



"Resurrection Impact – Completely 1"

Seventh Sunday of Easter
8:30 & 10:45 am Saturday May 8, 2016
The Reverend Dr. Jack M. Horner
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Psalm 97; Revelation 22:12-14, 16-17, 20-21; John 17:20-26

Grace and peace be to you from God Our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Well through this season of Easter we have been looking about how the resurrection is not just a one-time event, but an event that impacts our life and helps us understand better the purposes that God has for us. Not only us as individuals, but also as us as the church. And, we've seen through the readings, both in John's Gospel as well as from the book of Acts, how God is leading the church, leading us as believers in Christ through the powerful experience of those first disciples of the resurrection, and the resurrection experiences that we are able to experience even today.

I want to take a moment to thank you, some of you may know that my Mother passed away last Sunday. We had the funeral on Wednesday and I know that there were many people praying for her through this season of her illness, and I know that there were many people praying for me and for my family and I want to just say how much I appreciate those prayers. It means a lot to all of us, and I hope that you take this opportunity on Mother's Day to hug your mother or your grandmother, or that person who has been a mother figure to you, and I just ask that you take that time to do that today.

There is amazing power in prayer. One of the great experiences that I've had as a pastor is of course to lead a variety of churches throughout my ministry. I look back and I see those special moments certainly presiding at the Holy Eucharist, at the Holy Communion and leading congregations in planning for mission. All of those have been great experiences, but if I were to pick those moments that probably meant the most personally to me it's those moments when I was engaged in prayer with members of my congregation or people in the community. Sometimes those moments are individual where someone sharing something with me and I am able to be able to offer an individual prayer with them. But more often than not they take place in corporate worship settings, and I am always amazed how powerful of a witness those setting are. I am thinking in particular about the healing services that Trinity has every single month. We don't get a ton of people at those services, generally there is anywhere from six to fifteen, sometimes sixteen people, but it's always a powerful moment to invite people to come forward, for them to receive individual prayer, whatever their needs are. Sometimes they come because they have an illness and it is really on their hearts and they want to ask for God's healing. Sometimes they come because they are concerned about another member of the congregation or family member and they want to pray for that individual person, they'd like me to be there with them and the other pastors to be there with them and to pray for them.

We have other moments that are like that. Those that are involved in our prison ministry will be glad to share with you the powerful moments in which after communion those who are incarcerated are invited for individual prayer by some of the prayer warriors we have here at Trinity. It's so powerful, sometimes they come before us, usually not just asking for themselves, but out of concern that they have for other family members that they are not able to be with because they are imprisoned. Those are powerful moments for all of our volunteers and the pastors that participate in those opportunities.

This past Maundy Thursday we had a time of prayer that was offered to the people that attended that service. The lines were so long we had to like grab other people and say be a prayer, be a prayer so that there could be other individuals that could help lead individual prayer. It's a powerful moment when people that you know and care about come before you with already tears streaming down their faces, and then you ask the question, "What can we pray for together?"

In John's gospel it's a moment that's really, really important. Jesus has been in the upper room with his disciples, he is preparing for the sacrifice and there's a lot of things that happened while he was there with his disciples. He has washed their feet and given them a model for how they are to be servants to one another. Judas has already decided to betray Jesus. He's left the upper room and he's on his way to talk to the officials to betray Jesus. Peter has already been told that he is going to deny Jesus three times. Jesus has shared with them the love commandment that they are to love God and love their neighbor, and he has on a number of occasions spoken to them about the promise of the Holy Spirit. That when he leaves he is going to send a helper, an advocate that is going to be there for his disciples, for his followers through thick and thin. Whatever they go through, God's presence is going to be with them through the activity of the Holy Spirit. And now in that moment, before they decide to leave and go over to the Garden of Gethsemane, where he is going to pray some more and then finally be betrayed and arrested, he decides to pray for his disciples that are there.

And Jesus is praying for the whole church that we might be one. It is a prayer that gives us a glimpse into God's future, because Jesus is not only praying for the disciples that are gathered in that upper room for that meal, but he is praying also for all of those future disciples, future followers of Jesus so that they might give thanks to God and that they might be one. And so it's a prayer that focuses on unity as a gift for the future church that we all might all be one.

