

## Midweek Message

*When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:*

*“Death is swallowed up in victory.”  
“O death, where is your victory?  
O death, where is your sting?”*

*The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:54-57 ESV)*

This past Sunday we celebrated the greatest of all events in the History of the world as we focused on the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I agree with you that on this year's celebration it did seem a bit different as we couldn't physically be together. To be honest with you I really miss seeing you all and hearing your "Good Morning! How are you doing today?" I also miss your smiling faces as you sit in the pews and I definitely miss your amazing voices as we sing the great hymns of the faith as well as some the wonderful songs that our Christian brothers and sisters are writing for our walk today. Although there are five of us working to stream the worship service it's just a little bit too quiet for me these days. However, I do thank God for His providence in leading Highlands to install the electronic equipment several years ago so that we can still join in spirit, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in a united worship before our God.

I mentioned this past Sunday at the beginning of the service that believers are actually celebrating the resurrection every Sunday we come together in worship. Under the New Covenant, in which we now find ourselves, the Church began using one of the New Testament descriptions of the Christian Sabbath which is called "The Lord's Day." In other words, it's the day in which our Lord was raised from the grave that put God the Father's stamp of approval on the life and death of our Savior. I often wonder if that truth is ever in the forefront of our minds when we do gather together for worship or in our current circumstances worship via electronic means. You see, in the resurrection of Jesus we have complete and total victory over every aspect of the fallenness of humanity into sin and misery. We who've come to faith in Jesus are now free from sin and all the consequences that result.

First, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus has given us the victory over the punishment of sin. As believers we all know that we're guilty of violating the moral law of God and that because of our rebellion God has the right to, and certainly should, require that justice be fulfilled. God is holy and will not, in fact, He cannot tolerate sinful rebellion. When Adam and Eve rebelled against God through their disobedience by eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, in defiance of God's directive, they brought judgment on themselves and all their posterity. God had told them they would die if they did and that's what has happened. The Apostle reminds us in the above Scripture that the "sting of death is sin." It's this death, both spiritual and physical, that has resulted in a cursed world in which we face troubles of all kinds, especially now in this pandemic. However, the good news is that God has chosen to pay the price of judgement Himself. In the incarnation, Jesus came to us so that He might live the perfect life we didn't and pay the price we couldn't so that through Him we can experience the freedom from of guilt and judgment as we receive Him and the redemption He has purchased for us.

Second, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus has given us the victory over the power of sin. This is what the Scriptures talk about when we're told that in Jesus, we have new life. In other words, we can live in obedience to the Lord as we strive by the power of the Holy Spirit, who lives in us, to love the Lord our God with all our heart and all our soul and all our strength and all our mind as well as loving our neighbor as we love ourselves. Since sin is the culprit that gets in the way of our obedience then it's sin that must be defeated and its power over us removed. Now, we all know that we continue to do things we shouldn't and that we don't do things we should. Sin is still present in us and it can, at times, raise its ugly head and we in turn fall prey to its influence over us. However, even though we do fail at times we can be greatly assured that Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law. We have no fear of eternal judgment because in Jesus all our sins are fully paid and when we do fall, we know we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous One.

Finally, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus will give us the victory over the presence of sin. This is our greatest hope, in that, one day, yet to come, we will be completely free from every aspect of sin and its consequences. This is the wondrous hope of which the Apostle Paul is speaking when he talks to us about the perishable putting on the imperishable, and the mortal putting on immortality. He's looking to the promise of God that He is going to restore paradise that was lost when our first parents failed to obey Him. As Scripture teaches us, we have so much for which to hope, so much for which to look forward, so much coming our way in our salvation that the Apostle Paul could write with such confidence that the sufferings of this world do not compare to the glory that will be ours. I don't know that I can even imagine what that will be like, but I know it will be far better than even the best of times we enjoy in this world. There will be no more pain or sorrow, no more famines or wars, no more disease or death as everything in the universe will be restored to the place where God looks again at all He has made and says: "It is good."

For now, we have to be careful to follow the guidance of our government leaders and medical professions so that we can navigate this pandemic. I doubt that any of us actually like being isolated and I want you to know that I find it very difficult. Even as an introvert, I am wanting to get back out into society but I know that God has brought this into our world and He has a purpose in it all, a good and righteous purpose, because He is good and righteous. We don't have to fret and worry like those around us who have no hope. We experience and express the greatest hope because of God's love for us in Jesus. We can go on with life, even though it's a bit difficult, because God is always with us and He will continue moving this world forward until that time when Jesus returns and ushers in His eternal Kingdom.

So, as we move forward through this current crisis, I would like to remind you of the words we sang Sunday at the close of worship from the hymn "Because He Lives."

Because He lives, I can face tomorrow  
Because He lives, all fear is gone.  
Because I know He holds the future  
And life is worth the living, just because He lives.

AMEN!!!

*Pastor Mark*