

IN NOMINE JESU

FREED TO LIVE OUTSIDE OF LEGALISM AND CHEAP GOSPEL

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

Christ is Risen, *for the Pascha of us has been sacrificially killed, (that is) Christ!*¹

Many of you have heard this morning's reading from I Corinthians each Resurrection Sunday morning for many years. Perhaps you have thought that it seems a bit incongruous. After all, it is proclaimed between the promise of the resurrection for believers confessed by Job and the empty tomb declared to eyewitnesses of Jesus' resurrection from the dead in Mark's Gospel. Certainly, there is an Easter Sunday-fitting phrase in the letter. It serves as our theme verse for this Great High Feast: *the Pascha of us has been sacrificially killed, (that is) Christ.*² (More on that in a bit...)

But, what of all the rest of the words of St. Paul which have been read into your ears this morning? There were warnings about boasting, about old leaven, and calls to live in purity of motive and truth. How does that all fit within the eternal reality of the coming resurrection of those who die in Christ, and the surety of that declared in the empty tomb—even though the women, *nothing to no one they said, for they feared?*³ (Just so you know, that appears to be a set up line. It should lead you to ask, "Then what happened?" That seems to have been done to lead you to want to hear the Word to be proclaimed at tonight's Service). How did the seemingly unfitting for resurrection proclamation and joy get into our readings?

Well... there has been a long held theory that St. Paul had originally composed the Letter we call First Corinthians before a Feast of the Resurrection. The reasoning was that he, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, thought that his words would

¹ *I Corinthians 5:7b.*

² *I Corinthians 5:7b.*

³ *Mark 16:8.*

make it to Corinth that they could be read as the Great High Feast was celebrated that year. As you may know, they were troubled with all kinds of internal conflict.

In fact, that which is described in the text surrounding the words today is one which has come full-force into the Church at large today. We are not going into the specific sins addressed in this part of the letter this morning for there are children present. Even so, let us declare that Corinthian congregation held members who were not only being tempted by many things, in part to legalism – trusting the Law for salvation – but also to antinomianism – living as if God’s Law had no force.

It is to that latter that they were rejoicing in, acting as if they were free to tolerate – in the Church – even the most perverse of person sins. For that reason, before they celebrated the Feast rightly that year (and in all right-teaching congregations before or since), they needed to be called to repentance. They needed to hear again of Christ, their Passover, Who had been sacrificed to bring forgiveness of all sins – not to free them to sin in ways that were not even known among pagans!

Earlier it was declared that the Corinthian sin has come full force into the Church at large today. It is the sin of following the demonic lie of being nonjudgmental and inclusive. Such is compounded when congregations and pastors brag of their tolerance, in their midst, at the Lord’s Table, of those who are not only unrepentant of their sins, but who revel in them. St. Paul still says to such people, *Not beautiful (is) the boasting of all of you!*⁴

Examples of that which is taking place publicly – boasting in the tolerance of sin – in congregations near us could consume the rest of this sermon. But one should capture the essential teaching of a spirit which had repeatedly plagued the ancient

⁴ 1 Corinthians 5:6a.

Corinthian congregation, and still infects the Church today. Consider this public witness of a local congregation, a Church that claims to be United, though from their public statements, in a union that is certainly not revealed in the Christ Who is the Passover Who has been sacrificed and raised from the dead to save sinners:

*Our sanctuary is a safe place to worship God because we are not judged by what we think and believe.*⁵

There is some biblical truth in that statement. When it declares that the Church's sanctuary is a safe place, that is correct. Some of you were present when this sanctuary, that which is behind the chancel rails to the wall, was actually given as sanctuary. A troubled individual was safe, and was kept from apprehension by legal authorities, as long that person remained in sanctuary.

On the other hand, the local congregation's witness goes on to inform the reader that they are safe place, "to worship God." From other writings put out by their pastor, that appears in part to mean worship such as celebrating Easter this way, "Resurrection is an indication of liberation, that frees us from the way things are and renews our attention on the way things can be. Resurrection is a new beginning for people who are not satisfied with the world the way it is."⁶

If that is what Easter means, we are in trouble. The New Testament Church has had almost two millennia to declare new beginnings for people dissatisfied with this fallen world. The fallen church teaches, "This is a good time to put into practice your own answers to what...Easter [is] all about." How is that going for you? Are you being built up into the new beginnings of greater satisfaction? That type of Resurrection emphasis makes you the arbiter and decider of what God's Word means

⁵ Internet. <http://www.orovalleyucc.org>, accessed 26 March 2016.