The purpose though is to point you and me to God. Because unity in and of itself is not what Jesus is trying to teach his disciples. He's trying to point them to something greater, to God himself, as God is manifested to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Now in the church we have lots of moments where we speak of the unity of God. Of course we share a meal together that shows that Christian unity. We might pray for one another together. There's lots of different ways in which we manifest the unity that we share in Christ. But one of the most poignant moments is actually after we have the sermon and we share the Creed. In the Easter season we're lifting up especially the Nicene Creed, and in the third article of that Creed as we talk about the Holy Spirit, we also talk about the church. Now that Creed was developed a little after 300 A.D. so in historic terms pretty soon after Jesus was crucified and rose again and ascended to the Father. It was a time when the church was struggling with who is God? Who is Jesus? And

the church came to a profound realization that God was Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit and that Jesus was in two natures fully human, fully Divine. It's a way of helping us to explain who God is.

Now you might look at the Creed and say well it's pretty simple, well it is. The church argues about all sorts of stuff all of the time, but you'll notice in the Creed it speaks of simple understandings of who God is, as Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and in its simplicity is its beauty. And when it talks about the church, who we are as the people of God, there are four words for us to remember and to take to heart.

We believe in the one holy catholic and apostolic church. One holy catholic and apostolic. The church is one. It is that community for which Jesus prayed that we might be unified, that we might be one. Now that doesn't mean that we have to get along all of the time. It doesn't mean that we have to agree on every principal or the direction of the church or what we should be thinking about or doing. It doesn't mean that if you want to be in this church, everybody has to be a democrat or everybody has to be a republican, or come from a certain ethnic background or whatever. It means that we are unified as the people of God because that's how Jesus wants it. We are unified because we were born in baptismal water. Each one of us born out of that water to be a follower of Jesus Christ. To be a part of the community of the church of God, and so you and I are a part of the one.

The church is also holy. We are sanctified, we are made right with God. Not because of anything that we have done, but because of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. And so the biblical scholar, probably one of the best biblical scholars of the Gospel of John, Father Raymond Brown said; *The unity involves both the vertical dimension (that's between us and God) and the horizontal dimension (that's between us and our neighbor). Christ is praying for unity, not "simply human fellowship."* (*The Gospel According to John*) So the unity is based in our oneness, in our holiness that God has given to us and infused on us in holy baptism. It is there that we are forgiven of our sins and each one of us is given a level playing field as we are invited into a holy righteous relationship with God, and then given the command to love each other.

The church is one, the church is holy, and the church is catholic.

Now we need to learn something about that word there.

The catholicity of the church that we're talking about is universe solitary, that's what that word means, catholic. The church is universal. We come to understand who our God is, but the entrance to that church is offered to all people. In other words, there's no place for Christian "Lone Rangers" of just doing it yourself. We are brought together, but we are also universal in our appeal. The church is made up of a diversity of people. A rich diversity of people and that's the way God wants it. So, you will find in Christian congregations different ethnic backgrounds. You will find different economic conditions, you will find the young and old and everything in between, a diversity of humanity, beautiful in scope and love and the praise of God.

Maybe that's what Lutherans meant when they talked about the priesthood of all believers, that universal priesthood of which you and I are a part because we are baptized into Christ. One holy catholic and apostolic.

Apostolic, you and I come from somewhere. We are in a long line of apostles, of apostolic witnesses. People who have witnessed the resurrection of Jesus Christ with all of its power and glory and might. And we lift up those individuals in our prayers for they bear witness for everything that God is doing in our world.

And so we remember, especially in the Easter season, St. Peter, and Mary mother of our Lord, Mary Madeline, the apostle Paul, and Lydia, Augustine, St. Francis of Assisi, Martin Luther, Muhlenberg, Mother Teresa and my mother who brought me to church, taught me the faith, encouraged me in my education and supported me in my vocation as a pastor. And some day, your name will be added to that long list of witnesses to the power of the resurrection. We belong to something ancient, and because of that you and I are never alone. We are bound together in holy relationship as witnesses of the great things that God is doing in our lives and in our world. We are bound together in that loving relationship that God has with God's self as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The oneness and the unity that we are called to is about love. We don't have to agree all the time, but we better love each other for Jesus' sake.

Martin Luther in his explanation of that third article of the Creed talks about the Spirit calling, gathering, enlightening and sanctifying the church or making it holy.

Resurrection impact is an impact of that gospel promise and that prayer of Jesus. The promise of what you and I can believe in and a prayer to let us know that no matter what it will be all well. The promise and prayer that strengthens us, supports us, transforms us, and comforts us in the Spirit filled days that are ahead.

Resurrection impact that makes us one with God and one with each other, completely one Jesus prayed. One in Spirit, one in Hope, one in Mission and Ministry.

Amen

In the name of the Father and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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