



Dr. Carolyn Cole, Retreat Master

July 22, 2006

Retreat July 21-23, 2006

Sermon: *Are You A Witness to the Resurrection of Jesus*

Lectionary

Isaiah 44.1-8 or Acts 2.1-11

Psalm 104.25-37 or 104.25-32 or 33.12-15, 18-22

I Corinthians 12.4-13 or Acts 2.1-11

John 20.19-23 or John 14.8-17

Additional Scripture: Isaiah 6; Micah 4 and Isaiah 2; Acts 2.14-21

I ask you, Are you a witness to the Resurrection of Jesus? One more time I am asking, Are you a witness to the Resurrection of Jesus? I will not ask you to raise your hands. I did that in the Tuesday morning Bible study – and learned a lesson.

If you are a witness to the Resurrection of Jesus, then I ask your prayers during the rest of this message. If you are not a witness to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, then I ask – what are you a witness to? What more do you have than the pagans? What more do you have than those who worship another god?

Let's look at the tomb on that morning when the women went to anoint the body of Jesus Christ. Were they a witness to the Resurrection of Jesus? -- Now, just a moment, the Scripture says in Matthew 28.5, 6, "And the angel answered and said to the women, 'Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified.' 'He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said, Come, see the place where He was lying.'"

I ask you, did the women witness the Resurrection of Jesus? What about the disciples? Going on with that same Scripture, "And go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going before you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you."

Now, I ask you, were the disciples witness of the Resurrection of Jesus? Were any of them actual witnesses to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ?

Was Paul a witness of the Resurrection of Jesus? Remember his conversion does not take place until years after Jesus was crucified, buried, and died.

So, now I ask you by what power and authority did Paul speak before King Agrippa – if he were not a witness to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ (Acts 26)? By what power and authority do the disciples proclaim the message of Jesus Christ and baptize 3,000 in Acts 2 – if they were not witnesses to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Then, I ask by what power and authority did the Primitive Church proclaim the message of Jesus Christ, and, as ten of the disciples, chose to die a martyr's death, a death of joy unspeakable to die for Jesus Christ – if they were not witnesses to His Resurrection?

Then, I ask, what happens when one is a witness to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ? How does his or her life change? Or does it change? How does the life of the parish change? How does it change the community – and then the world?

How is it that you can go into the world and proclaim Jesus Christ is Lord – if you have not witnessed His Resurrection? By what authority do you proclaim Him Lord of your life – if you are not a witness to His Resurrection? If you are not a witness of His Resurrection, you have no power in proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If you are not a witness of His Resurrection, then what are you a witness to?

Your words are empty if there is no power that comes from the witness of His Resurrection. The disciples proclaimed Him Lord, Savior, Redeemer, the Risen Lord because they indeed had experienced His Resurrection.

The Early Church experienced the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and that is why they with joy gave their lives before the pagans in the arenas. That is why even those in later centuries who were martyred for Jesus Christ did with joy for their Lord. That is why today in many countries others are with joy being tortured unto death for Jesus Christ – and the US is not going untouched today.

If we are to change the world for Jesus Christ right here where we live and in this parish, it will be because we have been empowered by the Holy Spirit out of being a witness to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Act 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Mark 16.15-18 says,

Mar 16:15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

Mar 16:16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Mar 16:17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

Mar 16:18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

The power that was experienced in Acts 2 as Peter preached and 3,000 were saved and baptized comes from being witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Holy Ghost empowers only those who are witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

If they had not been witnesses of the Resurrected Christ, they would have had no greater experience than the Egyptians who worshiped Dagon, those who worshiped Baal, those today who worship other gods. A god who is not resurrected is a dead god. Beloved, we serve a living, risen Lord and Savior, and we need to live in the power of His resurrection though it will take us to the fellowship of His Suffering.

We are told to count the cost, then take up our cross and follow Jesus who is alive and well – and in our midst.

Oh, hear the words from Acts 2.16-21,

Act 2:16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;

Act 2:17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

Act 2:18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

Act 2:19 And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke:

Act 2:20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come:

Act 2:21 And it shall come to pass, *[that]* whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Yes, when we begin acknowledging that we are witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the world will come to this place to see Jesus. When we live the Resurrection of Jesus Christ in our lives, the world will begin asking us to share with them Jesus of Nazareth. Three services will not be enough. The few Bible studies that we have will not be enough. Wednesday evening Healing Mass will be filled.

Oh, yes, they will say that we too are drunk with wine as they did the Early Church after Pentecost – at the third hour of the day.

We will be speaking forth the mighty deeds of God. But there will be not power of God by His Holy Spirit flowing through us if we do not know the Word of the Lord. I am speaking of the written Word as well as the Living Word. Jesus told the Sadducees that they did not know the Scripture nor did they know the power of God.

We cannot know the power of God if we do not know the Scripture. We cannot share what we do not know, what is not lived in our lives.

The Jews live the Hebrew text. They talk about it when they lie down, when they rise, when they are away from home, and when they are at home. This is a commandment of God in Deuteronomy 6:4-9. The children are experiencing the events so important to the Jewish community even before they are born. They hear and experience the Word constantly; it is a way of life for them.

We, as Christians, too often tell little stories from the Bible, and we as teachers do not even see the connection of the little stories that we tell children. We do not know the Word of the Lord as the Word of the Lord, all too often – but just stories.

We must know the Scripture if we are to know the Power of God in our lives through His Son Jesus Christ who died on the Cross of Calvary, was buried, and rose victoriously over sin, hell, and the grave. We must live

this by the power of the Holy Spirit knowing that we are witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

But, Beloved, be prepared for what will happen when we as a church and individuals in the body of Christ covenant to live this way (Micah 4:1-5).

Mic 4:1 But in the last days it shall come to pass, *[that]* the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.

Mic 4:2 And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Mic 4:3 And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Mic 4:4 But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make *[them]* afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken *[it]*.

Mic 4:5 For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever.

And so, I say again to you: We must know the Scripture if we are to know the Power of God in our lives through His Son Jesus Christ who died on the Cross of Calvary, was buried, and rose victoriously over sin, hell, and the grave. We must live this by the power of the Holy Ghost knowing that we are witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Amen.