⁶ Briney, James. 2016, *Explorer*, "Lent-Easter-Jews-Christians-Muslims"

for you... which, could after all mean that you can continue to cling to all your sinful self-centered, self-congratulatory desires, for who would want to change them? After all, they are good for the “me” in each of us. St. Paul continues to teach congregations of the true Faith that such self-tolerant and nonjudgmental thinking are sinful. He still speaks through the Holy Spirit inspired Word to call erring individuals and congregations to repentance, when he declares of such demonic impulses:

*Do not all of you know that (a) little leaven the whole lump leavens?*⁷

The leaven of which he preaches is that of tolerance for unrepentant sin in the congregation, and boasting of our inclusiveness. The example he is moved to use is that of a common element used in one of the staples of the Israelite people, yeast. As they did not have prepackaged packets of yeast to carry with them on their Exodus from slavery to freedom in the Promised Land, they would take a bit of each weeks risen bread dough and preserve it to add to the next week’s dough.

Further, when He established the Feasts of Unleavened Bread and the Pascha, God forbid his people from having yeast in their homes. For an Israelite to be caught with that bread-rising product during the times God had forbidden it would mean excommunication – to cast out as an unbeliever – from the congregation. St. Paul is using that congregational reality, drawn from the Old Covenant Law, to show how serious the sin of tolerating open and unrepentant sin in a New Covenant congregation is to God. He calls them, us, to *purge out completely the old leaven, that you all may be a new lump, just as all of you are unleavened;...*⁸

That means that the evil sin to which the Church in every age is tempted – to tolerate and encourage in sin those who remain unrepentant – God Himself has given

⁷ 1 Corinthians 5:6b

⁸ 1 Corinthians 5:7a.

the means to remove. His Law goes forth. Here, reminders of it are posted under that Cross in this Chancel to show us that we are not free to tolerate unrepentant sin in our midst. The Church is not free to boast of our inclusion at the Lord's Table of those who will not repent of breaking those Words and all their meanings. God is calling the Christian congregation to return to the pure Good News as we turn from such sins when He declares, following the call to look even into the gecko holes in the Church to find the sinful leaven,

For the Pascha of us has been sacrificially killed, (that is) Christ!⁹

That, dear repentant sinners, is the meaning of the Resurrection. Christ was handed over to pay the full price for all of our, your, sins. The single Word that has been repeatedly translated, "has been sacrificially killed," appears to be part of the Hebrew practice of circumlocution – that is, it is a way of avoiding the use of God's Name. It seems, from the text's Greek language construction, that God the Father sacrificed the God the Son, (The True Passover Lamb). Just so, God the Father raised the slain Passover Lamb (God the Son) from the dead.¹⁰ That means, dear ones, that even the death that pays the price for our sins, even those congregational ones of unbiblical tolerance and inclusiveness, was offered to God by God! (It is amazing that some Christians still seem to think the Jews or the Romans offered Jesus as the sacrifice)! The Lord God still declares from out of that sacrifice:

Just so, we feast, not in old leaven, and not in leaven of evil and sexual sin, but in unleavened (loaves) of sincerity and truth.¹¹

That is God's Resurrection Feast call to those who have received the salvation His sacrifice brings. We are called away from our sins, individual and corporate. He,

⁹ *I Corinthians* 5:7b.

¹⁰ Lockwood, Gregory. 2000. *I Corinthians*, quoting Dean Wenhe. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House. 171-172.

¹¹ *I Corinthians* 5:8.

through His Word, frees us from slavery to evils that this world, and erring churches, hold as normal and acceptable. God sacrificed His Son to cleanse us from sin's eternal stain. He raised His Son from the dead to present us as declared right before Him.

The bodily death and resurrection of Jesus, the Son of God and Son of Man, frees us to live with pure motives. We are liberated to life conduct that will stand in the light of day – in the Church, among ourselves, and in this fallen world. In the light of the Resurrection proclamation, you are free to live in the Truth that because Jesus lives, you live in Him. Christ' resurrection means that, though you may die, you will be raised again to blessed eternal life in Him. Let us continue to celebrate the Feast of the Resurrection in sincerity and truth. Christ is risen!

The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

Resurrection Hauptgottesdienst (*LSB* One-year series)

Job 19:23-27; I Corinthians 5:6-8; Mark 16:1-8

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Soli Deo Gloria