be weary in well-doing, but if we don’t give up, the victory of the harvest of our planting and toiling would be plentiful. The point is that we may not see the result of our labor, but we have to SEE it in our spirit self and keep working towards that “mark of the high calling” in Christ. The ‘in Christ’ is talking about actions we do from the power of the resurrection. There is no power of the Christ without the resurrection.

Ok hold up. You may be saying “what?” “sacrilege!”. So, before you mute me and put me in the waiting room, let me unpack that. So, Jesus became the Christ, and we are all called to become the Christ in our own lives. Yet, Jesus being the Christ was not enough for the redemption of humanity; there had to be a resurrection so that the power of being the Christ could be realized in the world. Now, the great thing is that we do not have to literally die to be resurrected but, unlike the nakedness of Adam and Eve, we must die to our own willfulness so we can live out the Divine call on our lives. When we do so the “unction-ing” and depths of the call will cry out in a profound way from our very souls, and we will be compelled to act on our Christ nature to be the Christ and therefore the living embodiment of the resurrection today. We cannot always see the actual results of our labor but we have to “see it” with our third eye or our spiritual eye, which is the Christ consciousness, so that we work towards the calling of God whether we can see it or not because we believe just as God raised Jesus from the Dead that we too will be raised with him, in spirit, and live out the true divine will in our lives. Because, in the end, what we do **is** for God, not ourselves; and the reward is the promise of change on earth and life everlasting given not by other humans but by God alone.

 2 Corinthians 5: 1

 For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.

 So even if they kill us; even if they oppress us; even if they refuse to see the message of God in our lives such that they attempt to destroy us, our churches, our ministries, our legacies; they cannot destroy God’s power or the power of the resurrection that we are called to BE as the embodiment of the residence of the Spirit that lives in us and empowers us to be the active agents of the power of the resurrection in the world around us. So it is time to Be the Resurrection in our own lives and in the lives of those around us, just as Jesus did for the woman with the issue of blood, the lepers, the centurion’s daughter, the boy in the catacombs, the wedding party, the Roman soldier whose ear was cut off, the man at Bethesda, the 5000 on the mount, the disciples on the boat, and each and every one of us who calls ourselves followers of the WAY, and are called by God’s name as children of the most high God; joint heirs with Christ and all of the billions of people around the world for whom the resurrection may be known or unknown but nonetheless is for them all. This is why we are called to BE the resurrection, to live our lives in demonstration of the power of the resurrection in the actions and work we do, and in the lives we live.

Finally, in Mark, we hear the parable of Jesus and points us to the potential of hypocrisy if our words do not match our action. Jesus points out that a house divided against itself cannot stand. Rev. Dr. MLK, Jr. has an famous staying that ‘just like darkness cannot drive out darkness only light can; ‘hate cannot drive our hate, only love can’.. so, if we only talk our talk about Christ and the love of God for all; yet we have no action to support it, our church cannot stand. A Church built on words, but no action will be fruitless and sterile the very essence of being divided against itself. It will have no power, no relevance, and no momentum to draw people closer to God. It cannot be a true reflection of the Christ. This is also true for us individually. It is not enough to know scriptures, to attend church, to know the Bible if that knowing does not translate into action. This church walks the walk that it talks about. And that must continue and each person that comes to this church must come also with the intention of being active agents of God for those who need to see and experience the love of God the most. You cannot say one thing and not follow that up with a companion action. Jesus’ parable foreshadowed what was to come. He challenged the idea that we could continue living like the “religious folk of the day” but instead had to be the spiritually guided agents so that we would demonstrate the power of the resurrection by being the resurrection through our faith in action. Be the resurrection by being the change you want to see in the world, just as Gandhi invited us to do. Just as Jesus lived, died, and was resurrected to demonstrate, so too we can be the power of the resurrection in the world that so desperately needs us.

 Blessings, beloved.